The Quest for an Islamic Methodology: The Islamization of Knowledge Project in Its Second Decade

Louay Safi

The Islamization of knowledge is one of the dominant themes that continue to preoccupy contemporary Muslim intellectuals. Since Ismāʿīl al Fārūqī presented this thesis little over a decade ago, numerous papers, monographs, and books have been written on the subject. This paper attempts to examine the progress of the project of Islamization in the last decade by outlining the general framework of Islamization and examining the work of its proponents and critics. Modifications aimed at overcoming the difficulties inherent in the original plan are then proposed.

I argue that the project of Islamization is still in its premethodological stage. This is due partially to the limitations of the original work plan, which does not take into account some important logistical and psychological factors. I therefore propose a slightly modified strategy in which the emphasis is placed on a critical examination of methods and techniques developed in both the classical Muslim and the modern Western scientific traditions.

Islamization Framework

Any study concerned with analyzing writings on methodology in the context of the Islamization of knowledge has to start from the two essays written by al Fārūqī (IIIT 1987). In this monograph, he singled out two factors as being responsible for the present condition of the ummah—conditions he termed the "malaise of the ummah"—namely, the current secular-religious duality of education systems in Muslim societies

Louay Safi is an assistant professor of political science at the International Islamic University, Selangor, Malaysia.

and the lack of a clear vision with which to guide and direct Muslim action. The rejuvenation of the ummah, he argued, is contingent on the integration of the Islamic and the secular sciences—in a word, on ending duality in education:

> The task confronting the ummah in the fifteenth century Hijrah is that of solving the problem of education. There can be no hope of a genuine revival of the ummah unless the educational system is revamped and its faults corrected. Indeed, what is needed is for the system to be formed anew. The present dualism in Muslim education, its bifurcation into an Islamic and secular system must be removed and abolished once and for all. The two systems must be united and integrated (IIIT 1987, 9).

According to al Fārūqī, this desired integration of education is the task of academicians well-versed in the modern disciplines and the Islamic legacy (ibid., 14). This integration of knowledge, the concrete manifestation of which is the production of university-level textbooks containing "Islamized" knowledge, is the essence of what he called the Islamization of knowledge. "Islamizing Knowledge," he wrote, "[is] in concrete terms, to Islamize the disciplines, or better, to produce university level textbooks recasting some twenty disciplines in accordance with the Islamic vision" (ibid.).

The task of integration is not an eclectic mixing of classical Islamic and modern Western knowledge. It is rather a systematic reorientation and restructuring of the entire field of human knowledge in accordance with a new set of criteria and categories derived from and based on the Islamic worldview (ibid., 15) Al Fārūqī, turning to the specific question of methodology, pointed to the inadequacy of the traditional methods of ijtihad. This inadequacy reveals itself in two diametrically opposed tendencies. The first tendency is to restrict the field of ijtihad to legalistic reasoning, thus subsuming modern problems under legal categories and thereby reducing a *mujtahid* to a *faqīh* (jurist), and reducing science to legal science. The other tendency is to eliminate all rational criteria and standards by adopting "a purely intuitive and esoteric methodology" (ibid., 19) A sought-after methodology should avoid the excesses of these two approaches. In other words, it should avoid restricting reasoning to the extent that modern problems confronting Muslim scholarship are placed outside the realm of scientific research and should not, at the same time, allow the admission of fiction and superstition into the realm of true knowledge (ibid.).

Being concerned mainly with outlining the Islamization of knowledge project in general terms, al Fārūqī did not venture into the area of methodology proper, but confined himself to identifying some epistemological principles. Under the label of "first principles of Islamic methodology," he introduced five general principles which, he argued, constitute the basic framework for guiding the process of Islamization. As he put it:

> While avoiding the pitfalls and shortcomings of traditional methodology, Islamization of Knowledge ought to observe a number of principles which constitute the essence of Islam. To recast the disciplines under the framework of Islam means subjection of their theory and method, their principles and goals to the following [principles]. (ibid., 22)

Al Fārūqī identified five principles of Islamic methodology and expressed them in terms of five unities: the unity of Allah, of creation, of truth, of life, and of humanity. These principles of unity belong to the theory of being (ontology) and hence form the ontological presuppositions of an Islamic theory of knowledge (epistemology). Since this paper deals primarily with methodological questions, we will not discuss these principles' content. Rather, we will briefly review their epistemological and moral implications as understood by al Fārūqī. Following are eight epistemological principles arising from the five principles of unity:

1. Everything in the universe is created by Allah according to a precise measure. Nothing is futile or devoid of meaning.

2. The universe is governed by one cosmic order consisting of laws discoverable by human reason. Hence the Muslim is not free to ascribe anything to accident or blind fate.

3. The cosmic order brings unity into creation by linking the objects of the universe through two types of relations: cause-effect relationships and means-to-ends relationships.

4. The Islamic beliefs that constitute the apodictic presuppositions of reason can never be contrary to reason. Hence facts disclosed by revelation should always accord with those discovered by reason and experience.

5. The universe has been made subservient to humanity so that the whole range of nature is capable of receiving humanity's efficacy, of

suffering change at its initiative, or of being transformed into any pattern that humanity desires.

6. The meanings of the Islamic revelation are eternally anchored in two solid rocks: Arabic lexicography and syntax on the one hand, and reality on the other.

7. Since the patterns of Allah's creation are infinite, no inquiry into the nature of creation is ultimate or conclusive. Hence openness to new evidence and persistence of the quest are necessary characteristics of the Islamic mind.

8. While natural behavior is governed by laws of necessity, human action is subject to laws of freedom. While the former are immutable, the latter are manifested in history through the human agency (ibid., 22-38).

In addition to the foregoing epistemological principles, the first five principles listed by al Fārūqī embody the following ethical principles:

1. Humanity must live in accord with moral laws (*amānah* obligation).

2. Humanity must develop and establish culture and civilization (*khilāfah* obligation).

3. Since the will of Islam to culture and civilization, manifested in the comprehensiveness of the Sharī'ah, is all-inclusive, Muslim thinkers have a duty to Islamize every single aspect of human life.

4. Political action (i.e., engaging in activities aimed at ensuring that public affairs are carried out in accordance with the measures of right and justice) is a religious and moral obligation.

5. Each human being has the same basic dignity and human worth. Thus ethnocentrism, of which racism and nationalism are commonplace expressions, is a moral crime.

6. Separating the secular from the religious is contrary to the Islamic concept that obliges each individual to develop his/her life in accordance with revealed principles.

Clearly, under the title "methodology," al Fārūqī does not discuss techniques and procedures (scientific methods) but only outlines universal principles that constitute the epistemological foundation of an Islamic methodology. The "first principles" summarized above, though open to modification at the level of concrete interpretation and to expansion at the level of general formation, do provide an epistemological foundation on

the basis of which an Islamic methodology may be found. Undoubtedly, al Fārūqī's profound contribution lies, first of all, in his clear statement of the problem and, secondly, in his articulation of the general framework of an Islamic methodology.

Let us turn now to the most influential aspect of al Fārūqī's proposal. Towards the end of the *Islamization of Knowledge* monograph, he introduces a general strategy for achieving the objectives of Islamization: his "work plan." The strategy consists of twelve steps summarized in figure 1. The work plan shows in some detail what has to happen if the goal of Islamization is to be achieved. On the level of theoretical requirements, the plan is lucid and thorough.

However, on the level of practical implementation, it appears overwhelming and exceedingly complicated. The plan overlooks two important practical considerations; one is logistical, the other psychological. If the twelve steps are taken literally as successive steps, this means that one has to be entirely completed before the next one can be attempted. Without a large scientific community who is both interested in and trained to undertake the Islamization of knowledge, the time frame for accomplishing the task is immediately stretched into infinity. It becomes more cumbersome when we realize that the practical incentives giving impetus to the project are located far down the chain at steps the "Establishing the relevance of Islam to the discipline" and "Producing university textbooks." The steps in which the psychological impetus to pursue the project are located, respectively, in the middle and at the end of the chain.

