

Islamization of Knowledge and Its Grounding: Appraisal and Alternative

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Abstract

In recent decades, there has been much discussion on 'Islamically-grounding' the social sciences, which some researchers have described as being traditionally 'Western' in nature. This debate among Muslims flourished in the early nineties, taking place in books, articles and doctoral theses. As a sociologist, I have no qualms about using the terms 'Islamic', 'Arab', or 'Lebanese' to describe some social sciences and for some of the concepts and theories of these sciences to be inspired by the Islamic heritage and these societies. However, through a content analysis of articles, books and masters and PHD theses that adopt this orientation, as well as through interviews with some of the proponents of the Islamization of Knowledge (IoK) or Islamic grounding (*ta'sil*) of knowledge, I show that adding a geographical or religious adjective to the social sciences creates real problems. This paper describes and presents a synthesis of this literature, analyzes some of its problems and ponders whether the project to 'Islamize' knowledge is truly necessary or instead serves as a sort of identity politics. Based on this analysis, this paper suggests a new approach that I call 'separation, connection and pluralistic praxis' as an alternative to IoK and similar projects.

Keywords: Islamization of Knowledge, social sciences, Islamic grounding, integration, political crisis

Introduction

There has been much discussion for several decades on ‘Islamically-grounding’ the social sciences, which some researchers have described as being traditionally ‘Western’ in nature. This debate was particularly prominent in Middle Eastern countries in the early nineties and took place in books, articles and doctoral theses. Nonetheless, while this project received a positive response from a small group of researchers, it attracted a largely negative response from many in the social science community.

As a sociologist, I have no qualms about using the terms ‘Islamic’, ‘Arab’, ‘Lebanese’ or ‘Algerian’ to describe where social science concepts and theories have been inspired by Islamic heritage and these societies. However, after undertaking a content analysis of 97 articles,¹ 32 books and nine theses that have adopted this orientation, as well as conducting interviews with some of the proponents of the Islamization of Knowledge (IoK) or Islamic grounding (*ta’sil*) of knowledge, I believe that adding a geographical or religious adjective to the social sciences creates real problems.

This paper describes the literature of the IoK, presents a synthesis of this literature, analyzes some of its problems and ponders whether this project is truly necessary or instead serves as a sort of identity politics. On the basis of my analysis, this paper suggests a new approach that I refer to as ‘separation, connection and pluralistic praxis’, which acts as an alternative to IoK and similar projects. However, I will first show that the social sciences include several elements and dimensions which are not found in the Islamic social sciences. Furthermore, Islamic social sciences constitute a closed system in the face of the ‘Western’ social sciences, only searching for an Islamic social philosophy, thereby ignoring other important elements and dimensions.

The Five Dimensions of the Social Sciences

The social sciences are made up of five dimensions: 1) a social philosophy and ontological concepts; 2) methodological tools; 3) ‘objective’ analysis of social structures; 4) individual and group perceptions; 5) economic/political/psychological and sociological public policy recommendations in a manner that takes into consideration the material possibilities and interests that make one social group dominate over others, individual and social consciousness, as well as the contradictions and paradoxes related to measuring benefits and harms

¹ I rely here on some of the specialized journals in this field, the most important of which is the “Islamization of Knowledge” journal published by IIIT (in Arabic), as well as JSTOR, the Arabic e-marefa and Al Manhal Databases.

and the lesser of two evils. These recommendations, therefore, do not depend on ultimate good and evil, or ultimate halal and haram, but are instead equations that are as complex as the complexity of social phenomena and their changes, and do not depend on the Weberian ethics of conviction only, but also the ethics of responsibility, as I will soon explain.

When discussing the social sciences, people tend to focus on the first and fifth elements outlined above, the two most normative elements compared to the others (which are more objective). They will, most likely, argue that there is a unified Islamic vision, in the manner of the electoral slogan ‘Islam is the solution,’ which imbues it with an essence of being the antithesis of what they refer to as the Western (materialistic) vision. This generalization of the Western social sciences distracts us, rather than explaining the nature of knowledge production in Western countries. For instance, the Marxist school has an interest in social classes, which they see as the vehicle of social dynamics, whereas the functionalist school relies on various social systems that work harmoniously and discusses religion, for instance, as an important dimension in social cohesion. This is a chasm that simply cannot be reduced to saying ‘these two schools are Western’. At the same time, we also cannot say that ‘there is an Islamic social science’ except in the strict sense of the word (sciences produced in an Islamic context or historical sciences produced in Islamic context). Perhaps, there is an Islamic social philosophy that discusses the first dimension of social science but is meaningless with regard to the other dimensions. Therefore, the social sciences are construed as forming a closed system.

The Genesis of the Islamization of Knowledge Project

Social scientists, mostly non-Arab, were the driving force in early thinking about the Islamic perspective on the social sciences, such as the Pakistani Akbar Ahmed (1986), Iranians Ali Shari'ati (1979) and Shaykh Murtada Mathari (1979), and the British Muslim scholar Merryl Wynn Davies (1988). Except for Mathari, all were intellectually raised in the West and developed their ideas in this context. For example, Akbar Ahmed called for an Islamic anthropology, describing it as a specialization that would be concerned with studies of Islamic groups by researchers committed to the universal values of Islam (humanism, knowledge and tolerance), which would connect studies, particularly on tribes and small villages, to Islam's grand historical ideological frameworks. The concept of Islam here is not in its theological description, but as a social science. Therefore, for Ahmad, the definition does not exclude non-Muslims. (Ahmed 1986, 56). There were likewise Arab attempts in Islamizing knowledge, the most important of which was possibly by Shaykh Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr, especially in his Thematic Exegesis of the Qur'an (Al-Sadr 1989).

The establishment of The Association of Muslim Social Scientists by the Muslim Students Association in the United States and Canada in 1972 was an important event in understanding the connection between the social sciences and Islamic values. This association convened many conferences and meetings that culminated with the establishment of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in Washington in 1981, which officially launched the Islamization of Knowledge project.² This project was led by the late Palestinian philosopher, Ismail Al-Faruqi, in order to “recast knowledge in the mold of Islam in relation to the Islamic vision” by defining it as “to redefine and re-order the data, to rethink the reasoning and relate the data, to reevaluate the conclusions, to re-project the goals and to do so in such a way as to make the disciplines enrich the vision and serve the cause of Islam.” (IIIT 1984, 46) He outlined the aims of his work plan as: 1) Mastering the modern sciences; 2) Mastering Islamic Heritage; 3) Establishing the proper relationship between Islamic concepts and every field of the modern sciences; 4) Establishing a creative connection between Islamic heritage and modern knowledge; 5) Launching Islamic thought on the path that will lead to the realization of God’s laws on earth.

