

A Critical Assessment of the Issues of Objectivity and Subjectivity in Contemporary Western Socio-Behavioral Thought and its Muslim Khaldunian Counterpart*

Mahmoud Dhaouadi

The issues of *objectivity* and *subjectivity* in the contemporary knowledge of the behavioral and the social sciences represent a highly controversial debate whose solution has defied all attempts by those who have tackled it with analysis and discussion. There are presently *four* causes of bias which afflict the modern behavioral and social sciences.

- 1) Numerous studies in this field have explained the social scientist's inevitable bias as emanating from personality subjective factors. The sociologist or the psychologist, according to this view, can't entirely liberate himself or herself from individual inclinations, values, and interests in going about studying the phenomena which belong to each field. Total objectivity in the sciences of man and society is beyond human reach according to the German sociologist, Max Weber.¹
- 2) In spite of the important role played by the social scientist's personality *subjective* factors in the making of his or her scientific bias, these factors are not, nonetheless, the only forces which determine the phenomenon of bias in contemporary behavioral and social sciences. Scientific bias could be the outcome as well of a *collective* or an *institutional*

Mahmoud Dhaouadi is a sociologist at the Faculté des Sciences Humaines et Sociales, Université de Tunis I, Tunisia.

*This is a revised and expanded version of the author's study in Arabic published in the journal of *Al Mustaqbal Al Arabi*, No. 120, Feb. 1989 pp. 26-52.

¹M. Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, translated by E. Shills and H. Finch (Chicago: Free Press, 1949).

bias. Social scientists often belong to particular schools of thought and theoretical paradigms which can't be entirely bias-free. Marxist functionalist sociologists are examples of that. Marxist thought, as we know, accounts for the explanation of socio-politico-psychological phenomena through the economic-materialistic forces. Similarly, behavioral psychologists explain human behavior as a response to external influences in the environment. As such, both Marxism and behaviorism do away with the subjective factors that could affect individual and collective behavior. Cognitive factors² and cultural factors (superstructure) are not taken into account by behaviorist and Marxist explanations respectively. Consequently, the behaviorist and the Marxist stand against "the subjective factors" constitutes a *collective bias* which involves practically all those scholars and thinkers who adhere to the behaviorist and the Marxist schools. The collective bias in question would eventually affect the credibility of the behaviorist-Marxist social scientists' hypotheses, concepts, paradigms, theories, explanations, and predictions.

Furthermore, with the development of modern structures and institutions for the enterprise of science, bias has taken an *institutional form* as well. For modern knowledge is becoming more and more an institutional knowledge. The latter emanates from universities, research centers, specialized institutions, etc. which have their own self-interests and ideologies and whose impact on the bias of their scientific knowledge is inevitable. Today's increasing efforts to establish an *interdisciplinary approach* capable of assembling at once all scientific contributions of behavioral and social sciences are seen as a good strategy for reducing the bias of each discipline that often claims that it is the credible reference for the explanation of individual and collective phenomena.

The call for interdisciplinarity³ in the fields of behavioral and social sciences implies basically the rehabilitation of the epistemological unidimensionality of their perspectives. In other words, what is required from the sciences of man and society is the adoption of multifactorial perspectives in their understanding, explaining and theorizing about individual as well as collective behavior. This means implicitly that human behaviors, individual

²H. Gardner, *The Mind's New Science: A History of Cognitive Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p. 408.

³H.M. Blalock, Jr., *Basic Dilemmas in the Social Sciences* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1984).

or collective, are by their nature enormously complex. The criticism of reductionist scientists and scholars in the behavioral and the social sciences is thus very legitimate.

- 3) The third factor which brings about bias in the behavioral and the social sciences is related to the ideological nature of these sciences. The roots of this can be traced to the fact that the behavioral and social sciences deal with issues which focus primarily on social life and its economic, political, and cultural parameters. As such, many thinkers believe that behavioral and social thought can't be entirely liberated from ideological factors: they can't be totally bias-free. The realization of the natural sciences' objectivity remains, thus, beyond the reach of the sciences of man and society. The German sociologist Habermas affirms that knowledge in general and knowledge of the behavioral and social sciences in particular are directly or indirectly influenced by the interests, the outlook, the concerns of thinkers, scientists and researchers. On this basis one can easily understand the feasibility of the co-existence at the same time and in the same place of the sociology of the *Right* and the sociology of the *Left*. This stipulates that bias or ideological dimension⁴ is an inherent characteristic in the nature of these sciences. This implies that the search for an ideal objectivity in the study of man and society is an impossible task. It is in this sense that we ought to consider the objectivity concept in the behavioral and the social sciences not as a static but rather as a dialectical notion. That is to say, in attempting to identify the nature of phenomena, the social scientist remains, on the one side, under the influence of his or her own socio-psychological background and, on the other, under the impact of the external social milieu. Consequently, the very foundations of the objectivity of the behavioral and the social sciences are of a dualistic nature. This state of affairs is likely to promote more subjectivity on the part of the social scientist's science. As pointed out, the latter's total liberation from personal as well as social influences is not plausible. It is on this basis that objectivity in the sciences of man and society constitutes a controversy. As in any other intellectual

⁴S. Ayb, *Ideological Influences in Sociology* (in arabic) (Beirut: The Arab Development Institute, 1983), p. 29.

controversy, the securing of a reasonable degree of objectivity in these sciences requires a continuous critical intellectual debate between the social scientist and his social milieu, on the one hand, and between himself and the available state of knowledge, on the other. This is what has been emphasized by the French sociologist Raymond Boudon in this regard.⁵ For him the critique of the knowledge of the behavioral and the social sciences could take two forms: (1) internal critique which deals with the degree of the logic of the theories, the hypotheses as well as the plausibility of the concepts being used, and (2) external critique which attempts to test the foundations of the theories and their implications as far as their compatibility with the empirical facts is concerned. The social scientist's adoption of what Boudon calls *la critique rationnelle* is seen as the best method for securing a better credibility in the sciences of man and society.