Another scheme for implementing the work plan is to divide it into parallel tracks, as shown in figure 2. The assumption here is that certain steps can proceed simultaneously. The importance of this schema is not that it helps us overcome the difficulties posed by the original schema, but rather that it brings the shortcomings of the original into sharp focus. It becomes immediately apparent through the second schema that steps 2, 5, 6, and 7 are closely interrelated. Those who are to establish the relevance of Islam to modern disciplines and provide a critical assessment of the legacy cannot have a knowledge base or a training base separate from those entrusted with surveying and critically assessing modern disciplines.

The schema also shows that there are two types of knowledge to be mastered by modern Muslim scholars: substantive knowledge (steps 1, 3, and 4) and technical (methodological) knowledge (steps 6, 7, and 10). Insofar as individual scholars are concerned, steps 2, 5, 8, and 9 represent the impact of his/her moral-spiritual commitment on problems and sources selection. This means that these steps cannot be considered as separate and independent from the process of thinking itself, but are significant only as "filter" steps denoting processes of elimination and selection.

Taking the foregoing remarks into account, we can obtain a third schema, represented in figure 3. This schema could be quite demanding in terms of the intellectual work it requires. It provides a markedly simplified procedure consisting of two steps: mastery of substantive knowledge and mastery of technical knowledge. Note that mastery is not an

absolute, but only relative, term. Mastery here means knowledge that can be acquired by a scholar, given the constraints of time and the level of development achieved in the discipline. This new diagram brings into sharp focus the crucial role played by methodology in the Islamization of knowledge project. It vividly shows that the production of an Islamized knowledge is contingent on the emergence of Islamic methods.

Before examining several works on methodology written by Muslim scholars since al Fārūqī inaugurated the Islamization project a little over a decade ago, two points are in order. First, although the production of Islamized knowledge is contingent on the application of methods rooted in the Islamic worldview, this does not mean that the articulation of an Islamic methodology must precede a substantive contribution to the Islamization of knowledge process. Secondly, the final outcome of the schema shown in figure 3 (the production of university textbooks) is knowledge that may be described as Islamized only tentatively. The Islamicity of this knowledge can be confirmed only through the involvement of the Islamic scientific community. We will return to this point later.

Al Fārūqī's argument for an Islamic methodology has, thus far, elicited three types of responses. The first two, represented in this paper by Muḥammad Sa'īd al Būṭī and Fazlur Rahman, deny the need for the development of an Islamic methodology. However, while al Būṭī claims that an Islamic methodology has already been "discovered" by classical Muslim scholars, Rahman advances an argument reminiscent of Ibn Rushd's contention that methods are basically tools independent of any religious orientation. The third group consists of scholars who have supported the project of Islamization and have made significant attempts to contribute to its advancement. But before we look critically at some of the most important contributions of this group, let us quickly examine the two major dissenting responses to the Islamization thesis.

Dissenting Responses

In a paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Islamic Methodology and Behavioral and Education Sciences, held in Khartoum, Sudan, during 1407/1987, al Būṭī said that the scientific method is a fact (*ḥaqīqah*) belonging to the "objective world" (al Būṭī, 1411/1990). Like all "immaterial things" it has a fixed nature and is completely independent, in structure and existence, of human thought and reasoning (ibid., 57). In addition, the objectivity and permanence of the scientific method (*manhaj al ma'rifah*) is necessitated by its function. Since the scientific method is an instrument, a scale (*mīzān*) for ensuring the correctness and soundness of thinking, its validity must be independent of the thinking process. Hence, al Būṭī concludes, the scientific method cannot be modified or altered by reason, for this would involve seeking another method for its modification, a search that would lead to infinite regress (ibid.). He argues that since the scientific method is fixed and permanent, it is not susceptible to development and innovation. Thus, the

role of human intellect—in this case Muslim—is limited to identifying or discovering the "sound method" (ibid., 59).

Furthermore, contemporary Muslims need not bother to discover the "sound method" of knowledge, al Būṭī contends, for this discovery has already been accomplished by early Muslims during the "golden age of Islam" (ibid.). As to the question of what is the role of contemporary Islamic scholarship in relation to scientific methodology, he proposes a twofold program: contemporary Muslim scholars work, firstly, to re-organize the already discovered method so as to make it more responsive to existing needs and, secondly, to recast it in contemporary language so that it could once again guide Muslim discourse (ibid., 59-60).

In fact, al Būṭī's argument epitomizes the type of argument against which the advocates of the Islamization of knowledge project, most notably 'AbdulḤamīd AbūSulaymān, have been especially critical. Al Būṭī's argument is problematic for at least two reasons. First, it confuses the methods of scientific research with the fundamental principles of rea-son. While one may argue that the principles of reason (i.e., the principle of consistency or noncontradiction) is intrinsic to human reasoning and hence unalterable, one can hardly say the same about the techniques and procedures used in *uṣūl al fiqh* (i.e., *istiḥsān*). But beyond that, al Būṭī fails to recognize that the methods employed by *uṣūl al fiqh* were not "discovered," but rather were developed over several centuries. Indeed, his suggestion that the classical methods need to be recast into contem-porary language points to their inadequacy for modern research. If the use of language is a matter of function and not of fashion, why should any-one call for recasting the perpetual scientific method in a new language, unless there is some intrinsic conceptual or procedural differences be-tween the old and the new?

Fazlur Rahman, like al Būṭī, disagreed with the Islamization of knowledge project, but for very different reasons. In an article that ap-peared shortly after his death, Rahman (1988), while agreeing that much of contemporary knowledge reflects a Western ethos, contended strongly that one cannot devise a methodology or detail a strategy for achieving Islamic knowledge. The only hope Muslims have for bringing about Is-lamic knowledge, he argued, is to nurture the Muslim mind:

> So far as the problem under consideration—Islamization of knowledge—is concerned, I, therefore, conclude that we must not get enamored over making maps and charts of how to go about creating Islamic knowledge. Let us invest our time, energy and money in the creation, not of propositions, but of minds. (ibid., 10)

While anyone who has thought about the revitalization of Muslim scholarship can hardly disagree with Rahman that a state of Islamized knowledge can never materialize unless it is produced by scholars who are highly competent in their fields and strongly committed to Islam's

ideals, one has to reject an outright denial of the methods' value. Indeed, Rahman himself could not maintain his claim till the end of his article. In the early part of the article, he proclaimed that one cannot develop a method for guiding human reason, for "human thought has its own mode of operation. We still do not know what the nature of human thought process is" (ibid., 11). He stated that Aristotle tried to discover the structure of human thinking, and that his efforts culminated in the theory of syllogism. But Aristotle failed because, he added, "[a]bsolutely nothing of this sort happens in actual reality. Human thought does not behave syllogistically" (ibid., 10).

Yet one paragraph later, he outlines a surprising twofold strategy in his conclusion: Muslim scholars must examine (first) Muslim tradition and (second) Western tradition. To do this, he added, Muslim scholars must establish "certain criteria" that "must obviously come initially from the Qur'an" (ibid., 11). Such an task is what an Islamic methodology is all about.

Rahman's concluding paragraph seems to contradict his earlier argument against methods, or at least reveals an inconsistency and ambiguity in his attitude towards methodology. If one concedes a need for "certain criteria" to guide the examination of Muslim and Western intellectual traditions, one must concede a need for rules to guide the derivation and application of these criteria: an Islamic methodology.

The Inadequacy of Traditional Methods

Apart from these two types of dissenting responses, a significant amount of literature has been produced, in both Arabic and English, to advance the themes of the Islamization of knowledge. Among those who have made regular contributions to the clarification of the Islamization thesis and have championed its cause for the last decade is 'AbdulḤamīd AbūSulaymān. In his writings, he has consistently criticized the classical methods of *uṣūl al fiqh* and called for their reform and restructuring. His basic critique and his most specific proposals for their reformation are summarized in an article published in 1985 under the title "Islamization of Knowledge with Special Reference to Political Science" (AbūSulaymān 1985).