A group of contemporary Islamic intellectuals/researchers – most of them university professors in the social and human sciences – adopted ideas inspired by this project. These intellectuals belonged to four groups. The first group was centered in the International Institute for Islamic Thought (IIIT) (e.g. Emad Al-Din Khalil, Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, Al-Haj Hamed Abu Al-Qasem, etc.). The second group was connected to the International Islamic University of Malaysia which called for the Islamization of human knowledge and not every form of knowledge (e.g. Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas). The third group was connected to Saudi universities, especially Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, which was established in 1950. The fourth group was centered on the IIIT branch in Egypt (e.g. Muhammad Emara and Abdulwahab Al-Mesirri). From these beginnings, their intellectual efforts, which mostly took the form of non-research studies, spread all throughout the Arab world (e.g. Mahmud Al-Dhawadi in Tunisia, Balqasim and Alyan Buzayan in Algeria, etc.).

IIIT’s paradigm developed over many academic meetings convened to discuss the Islamization project in a general sense or related topics, organized by the institute among other bodies that shaped the project. (See: Table 1).

² The institute has several branches and offices in Muslim and Arab capitals, and its work is supervised by a board of trustees, whose members include a president rotated cyclically.

Table (1): Conferences and Events Related to the Topic of the Islamization of Knowledge

Conference/Event	Organizer	Convening Year
Establishment of the Association of Muslim Social Sciences	Muslim Students Association in United States and Canada	1972
The International Conference for Islamic Economics	King Abdulaziz University	1974
Islam and Psychology Symposium	College of Education at King Abdulaziz University in Riyadh	1978
First International Conference on Islamic Education	In Makka (at the invitation of King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah)	1977
First International Symposium on Islamic Thought ³	Lugano, Switzerland	1977
Establishment of International Institute of Islamic Thought	United States of America	1981
Islamization of Knowledge Symposium	Islamabad, Pakistan	1982
Establishment of World Islamic Association of Mental Health (WIAMH)	Lahore, Pakistan	1983
The Forum of Islamic Thought on Islam and the Social Sciences	Sétif, Algeria	1986
Symposium on the Islamic Grounding of the Social Sciences	Research Center at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University (Riyadh)	1987
The Islamic Orientation towards the Sciences	Al-Azhar University of Egypt in coordination with the League of Islamic Universities	1993
Social Sciences from an Islamic Perspective	Center of Epistemological Studies (Cairo)	2007
The Global Economic Crisis from an Islamic Perspective	IIIT and the International Islamic Sciences University- Amman ¹	2010
The Methodology of Knowledge Integration	IIIT and the College of Shari'a at the University of Jordan	2012

³ This resulted in a call to establish the “International Institute of Islamic Thought” to lead the efforts of the “Islamization of knowledge.”

The project's outcomes branched out in several directions, generating positive and negative responses. Some outright rejected the social sciences, which they viewed as being founded on theories which could not be applied to any study or problem facing Islamic society. This response was championed by Ahmed Ibrahim Khudr, who demonstrated his opposition to the Islamization of knowledge project with eye-catching article titles like "Do our countries need social scientists? (Khudr 2012), "Confessions of Social Scientists: The Futile Theory and Inadequate Method of the Social Sciences" (Khudr 2010), and "The Qur'an has provided solutions to all human problems." This approach is particularly prominent among some imams in Lebanon.

Another approach sought to focus on Islamic grounding (*ta'sil*) instead of the Islamization of knowledge, which took a more theological bent than knowledge-based, though this approach caused much confusion (Abdulhalim 2014). The term *ta'sil* was formulated in several universities, especially Imam Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud University, in which representatives from the Association of Muslim Social Scientists and IIIT helped formulate the plan for its social sciences colleges at the university's request. There were specific suggestions for the Islamic grounding of knowledge. For example, Bilqasim Al-Ghali (1999) suggested the following steps: Placing social issues in an Islamic framework, clarifying issues through reference to classical works, authoring Islamic works that have a social dimension, utilizing the works of Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) and integrating the science of *usul* with social sciences.

As the editor of *Idafat: the Arab Journal of Sociology*, I notice at times that some researchers use Ibn Khaldun as if his sociological thought was applicable for every place and time. They use the concept of *aṣabiyya* for all Arab societies, even if social studies have proven that the tribe as a social structure has become weaker in a country like Algeria under the influence of French colonialism and with the emergence of the nation-state – both of which adopted the same approach to breaking up the tribe as a social unit and supplying society with new loyalties. Some researchers praise Ibn Khaldun as the founder of his methodology of history in his book *al-Muqadimma* (The Prolegomena), even if his *al-I'bar* (to which *al-Muqadimma* was the introduction for) on the history of the Arabs and Berbers has not been very beneficial. I would argue that Ibn Khaldun's work was used more as a form of identity politics than for connecting local history to sociology. Some researchers have also viewed Ibn Khaldun as rejecting the philosophy of his age, which is not true, as he was, indeed, influenced by it and engaged with it. History (the science of events) and sociology (the meaning of events) do not come from the observer's direct experience, that is, pure observation, but rather the merging of the observer's personal experience with philosophy and especially logic. The latter presents research tools and building materials for the theoretical architecture of

history and society.⁴

Others, such as Fu'ad Abu Hatab, took up the term Islamic orientation (*tawjīh*) of knowledge. The concept of destination (*wijha*) for him is synonymous with a paradigm, or Islamic interpretation of knowledge (Al-A'tiri 2013). Others are simply interested in Islamic perspectives on whatever science.

There are other strands that are not necessarily influenced by IIIT but which aimed to connect science to Arabs or Muslims' cultural particularities, such as Mahmood Amin Al-Alim, Muhammad Jabir Al-Ansari, and Mahmud Al-Dhawati. Sometimes taking an eclectic approach, they called for the establishment of a bridge between European modernity's binaries and Arab or Islamic identity, or between the classical tradition and modernity, authenticity and contemporaneity, revelation and reason, or material and symbolic spiritualism.

In this section, I will discuss some of the many attempts of Islamization and Islamic grounding of knowledge. These efforts are extensive in some fields – according to the Dar al-Mandumah Database (research undertaken in 2020) there are 213 research papers and books on the Islamic grounding of psychology alone. I will discuss three types of these efforts at Islamization and Islamic grounding of knowledge.

Outcome of Islamization and Islamic Grounding of Knowledge

In this section, I will outline some examples of IoK or Islamic Grounding and will organize them into three headings: (1) Social Philosophy Emphasis, (2) serious attempts and (3) shallow attempts.