- 4) In addition to the three outlined factors contributing to the bias of the behavioral and social sciences there is a fourth related one which is represented in *the tendency* of these sciences to *generalize* their concepts and their theories from one society or from one civilization to another. In not taking often into account the particularities and the specificities of human societies and civilizations, behavioral and social sciences tend to undermine their scientific objectivity and, thus, their scientific credibility. This state of affairs has been widely recognized especially in the last two decades by critical analysts of the corpus of Western modern behavioral and social sciences. For instance attempts to strictly apply American sociological theories of modernization and development on the Third World have been severely attacked by an increasing number of behavioral/social thinkers, particularly in socialist countries, in the West, and in developing societies. Daniel Lerner's theory of modernization⁶ and William Rostow's theory of economic development⁷ are but two illustrations of *ethnocentrism*. Lerner claims that Middle Eastern societies can't achieve modernization without adopting the Western model for modernization. As such, he believes in the *universal*

⁵Boudon and Bourricand, *Dictionnaire Critique de la Sociologie* pp. 425-32.

⁶D. Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society, Modernising The Middle East*, 2nd Edition (New York: Free Press, 1964).

⁷W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

raised by the objectivity/subjectivity controversy facing the scientific credibility of modern behavioral and social sciences. The implications of this problematic on the identity as well as the progressive continuity of these sciences are far from being superficial. In our opinion, the crisis which the sciences of man and society have known in the last two decades or so is, to a great extent, organically related to the theory issue of the objectivity/subjectivity continuum.

Voices of the Crisis from Within

It is no exaggeration to state that there has been a great deal of critical writing in the West since the seventies on the crisis of the behavioral and the social sciences. The titles themselves of certain books bluntly refer to the crisis in question. Alvin Gouldner's *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*¹¹ is one of the significant sociological works which underline the principal factors which would eventually lead to the coming of the crisis of sociology in Western societies. The book *Radical Reflections on the Origin of the Human Sciences*¹² emphasizes in turn that the crisis of the behavioral and social sciences is already a reality, and it is no longer a part of our imagination. The author of this book summarizes the aspects of the crisis this way: "there is today a widespread awareness that a crisis in the human sciences has taken place. Philosophers and social scientists alike have expressed increasing concern about this apparent lapse of the sciences of man into a situation of crisis. Regrettably, however, no clear and consistent account of the nature of this crisis and the factors that have occasioned it has been forthcoming. Indeed, the varied and conflicting accounts of the nature and source of the encroaching crisis have become infected with a conceptual crisis of their own."¹³ The book *Les Splendeurs et misères des sciences sociales*¹⁴ depicts the crisis of the behavioral and social sciences with an alarming description. It is no longer enough to speak of the crisis of the behavioral and social sciences. The state of these sciences has deteriorated dangerously on several levels. It is more accurate to say that they are in a state of agony rather than that they are merely going through a crisis. It is time to admit that the behavioral and social sciences have provided us, so far, only with an imaginative corpus of knowledge.¹⁵ The thesis of the work *Les Mythes*

¹¹A.W. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (New York: Basic Books, 1970).

¹²C.C. Schrag, *Radical Refelctions on the Origin of the Human Sciences* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1980).

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁴A. Caillé, *Les Splendeurs et misères des sciences sociales* (Genève: Librairie Droze, 1986).

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 5.

*fondeurs des sciences sociales*¹⁶ is no different from those cited above. The author points out that the behavioral and the social sciences have not been able to remain committed to the spirit of objectivity. Consequently, they have failed to provide us with the objective knowledge which behavioral and social scientists have promised to deliver in the last three centuries. As such, the social functions of the sciences of man and society resemble those of religions.

Unlike the previous books, *La Place du désordre* is not a total attack on all social and behavioral sciences. It is rather a critical analysis of the theories of social change which have been assembled by these sciences since the Second World War. Boudon's criticism of the foundations of those theories has already been referred to in the preceding pages.¹⁷ In his view, they are theories that can't be considered scientific because of their inclination for easy *generalization*. So, these theories are bound to contribute to the crisis of contemporary behavioral and social sciences outlined here.

The crisis of the sciences of man and society is not better on the applied side either. The success of the treatment of mental diseases both by clinical psychology and psychiatry is still *very* limited. The same is true also of the criminological sciences. Rehabilitation in advanced Western societies is increasingly viewed as a flop. This desperate situation has led a growing number of prison as well as rehabilitation center authorities, in Canada and the United States in particular, eventually to abandon or to begin to think to abandon the widespread rehabilitative philosophy which was quite popular, especially in the sixties and the seventies. The call for the punishment of the deviant and the criminal, instead of his/her rehabilitation, is being voiced more and more by criminologists in those societies.¹⁸

Our call for learning from the accumulated knowledge of various human civilizations in the understanding of man and society implies our flat rejection of the principal thesis of modern scientific thought which claims that *no* human knowledge is ever credible unless it is the result of the scientific spirit as defined in modern times. In our view, a part of the crisis of the behavioral and social sciences must be attributed to this narrow and shortsighted outlook of the meaning of scientific knowledge in contemporary Western academia, as we will see. One methodology which may enlighten us about the roots of the crisis of the behavioral and social sciences is to draw a comparison between the foundations, the principles and the visions of the Arab Islamic mind of Ibn Khaldun, on the one hand, and those of the contemporary Western mind, on the other. The former had heavily marked Ibn Khaldun's *Ilm al*

¹⁶P. Claval, *Les Mythes fondateurs des sciences sociales* (Paris: PUF, 1980).

¹⁷Roudon, *La Place du désordre*.

¹⁸J. Wilson, *Thinking About Crime* (New York: Basic Books, 1983) and M. Cusson, *Pourquoi Punir?* (Paris: Dalloz, 1987).

Umran al Bashari, and the latter has profoundly shaped the nature and the orientation of modern behavioral and social sciences. The comparison of these two types of thought may drive us closer to the shores of the dilemma in question. Like every other human thought, modern sciences of man and society are bound to be influenced by the socio-cultural historical conditions as well as of the epistemological foundations on which they have been based and evolved. We believe that the first step to be taken in order to secure a credible diagnosis of the nature of the crisis of modern behavioral and social sciences must identify and reconstruct the factors which have shaped their content as well as their form in contemporary times.¹⁹

The Root of the Ideological Bias of the Behavioral and Social Sciences

As it has been outlined, contemporary behavioral and social sciences have limited their scope of interest in the study of those phenomena which strictly fall within the range of the five human senses, that is, those phenomena subject to human observation, experimentation, and tangible manipulation. Such a position could only narrow man's wider potential resources for knowledge. This stand is as well a violation of the very ethics of the objectivity concept which the behavioral and social sciences have often claimed to defend. In so doing, the modern sciences of man and society have compromised the principle of total neutrality or that of fair objectivity toward the phenomena they aspire to study. Behavioral psychology's attitude toward the study of man's cognitive processes is a case in point.²⁰ The behaviorists have practically shown no interest in cognition and its impact on the individual's behavior. The denial of the role of man's cognitive dimensions in the shaping of human behavior constitutes a biased blow to the scientific credibility of behavioral psychology. Such a position puts behavioral psychology in a clear contradiction with the discipline of psychology in general. While the latter focuses its interest on the study of man's personality, behavioral psychology has done away with significant components of the human personality like its cognitive processes and its innate predispositions.²¹ Likewise, metaphysical, religious, and spiritual aspects of the human personality have also faced the same fate at the hand of behavioral psychologists. Empirico-positivist social scientists have hardly hesitated to consider them as plain fabricated superstitions and myths. This outlook appears, nonetheless, to be tainted with biased overtones.