AbūSulaymān, like al Fārūqī, links the rejuvenation of Islamic scholarship to the development of new Islamic methods. These new methods should overcome the limitations of the old, which are now no longer suitable due to their use of exclusively linguistic and legalistic patterns of thinking. The dilemma of contemporary Muslim intellectualism is that while the *faqīh* qua jurist is trained to handle legal-moral problems, he/she continues to be perceived as an all-round (universal) intellectual capable of resolving all problems of modern society:

The crisis [of Islamic thought] also lies in the nature of our Islamic methods of research, which are confined to textual studies

of language, traditions and orthodox jurisprudence. These two attitudes are manifested in our tendency to regard the *faqīh* (jurist) in the historical sense as one who is capable of resolving the crisis of thought, culture, and knowledge. (ibid., 268-9)

Unlike al Fārūqī, who has presented an elaborate strategy for dealing with this problem, AbūSulaymān identifies more focused, and hence more manageable, areas for the immediate attention of Muslim scholars. According to him, the resolution of the intellectual crisis of the Muslims has to proceed along three lines.

First, the relationship between reason and revelation should be redefined. He argues that it is no longer sufficient to state in general terms that both reason and revelation are sources of knowledge. One has to go a step further and specify, in concrete terms, how each relate to the other.

Second, the meaning of ijtihad and the role of the *faqīh* in the process of intellectual reform should be redefined. This redefinition, he contends, is necessitated by the fact that ijtihad has been limited to linguistic reasoning. Consequently, the *faqīh* is trained exclusively to deal with legal issues. If ijtihad is to be entrusted with the task of reformation, it has to be redefined so as to incorporate empirical modes of thinking intrinsic to economic, social, and political disciplines. As he put it:

In view of this multifacedness of knowledge, and the multifariousness of the fields of specialization, it is clear that Ijtihad, insights, solutions, alternatives, etc., in the domain of social and scientific knowledge cannot be provided by the specialists in legal studies alone. Both the task and the expectation are impossible. (ibid., 272-3)

Third, the religious-secular dualism should be ended. Created by Western science, it is completely alien to Muslim thought. If the secular and religious spheres are to be integrated, thereby ending the existing dualism, the various fields of modern knowledge have to be restructured.

AbūSulaymān's treatment of the question of Islamic methodology has been confined mainly to general principles. Even when he analyzes technical and procedural issues, he tends to focus on some salient aspects rather than on engaging the full range of opinions expressed by classical scholars, as he did in his *The Islamic Theory of International Relations* when addressing *qiyās* and *ijmā‘* (AbūSulaymān 1984, 65-6, 75-6). Furthermore, in his critique of the classical *uṣūl*, he endeavors to show the methodological inadequacy of the traditional approaches by demonstrating the substantive inadequacy of their resultant political science theories and doctrines. In other words, he tries to show that these doctrines are not adequate for explaining modern societal phenomena or for dealing with modern societal problems (ibid., 76-81; AbūSulaymān 1985, 277-80).

This approach has one difficulty: while the argument may have a resounding impact on those who recognize the inadequacy of traditional

methods for social research through their own experience, it fails to strike a chord with those who strongly believe that "sound methods" are "discovered" once and for all, but that they can never develop.

Difficult Transition: From Principles to Techniques

The logistical difficulties of al Fārūqī's work plan are reflected in the works of the scholars who have sought to further the Islamization project by attempting to devise methodological procedures. Before we examine four important contributions, it should be noted that so far, all studies in search of an Islamic methodology engage the "Western disciplinary" track (steps 1, 2, and 6 of the work plan; see figure 2) of the Islamization work plan, while almost completely overlooking the "Islamic legacy" track (steps 3, 4, 5, and 7; see figure 2).

One who has tried to identify possible avenues for the development of an Islamic methodology within the Islamization of knowledge framework is Muhammad Arif (Arif 1987). In "The Islamization of Knowledge and Some Methodological Issues in Paradigm Building," he outlines and applies procedures for building an Islamic paradigm or worldview (he uses the terms interchangeably). Drawing on Imre Lakatos' Scientific Research Program (SRP) notion, he urges Muslim scholars to adopt the SRP elaborated by al Fārūqī. This, he argues, will allow them to reduce the task of building Islamic paradigms in their respective disciplines to the realization of the Islamization program's goals (ibid., 51-2). Al Fārūqī's SRP, he opines, promotes the incorporation of revelation into scientific research and thus frees Muslim scholars from the constraints of Western epistemology (ibid., 53).

Arif, seeing that al Fārūqī's epistemological principles are too broad, has tried to derive a more specific set of principles to guide economic research. But, in his attempt to move from the general to the specifically economic, he runs into rough terrain. In a surprising move, he abandons the Islamization approach and embraces two approaches found in the field of theoretical physics. Both can help develop an Islamic paradigm (worldview), he states, for "[T]he role of the social scientist engaged in the Islamization of knowledge resembles that of a theoretical physicist" (ibid., 56).

To make things more complicated, Arif introduces the concept of philosophical foundation, which, he argues, constitutes the ground upon which an Islamic worldview is erected. The selection of a philosophical foundation, the ultimate normative ground, is, however, a matter of value judgment by the scientist. With this formulation of the problem, the question becomes: "How does a social scientist arrive at a particular worldview given the philosophical foundations of his/her thought?" (ibid., 57). In response, he proposes two different approaches: the stratification approach, taken from Einstein's Stratification of Scientific System process, and the idealization approach, adapted from the *Academic American Encyclopedia.*

Einstein's stratification procedure calls for the conceptual systemization of physics via a series of conceptual abstraction, whereby concepts derived from "immediate experiences" are subsumed under more general concepts in an upward movement ending with the most abstract concepts. The movement from the primary and concrete to the secondary and abstract system allows the scientist to deal with a scientific model having fewer, and hence more manageable, sets of concepts. The idealization approach, however, in complete opposition to the stratification approach, allows the movement from the most general and abstract to the most particular and concrete. This is due to the fact that here, the system's parameters are specified in advance of its substantive elaboration.

If the purpose of these two procedures is to explain how a social scientist arrives at a particular worldview, the above exercise is, at best, problematic. Stratification is in direct opposition to Islamization, for it derives the ideal and universal from the actual and particular. The idealization procedure, while not contradicting the Islamization framework, brings us back to the initial question, for it presupposes the availability of the worldview that it is presumed to elaborate. The most troublesome aspect, however, is found in the application. Arif says he devised, by applying stratification, five criteria for evaluating the performance of an Islamic economic system: 1) socioeconomic justice for efficiency and growth; 2) freedom for individuals to maximize their well-being (falāḥ); 3) purity; 4) elimination of class dominance; and 5) equal opportunity for all (ibid., 64).

Substantive soundness aside, the scientific value of the above-cited criteria is questionable. When an empirically based method such as stratification is used in social science, it serves only to idealize the actual: it can produce only a system in which the "ought" accords with the "is." How could Arif arrive at a set of principles aspiring to change, rather than to perpetuate, the status quo via an intrinsically naturalistic strategy? But there is a more important reason: the methods through which the so-called "criteria for the evaluation of Islamic economic system" are to be identified do not emanate from the Islamization framework, but are predicated upon a logical-positivistic approach. Unaware of the profound incongruence between logical positivism and the Islamic ethos, Arif sees the role of Muslim scholars as reconciling Islamic values with logical-positivistic methods:

> The above discussion [the reference is to al Fārūqī's call for reconciling wahy and 'aql] enables us to understand the complementarity of Revelation in Islam and what we might call logical positivism—which as suggested by Dr. Fārūqī, are the two elements whose interaction produces the Islamic epistemology. (ibid., 54)

Needless to say, "the complementarity of Revelation . . . and . . . logical positivism" is Arif's misreading of al Fārūqī's call for reconciling

revelation (*waḥy*) and reason (*'aql*). Unlike a logical positivist, al Fārūqī maintained that while the natural order is subject to laws of necessity, the human (moral) order is subject mainly to laws of freedom (IIIT 1987, 30).