III-1. Social Philosophy Emphasis

There has been much theorizing on the need for an Islamic social science, Islamic psychology, or Islamic political science. Upon examining many of these attempts, one can find that in reality they do not transcend being an Islamic social, psychological or political philosophy. Debates revolved around the importance of the group over the individual, and the necessity of replacing 'instrumental rationality' with a normative rationalization that takes ethics into consideration. There are concepts proposed by Muslim intellectuals that must be reconsidered, such as Ibn Khaldun's *aṣabiyya*, or Malik Bennabi's 'colonizability'. In general, many of these researchers have stressed the necessity of benefiting from classical Islamic literature or intellectuals in the social sciences (Haque 2004; Alatas 2013). There has also

⁴ Ibn Khaldun's "logic of proof" does not rely on Aristotelean logic, that is, deducting particulars from universals, but rather inducing universals from particulars, something rejected by Aristotle, due to his belief that familiarity with all the particulars is practically impossible. In this respect, we can refer back to Ali Al-Wardi's *Ibn Khaldun's Logic* (1962).

been an emphasis on the necessity of reforming the research methodology of the social sciences in addition to including revelation as a source of knowledge which completes and complements the senses and reason, which extreme positivist and empirical theories have evaded and exclusively relied on (Rajab 1996).

Despite the importance of Islamic social philosophy, IoK scholars ignored the importance of understanding the *Sharī'a* through the geography and history of Muslim societies and hid behind ideals inspired by Qur'ānic concepts, which they viewed as if they had a fixed understanding and application throughout the ages. For example, are the concepts of *aṣabiyya* or tolerance or humanism the same in tribal societies and modern societies built on urbanization and the nation-state?

III-2. Serious Attempts at Islamic Grounding

There are new attempts, though rare, to study all the elements of the social sciences and ground (*tawteen*) them. I prefer to use the concept of an interactive ecology of knowledge, as it points not only to an Islamic cultural or value framework, but also other factors, such as local and national culture. This is closer to the spirit of science as being (*softly*) universalist than describing it as Islamic. I consider a process of grounding to be serious if it possesses the following four dimensions:

- Admission that a large part of the social sciences (and especially its objective side) has developed due to the global accumulation of knowledge. Therefore, we should no doubt benefit from research produced globally, whether in the West or elsewhere.
- Because the social sciences are imprinted by local culture, including Islamic culture, the role of this culture should be taken into consideration while understanding the social actors of any social phenomena, as indicated by the social constructivist school of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967). That is, systems of knowledge are but mental constructions that are impacted by the dominant ideological and religious values in society, government policies, and the ethical system carried by knowledge producers. It is not enough to provide a simple chemical description of *Qat* as a form of narcotic, but rather how many Yemenis understand *Qat* as a part of convivial social rites for social cohesion in Yemen.
- The whole life-cycle of research (i.e., including knowledge transfer and public or policy-oriented research activities) should be taken into account. Knowledge cannot be completed (when there is a local relevance) without interaction with the concerned community, and the societal debate resulting from its reception by the community and how policy options can be received by society. From here, it is important for researchers to engage with their local colleagues to provide debates in the public sphere with scientific and moral arguments for specific policy options. That is, moral choices should be forged

in the public sphere using Rawlsian public reason and where social sciences should play a crucial role in the process of overlapping consensus and finding reasonable accommodations.

- It is necessary for the social sciences to communicate with moral philosophy and *Shari'a* sciences (*Fiqh* and *Usul al-Din*), in order for empirical findings to be integrated with normative analysis, and for there to be a *fiqh al-waqi'* (jurisprudence of reality) based on *maqāṣid*, which are two necessary paradigms for all Islamic reformist schools in our contemporary reality. As a result, social scientists need to understand the lexicon used by religious scholars and lay people, while religious scholars should use the social sciences to think ethically before establishing jurisprudential rules.

I will now turn to discuss two examples of these serious attempts. The first example is in the field of Islamic economics. Bibliometric searches show an impressive amount of scientific research in this field. The research in this strand began by focusing on normative aspects, such as theorizing how to fulfill well-being, instead of mere instinctive desires, replacing usury with *murabaha* (an Islamic form of cost-plus financing), and stressing sustainability instead of optimization, etc. From there, empirical studies to analyze economic behavior were carried out, even if they were few compared to the copious amounts of normative studies. The assessment I am conducting here is with regards to the quantity of knowledge rather than its quality or ability to achieve a breakthrough. This literature mostly adopts a neoliberal paradigm influenced by the situation in the Arab Gulf and does not concern itself much with social justice or equitable distribution of wealth. However, in fairness, we must point to a serious and critical attempt whose source is more East Asian than Arab. Particularly that of Mohammad Najatuallah Siddiqi, who was chosen as the president of the International Association of Islamic Economics in 2001, and Masudul Alam Choudhury, both of whom studied economics before embarking on *Shari'a* studies. Here I will particularly focus on Choudhury's contributions.

There is serious critical debate on Islamic economics and attempts to mainstream it. One of the most influential figures in this regard is Professor Masudul Alam Choudhury, whose books are part key readings at IIUM. Bridging the Islamic and western fields in Islamic economics and finance, Choudhury's scholarship has been recognized in both Western and Muslim academic circles, and as such, plays an influential role in defining this Islamic discipline locally and internationally. After graduating from the University of Toronto, he occupied the Professorial Chair of Islamic Finance at the Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance at IIUM. As a way of validating his work by peers in the scientific community, he asked a prominent figure in economics from California State University, John C. O'Brien, to write the foreword for his book, *The Principles of Islamic Political Economy: A Methodological Enquiry* (Choudhury 1992). In addition, unlike many IoK scholars,

he not only put emphasis on *tawḥid* (monotheistic law that stems from the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*) as an episteme, but also provided three other resources. The first, which is called foundational epistemology entails universal epistememes. The second is not an episteme per se, but discourse channeled through a shuratic process (i.e. consultation which he considers as compulsory, making it closer to the notion of democracy). The third and final is the “formation of knowledge”, which is a discursively Interactive, Integrative, and Evolutionary Process (IIE-learning process). Choudhury’s methodology relies on epistemology while also remaining a process-oriented model, the combination of which is used to ensure innovation (*ijtihād*).

These sources will establish the five *maqāṣid al-Sharī’a*, organic unity of knowledge and the world-system in its diversity, goodness - choice of the good things of life - and justice as balance. These five principles are used to guide four areas within economics: (i) in *mudāraba/mushāraka* (profit-sharing/equity participation) as interactively participatory joint venture instruments; (ii) avoidance of wastefulness (*isrāf*) in consumption, production, and resource utilization, and in interest-bearing transactions (*ribā*); (iii) in the institution of a wealth tax (*zakāt*) to ensure justice and goodness is carried out through the act of wealth distribution, and; (iv) in the diversification and continuity of evolutionary learning possibilities. These instruments ensure a complementary relationship between the broader world-system and *māqasid al-Sharī’a*, allowing for its sustainability and continuity through circular causation, in turn feeding the sources of knowledge and supporting general well-being.