¹⁹Keat and Urry, *Social Theory as Science*.

²⁰Gardner, *The Mind's New Science*.

²¹*The Controversy of Social Sciences in the Arab World (in Arabic)* (Cairo: National Center for Social and Criminological Researches, 1984), pp. 13-25.

for the sociologists, can only imply that human behavior is a simple type of behavior. That is, it is not influenced by a multitude of factors other than those of the outside milieu. Such a simplistic unidimensional perspective is in contradiction with the conclusions of an increasing number of modern studies in the behavioral and social sciences which concur that social phenomena as well as the behavior of the individuals are complex in nature.²⁶

(2) In our opinion, behavioral psychology and the social determinist sociology, as represented by Durkheim, suffer from an acute confusion in their conceptualization of the stimuli/social forces which are at work in human behavior. Since they have generally distanced themselves from taking into account the role of invisible forces in shaping human behavior, the impact of spiritual influences and innate human personality traits on human behavior is discarded at once. The former are considered of magical, metaphysical nature. The latter may be seen as potential influential forces on human behavior but their invisible nature constitutes an *obstacle* for the empirico-positivist behavioral and social sciences. Had these sciences denied only the influence of the metaphysical/spiritual factors on human behavior, they would have caused no big surprise on their part. But to reject altogether real psychological human traits, drives, cognitive processes—for no other reason than their claim that they couldn't be studied by the empirico-positivist traditional observation, manipulation, experimentation—constitutes an obvious distorted conceptualization of what could affect and explain human behavior. This kind of *conceptual disarray* is likely to be the outcome of some sort of phobia on the part of the empirico-positivist social scientists who have the tendency to associate anything which is not observable and measurable by the logic of the five senses with the worlds of metaphysics, phantoms and spirits, whose very existence had been categorically dismissed by the father of positivism, Auguste Comte, in the 19th century. In retrospect, the basis of the two positions (a + b) is far from being on solid objective ground. The bias in question here could be accounted for through the reading of the European history of science since the Renaissance. The conflict between the church/royal authority alliance on the one hand, and the European philosophers and scientists on the other, has been well documented since the 17th century. In this conflictual context, ideological connotations are bound to surface and play an important role in group conflicts, particularly when one party attempts to dominate the other. As such, the logic of the *history* of positivism's emergence does not permit positivism to be as objective as it claims. The sociology of knowledge is the most appropriate branch of modern sociology which could formulate an articulate explanation for the spectrum of bias that has inevitably afflicted the empirico-positivist perspective. The claim of positivism's logic

²⁶Blalock, *Basic Dilemmas in the Social Sciences*.

that the true discovery of the nature of things lies outside the intricate entity of the human being as well as away from the metaphysical influences has, nonetheless, several implications on man's morale.

On the one hand, human nature has no longer any intrinsic mysteries to be explored and discovered. As such, it is no more than an empty shell with no depth whatsoever. On the other, the discovery of the laws, mysteries of the infinite universe becomes limited only to those which can be revealed and identified by the means of the five senses. This type of vision of things has not only constituted a blow to the relation between man and the world beyond, but has affected as well the nature of the image which man has made of himself. The empirico-positivist man's new image has no precedent throughout man's long history. He has become the master of the universe and its center at the same time. For him, there is hardly any existing universe but that universe which can be recognized and manipulated by his five senses; knowledge is credible as long as it is based on the knowledge and logic of tangible observation and experimentation.

In doing so, the empirico-positivist man has narrowed the scope of his experience with the limitless universe as well as with his own internal world whose mystery and secrets are potentially countless. This new outlook of modern man has indeed tightened the grips of self-imposing isolation on him. His universe has shrunk considerably, so the depth of human nature and that of the larger universe have been drastically shattered. This empirico-positivist attitude has, consequently, deprived modern man from being able to communicate with the greater universe with means other than the plain five senses. The empirico-positivist man's interaction with himself, with his fellow men, and with the vast universe has deteriorated to a degrading level known only among the nonrational beings. Many anomalies of modern times, from which the empirico-positivist man suffers, could be attributed to his *double rupture*: (a) a rupture between himself and his inside world, on the one side, and (b) a split between himself and the outside universe, on the other. It is against this background that one can understand why the dialogue between those dimensions of human depths has been strikingly mutilated under the reign of the empirico-positivist man.²⁷

The Behavioral and Social Sciences Are Special Sciences

Among the consequences of the empirico-positivist thought, as described above, is its silence on the study of certain distinct human characteristics.

²⁷B. Freedman, *To Be or Not to Be Human* (New York: Vintage Press, 1987).

What philosophers have called human freedom, will, spiritualism, and morality are hardly dealt with in the literature of modern behavioral and *social sciences*. There are a number of reasons for such a silence: (1) The empirico-positivist disciplines in question don't recognize *a priori* those human traits since they are considered as unreliable in nature; (2) The empirico-positivist methods and techniques of modern behavioral and social sciences are hardly fit to explore scientifically those distinct human traits; and (3) The recognition of the role of human freedom, will, spiritualism, and morality as influential forces on human behavior goes especially against the vision of social determinism to which subscribe passionately a number of contemporary social scientists. The strong adherence by Durkheim from sociology and the behaviorists from psychology to social determinism could be seen as the outcome of an imitation on their part of the deterministic laws of the sciences of physics, chemistry, and biology. There is obviously an exaggeration underlying this assumption here. That is, the deterministic laws of the behavioral and social sciences can't be identical to those prevailing in the natural sciences. The insistence to equate the dynamics of the natural and the social worlds, on the one hand, and the nature of their deterministic laws on the other, is an outlook which has no solid objective basis.²⁸ In our view, the behavioral and the social sciences which pay very little or no attention to the special distinct human characteristics in their understanding of the individual as well as of collective behavior are bound to be less credible in their explanations and their predictions. To be more specific, credibility of the various disciplines of the behavioral and the social sciences is due in part to: (a) the treatment of human behavior as no different epistemologically from that of non-humans. Behavioral psychology is a case in point, and (b) the fashionable tendency on the part of the great majority of specialists of the behavioral and social sciences to adopt unidimensional perspectives in their attempt to explain individual behavior as well as social phenomena. Against this background, one can assert that in the real human world individual as well as collective behaviors are under the impact of *two* types of influences: on the one hand, those related to the distinct human particularities and, on the other, those pertaining to the external influences. Furthermore, each one of them displays a mosaic capacity of influences of its own on the human individual and collective behaviors. Still the cross-interaction between the two levels of influences is a continuing one. Given this intricate complex nature of the multitude of factors affecting human behavior and phenomena, one can appreciate the legitimacy of the call of an increasing number of specialists of these sciences to consider their laws and their theories as