Another work deserving critical examination is A. Rashid Moten's "Islamization of Knowledge: Methodology of Research in Political Science" (Moten 1990). A political scientist, Moten tried to further the objectives of the Islamization project in his field. Like Arif, he begins from the Islamization of knowledge framework to develop an alternative to the currently predominant Western paradigm. However, he rejects logical-positivism, in particular, and the naturalistic methods that are the bedrock of contemporary Western social science. The new paradigm, he says, should study "individual behavior within the context of an entire social system" (ibid., 163), abandon the individualistic (hence ethnocentric and anthropomorphic) approach of Western political science, and then replace it with one viewing "human life as an organic whole and integrates moral values and social ideals" (ibid.).

Yet Moten rejects the naturalistic model of science without completely abandoning empirical research. The scientific value of empirical findings has to be determined in connection with a three-layer schema of human knowledge which includes—in addition to empirical—rational and absolute knowledge. As he explains:

> To be sure, the place of the two sciences [political and natural] in the scheme of human knowledge is one and the same, i.e., to unfold and comprehend the Divine pattern. In the Qur'anic scheme, this knowledge (*'ilm*) is to be obtained through revelation or divinely ordained absolute knowledge (*ḥaqq al yaqīn*), rationalism or inference based upon judgment and appraisal of evidence (*'ilm al yaqīn*), and through empiricism and perception, that is, by observation, experiment, historical reports, description of life experience and the like (*'ayn al yaqīn*). Thus, the Islamic way of knowing accords full freedom to experience and experiment and to rational and intellectual inquiry within the circumference of revealed knowledge (ibid., 165).

Although this model uses Qur'anic terminology, it has not been systematically derived from the Qur'an, rational arguments, or empirical experience. However, its heuristic value cannot be overlooked, as it provides a hierarchical categorization corresponding to intuitive, rational, and empirical knowledge. But it still needs further development and a more rigorous grounding, for it cannot guide scientific research without subsumption rules that may relate the empirical to the rational as well as the rules of derivation by which the absolute can validate the rational.[1]

---

[1]The three levels represent, in descending order, revelation, reason, and experience.

Yet as soon as Moten identifies substantive elements of the Islamic paradigm, he almost completely drops his initial methodological concerns and embraces unexamined notions and concepts. Following al Fārūqī, he proposes an organic model of the ummah for advancing substantive Islamic research in political science. An organic model is justified on the basis of a prophetic statement and four pragmatic and metaphysical considerations. But without well-defined rules of derivation allowing for rigorous predication of political theories on prophetic statements or metaphysical arguments, the mobilization of authoritative or metaphysical statements in support of the scholar's contention is worrisome. In other words, the use of a prophetic statement, whose immediate reference is to the believers' solidarity, to justify an organic political organization with far-reaching consequences is inadequate for its scientific grounding. Such an exercise falls more in the realm of speculative reasoning than rigorous scientific derivation. A comprehensive analysis of the organic model of the Islamic polity becomes more urgent when one realizes that the model contradicts the contractual model embraced by classical Muslim scholars.

Moten, like all contemporary Muslim scholars, is aware of the current tension between reason and revelation and devotes a section of his paper to dealing with it. His brief treatment of it presupposes, however, that the tension will fade away as soon as Muslim scholars reject Western scientific approaches and embrace approaches rooted in the Islamic legacy.

However, the general and passing reference to the historically harmonious relationship between revelation and reason in the Islamic legacy overlooks one factor: the unease that grew gradually within the dominant intellectual school, the Ashʿarīyah, and climaxed in an anti-intellectualist stance that manifested itself in a hostile manner vis-à-vis the nonlegalistic sciences.[2] It is true, as Moten states, that this school, beginning with Abū al Ḥasan al Ashʿarī, "strongly defended the use of reason" (ibid., 163). But it is also true that the Ashʿarīyah used reason only as a defensive mechanism and restricted its use to defending the worldview of the *mutakallimūn* (philosophers), even to the one embraced by Ashʿarī scholars.

Moten's general assertion that "the truth of revelation was always appreciated in light of reason" (ibid.) is borne out by the history of Islamic scholarship. However, a detailed examination of the relationship between the revealed and the reasoned uncovers areas of tension and conflict requiring the immediate attention of contemporary Muslim scholars if the Islamization of knowledge project is to be erected on a solid foundation.

The Specter of *Madhhabīyah*

One of the difficult issues facing modern Islamic science, which is still in its embryonic stage, is the direct result of the absence of a precise

---

[2]See, for example, al Shāṭibī's *Muwāfaqāt*, vol. 1, 46-52; also al Ghazzālī's *Mustasfā*, vol. 1, 3.

definition of the relation between reason and revelation. Where exactly is the demarcation between science and ideology? This problem has been brought to the forefront by Muḥammad Umziyān in his *Manhaj al Baḥth al Ijtimāʿī bayna al Waḍʿīyah wa al Miʿyārīyah* (Umziyān 1412/1991) Here, he engages in an extensive critique of logical positivism and suggests a set of principles, or criteria, for building an Islamic methodology.

Of the four parts that constitute the book, the third one is of special interest to the current study. In this part he outlines a number of criteria, the aim of which is to permit the incorporation of revelation as an intrinsic source of scientific reasoning. He also emphasizes the need to transcend the positivistic definition of science in order to arrive at one that reincorporates revelation into the realm of science. This reincorporation, he contends, should be comprehensive, whereby both Qur'anic values and concepts are employed for guiding scientific research. The Qur'an, he argues, could contribute to the development of social theory in three ways: it can a) provide accurate information on the nature of early social life; b) rectify the metaphysics of social knowledge on questions concerning the creation and evolution of humanity; and c) help us formulate and discover social laws (ibid., 268-88).

However, rather than articulating methods that may allow a rigorous progession from Qur'anic statements to social propositions, he begins to compare what he calls the "social gradation" (*tadāruj ijtimāʿī*) of Islamic social science with those of the capitalist and Marxist social sciences. As the purpose of this analysis is not a comprehensive critique of Umziyān's work but rather to emphasize the point that a truly Islamized knowledge presupposes the emergence of a mature and sophisticated methodology, I will discuss only one of the concepts considered by Umziyān as part of Islamic social science: social inequality.

While social inequality, or "the rich versus the poor" (*al ghanī muqābil al faqīr*) as he prefers to put it, signifies free competition under capitalism and economic exploitation under Marxism, in Islam it simply signifies social integration and complementarity (ibid., 320-1). This meaning, Umziyān proclaims, is implied (*īḥāʾ*) in the following verse:

> Is it they who would portion out the Mercy of thy Lord? It is We who portion out between them their livelihood in the life of this world: And we raise some of them above others in ranks, so that some may command work from others. But the Mercy of your Lord is better than that which they amass. (Qur'an 43:32)

One must ask here if there are there rules that must be followed by the Muslim social scientist in deriving social principles from revelation, or is this derivation simply a matter of implication and intuition? A modern Islamic social science cannot be left to the loose and unrestricted speculation of individual Muslim scientists, but has to follow a well-articulated and rigorously grounded set of principles and criteria. If it does not, Qur'anic statements can be used arbitrarily to justify any propo-

sitions serving the ideological commitments of different social groups. In fact, without scientific rules and procedures to guide the progression from the revealed text to the sociological principle, both gross economic inequality and political and social inequalities can be justified by this verse.

