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Method and Methodology: The Nature of Concepts and the Importance of Investigating Them

GOALS OF THIS CHAPTER

1. To clarify the meanings of the Qur'anic concept of "method" (*minhāj/manhaj*) and its relationship to other relevant Qur'anic terms, such as *ṣirāṭ*, *sabīl*, *hudā*, and *nūr*.
2. To distinguish between *minhāj/manhaj* (road, way, method) in the sense of a manner of arriving at a place or a goal, and *manhajiyyah* (methodology) as a way of going about a task.
3. To highlight different aspects of the need for a discussion of the terms *manhaj/minhāj* and *manhajiyyah*.
4. To provide examples of contemporary Islamic awareness of the importance of *manhaj* and *manhajiyyah*.
5. To clarify the meanings of the concepts of worldview, epistemological system, guide model and hermeneutical model, and how *manhajiyyah* relates to them.

INTRODUCTION

It is generally agreed that the issue of methodology in Islamic thought is a matter of major importance. Methodology is equally important in relation to thought, research for the purpose of acquiring, testing, and applying knowledge, investigating the sources and foundational principles of Islam, studying the Islamic heritage and the overall human heritage, and dealing with the conditions currently facing the Muslim community and the world as a whole.

Numerous Muslim thinkers and researchers, both ancient and modern, have written about the importance of methodology, the need for systematic, orderly thought, and the signs of imbalance and dysfunction in the Muslim mind. The signs of backwardness in the Muslim community that are so widespread at the present time point to a serious methodological imbalance in thought, research, and ways of relating to reality. Consequently, all members of the Muslim community, and its intellectual leaders in particular, should be encouraged to master the art of systematic thought and action in life's various spheres and on its various planes.

Like the methodologies proper to other frameworks, Islamic methodology is based on unchanging principles and rules. At the same time, Islamic methodology consists of a number of elements that change and develop in keeping with scholars' accumulated experience, expertise and evolving interpretations, as well as the norms adhered to by the scholarly community in this or that field of knowledge or in this or that generation. Some of these elements are shaped by the issues and problems under investigation, the norms that prevail among scholars and researchers during a particular era, the inspired, innovative, and creative interpretations of certain individual scholars, and/or the manner in which society deals with crises, misfortunes, and newly emerging issues and events.

What has been written about methodological rules and principles consists of human interpretations which may be either right or wrong, not divinely revealed legal rulings relating to specific concrete situations. As a consequence, there is an ongoing need to research and discuss methodology and systematic thinking, the aim being to validate those aspects of existing methodology that are correct and effective, and to correct those aspects that are flawed. Every generation has the obligation to reinterpret, renew its understanding and its vision, and push the limits of knowledge to new horizons. In so doing, it must derive inspiration from the divine purposes for humanity while leaving the way open for future generations to make their own innovative contributions. What is referred to in Islamic circles as reinterpretation of the Islamic heritage may be the equivalent of what is referred to in

other circles as academic research. And, like the innovative interpretation of the Islamic heritage in days of old and Islamic thought from one age to the next, modern academic research is associated with methods that change and evolve.

Reinterpretation remains both an adventure and a risk due to the influence of demagogues in the Muslim community who work to keep people tied to obsolete ways of thinking, and who bestow academic titles on individuals who do not deserve them. For this reason, the only people who dare to engage in reinterpretation are the most stouthearted scholars, and even they undertake it with a degree of trepidation. This is worrisome. Still more worrisome, however, are the practices of those who, enthralled with this or that method, promote it indiscriminately among others, and in the midst of turmoil and methodological anarchy, circulate slogans the effects of which may well be unwholesome despite the fact that the slogans themselves contain words of truth.

Given that research into methodology has been marked by various types of rhetorical eloquence and theoretical description, it is to be hoped that scholars' and researchers' efforts will make the transition to the phase of what we might term methodological eloquence and systematic practice. This is a serious responsibility. However, it does not relieve individuals of their own responsibility to investigate things for themselves and to give things careful thought in order to gain insight into their private and public affairs, and to fulfill the obligations entailed by their religion. Those who seek knowledge will be rewarded more richly, both in this life and in the life to come, than those who do not. Hence, each of us needs to make an effort to acquire knowledge, and just as we should condemn demagoguery in relation to research methods driven by ignorance and capriciousness, we must likewise condemn the elitism and classism that isolate those that possess knowledge and sound methods, treating their understanding as something no one else could possibly attain.