²⁸*The Controversy of Social Sciences*, pp. 13-26, and Keat and Urry, *Social Theory as Science*, pp. 3-26.

particularist in nature and thus, limited in application.²⁹ In other words, the behavioral and the social sciences are special sciences. Their laws and their theories are not easily generalizable like those of the natural sciences. The lack of precise explanations and predictions of various theories of man's behavior and society's social dynamics could be attributed particularly to the principle of generalization adopted by a number of social scientists. The matter in the study of human behavior is still further complicated. The different and the changing nature of individual behavior and social phenomena from time to time and from one culture to the other certainly doesn't help the task of the social scientist in his or her pursuit to figure out precisely the forces at work in individual and collective behavior. Consequently, the search for behavioral and social sciences of credible laws, theories, etc., like the ones of the natural sciences, is far from being a realistic ambition.³⁰

The Khaldunian Mind and its Western Positivist Counterpart

A number of Western positivist thinkers have criticized part of Ibn Khaldun's social thought found in his *Muqaddimah*. They are, on the one hand, fascinated by his proof-oriented reasoning mind as displayed particularly in his analyses and theories of the social dynamics of the Arab Muslim civilization. On the other, they accuse him of irrational tendencies in his approach to the study and explanations of invisible non-material phenomena. Yves Lacoste and Neil Shmitt went as far as dividing Ibn Khaldun's work into two categories: (1) Ibn Khaldun's written work in Qalat Bani Salam in Algeria, and (2) Ibn Khaldun's social thought which was written afterwards, especially during his old age in Cairo. Lacoste and Shmitt and others like them consider the first type of Ibn Khaldun's work as rationalist, proof-based, and semi-empirical in nature. As such, it is seen as having a close affinity with the epistemo-philosophical perspective of contemporary positivist Western thought. This type of work is described by them as *original*. The second type of Ibn Khaldun's thought is viewed by the same thinkers as superstitious, irrational, and subjective. Thus, according to them, it contradicts the very basic assumptions and foundations of the former.

In our opinion, the accusation of Ibn Khaldun of some kind of split-thought is ill-founded. Because it does ignore (or pretend to ignore) the specific socio-historical conditions in which Khaldunian social thought was born and grew. This prejudged evaluation against the social thought of the author of

²⁹Boudon, *La Place du désordre*, p.

³⁰*The Controversy of Social Sciences*, p. 20.

the *Muqaddimah* could have been avoided had those critics adopted a socio-historical perspective in their understanding of the nature of Ibn Khaldun's social thought. Ibn Khaldun had based his 'Umran work with its new concepts, methodologies, and theories on the Arab Muslim civilization's socio-historico-culturo-religio-political background. For instance, the Arab Muslim civilization did not witness in the same manner the number of phenomena which have led to the emergence of the positivist science in Europe. The phenomena in question were the despotism of kings, the Church's authoritarianism, and the skepticism directed against the thin credibility of the rationalist thought of the Renaissance. The well-known long history of the conflicts between the Church and the scientist in European societies since Newton's time does not have its counterpart in the history of science in the Arab Muslim civilization. Ibn Khaldun, for one, did not suffer from a conflict between his proof-based reasoning mind, on the one hand, and his religious metaphysical beliefs, on the other. As such, he attempted to understand, with an open reasoning outlook, both the nature of this observable world and that of the world beyond the five senses. According to the Moroccan thinker, Mohammed Abid Al-Jabri, "*the Muqaddimah* stands as a pyramidal and a unified constructed and developed thought in its content as well as in the organization of its chapters, paragraphs and the harmony which prevail among its various parts.

Ibn Khaldun was firmly committed throughout his *Muqaddimah* to logical thinking in his analysis and his deductions. Ibn Khaldun's focus on the understanding of supernatural phenomena (prophecy, dreams, mysticism, etc.) is far from being an abnormal deviation from his logico-rational framework. Supernatural phenomena are integral components of collective social gathering. The author of the *Muqaddimah* tried to find a sound justification for their existence in the Arab Muslim civilization. In doing so, *he did not go against the scientific spirit* but rather he remained objective vis-à-vis the study of the supernatural."³¹

In comparison with the contemporary Western empirico-positivist thought of the behavioral and the social sciences, we can assert that Ibn Khaldun's epistemology is fundamentally different from that which the Western founding fathers of these sciences have adopted since Comte's time. As shown, both positivism and Empiricism are either not interested in the study of the phenomena which don't fall within the range of the human five senses or they categorically dismiss their very existence. Ibn Khaldun on his part recognizes two types of phenomena: (1) The phenomena perceptible through the senses, and (2) those phenomena which are not perceptible through the

³¹M. Al-Jabri, *Al-Assabiyya and The State: Ibn Khaldun's Theoretical Perspectives in the Arab-Islamic History* (in Arabic) (Beirut: Dar Attalia, 1982), pp. 118-19.

senses. Unlike the empirico-positivist social scientists, Ibn Khaldun did not turn his face away from the second category of those phenomena.³² On the contrary, he put a great effort to understand and explain them. The author of the *Muqaddimah* did pay attention to the understanding of such phenomena like divine revelation.³³ In his analyses of those phenomena, as in others, Ibn Khaldun relied solely on logical and rational evidence. As an example, we mention his argument concerning the limits of the human mind vis-à-vis the recognition of the phenomena which lie beyond the world of the senses. "Initially the knower believes that the world he knows is only that one he can recognize by his senses. The truth of the matter is otherwise. Isn't the world of the deaf limited to his *four* senses, since audible phenomena are excluded from his perception? Likewise, isn't the blind person deprived of the visible world? Accordingly, there may be phenomena which are beyond the recognition of our five senses."³⁴