The specter of subordinating revelation to ideology is raised when Umziyān deals with the relationship between the Islamic *madhhabīyah* and social scientific research. While insisting that Islamic social science cannot, by its very nature, proceed unless the scientists adhering to it are committed to the Islamic paradigm (*madhhabīyah Islāmīyah*), he stresses "the necessity of emancipation from subjective tendencies and ideological commitment." Evidently, his distinction between ideology and *madhhabīyah* is meant initially to differentiate a commitment to the immediate and narrow interests on the one hand, and a commitment to the universal and higher interests of human existence on the other. Yet his treatment of the subject (ibid., 327-33) is far from nonproblematic, for he seems to equate ideology only with non-Islamic thought, while excluding the possibility of ideological bias appearing within the fold of Islamic social sciences:

> There is no ideology which can approach this level of neutrality except the Islamic *madhhabīyah*, because it emanates from a divine source that transcends all human interests and desires . . . . (ibid., 328)

However, since the Islamic *madhhabīyah* is used by the author in reference to the principles and concepts derived from revelation through the agency of intellectually and morally fallible human beings (ibid., 302-4), one can hardly maintain that the ideas and theories of Muslim scholars enjoy absolute neutrality, especially when a set of rigorous techniques and procedures is absent. And so while one is justified, from an Islamic perspective of course, in imputing absolute objectivity to the worldview embedded in divine revelation, one cannot do the same with regard to any intellectual or moral system formulated by human beings.

Do Paradigms Shift?

Our critical review of the literature on the Islamization of knowledge project would be conspicuously incomplete without engaging the work of Mona Abul-Fadl, who has provided one of the most profound and thought-provoking contributions to the project. She offers, in several papers written on the subject, a critical assessment of the epistemological foundation of modern Western thought as well as an attempt to explore an Islamic methodology. My critical examination of her contribution will be confined mainly to two works: "Paradigms in Political Science Revisited: Critical Options and Muslim Perspectives" (Abul-Fadl 1989) and "Naḥwā Manhajīyat al Taʿāmul maʿa Maṣādir al Tanẓīr al Islāmī bayna al Muqādimāt wa al Muqāwimāt" (Towards a Methodology for Dealing

with the Sources of Islamic Theorizing: Between the Premises and the Essentials) (Abul-Fadl 1411/1990).

In "Paradigms in Political Science Revisited" Abul-Fadl reviews the paradigm debate currently underway in Western scientific literature, exploring the possibility of "paradigmatic shift," in the Kuhnian sense, conducive to the historical and intellectual ethos of Muslims. The study's aim "is to draw out some lessons which can tell us why and in what ways the paradigm debate can be important to us in the recovery and reconstruction of our intellectual bearings" (Abul-Fadl 1989, 89-90).

Examining recent statements by leading Western scholars, most notably a statement Gabriel Almond delivered before the annual convention of the American Political Science Association, Abul-Fadl concludes that the field of political science is in a state of flux. The flux, she contends, "signifies a crisis of identity in the discipline," which may be linked to more fundamental crises, those of Western culture and power (ibid., 26-7). The crisis of identity reveals itself on the intellectual plane in the emergence of radical paradigms that are forcing mainstream Western social science to abandon its behavioralist stance and embark on a postbehavioralist project. Yet postbehavioralism, she points out, does not signify a genuine change in the mode of scientific research, but merely a strategic move for silencing critics.

According to Abul-Fadl, the paradigm debate and the current state of fluidity in social science "signifies a Kuhnian moment in the evolution of the discipline where the sensed anomalies between the established ways of thinking and the experiences of the times are intensified" (ibid., 32). The current crisis, she says, has far-reaching implications for scholars with "Islamic sensitivities," for it opens the possibility for a paradigmatic shift (ibid.).

Towards the end of her essay, Abul-Fadl identifies two intellectual trends in Western scholarship which, she argues, have the potential to guide Muslim scholars in their endeavor to overcome the positivistic tendencies of modern social science. The first trend is represented by the hermeneutics movement whose relevance, from a Muslim perspective, lies not only in its aspiration to restore value, history, and culture to the study of social phenomena, but also in its capacity to "sensitize" social scientists "anew to the affinities between politics and religion" (ibid., 34). The second trend appears in Eric Voegelin's works *The New Science of Politics* and *The Order of Things*. Voegelin's importance is not limited to his "distinction between two conceptions of science: naturalistic science and poetic science" (ibid., 37), but extends to the possibility of relocating history "in its transcendental perspective" and in recovering "the relevance of a higher realm of order to the mundane order of politics" (ibid., 40).

Granted that Muslim scholars must engage, especially at this stage, Western scholarship in a critical examination and debate, and granted that this debate could ultimately lead to a one-sided or even a two-sided (if Western scholars decided to open-mindedly respond to Muslim critique) intellectual exchange, the notion of a paradigmatic shift resulting in the

emergence of an Islamic or *tawḥīdī* paradigm out of Western social science is highly problematic. Such a notion ignores the culturally based constraints imposed on social research and assumes that a paradigmatic shift can spill-over across cultures as a result of a paradigm debate. Indeed, this very assumption stands at variance with the main contention of her "Contrasting Epistemics" (Abul-Fadl, 1990). Here, she establishes the affinity of an Islamic paradigm or *tawḥīdī* epistemics to a "median culture" in which "the Absolute and the transcendent" occupy a prominent place. The *tawḥīdī* paradigm, she further argues, is by its very nature antagonistic to any "oscillating culture" characterized by "the absence of a core" and, hence, by its tendency towards fragmentation and secularism (ibid., 22-6).

Abul-Fadl's intellectual endeavors extend beyond her critical assessment of modern Western scholarship to contributions aimed at building an Islamic methodological alternative. In her "Towards a Methodology for Dealing with the Sources of Islamic Theorizing" (Abul-Fadl 1411/1990), she recognizes that in order to contribute to the formation of an intrinsically Islamic social theory, Muslim social scientists should have access to Islamic revealed sources. However, these methods are inadequate when it comes to dealing with social questions, for while the study of social phenomena requires a holistic approach whereby social relations are systemized pursuant to universal rules, classical methods are atomistic, relying primarily on analogical reasoning (Umziyān 1412/1991, 206-7).

Abul-Fadl concludes, therefore, that the *uṣūlī* legacy (*mirth al uṣūl*) as it stands today can hardly be used in social research. Before it can become operative, the *uṣūlī* methods require a comprehensive restructuring whereby the particular is grouped under the universal. Until that happens, contemporary social scientists have no other avenue but to erect their disciplines on concepts and categories derived directly from the Qur'an (ibid., 207-8).

Yet rather than examining classical methods in order to identify the source of their inadequacy and to build on the accomplishments of classical Muslim scientists, she overlooked the entire *uṣūlī* legacy, which is rich with techniques and procedures for textual analysis, and starts anew. She introduces a three-step procedure designed to help Muslim social scientists derive concepts and models from the Qur'an. First, a list of the basic terms of the discipline is compiled and their Qur'anic equivalents identified. Second, the linguistic and historical meaning of the compiled terms is established. This requires that the terms be examined within both their immediate (*mubāshar*) and their overall (*ijmālī*) context. Finally, the terms have to be reorganized in accordance with a set of criteria (*ma'āyīr*). This set of criteria, Abul-Fadl argues, must be derived from the Qur'an and social experience. Consequently, it should help Muslim scholars develop social models and identify social patterns (ibid., 216-9).

Abul-Fadl's procedure is an important step for ending the practice of loose usage of the Qur'an to support themes and propositions. However, as it lacks the meticulousness of the text-analysis methods furnished by

classical scholars, the approach leaves room for loose interpretation of revealed text. In fact, the procedure outlines in general terms the method used in the science of *tafsīr*, as Abul-Fadl herself points out. The procedure lacks, however, detailed rules of derivation that could end the arbitrary and loose usage of Qur'anic text in support of theoretical principles.

While the proposed procedure is a step in the right direction, it must be developed further before becoming a useful tool for the articulation of the normative elements of an Islamic social theory. The author is also aware of the applicational inadequacy of her proposed method when it comes to developing a general framework for what she refers to as the "Islamic civilizational act" (*al fi'l al ḥaḍārī*).