It is clear that Choudhury’s methodology was developed with the aim of creating harmony between Islamic political economics, the broader social sciences, and contemporary economics. This approach is very different from how the IoK was initially conceived, as simply Tawhidi epistemology, where western social sciences are altered to work in line with Islamic principles. This epistemology provides some epistememes that will complement or enter into tension with the universal foundational epistemology, and the other sources of knowledge will come to resolve tensions and contradictions. This is why, for Choudhury, it is not only applicable to the Muslim world, but to humanity generally. In his article, using the example of Canada’s indigenous people, he demonstrates how his conception of Islamic political economy can be utilized to deal with the labor market problems this population faces.

In line with this, Choudhury’s *Heterodox Islamic Economics: The Emergence of an Ethico-Economic Theory* (Choudhury and Bhatti, 2016) was an attempt to show that Islamic economics is an inherent part of heterodox and ethico-economics. By mainstreaming Islamic methodology in this interpretive way through combining it with international and reflexive epistemologies, he allows for the possibility for

democracy and innovation (*ijtihad*) to handle tensions that could emerge from the competing stances.

Beyond epistemology, details are important, and the more one examines issues of microeconomics, the more complications which require empirical work arise. In this regard, Choudhury's book (1992) does a thorough job of laying out the details of the principles of Islamic economics, as has the work of many IIUM faculty members. Looking at the titles within the publications of these researchers, the topics go beyond epistemological debates and Islamic banking, covering various areas of socio-economic life, including Islamic microfinance, the *Shari'ah* screening of stocks that promote responsible consumption and production and support climate action, *zakāt*, *sadaqat* (charity), *qard hasan* (free loans), *waqf* (endowment), micro-*takāful* (mutual insurance), and poverty, hunger, well-being and the sustainability of communities in 'underperforming' Islamic economics. Therefore, Islamic economics has begun to represent an important research and knowledge approach. Today we truly find researchers in several Arab universities, and more particularly Malaysia, who are distinguished by their serious work.

The second example is Huda Muhammad Hasan Hilal's pioneering work *The Theory of Aptitude: An Analytical and Comparative Study of Fiqh and Psychology* (2011). Hilal graduated from the International Islamic University of Malaysia and specialized in *al-Fiqh and Usūl*, and she appears to have an insightful mastery of psychology. The importance of this book stems from it raising many thorny issues for research and discussion, such as women's aptitude as judges, rulers and witnesses under Islamic law, and distinguishing between physiological maturity and rational wisdom, and the subject of mental or rational disorders invalidating one's eligibility temporarily or permanently. This approach represents a change from blunt and categorical discrimination between men and women to one based on maturity, as men – like women – may enjoy eligibility or may lose it. She refutes the opinion of some scholars that a woman's disqualification from some roles has any relationship to her menses, postpartum and other biological changes. She insists on the need for a sound contemporary theory of eligibility incorporating findings from between *fiqh* and psychology and contemporary sciences, to find solutions to old and modern problems and differences.

III-3. Shallow Attempts

While there have only been a few serious attempts at the Islamization of Knowledge and grounding knowledge in Islam, theoretically shallow works are unfortunately far more plentiful, as they are mostly built on reflections without implementing methodological tools to obtain positivist/empirical elements (structural or perceptual data about individuals and groups) which can understand reality. Some dress the social sciences in religious garb with some verses and Prophetic

statements as decoration, while others impart the adjective Islamic to ethics that more closely resemble humanistic or Christian or Jewish ethics, for example in some of the literature related to the topic of the environment.

It is understandable for intellectuals to be inspired by the dominant Islamic culture in order to encourage Muslims to respect the environment, but there is discussion on particularities that are not really particularly 'Islamic'. For instance, it is all well and good for Audah al-Jayyasi (2013) to remind us that the principles of Islamic thought are represented in notions of justice, *ihsān* (in its many significations: quality, doing something well, and continual beautification), treating one's family well, and preventing corruption. He aimed to root this universally through studying sustainable development from an Islamic perspective. But to see these principles as contrary to Western principles is empirically incorrect, as these are general principles which cover all peoples. As for saying that they are the negative effects of a Western paradigm that aims 'towards happiness through excessive consumption and luxurious distractions to necessities', this is none other than a capitalist paradigm that can be found in both the West and the East, especially in the Gulf countries. Much of the literature around the environment and Islam (See for example: Al-Khasn 2011) is nothing but literature on general ethics that lacks a basic level of scientific research to identify a specific problem and present solutions that transcend wishful thinking. Despite the importance of *Sharī'a*-grounding to maintain an environmental balance (e.g. Saidi 2013), it is insufficient to reduce the topic of the environment to this element alone.

Another example of these incomplete attempts is Jasser Audah's study (2012) entitled 'Employing *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a* to Guide Policies of the Knowledge Economy'. This study begins by presenting an amazing understanding of the concept of the knowledge economy promoted by the World Bank, and then presents afterward a critique of the indicators of a knowledge economy. Yet the study's criticism was very general without reflection on specific indicators. He did not benefit from the substantial literature that has highlighted the problem of the knowledge economy indicators, such as percentage of mobile phone use. As Tremblay (2011) reminds us, Arab countries have rarely developed typical knowledge economy industries, such as production or assembly of electronic components, biotechnology or pharmaceutical industries. Ali Kadri (2014) talks even of policies of deindustrialization that have laid waste to the production of knowledge. As such, the indices used for post-industrial society do not fit the reality of many Arab countries. All of this was absent in Jasser Auda's discussion. This reminds us once more of the importance of such topics being discussed in multi-disciplinary settings, including the side-by-side presence of experts on Islamic jurisprudence and researchers.

There are two interesting synthetic and bibliometric works that studied the

knowledge produced on Islamic economics. The first is offered by the study of Ahmad Balwafi and AbdalRazzaq Bilabas (2010), which was built on a content analysis of 33 research papers published on the global financial and economic crisis from an Islamic economic perspective. The two researchers came up with alarming results on the content of most of these research papers, the majority of which they described as essays that merely make comments, embellish capitalism and have poor methodological bricolage. They also noted an absence of strategic dimensions and methodological planning to the point that they concluded that Islamic economics is unprepared to present alternatives to neoliberalism. The second is more bibliometric specifically on knowledge production in Jordan (219 Masters and Ph.D. theses, 118 articles and 178 books) from 1974 to 2010. This study concludes that 60% of the materials focus on Islamic finance, meaning that other aspects of economics are missing. This study also highlights the chaos in the field and some problems related to the quality of research (Al-‘awran and Hattab 2016 :24).