Ibn Khaldun clearly underlines here the extent of the limitations of the human mind's knowledge.³⁵ This is neither an attack on it nor is it a belittling of its appropriate capacity of knowledge. Thus, for Ibn Khaldun, the human mind is like a balance, the latter, whatever its precision and its authenticity, could only weigh a limited amount. It is legitimate, then, for humans to seek help from divine revelation in matters which fall outside the comprehension of the human mind.³⁶

From the above background it appears very clear that the Arab Islamic Khaldunian mind differs from its Western empirico-positivist counterpart as far as the foundations on which they have based their knowledge of man and society. On the one hand, the mind of the author of the *Muqaddimah* is considerably shaped by the Islamic epistemological outlook in its attempt to understand the 'Umrani phenomena. On the other, the epistemology of the Western empirico-positivist mind is basically, as we have seen, the outcome of a set of socio-historical circumstances which European societies have witnessed since the Renaissance. The Khaldunian mind takes into account a multitude of factors in its understanding and explanation of phenomena.

³²Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of knowledge resembles very much that of the famous Muslim philosopher Al-Ghazali (1059-1111). The latter had emphasized the extreme importance of the human senses and the human mind in the acquisition of knowledge. But the senses-mind knowledge could not be the ultimate knowledge particularly as far as the metaphysical dimensions of human existence. Religion, Sufi experience become then a necessity to resort to.

³³Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah* (in Arabic) (Beirut: Dār Al-Qalam, 1987), pp. 91-119. I am obliged to use the Arabic version of the *Muqaddimah* because of the difficulty to find the English one in Tunisia where this study is written.

³⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 496-504.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 480.

³⁶A. Saṭī' Al-Husrī, *Studies in Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah* (in Arabic) (Beirut: Dār Al-Kitāb Al-'Arabī, 1967), p. 494.

It uses observation, experimentation, divine revelation, and spiritual experiences in formulating its acquired knowledge about universal phenomena. Thus, the Khaldunian perspective is profoundly Islamic in nature. It is a multifactorial perspective, open to all sources of knowledge which could help the scientist or the scholar to have a more credible knowledge of the phenomena he studies. The Western contemporary mind is empirico-positivist in nature. It limits, on one side, the horizon of human knowledge to the materialistic empirical sense-based knowledge. On the other, it disregards the importance of the other types of human knowledge. Because of its materialistic nature, the Western contemporary mind has been more susceptible to adopt the concept of rigid determinism with regard to the laws that govern and orient individual as well as collective human behavior. The crisis of Western behavioral and social sciences is partially attributed by the American philosopher Schrag to the prevailing extreme trends of social determinism that are easily reflected in the conceptualization as well as the explanation of those sciences. For the American political scientist Laswell man is a homopoliticus. The German sociologist Dahrendorf views man as a homosociologus. As far as Cassirer is concerned, man is homosymbolicus. Such perceptions of man express, indeed, a state of malaise and confusion on the part of contemporary Western behavioral and social sciences.³⁷ In response to that situation certain thinkers, like the philosopher of sciences Karl Popper and the French sociologist Raymond Boudon, have called for the adoption of the principle of indeterminism not only in the sciences of man and society but in the exact sciences as well. However, two things have to take place if the behavioral and the social sciences are to be appropriately reformed:

(a) The specialists of these sciences must promote the sense of *self-criticism* concerning their epistemology, their assumptions, their methodology, and their theories which they have founded and used in their study of man and society, and (b) science's modern outlook needs also to be rehabilitated. *Sciences must cease to rely solely on quantitative data as the only measure for the credibility of human knowledge.* In other words, behavioral and social sciences must, like Max Weber had done, give great importance to the role of non-quantifiable factors in the explanation of behavioral and social phenomena. The sciences of man and society must liberate themselves from unidimensional determinism and replace it, instead, with a multidimensional deterministic perspective. The latter has clearly more flexibility in accounting for complex behavioral and social phenomena under consideration. In our opinion, this is what Ibn Khaldun's 'Umran mind had stood for in his analyses, his laws, and his theories which he had established as a result of focusing on the dynamics of the Arab Muslim societies between the birth of Islam

³⁷Shrag, *Radical Reflections on the Origin of the Human Sciences*, p. 2.

and Ibn Khaldun's time. In recent years there have been many voices echoing the crisis of Arab Muslim sociology.³⁸ A great deal of what has been written in this regard fails to stress that contemporary Arab behavioral and social sciences suffer from two crises: (1) Arab social scientists' imitation of the empirico-positivist Western mind in their study of man and society, and (2) Arab social scientists' uneasy ambiguity as far as their willingness to embrace the author of the *Muqaddimah's* larger vision on how to secure credible knowledge. The latter as pointed out is not to be strictly provided by the senses but must also be open to extrasensory knowledge. There is growing evidence today that Ibn Khaldun's vision is more comprehensive and thus, better fit for the understanding of man and society.³⁹

The Study of Man as a Thinking Being or as an Animal

In the preceding pages we have drawn attention to some of the underlying causes behind the present crisis of the behavioral and the social sciences. We have indicated as well that *Ibn Khaldun's* general framework for the study of man and society appears to be more realistic than that of its modern Western counterpart. On the one hand, the author of the *Muqaddimah* adopts a social deterministic view as far as the explanation of social phenomena is concerned. But he has, on the other, an *epistemological outlook* of man which is profoundly different from that of the Western materialistic positivist mind. In the view of Ibn Khaldun, men resemble animals and differ from them at the same time. "All animals share with man his animality which is represented in his need for food, habitation, movement, etc. yet he is distinct from them. The latter allows him to secure his substance survival material through cooperation with others. It is also through his thought that man comes to accept the divine revelations brought by God's messengers and orient his behavior accordingly. In all that, man always uses his thinking and hardly could he cease to think."⁴⁰ For the author of the *Muqaddimah*, man is first of all a thinking being. His animality comes second in importance as far as his human identity is concerned. It is no exaggeration to state at this point that man's animality has become a central concept of Western specialists of the behavioral and social sciences since the publication of Darwin's theory on man's evolution.⁴¹

³⁸*Toward Arab Sociology* (collective work) (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1986).

³⁹The increasing criticism today addressed to Empiricism, Positivism, Social determinism, Materialist-Marxism etc. in the behavioral and the social sciences implies that there is an urgent need for those sciences to open up their perspectives and become interdisciplinary and multidimensional.