The general framework consists of four generic concepts: *tawḥīd*, *istikhlāf*, ummah, and Sharī'ah. She argues that one can derive, from the generic conceptual framework, two layers of concepts: primary (*mafāhīm awwalīyah*) and secondary (*mafāhīm far'īyah*). Out of the four universal concepts postulated, she generates nine primary concepts and twelve secondary concepts (ibid., 215-21). Primary concepts are: *amr* (command), *nahy* (prohibition), *ṭā'ah* (obedience), *'iṣyān* (disobedience), *ḥukm* (rule), *qaḍā'* (judgment), *wilāyah* (sovereignty), *iṣlāḥ* (reform), and *tadbīr* (planning). Secondary concepts are: *'adl* (justice), *ẓulm* (tyranny), *baghy* (injustice), *bay'ah* (covenant), *shūrā* (consultation), jihad (struggle), *infāq* (expenditure), *iṣlāḥ* (reform), *i'tiṣām* (adherence), and *waḥdah* (unity). While these are concepts with important political implications, the method of their selection and stratification is extremely ambiguous.

The proposed framework does not tell us why these concepts are deemed relevant, while others that appear to be equally relevant and important for the ummah's political life, such as *ta'āwun* (cooperation) and *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), have been excluded. Nor is it clear under what rules the framework is stratified into primary and secondary concepts. Why, for example, is *'adl* secondary, while *ṭā'ah* (obedience) primary? Or, for that matter, why is *iṣlāḥ* both a primary and a secondary concept?[3]

The Immediate Task

We pointed out early in this paper that the Islamization of knowledge framework does not provide detailed methods for guiding scientific research, but only a set of ontological principles having epistemological and ethical implications. Evidently, the ontological principles along with their epistemological and ethical corollaries, though open to further improvement and modification, constitute a solid foundation for the project

---

[3]One is tempted to consider the repetition of *iṣlāḥ* among both primary and secondary concepts as a typesetting error, especially when *i'tiṣām* is repeated twice in the list of secondary concepts. Yet lacking an understanding of the rules of stratification, one can only express bewilderment.

of Islamization. Hence, they should be considered an appropriate starting point for any endeavor in this direction.

But while the general framework provided by al Fārūqī gives us a good starting point, the same cannot be said about the strategy or the work plan he outlined, for it requires an organization of highly qualified scholars working in unison under a unified command. The conditions needed for the implementation of such a strategy are neither available nor, from what we know about scientists and scientific enterprises, are they likely to materialize. In fact, bureaucratic organizations tend to suppress the very elements that make science possible, viz. creativity and originality.

We need, in light of the foregoing remarks, to substitute al Fārūqī's original plan with a more practicable one that will take into account the logistical impediments discussed above. One possible alternative strategy, already alluded to in this paper, is to reduce his twelve steps to three. Summarized in figure 3, these steps are: a) mastery of substantive knowledge, b) mastery of methodological knowledge, and c) production of university textbooks (or generally intellectual works). The knowledge produced through this procedure cannot readily be described as an Islamized knowledge, for it has first to undergo a close examination by the larger Muslim scientific community. Only by passing the critical scrutiny of other Muslim scholars can the work produced by individual scholars be elevated to the level of Islamized knowledge. To use the terminology of *uṣūl al fiqh*, we can say that only when the individual ijtihad of Muslim scientists is substantiated by the process of *ijmā'* can it be considered as part of the body of verified knowledge (see figure 5).

It is clear, therefore, that the Islamization of knowledge project is still in its premethodological stage. Indeed, due to the lack of articulated methods, the project has been particularly susceptible to criticism from the supporters of both traditional and Western methods. Filling this gap requires the critical engagement of both classical Muslim and modern Western methods. In addition to satisfying the immediate needs of contemporary Muslim scholarship, this engagement serves as a preparatory stage during which the ground can be prepared for the emergence of an Islamic methodology. This is because an Islamic methodology has to emerge, at least partially, by appropriating elements of both classical Islamic and modern Western methods. A wholesale and a priori rejection of either of the two traditions is unscientific.

This leads us to the question of inadequacy raised frequently by the advocates of a new Islamic methodology. Although the question of inadequacy is usually raised in relation to traditional methods, it is by no means exclusive to them. Modern Western methods are also inadequate for the development of a social science that considers divine revelation to be an intrinsic source of knowledge. However, the term "inadequate" should be understood at this state to mean "less-than-adequate," not "invalid." The task of contemporary Muslim scholars is, therefore, to examine methods developed in both Western and Muslim traditions to

determine the source of their inadequacy and the possibility of their being developed, supplemented, or invalidated.

Thus far, the inadequacy of traditional methods has been attributed to three factors: their a) exclusive legalism, b) overtly linguistic nature, and c) excessive atomism. Although the above characterization reveals a great deal of the truth about traditional methods and is in the main a fair description, it nonetheless overlooks streams within classical thought that attempted to balance some of mainstream excesses. For example, the theory of *maqāṣid al sharīʿah* (purposes of the Sharīʿah), advanced by al Shāṭibī, was intended to systemize the science of fiqh and counterbalance the atomistic tendency that existed in classical legal thought.

Thus one may deduce that there can be no hope for escaping the pre-methodological state of contemporary Muslim scholarship without having a serious and profound encounter with the methodological approaches generated in both traditional Muslim and modern Western scholarship. In their examination of classical and modern methodologies, contemporary Muslim scholars have to answer four interrelated questions:

1. What are the rules for deriving social concepts and categories?

2. What are the rules for deriving concepts and categories from empirical sources?

3. What are the rules for the differentiation (horizontal ordering) and stratification (vertical ordering) of concepts and categories derived from both revealed and empirical sources?

4. What are the rules for linking revealed concepts and categories with empirical ones?

Undoubtedly, responding to the challenge posed by the above questions can be quite demanding, but this is inevitable if the goal is to achieve scientific progress, for methodological rigor has always been a precondition of science.

Figure 1: The Islamization of Knowledge Framework (al Fārūqī).