IoK: Six Problems

The late Egyptian sociologist Mona Abaza (2002) in her important book *Debates on Islam and Knowledge in Egypt and Malaysia* conducted a study of IoK projects, in which she focused on the political context (conflicts of intellectual and economic influence between Malaysia and Saudi Arabia), and the context of post-colonial policies and the African-American discourse that influenced Ismail Al-Faraqi. In addition to these identity politics contexts, there are local social contexts that called for the necessity of local adaptation of knowledge. For instance, the Iranian authorities were interested in this grounding after some conservatives viewed the Green revolution as a result of a “wrong understanding of the concept of liberty” resulting from the ‘Western’ social sciences, and some extremists even called for social sciences colleges to be closed. Al-Imam al-Sayyed Ali Khamenei responded to them in the manner represented in the following quote:

“The origin of the human sciences and its focus must be found in the Noble Qur’an. This should be an important field of Qur’anic research. Care must be taken of the fine points of Qur’an in different fields, and the foundation and concepts of the human sciences must be investigated and found in the Noble Qur’an. This is an essential and important job. If this takes place, intellectuals, researchers and opinion-makers in the different human sciences will be able to construct great knowledge on this basis (the Qur’an) and this focus. Of course in that case, they can benefit from the achievements of others of Westerners pioneers in the human sciences, but this foundation must be a Qur’anic foundation.”

By the human sciences, Imam Khamenei indeed meant the social sciences. Sara Shari'ati clarifies this point that the *hawzas* of Qom maintained philosophy, while erasing sociology, psychology and politics from their curriculum until 2013, when a new 'Islamic sociology' branch was opened.⁵ The Egyptian authorities in 2014 viewed the 'Tuesday class and discussion' based on Ibn Khaldun's *Muqadimmah* conducted by Heba Ra'uf Ezzat, then Professor of Political Science at Cairo University, in the al-Sultan Huseiyn mosque and madrasa as dangerous and banned the meeting, even though spreading social knowledge in mosques is one of the most important means to ground knowledge of the social sciences.⁶ Ezzat, at the time, was a researcher at IIIT's Cairo branch, and continued its mission when she went into exile in Istanbul, continuing to give weekly lectures in one of Istanbul's historic mosques as a part of Ibn Khaldun University's (where she now teaches) mission of integrating knowledge and spreading it outside of the university walls. As such, there are stakes that transcend the episteme proposed by the Islamization and grounding of knowledge project.

I will focus here on six problems that emerged from the dominant concepts of IoK projects and their lack of serious application. Some of these problems are related to analyzing the content of the discourse, while others are related to the conditions of its socio-economic production.

Reductionism

Some of those involved in IoK projects respond to Eurocentrism by using an Islamo-centrism (Alatas 1987): Islamic knowledge would interpret phenomena in Muslim societies, and Western science for the West. There is a reduction of the West's value framework to its Judeo-Christian inspiration. Most likely this reductionism is used to justify the necessity of an Islamic social science, with some highlighting the case of the Western financial crisis in 2007 (which began in USA as a subprime mortgage crisis) as proof of the need for an alternative presented by Islamic economics. This religio-cultural reductionism conceals what is problematic in the West, namely capitalism and neoliberalism, which were the essential culprits of the financial crisis. Most likely, this reductionism only operates in one direction, meaning that the same people will not make the same assumption in reverse, i.e. "Our problem in the Muslim world is the presence of a religious culture." This is a form of straw-man fallacy that attributes the cause of Muslim countries' backwardness solely to an imperialist

⁵ Interview conducted with Shari'ati in January 2013.

⁶ These lessons and discussions continued for seven months, including small study groups to learn about and discuss the book and different topics based on Ibn Khaldun. This also included discussions through a Facebook page, which reached 40,800 followers who took part in discussions and read Plato's Republic.

conspiracy and neo-colonial influence. This kind of reductionist discourse is shared alike by many Islamists and the (illiberal) left in many Arab countries.

Syed Farid Alatas rightly called for the development of alternative discourses without these binaries. This is an essential demand in the process of popularizing the social sciences and protecting internationally-recognized standards of scientific research. Introducing theories and concepts rooted in local practices and cultures must be counted as contributing to the universal social science – that is, they are not an alternative to it. Ibn Khaldun’s theory of the dynamics of tribal state formation could be applied to a myriad of other historical cases outside of his geographical area and periods of interest. Alatas, for instance, integrates the Marxist theory of forms of production with Ibn Khaldun’s theory of state formation and applies them to the case of the political economy of the Safavid empire (Alatas, 1993b). According to Alatas, the hypothesis that concepts and theories do not apply except to Asian phenomenon holds the idea that Asians are so greatly different from non-Asians that both sides demand a separate special world of theories for us to understand them. He views this as an extreme reaction to the problem of Orientalism. This represents one of the aspects of the problem of focusing on nativism, as it makes the local perspective the one judging things to the point that it refuses Western bodies of knowledge, not on the basis of the extent of their benefit, power of proof and accuracy, but on the basis of their national or cultural roots.

This reductionism takes on different forms, such as comparative reductionism that privileges one factor for the sake of comparative analysis like reading Islamic behavior as only the result of the Qur’ān without any influence of geography, history or society. Therefore, some believe in the unity of truth, and that they, naturally, are only ones who possess it.

Emphasis on normative approaches and empirical laziness

There is an emphasis on normative approaches, which makes it easy for many proponents of the Islamization of knowledge or its grounding to focus only on presenting ethical prescriptions. For example, talking about how the Muslim family or the Muslim youth should be, without dealing with descriptive/positivist issues, that is, empirical research which can present some sort of understanding of the nature of the family in the twenty-first century in a particular country. It is empirical research that clarifies how spiritual or religious rites influence individual or group behavior in society, the family or the market.

While I acknowledge the importance of the Islamic worldview or lifeworlds and some ontological premises (e.g. the family as an overarching social structure for protection of the individual), the normative becomes meaningless by itself without

the toil of empirical research. While Ibn Rushd promised that philosophy and the *Sharī'ah* sciences would meet in the end, I would argue that there will be tensions, dilemmas and paradoxes between what some see as firm/fixed in the *Sharī'ah* on the one hand and the results of the social sciences on the other. For instance, social research may conclude that polygamy or divorce has un-praiseworthy ramifications on children. Here concern would grow as to how this would be translated into normative provisions and public policy and awareness campaigns. Should that be done by temporal authorities or jurists and *mujtahids*? Or both? This is what will be debated at the end of this paper.

The Changing and the Unchanging

There are those who view Islamic thought and *fiqh* as unchanging in their normativity and ethical values, and that the 'positivistic' sciences must be subjugated to them. If we believe in the *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* methodology, this means that those literal textual laws – except the universals and foundations – can change with the changing nature of reality. Therefore, it is not only scientific knowledge that can change with the changing nature of reality. Eğri and Kizilkaya (2015) argue that ecclesiastical and customary religious meanings have been neglected, while relying on only contemporary lexical meanings, something which is against the *māqasid al-sharī'ah* methodology.

Generally, there has been a claim that *fiqh al-wāqi'* and *fiqh al-tawāqi'* (jurisprudence of forecasting) and modernizing and updating old rules must refer to the social sciences, but we have noticed an absence of methodological tools, structural information, and perceptions capable of understanding reality in order to present solutions built on an understanding of the Qur'ān, *Sunnah* and *Sharī'ah*. For the jurist to understand his reality he must generate the key questions: What? Why? Where? When? And how? Reality does not mean only the present, but also the past. Despite reality being globalized and transcending the local community (whether made up of a family, tribe or neighborhood), is the changing nature of reality what is needed before *fiqh al-wāqi'* can be grounded? In this case, who changes it? The ruler? The individual? The religious institution?