⁴⁰*The Muqaddimah* (in Arabic) p. 429. The translation of the quotation is mine.

⁴¹Ch. Darwin, *The Origins of the Species* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).

In our opinion, the understanding of today's crisis of the sciences of man and society must begin at this epistemological level which confuses the nature of man with that of the animal. A clear distinction between the two is bound to put true unique human nature back in its place. With that, the credibility of the behavioral and the social sciences can only improve. The widespread use of rats, pigeons, and monkeys in behavioral laboratory experimentations has become a scientific tradition particularly in psychology. The concepts, laws, theories, etc. . . . drawn from the results of these experiments are often generalized and applied sometimes literally to human behavior. In doing so, certain branches of the discipline of modern psychology, like behavioral psychology, tend to view the nature of man as practically no different from that of animals and birds. Given the same circumstances, man's behavior could only be expected to be identical to the behavior of pigeons, rats, and monkeys. In our view, this simplistic animal-man analogy represents an obvious epistemological distortion. When the very basic foundations of the theories, the predictions, and the explanations of individual as well as group behavior are established on false ground, their scientific credibility is bound to be considerably undermined. This situation would only harden the dimensions of the crisis of the sciences of man and society. Ibn Khaldun's assertion "that man is highly distinguished, from the other creatures, by his ability to think" is well supported by modern research in the domains of the physical anatomy of the brain as well as the thinking and the cognitive processes of the human mind. Neurologists have emphasized that man is privileged by the distinct organic nervous structure of his brain. Compared with the brains of non-human creatures, the human brain displays a more complex structure and it displays as well more diverse activities. For the French philosopher/sociologist Edgar Morin, the human brain is "*Une Machine hyper-complexe*."⁴² As it has become established now in the neurological sciences, man's brain has a right and a left hemisphere. They are different and complementary at the same time. Their complementarity is complex in itself. It manifests at once cooperation and conflicts. Furthermore, Von Forester has described the human brain as a democratic organism. This implies that the human brain is complex in nature. It is far from being a totalitarian regime which unilaterally gives its orders, but rather it is a sort of federation of various regions where each one of them enjoys a degree of certain autonomy. The structure of the human brain, as referred to some of its features here, is the center of what is labelled as symbols by contemporary behavioral and social sciences. Man is strikingly distinguished by these symbols from other living creatures. Language, thought, religiosity, and cultural and social values

⁴²E. Morin, *La Méthode 3: La Connaissance de la Connaissance* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1986), pp. 85-114.

are distinct characteristics of human individuals and groups. In other words, the phenomenon of human culture in its socio-anthropological sense couldn't be plausible without the presence of that complex organic structure of the human brain.

Regardless of the nature of the definition of the concept of culture which we may refer to in references, books, and journals of modern behavioral and social sciences, we would find a general consensus among them concerning its definition. It is seen as that non-materialistic (symbolic, thoughtful, spiritual) dimension of man's entity. Written and spoken language, for instance, are important symbols which distinguish man's world from that of the other non-human living creatures. There is enough scientific evidence today which affirms that without the use of human language, the human brain would be unable to involve itself, particularly, in complex thought activities. Language appears, as well, to offer man the capacity to defy the constraints of man's short life span as determined by the imperatives of the biophysical existence of the human body. Language, in this sense, permits man to enjoy "some sort of eternity." Human ideas, human thought, human wisdom could not have survived the ages and secured an everlasting time, had there been no human languages. Furthermore, man's spiritual dimension appears to involve often his use of language. Man's usage of the word in his calling, praying to his God is found in all faiths and religions the world over and throughout human history. Thus, language is resorted to in religious context to activate and invigorate the pulse of man's spiritualism. Thus, there is on the one hand an intimate relationship between language as a cultural symbol, and the practice of man's spiritual rituals, on the other. Spiritualism is by definition the antithesis of man's materialistic side. Its role is to help man liberate himself from the constraints of this world and allow him to go beyond it to the non-destructible eternal world of human existence. Thus, human language empowers man to have the sacro-eternal experience. The latter is, no doubt, a very special characteristic of man, the thinking being as stated by Ibn Khaldun.⁴³ The process of thinking here has a wider meaning. It implies that mankind is capable of rational thinking, of cultural invention, of discovering scientific laws, of belonging to the spiritual world. Men and women, as thinking beings, are capable as well to choose between things and behavioral actions and with

⁴³In our opinion the understanding of the domain of man's symbols by contemporary scientists still suffers from their empirico-positivist bias. One can hardly encounter any reference to the *sacro-eternal* dimension of man's symbols in the enormous corpus of publications on the subject. Eternalizing man's voice, image, living acts through modern photo-audio-video techniques has not yet made the empirico-positivist scientists aware of how man's use of symbols (in written words, pictures, recorded voice, or filmed acts) permits him to experience a form of eternity, that is, an existence beyond his physical existence. *Symbols are man's soul*. Their understanding is the key to the understanding of man.

their will are inevitably subject to error and rightfulness in thought and judgment. Viewing humans as beings with a distinct process of thought in that wider sense gives them an entirely different image from that of humans who are identical or very similar to pigeons, rats, and monkeys. In our view, it is utterly unrealistic to expect the present crisis of the behavioral and the social sciences to take a turn for the better as long as the social scientists continue to ignore, in the study of humans, the dimension of thought as a profoundly distinct characteristic of them.⁴⁴ As spelled out before, Ibn Khaldun's assertion that a person is first of all a *thinking being* is a statement of everlasting credibility. The author of the *Muqaddimah's* striking perception and observations of the nature of mankind can't be understood with making reference to the social milieu in which he was born and had grown up. Ibn Khaldun was deeply influenced by the Islamic outlook both in his perception of mankind as a thinking being as well as in determining the very substance of the nature of human knowledge. His emphasis on mankind's distinction from animals by its developed and complex thought processes is in complete harmony with the image of human beings as found in the Qur'an. The Qur'anic verses which speak of thought as a distinguishing trait of humans are numerous. The verse: "verily we have honored the children of Adam. We carried them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom we created with a marked preference."⁴⁵ This clearly refers to mankind's distinct capacity of thought. Consequently, in addressing human-kind the Qur'an has repeatedly called for the importance of thought and reflections: "Therewith causeth corn to grow for you, and the olive and the date-palm and grapes and all kinds of fruit, Lo! Herein is indeed a portent for the people who reflect,"⁴⁶ "and He hath constrained the night and the day and the sun and the moon to be of service unto you, and the stars are made subservient by His command. Lo! Herein indeed are portents for people who have sense,"⁴⁷ "and whatsoever He hath created for you in the earth of diverse hues, Lo! *There is indeed a portent* for people who take heed,"⁴⁸ "Who has created seven heavens in harmony, thou (Muhammad) canst see no fault in the Beneficent One's creation; then look again: canst thou *see* any rifts? Then look again and yet again, thy sight will return unto thee weakened and made dim,"⁴⁹ "such as remember Allah, standing, sitting, and reclining, and consider the creation

⁴⁴Man's thought as one aspect of his symbols allows him to *eternalize* himself by his ideas which could become *sacred* for his followers.