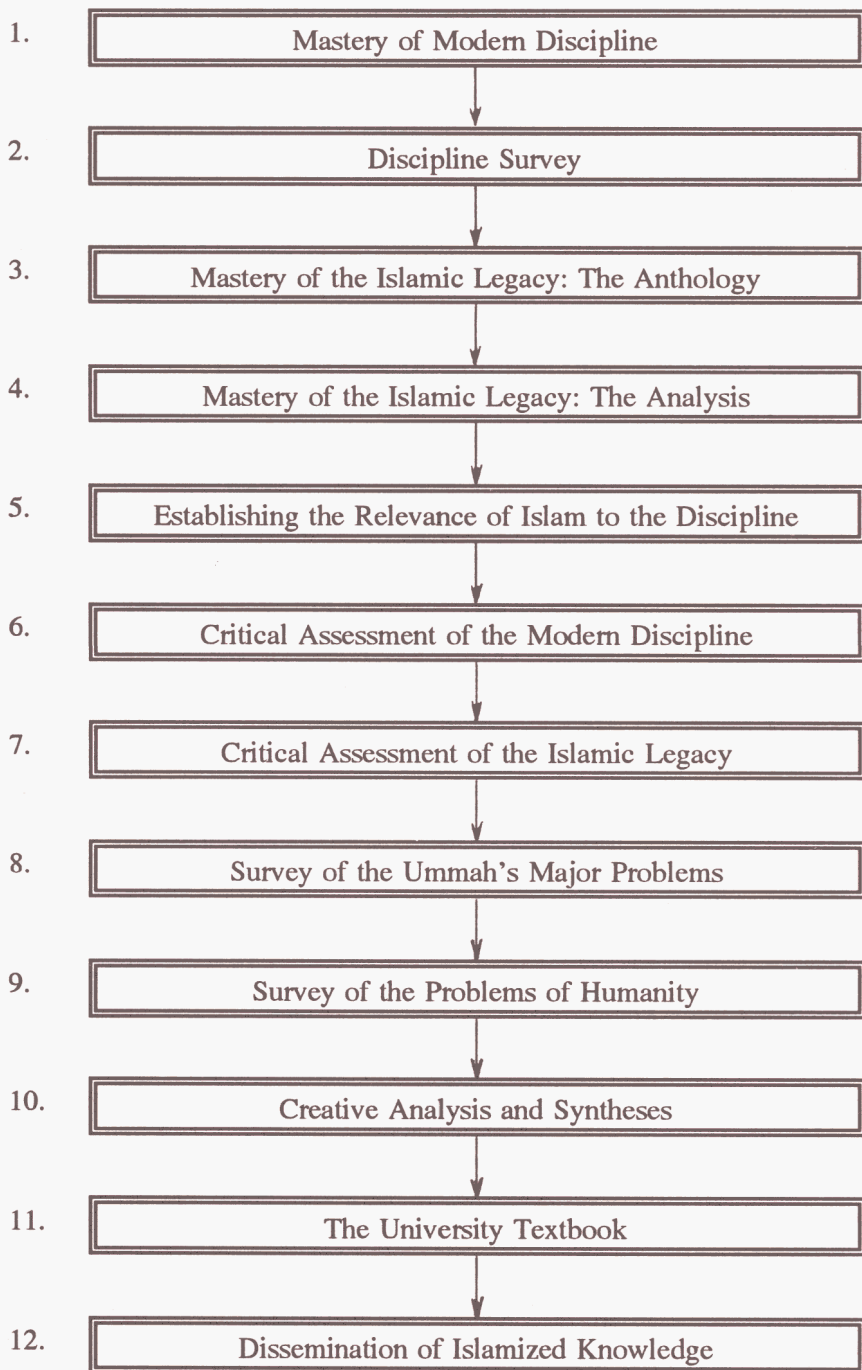|	
1.	Mastery of Modern Discipline
2.	Discipline Survey
3.	Mastery of the Islamic Legacy: The Anthology
4.	Mastery of the Islamic Legacy: The Analysis
5.	Establishing the Relevance of Islam to the Discipline
6.	Critical Assessment of the Modern Discipline
7.	Critical Assessment of the Islamic Legacy
8.	Survey of the Ummah's Major Problems
9.	Survey of the Problems of Humanity
10.	Creative Analysis and Syntheses
11.	The University Textbook
12.	Dissemination of Islamized Knowledge

Figure 2: The Islamization of Knowledge Framework: Parallel Tracks.
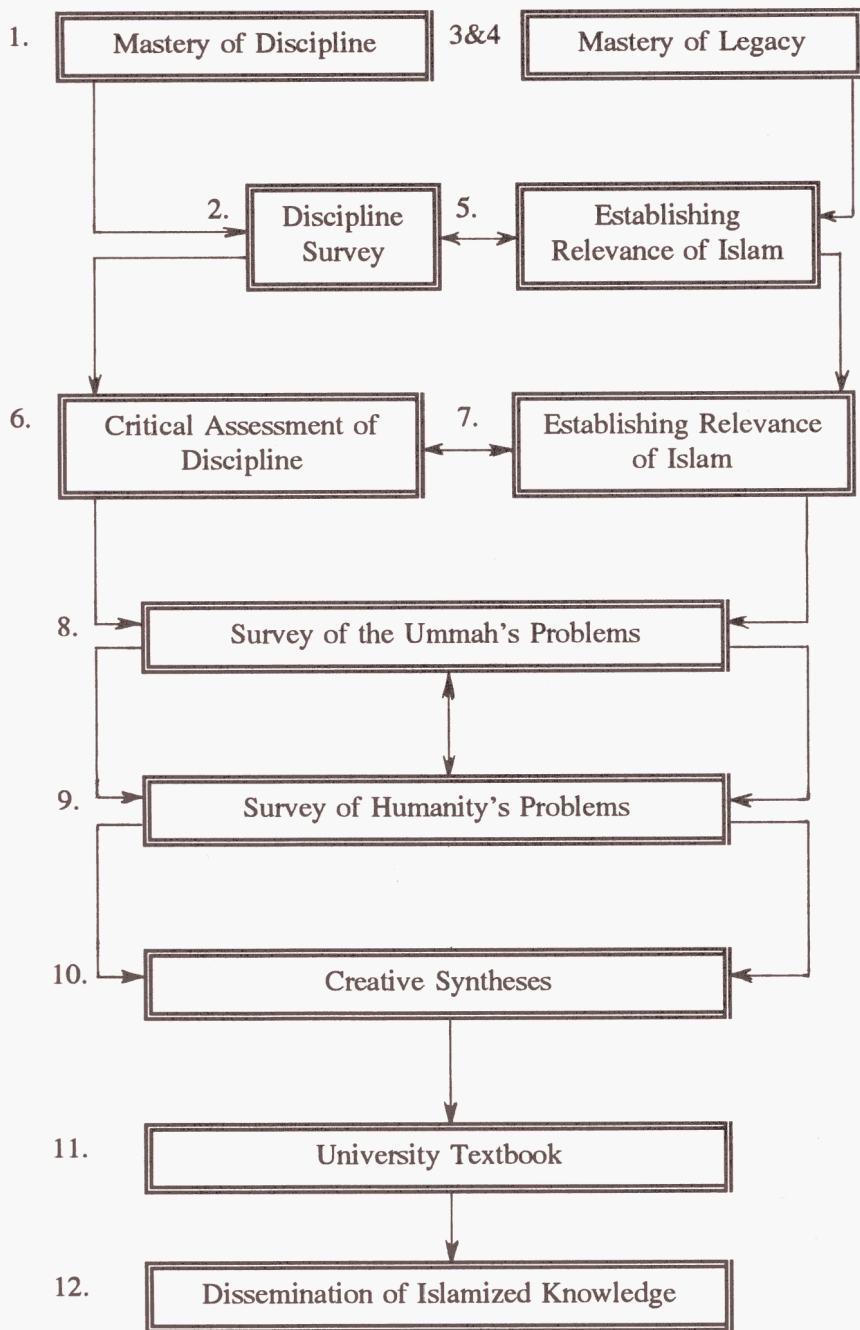
Figure 3: The Islamization of Knowledge Framework:
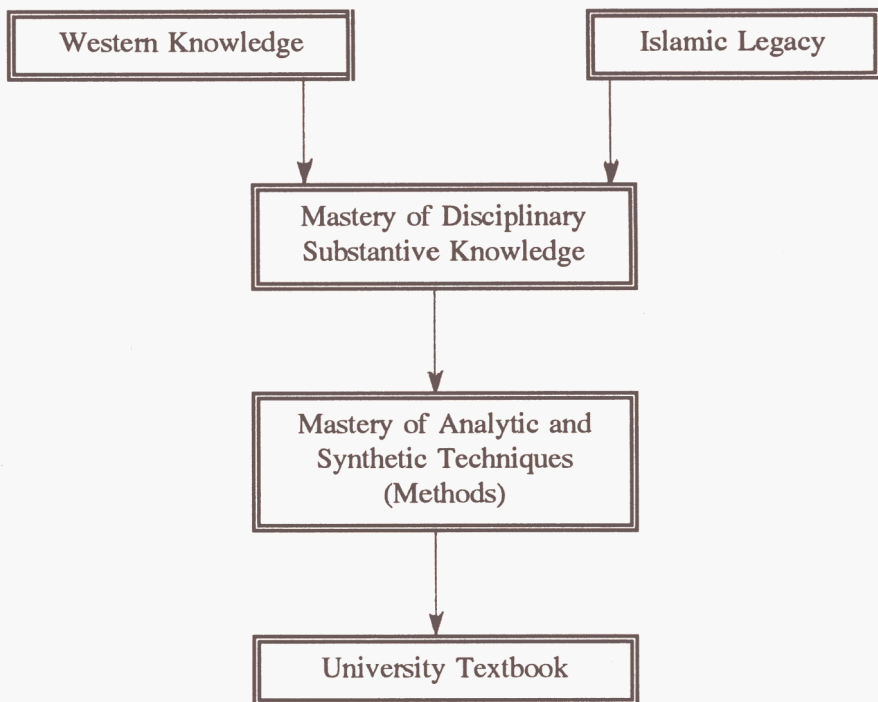   A Simplified Procedure.