These subjects were at the heart of the *maqāṣidī fiqh* which was neglected by the dominant jurisprudential trend. Alyan Buzyan calls on researchers in *Maqāṣid* "to move from comparative studies between *Sharī'ah* and law for simply comparing with the intent to demonstrate the difference and stressing the height of the *Sharī'ah* and its higher aims in obtaining human interests, to a stage of making them closer in a fruitful *maqāṣidī* approach" (2014, 76).

The *Fiqh of Sharī'a vs. the Fiqh of Applying the Sharī'ah* Abdullah Al-Maliki (who obtained a doctorate in the *Sharī'ah* sciences, and is an opinion-maker currently

imprisoned in Saudi Arabia) championed an important intellectual development in *The Ummah's Sovereignty before the Sharī'ah's Application*, by making an important distinction between the *fiqh* of *Sharī'ah* and the *fiqh* of applying the *Sharī'ah*. He transcends the philosophy of *fiqh* of *waqi'* to differentiate between a *fiqh* of *Sharī'ah*, which carries within its fold many fixed elements (*thawabit*), and between the possibility of application and its gradation: “*The Sharī'ah* is an expression of a revealed divine gift derived from revelation, and represented in undeniable and universal laws. As for application, it is a human and historical action, a struggle to understand (*ijtihad*) that divine gift. Application is not necessarily a religion, but rather could even oppose the religion, and corrupt the legislation's aims and oppose its higher aims” (Al-Maliki 2011). Kamal al-Haidari, a professor of Islamic philosophy in Qum's hawza, discusses the complications of the experience of change in Iran, saying “When Iran become an Islamic republic and we faced challenges that required answers, we found that the *fiqh* present at hand (I am not saying it cannot completely but) in many of its resources could not answer these problems” (Bou'ud 2006, 2).

According to al-Maliki, there is a need for there to be sovereignty of the *ummah* (Muslim community) through its popular recognition, namely democratic acceptance of a ruler. This will move the principle of the *Sharī'a's* obligatory status from the individual level to the group level by establishing laws and constitutions before applying the *Sharī'a*. Al-Maliki gives a witty reply to those who say that sovereignty in Islam only belongs to the *Sharī'a*, and not the individual or the people:

“This saying has a problem in understanding the nature of the *Sharī'a*, as it does not look at the *Sharī'a* as an expression of a system of values, principles and laws. Rather, it views it as if it was close to a living being eating food, walking in the markets, sitting on its sofa and enforcing its views and will on people. This is how some conceptualize it! I do not only say that this is a caricature, rather some really make you feel that this is how the *Sharī'a* is in its conceptualization. As such, he always contrasts the *Ummah's* Sovereignty and the *Sharī'a's* sovereignty, and presents the *Sharī'a's* sovereignty as above the *Ummah's*, as if the *Sharī'a's* values were living beings possessing a will and power.”

From here the importance of political and social sciences has an important role to play in studying this sovereignty, power and democracy, which are preliminary elements to applying the *Sharī'ah*. Enabling these sciences becomes a condition for those interested in spreading the *Sharī'ah*. It is apt for Islamic movements to raise the slogan “The Ummah's Sovereignty is the solution” instead of “Islam is the solution” (Al-Maliki 2011).

Epistemology vs Working conditions of researchers

Eclectic attempts are most likely the result of the weak scientific training for Arab researchers. I see the weakness of social sciences (whether they claim to be from an Islamic perspective or not) as resulting from the social, political, and economic conditions that researchers in the Global South face and which shape their intellectual formation, more than it is an epistemological problem resulting from the internationalization of the social sciences (that is, incompatibility with Western concepts born in the limited contexts of European nation-states). Arab societies, for example, have been afflicted with fierce dictatorships which prevented any possibility of critical thought, in sciences as well in theology.

Some epistemology-based theories have led to eclecticism, as many writers in Islamization of knowledge or Islamic grounding of knowledge use flowery speech, beginning with some crisis of knowledge in the Western social sciences, and subsequently by Arabs, and finish by presenting purely epistemological solutions, and suggest Islamic grounding as a means to exit this crisis (See for instance: Abdulhalim 2014).

Some researchers have rejected this over-emphasis on epistemology. In *Ideology and the Social Sciences: The Dialectic of Their Connection and Separation* (in Arabic), Algerian sociologist Wasila Khazar views the original relationship between the social sciences and ideology as one of separation. As she says:

“Epistemological, and therefore sociological theory emanate from the felt and observed reality and through empirical study. The social sciences try to frame concepts and connect them in the form of issues, and then test the validity of these issues to take the form of laws and theories. The beginning must then be from reality in the direction of building theory and not the opposite. Afterwards, then one relies on a theory to study other parts of reality, such as this study which was prepared as a basis to test the validity of a theory and the extent of its ability as a guide to understanding social phenomena. Therefore, when the Islamic perspective scholars argue that the Marxist and the structural functionalist schools include ideological premises which express purely human judgments and then suggest instead different ideological premises which originate in their basis from Islam, this suggestion for us is incompatible with science and objectivity. One’s starting-point for the basis of building a sociological theory must be from reality, and not from any ideological premises, no matter the essence of these premises, philosophical or religious, reason or revelation” (Khazar 2013, 269).

In this vein, Jamal Atiyya also demonstrates that the science of *usul al-fiqh* was formulated to provide a basis to determine duties and laws from texts, not to interpret social phenomenon and their casual relationships, which is the subject of

the social sciences (Al-Bustani 2000).

I end this paragraph with an elegant critique from Abdurahman Helali, a researcher with a mastery of different disciplines, of where this eclecticism leads:

“As for the last decades, dual specialties shrunk [that a researcher can have] and comparisons become done by researchers who studied a fiqh loaded with an obsession of fear with identity with an absolute confidence of faith and the fear of the threat of an equivalent knowledge moving on the ground. They resorted to comparison to dispel these obsessions with the superficial acquaintance with which they did this comparison rather than not studying it. There is another group of non-specialists in *Shari'a* studies who had studied other disciplines who found it their Islamic duty is to make clear Islam's precedence in their fields of knowledge, so they did comparative studies on *fiqh* with their scarce understanding of it. As such they exchanged titles and content, so the one who studies *fiqh* places his information under the lexicon of another discipline, and someone in economy or some other field places a contemporary economy under an Islamic lexicon, with both conferring Islam on their presentation without any harmonization” (Helali 2020, 3).