⁴⁵Surah XVII, verse 70.

⁴⁶Surah XVI, verse 11.

⁴⁷Ibid., verse 12.

⁴⁸Ibid., verse 13.

⁴⁹Surah LXVII, verse 4.

of the heavens and the earth (and say): our Lord! thou createst not in vain . . .”⁵⁰ In the Qur’an the call for thought and reflection is the privilege of man. This underscores sharply mankind’s distinct thinking capacity as the radical divider between human beings and the remaining living creatures.

As far as the sources on which human knowledge must depend, Ibn Khaldun adopts an Islamic perspective in this regard. The use of the five senses as well as of that of human reasoning are the Islamic pillars for the establishment of credible human knowledge. As an authentic illustration of this, the Qur’an had practically avoided altogether to resort to the use of the philosophical approach in its arguments to prove the existence of the one God. Instead, it had invited the unbelievers to use their visual, hearing, and reasoning senses in their observable tangible world. “We shall show them our portents on the horizons and within themselves until it will be manifest unto them that it is the Truth,”⁵¹ “and (also) in yourselves. Can ye then not see?”⁵² “(O mankind), follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. Lo! the hearing and the sight and the heart—of each of these it will be asked,”⁵³ “See ye not how Allah hath created seven heavens in harmony, and hath made the moon light therein, and made the sun a lamp?”⁵⁴

These Qur’anic verses, like so many others, have called on man to commit himself for good to the use of his senses and reasoning in his pursuit of acquiring knowledge. That is indeed what the Moroccan thinker, Al-Jabri, has called the *burhānī* (evidence) mind in the Arab-Muslim learned culture.⁵⁵ In other words, it is that mind which relies, in the development of its knowledge and science, on the observations and experiences made by his senses. Ibn Khaldun had certainly made great use of the *burhānī* mind in his *Muqaddimah*. As such he was indeed the first historian and sociologist, in the entire human history of ideas, who wrote with scientific and analytical spirit about the dynamics of human societies and their history. The credibility of his writings in the *Muqaddimah* in particular has enjoyed high respect among ancient and contemporary scholars of various human civilizations.⁵⁶ From this perspective, we can easily assert that there is a great resemblance between the Khaldunian *burhān* mind, on the one hand, and the contemporary Western empirico-positivist mind, on the other. But the Muslim Khaldunian mind

⁵⁰Surah III, verse 191.

⁵¹Surah XLI, verse 53.

⁵²Surah LI, verse 21.

⁵³Surah XVII, verse 36.

⁵⁴Surah LXXI, verse 15 and 16.

⁵⁵M. Al-Jabri, *The Structure of the Arab Mind: Critique of the Arab Mind* (2) (in Arabic) (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1986). See my review of this book in the *Arab Journal of the Social Sciences*, (Vol. 3. No. 1, April 1988), pp. 158-61.

⁵⁶A.J. Toynbee, *A Study of History Vol. 3*, (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 322.

differs radically from its Western counterpart on the second source of knowledge. While the author of the *Muqaddimah* believes in the existence of the world beyond our senses, the empirico-positivist mind rejects this categorically, as we have seen. The metaphysical world is hardly accessible to human senses and reasoning. Knowledge about it is to be sought in divine revelations according to Ibn Khaldun and other Muslim thinkers like Al-Ghazali.

Ibn Khaldun's mind stresses thus the importance of the cooperation between the sacred and man's acquired knowledge, a position which had been especially embraced by the thinkers of Arab Muslim civilization in its golden age. In Islam, the source of human knowledge is dualistic in nature: sacred-revealed and man-acquired knowledge. These two types of knowledge are referred to in Arabic as *naql* knowledge (knowledge whose basis is the Qur'an and the Hadith) and *'aql* knowledge (knowledge whose basis is human reasoning). Within the Islamic perspective, these are seen as mutually complementary and not contradictory as the contemporary Western empirico-positivist mind tends to believe. These differences are the result of two different socio-historical realities, as pointed out earlier. On the one hand, the Islamic cultural environment has permitted throughout the ages different degrees of cooperation, solidarity, and co-existence between sacred revealed knowledge and reasoned man-made knowledge. While the history of Muslim civilization has rarely witnessed serious confrontations between the two, the history of Western civilization has known intense conflicts and tensions between them since the Renaissance in the 17th century. It is against this socio-historical background of greater Arab Muslim society and the greater contemporary Western society that we can understand that the cultural-historical circumstances in the former have been more favorable for the establishment of integrated sacred-revealed and reasoned man-made knowledge. Such a knowledge has obviously the advantage of enlarging man's scope of knowledge and, thus, liberating him from remaining entirely imprisoned in his narrow confined sensory world. Man's adoption of the *naql/aql* knowledge can only help him to extend himself beyond his senses and reach out to the infinite universe beyond. Muslim scholars and scientists' adoption of the importance of the concept of the sacred-revealed and reasoned man-made knowledge is a stand which can only reinforce their objectivity and motivate them to distance themselves from the pitfalls of prejudice and subjectivity. The Islamic perspective asserts that human knowledge is limited and incomplete: "they will ask thee concerning the Spirit. Say: the Spirit is by command of my Lord, and of knowledge ye have been vouchsafed but little"⁵⁷ . . . and over

⁵⁷Surah XII, verse 76.