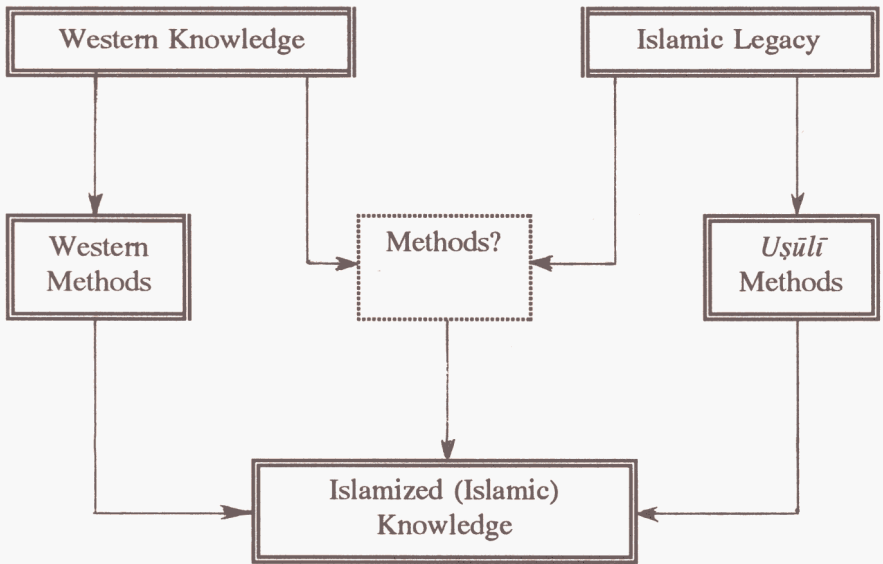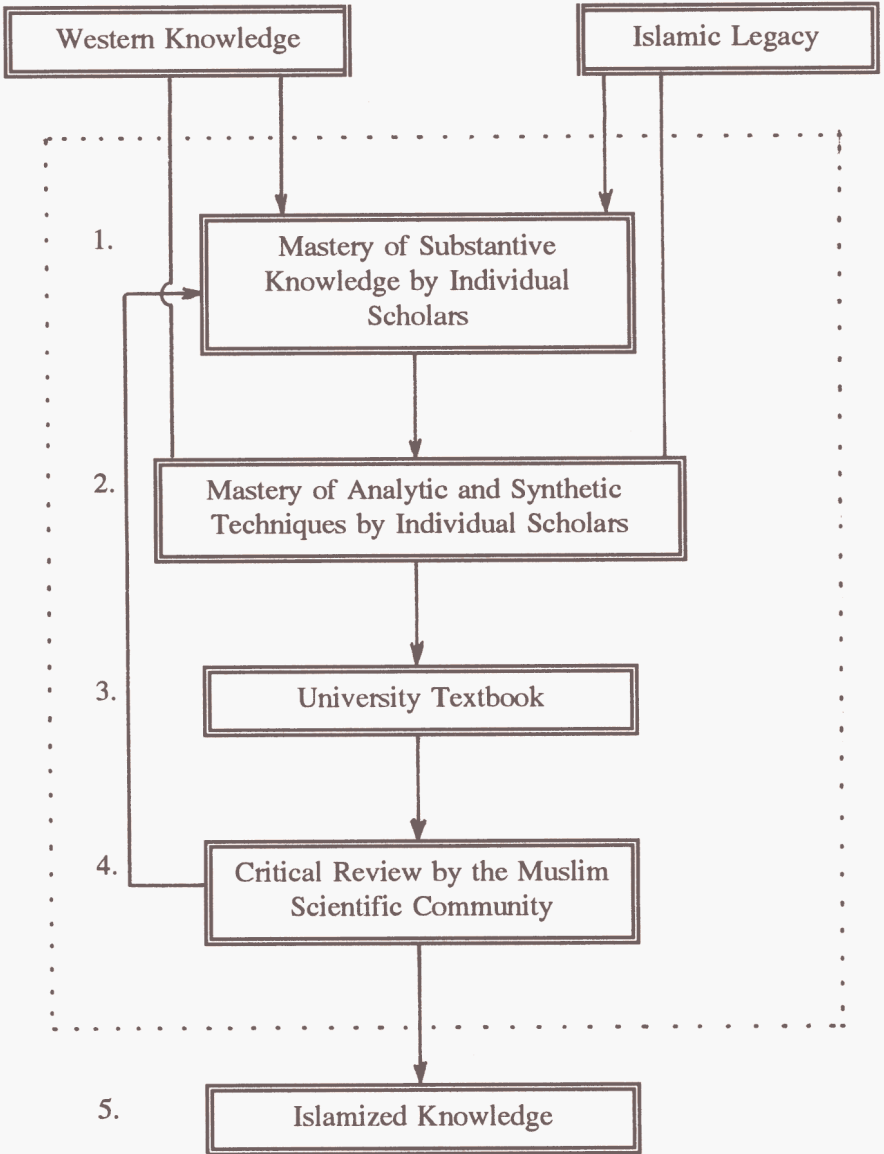Figure 4: The Production of Islamized Knowledge.

Figure 5: Proposed Revised Islamization of Knowledge Framework.

```
┌─────────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Western Knowledge     │              │    Islamic Legacy       │
└─────────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────────┘

 1.   ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
      │      Mastery of Substantive      │
      │     Knowledge by Individual      │
      │            Scholars              │
      └──────────────────────────────────┘

 2.   ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
      │  Mastery of Analytic and Synthetic│
      │  Techniques by Individual Scholars│
      └──────────────────────────────────┘

 3.   ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
      │      University Textbook         │
      └──────────────────────────────────┘

 4.   ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
      │   Critical Review by the Muslim  │
      │      Scientific Community        │
      └──────────────────────────────────┘

 5.   ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
      │      Islamized Knowledge         │
      └──────────────────────────────────┘
```

References

Abul-Fadl, Mona. "Paradigms in Political Science Revisited: Critical Options and Muslim Perspectives." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (September 1989): supplement.

-----. "Naḥwā Manhajīyat al Taʿāmul maʿa Maṣādir al Tanẓīr al Islāmī bayna al Muqādimāt wa al Muqāwimāt." In *Al Manhajīyah al Islāmīyah al ʿUlūm al Sulūkīyah wa al Tarbawīyah*, edited by Al-Ṭayyib al Zayn al ʿĀbidīn, vol. 1. Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1411/1990.

-----. "Contrasting Epistemics: *Tawḥīd*, the Vocationalist and Social Theory." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (March 1990): 15-38.

AbūSulaymān, ʿAbdulḤamīd. "Islamization of Knowledge with Special Reference to Political Science." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (December 1985): 263-89.

-----. *The Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Islamic Methodology and Thought*. Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1987.

Arif, Muhammad. "The Islamization of Knowledge and Some Methodological Issues in Paradigm Building: The General Case of Social Science with a Special Focus on Economics." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (September 1987): 263-89.

Al Būṭī, Muḥammad Saʿīd. "Azmat al Maʿrifah wa ʿIlājuha fī Ḥayātinā al Islāmīyah al Muāṣirah." In *Al Manhajīyah al Islāmīyah al ʿUlūm al Sulūkīyah wa al Tarbawīyah*, edited by Al-Ṭayyib al Zayn al ʿĀbidīn, vol. 1. Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1411/1990.

IIIT. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*. Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1987.

Moten, A. Rashid. "Islamization of Knowledge: Methodology of Research in Political Science." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 7, no. 2 (September 1990): 161-175

Rahman, Fazlur. "Islamization of Knowledge: A Response." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 5, no. 1 (September 1988): 3-11.

Umziyān, Muḥammad. *Manhaj al Baḥth al Ijtimāʿī bayna al Waḍʿīyah wa al Miʿyārīyah*. Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1412/1991.