Internationalization of Knowledge

To this day, a trend remains that argues there is an Islamic sociology for Muslims, a Buddhist sociology for Buddhists, and a Jewish sociology for Jews. This trend is incompatible with Muslims' belief in Islam's universalism and that it contains benefit for all people. Here, we must confirm that all sciences contain universalist dimensions as well as dimensions related to the culture of a population group and its needs. What is needed is a form of dialectical dialogue between the particular/contextual vs. the universal which can benefit from their different experiences and accumulation of knowledge.

The governance and predominance of science in political debates (like climate change, genetically modified organisms [GMOs], international property rights, and negotiations on drugs, biodiversity and the like) has changed. Scientific questions have become global. Scientists of the natural and social realms have become accustomed to thinking about issues at the global level. Of the two scientific fields, this phenomenon possibly occurs more with natural scientists. Objects are global; communities of specialists are global; training specialists has become a question of feeding an international distribution of competences, making every new PHD candidate a future emigrant. Caroline Wagner (2008), among many other authors, has defended the idea that international scientific networks are essentially made up of individuals who seek collaboration with peers having mutual interests and complementary skills around the world. In this globalized world, international

collaboration functions as a global self-organizing system through collective action at the level of researchers themselves (Leydesdorff and Wagner 2008).

Conclusion

Far from the ossified reading of much of the literature of extreme secular social sciences and *Sharī'ah* sciences researchers' simplified reading of the social sciences, in this paper I wanted to confirm that integration can be achieved between the *Sharī'ah* sciences and social sciences, as well as other sciences, and bridge the gap between these sciences. This is an incredibly important subject if we are concerned with returning legitimacy to the social sciences for it to do its pioneering part in solving obtuse economic, political and social problems, and creating new conceptions and visions that open the horizon for many and deep *ijtihadat* (interpretations) that would enrich Islamic thought and knowledge in different fields.

The process of integrating and grounding knowledge does not mean adopting a completely local theoretical context vs. 'Western materialist' theories (and like it, the slogan of 'Islamization of modernity', one of the branches of the IoK project). Rather, it means benefiting from global and local traditions at the same time and sifting through them to form a theoretical framework valid for studying the topic under consideration. For instance, if we were studying the independence of higher education and universities in Arab countries, the problem is related to the Arab dictatorial state's hegemony over universities, whereas the problem in the West and Southeast Asia is connected to the commodification of knowledge and privatization. If we wanted to study poverty in Arab countries, the role of privatization is the decisive factor vs. the problem of social cohesion in some Western countries. Therefore, the process of integrating and grounding knowledge does not mean adopting a principle of an opposition towards Western theoretical frameworks, which are qualified often as purely materialist or positivist, etc., and Islamic frameworks, which are often framed as embodying idealism, spirituality and the collectivity saliency. If the community is more important than the individual, then what part of this community, social class or category, is oppressed and need to be defended? In other words, it is easy to define an Islamic-grounding knowledge negatively (like that the Islamic economy is not neoliberal), but it more difficult to formulate positive determinants (what is particular to Indonesia that does not apply to Malaysia or to France for example?).

The late Ismail Al-Faruqi, who conceived the Islamization of knowledge, put together a work plan for his project in 1981, calling on everyone to adopt his approach. A third of a century later, we have found that this project did not produce much substantial research and knowledge. Perhaps, its secondary

effect has been to scientize Islamic culture rather than Islamize the sciences. Yet I see some important reflexivity within IIIT, the institutional bearer of Al-Faruqi project, as it has abandoned this slogan, instead adopting 'integrating knowledge' or 'Islamic perspectives on knowledge'. What I tried to show here is that there are epistemological problems that grew out some concepts of IoK, with one of its results being that it was more a collective self-view (identity politics project) than a view of knowledge. There are good seeds, but in soil that is still poor and in need of care and pruning before it can bear fruit.

I argue that good social knowledge is science that has the potential to enact change and perhaps even be subversive, which is to raise awkward questions on economic and political interests and some pathologies of strong ideologies that affect all levels of society. It is that knowledge which clarifies how ideologies are built and how symbolic systems are utilized. Do the different aspects of Islamization of knowledge aim to live up to the adjective of good science?

As I argued in this paper, there is an excessive reductionism in many of these projects built for harmonization or Islamization, which tend to be purely epistemological methodologies. There is an exaggeration of the importance of values at the expense of interests and motivations. It appears in the twenty-first century that universal values have dissipated at the expense of politics, and that all of the statements legislators proclaimed at its onset dissipated in the end when they sunk in the quicksand of politics. Khalid Al-Hurob (2008) criticizes the current Arab and Islamic discourse on the issue of cultural particularity, as it becomes distant from the reality of these societies and their historical experience. He also views these obsessive delusions as transforming cultural particularism into a form of excusing Arab societies' failures and hurting their chances of developing and catching up to scientific countries. It is necessary to criticize the Euro-centrism of the social sciences, but not to forget other local powers that push for self-censorship. The political crisis results in many researchers regressing themselves inside a methodology of theoretical poverty and excessive quoting of others. In other words, we should not fall for the myth of the idiosyncrasy of the Arab nation and its Arab-Islamic culture.

From here I prefer approaches that take into account both epistemology and the social condition of knowledge production as a means to understand the crisis of the social sciences, such as that of Rushdi Rashid (2008) who used the concept of 'localizing knowledge', describing it as a way to establish science in contemporary Arab societies. According to Rashid, the localization of knowledge focuses on two essential foundations: the necessity of focusing on the correct knowledge of the relationship between classical Arab-Islamic knowledge and modern knowledge, and the necessity of revising its pioneering role in the latter's coming to being. Second, is the necessity of both economic and political power in the process of

harmonization, in order to achieve the necessary infrastructure for knowledge production. One of the main messages of my *Knowledge production in the Arab world: the impossible promise* (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2015) was a clear call to improve the working conditions of knowledge production through enabling a national science system and the necessary political, economic and social conditions for its realization.

The alternative is 'separation-connection and pluralistic praxis. No knowledge exists today that has meaning without mutual enrichment and cross-pollination between scientific disciplines and domains of knowledge. The social sciences have come to observe local, national and global forms of religiosity, their impact on political, economic and social spheres and how they are impacted in turn. Theology studies religion and religious rites from the perspective of their religious meaning, and in connection with their values to achieve salvation for people. Yet theology, at least in many western universities, is interested in practical theology, i.e. how people perceive religion and how religion can help in human development through individual integrity and social cohesion and maximizing religious congruence. Thus, there is no subject that can be considered as a purely religious subject (Adnali 2016). The Turkish reformer Ziya Gökalp (1875-1924) translated Emile Durkheim's Social Consciousness to justify *urf's* (customary practices) importance, given its description as a source of Islamic legislation, in Turkish national consciousness and how to benefit from it to build a good society (Özerverli 2017; Roussillon 2015).