every Lord of knowledge there is One more knowing⁵⁸ does not disagree with the conclusions reached by the group of modern Western thinkers called the Philosophers of Science. Among the famous names are Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, Ivan Lakatos, and Paul Feyerband. According to them experimento-positivist knowledge is far from being able to establish unquestionable scientific generalizations. Mankind's thinking as well as perception don't qualify for claiming to have absolute correctness. All that they can hope for is to get near the truth but not having access to it all. Observation, as a favorite methodological basis of empirico-positivist sciences, is no longer considered foundational in the establishment of knowledge as it used to be in previous decades.⁵⁹ Hanson, for instance, rejects altogether the claim which stipulates that scientific theories are the outcome of objective observations. He believes that the scientist's own background, his theories, and his hypotheses influence considerably what he could observe. As such, there is no theory which has a neutral basis as assumed by the empirico-positivists. All this has led the philosophers of sciences to conclude that the empirico-positivist knowledge is ultimately *relative* in nature and consequently, far from being conclusive. This obviously implies that human scientific knowledge is bound to remain always subject to fault and error. Naturally, scientists are in search of the truth and they often think they have put their hands on it. But due to the doubt displayed by some from time to time concerning the credibility of their knowledge, they admit that their own supposed solid knowledge could be discovered to be false after all. Newton's physics had dominated the field for centuries. Then, it had backed away in light of Einstein's discovery of the law of relativity. Something similar is perhaps under way or is very plausible to take place in his physics in the near future as further discoveries in the subtleties of the world of physics will be made.

Thus, man-made knowledge based on reasoning, experimentation, and observation is far from being free from bias, shortsightedness, and limitation. It becomes, then, a sign of plain realism and modesty for humans to seek other sources of knowledge which are characterized, on the one hand, with high credibility, and which could serve, on the other, as a spiritual link that helps shorten the distance between man and this vast universe. Such an advocated attitude on the part of scholars and scientists is found throughout the pages of the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun, the Muslim historian and

⁵⁸Surah XVII, verse 85.

⁵⁹D.C. Philips, *Philosophy, Science and Social Inquiry* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1987), pp. 5-45 and H.W. Newton-Smith, *The Rationality of Science* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

sociologist. He was convinced while writing his First Book⁶⁰ that he was making a scientific breakthrough in the historico-social sciences as manifested in *‘Ilm-‘Umran*: (Sociology). In the establishment of the latter, Ibn Khaldun had successfully used the *burhānī* mind. But at the same time he did not hesitate to make his confessions as to the limitations as well as to the narrowness of man-made knowledge and science. Indeed, the author of the *Muqaddimah* very often ends (as have Muslim scholars and scientists throughout the ages) the paragraphs and chapters of his *Muqaddimah* by stressing that the privilege of absolute certainty in knowledge and science belongs only to Allah. Ibn Khaldun, as we pointed out, suffered neither from internal tension nor from conflicts in his spectrum of knowledge. Man-made knowledge and sacro-revealed knowledge smoothly co-exist in the Khaldunian mind. This attitude of the author of the *Muqaddimah* toward these *two* types of knowledge is *typically Islamic* in nature. Islam, as a belief and a religious system, is based on the concept of the middle way (*al wasatīyah*): “Thus, we have appointed you a middle nation.”⁶¹ *Al-wasatīyah* means that the scholar and the scientist must not side with either of the two sources of knowledge in question. Muslim scientists and scholars firmly believe that there ought not be any contradiction between sacred and man-made knowledge. Pragmatically speaking, the middle way attitude of Muslim scientists and scholars permits them to double check, so to speak, the credibility of the knowledge at hand. This is very crucial indeed particularly concerning the controversial social and moral issues. Alcohol drinking is an example. Nearly all modern available accumulated man-made knowledge on the subject demonstrates the negative affects of alcohol drinking on both the individual and collective society. Contemporary Muslim scholars and scientists double check this by consulting their sacred knowledge found in the Qur’an and the Hadith. The latter, as it is well known, forbid alcohol drinking.

As such, the Islamic perspective can’t accept, on the one hand, the empirico-positivist knowledge perspective as being the only credible and final source of human knowledge. On the other, the Islamic knowledge perspective is not ready as well to adopt the thesis of the gnostic (the *‘irfān*) mind as a solid basis for credible human knowledge, as claimed by the Muslim Sufis and other mystics.⁶² Each of these two perspectives is viewed by the Islamic

⁶⁰Ibn Khaldun called his *Muqaddimah* The First Book to his entire Work of History, referred to as “Book of Lessons and Archives of Early and Subsequent History, Dealing With the Political Events Concerning the Arabs, Non-Arabs, Berbers and the Supreme Rulers, Who Were Contemporary With Them.”

⁶¹Surah II, verse 143; see also the interview with the Egyptian thinker Zaki Najib Mahmud on the Arab mind and Arab thought in the journal of *Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi*, no. 114, 1988, pp. 123-127.

⁶²M. Al-Jabri, *The Structure of the Arab Mind*, pp. 380-410.

approach as unbalanced as far as securing credible human knowledge is concerned. Cooperation and dialogue between man-made knowledge and the sacro-revealed knowledge constitute a firm middle way position which the Islamic vision considers as *the basis* for the establishment of a reliable and valid human knowledge. The adoption of this balanced attitude on the part of Muslim scholars and scientists would make them better predisposed than their Western empirico-positivist counterpart to receive and assimilate the ancient wisdom and science left by earlier human civilizations. The advocacy of "Middle Wayness" as the right stand in pursuit of more credible knowledge is recommendable. "Middle Wayness", by definition, permits the scholars and the scientists to embrace both sacro-revealed and man-made knowledge. Thus, credible objectivity has special criteria and meaning within the Islamic framework. Neither the contemporary Western empirico-positivist mind nor the gnostic mind is willing to endorse the synthesizing middle way mind which is adhered to by the typical Muslim scholar and scientist. Against this background, the ideal credibility of knowledge in the Islamic perspective is the result of a dialogue, debate, and complementarity between man-made and sacred knowledge. In this sense, human knowledge becomes more credible when it is the outcome of a dialogue between the earth and the sky.

مجلة



"The Contemporary Muslim"

فصلية تعالج قضايا الاجتهاد المعاصر
في ضوء الأصالة الإسلامية

صاحب الامتياز
ورئيس التحرير المسؤول: الدكتور جمال الدين عطية

تصدر عن :

<p>المعهد العالمي للفكر الإسلامي INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT P.O. Box 669 Herndon, VA 22070, U.S.A. Phone (703) 471-1133 Fax: (703) 471-3922 Telex: 901153 IIIT WASH</p>	<p>مؤسسة المسلم المعاصر AL MUSLIM AL MU'ASIR FOUNDATION ص.ب. ٢٨٥٧، الصفاة 13029 - الكويت تليفون 241-4220 (965) فاكس (965) 245-0789</p>
---	--