Returning to the *Sharī'a* sciences, what is needed is to teach them with two approaches: an approach of knowledge built on faith, and an approach built on the academic methodology of liberal arts, remembering that one will complement the other. This was adopted in the Masters of Arts program in the Islamic Sciences (part of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities) in Al-Akhwayn University in Morocco, with the aim of educating students in the human and social sciences necessary for research in religious studies. The Masters of Islamic Studies has two tracks: a track for students who have an academic background outside of Islamic studies, and a track of 'Religious studies' for students who have a solid background in the Islamic studies (Munit and Rawi 2016).

How can we understand and work towards the integration of knowledge or pedagogies between the natural and human and social sciences and the *Sharī'ah* sciences? I will use an approach that I will call Separation/Connection/Pluralistic Praxis approach (SeCoPP) that takes its premises from the Egyptian philosopher Samir Abuzaid's (2009) bi-dimensional approach of separation and connection, and develop it further and add a third dimension (pluralistic praxis). In order to understand this concept, I will unpack these three dimensions.

First, by separation, any problem can be divided into issues related to different fields: for instance, social distancing related to a pandemic should be the subject of

medicine (how important it is to isolate the virus), the social sciences (psychological, social and economic ramifications of social distancing), and religion (what is the opinion of Islamic texts on holding the Friday prayer during a pandemic?). There is an acknowledgment that each knowledge field has its own methodology and some of the field's aspects are objective and others subjective. One cannot reduce all sciences to one episteme. Even knowledge can share the same ontology but not the same epistemology.

Second, connection is the art of providing a synthesis of the results of all fields about a problem in a way that ensures consistency. For Abuzaid, 'consistency' is related to a 'worldview'. For if every human has a view of the world, the essential characteristic which distinguishes this view is that it is consistent with itself and with the real world. This, in his view, was the secret of classical Arab-Islamic civilization's success (Abuzaid 2013a). However, here I tend to disagree with Abuzaid and others like him who strip pluralism from a worldview in a particular space-time context, especially if we consider the Islamic worldview as unitary. Therefore, in my opinion, worldviews must be seen as lifeworlds, a phenomenological concept dear to Muhammad Bamyeh (2019). Lifeworlds refers to the range of acts and practices through which old ideas continue to generate voluntarily accepted meaning, rather than enforced rules by an institution or state. The Islamic lifeworld thus is related to historical Muslims' experience rather than the systems that result from economic and political techniques of standardization, which seek to obstruct individual agency. Thus the concept of lifeworlds enables the possibility of having a specific ontology (e.g. Islamic ontology) for a given issue (for instance, the centrality of the family as a social structure in our society; what are the master conceptions of family in Islamic thought and corpus) but not a specific epistemology, unless related to a specific science (e.g. how sociology determines the validity of sociological reasoning, or how *hadith* science determines the authenticity of *hadith* through a method that investigates the chain of transmission of a given *hadith*). Using the metaphor of Michael Walzer (2019) on 'thick' and 'thin' moral terms, ontology is thin as it has a few premises and cannot be thick enough to encompass details on how to moralize the human being.

Abuzaid's methodology of 'separation and connection' relies on a model from our tradition, that is, the linguistic model of the Persian sheikh Abd al-Qāhir Al-Jurjāni, to guarantee the objectivity of a discipline, and at the same time a self-view of the world. This also ensures that the credal and religious aspects do not dominate science, and that science (in its descriptive/positivist aspects) does not exceed its epistemological boundaries, i.e. leaves space for normative ethical aspects drawing from religion and moral philosophy. This is not only related to Islam, but any religious or cultural context.

Al-Jurjani's treatment of the issue of the miraculous linguistic nature of the

Noble Qur'ān is an important example. He considered this to be both a scientific and religious topic. As such, he established the science of 'al-Nazm' (literally the arrangement of words) as a linguistic theory to study the Qur'ān's language akin to that of Ferdinand de Saussure's school of structuralism, while also maintaining the Islamic perspective which believes in the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān and confines it only in the meanings of the Qur'ānic words. In this manner, Aljurjani did not conflate the field of religious knowledge with the field of human sciences.

One of the means by which some philosophers and theologians have tried to solve the contradiction between science and religion has been to separate them on the basis that each has its own unique language. In the theory of linguistic analysis, interpretations are given to each – one for the language of religion and one for the language of science – with a complete contrast between them where one does not refer to the other, and with each having their own special role. In this regard, Wittgenstein uses the phrase 'language games', as he and his followers believe that both science and religions have their own specific language games. In light of this, both religion and science have special roles which differ from the role played by the other. As such, neither of them can be judged by the standards and criteria of the other. The language of science is a basis that benefits uncertainty and estimation and is distinguished in its pragmatic functional nature (Sajdi 2008).

Third, by pluralistic praxis, I mean that after connecting outcomes of different fields to deal with an issue, we need to consider different actions to different audiences taking into account the plurality of people in terms of culture, social classes, religions, ethnicity, etc.

Let me explain the SeCoPP approach through the example of the issue of women's share of the inheritance. For the *fāqih*, there is a Qur'anic verse revealed on the distribution of inheritance. For others, there is a sort of contradiction between both the noble virtues of Islam (and other religions) and liberalism, such as equality and justice. In Tunisia, there was an important debate on this topic. However, those who supported maintaining the dominant interpretation of the Qur'anic text and their peers who supported gender equality in distributing inheritance ended up using pieces of evidence that had the same epistemological repertoires for their moral justifications (using textual, legal and sociological arguments).⁷ After both sides have used their different methodologies, they sought connection through using different justificatory repertoires of arguments and disseminating them in the public sphere, which is the third phase, that is, pluralistic praxis.

Pluralistic praxis is that action which reflects the debate of ethical dilemma and research on reasonable accommodation (and not only rational, as it is also influenced by feelings) between virtue and a choice that take into account consequences. By

⁷ For more on this topic, you can see (Hanafi and Tomeh 2019).

pluralistic, I intend to emphasize that we always have different publics: at the very least citizens and believers. This is because arguments and justifications which are presented to the citizen who comes from a different social, cultural and religious background will most likely differ from one the preacher presents to believers. In the latter case, he can suffice with citing a holy text and its exegesis. Afterwards, action comes in, which is this peaceful debate in the public sphere which leads to a coming together of views through both sides accepting that no matter how much civil legislation may be preferable to a particular means of distributing inheritance, the other side may choose the other means. If there are democratic means to resolve the choice of the majority (most likely in the form of civil legislation), the preacher can always call believers to his religious choice and ratify it in the form of *fiqh*.

One can go even further to adopting legal pluralism, found in many democratic countries around the world, whether Muslim majority or not. One example was when the Moroccan Minister of Endowments Ahmad Tawfiq was asked in Parliament how he would treat homosexuals. Tawfiq answered that he would treat them with wisdom and good advice. He could have answered by issuing a *fatwa* against them, but he chose a different strategy, using rather the ethics of responsibility as a minister who wants to provide a statement for the whole Moroccan citizenry.

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