First: MINHĀJ/MANHAJ AND MANHAJIYYAH: THE CONCEPT AND THE TERM

(1) *Denotations of the Qur'anic Term*

The Arabic terms *nahj*, *manhaj*, and *minhāj* (or *manhajiyyah/ minhājiyyah*) appear frequently in modern writings, particularly in critical, philosophical and historical studies. The terms *nahj*, *manhaj* and *minhāj* are synonymous, referring to a clear, straight road or path that leads one easily to one's destination. These words also convey the sense of traveling quickly down a road because of its straightness and freedom from obstacles, or accomplishing a task quickly due to the clarity of the manner in which it is to be done.[1]

All three words are derived from the root *n-h-j*, which bears the sense of becoming clear, or being or becoming a clear road or path. In the Qur'an God declares, "Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law (*shirʿah*) and way of life (*minhāj*)" (*sūrah al-Māʾidah* 5:48). The terms *nahj* and *minhāj* are sometimes differentiated slightly, with the former being defined as "a straight path," and the latter as "a continuous, clear path." In a hadith passed down on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, may God be pleased with him, we read, "The Messenger of God (ṢAAS)* did not pass away until he had left you all on a clear path." The verbs *nahaja/anhaja* also convey the sense of panting, gasping, or being out of breath. As ʿĀʾishah is related as saying, "He led me along, and I was gasping for breath (*wa innī la anhaju*)." In another hadith we read, "He saw a man panting, that is, gasping for breath as though he were having an asthma attack, because he was obese."[2]

Al-Qurṭubī writes, "*Al-minhāj* is a continuous path; it is also *al-nahj* and *al-manhaj*, that is, a clear path. Al-Rājiz speaks, for example, of "…water, the quenching of thirst, and an open road (*ṭarīqun nahj*)."[3] The term *minhāj* occurs once in the Qur'an, where God Almighty states:

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* (ṢAAS) – *Ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*: May the peace and blessings of God be upon him. Said whenever the name of the Prophet Muhammed is mentioned.

> And unto thee [O Prophet] have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the
> truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and
> determining what is true therein. Judge, then, between the followers of earlier reve-
> lation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow
> their errant views, forsaking the truth that has come unto thee. Unto every one of
> you have We appointed a [different] law (*shirᶜah*) and way of life (*minhāj*). And if
> God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but
> [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed
> unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must
> return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were
> wont to differ. (*Sūrah al-Māʾidah* 5:48)

Commentators have suggested numerous explanations of the words
shirᶜah and *minhāj*. Some of them have suggested that the word *shirᶜah*
refers to the contents of the Qurʾan, while the word *minhāj* refers to the
contents of the Sunnah. "And *shirᶜah* is also *sharīᶜah*, or that with which
one begins to approach something. One might say, for example,
sharaᶜa fī kadhā, that is, he began to do such-and-such. The term
sharīᶜah can also refer to the path to a watering-place. As for the term
minhāj, it refers to a clear, easy path, while the plural *sunan* refers to
paths or ways."[4]

As such, these two terms refer to the practical rulings God has laid
down for each of the peoples and communities of the world, although
there is only a single religion before God. The differences between one
sharīᶜah and another are the differences between one set of rulings and
precepts and another based on differences in the various communities'
circumstances, living conditions, temperaments and predispositions,
potentials, life experiences, and so on. As God revealed His will to the
messenger He had sent to each people or community, it became appar-
ent that the new set of precepts would abrogate all or some of those that
had been sent down to previous prophets and messengers. In the words
of al-Qurṭubī, "A particular thing might be forbidden in one *sharīᶜah*
while being permitted in another, and vice-versa. Similarly, a particu-
lar ruling might be lenient in one *sharīᶜah* and more severe in another.
Such differences are due to God Almighty's unfathomable wisdom
and irrefutable arguments which, were we cognizant of this divine
wisdom, would be clearly apparent to us."[5]

Just as each community or nation has a *sharīʿah*, each of them also has a *minhāj*, that is, a way of life which it pursues in keeping with its *sharīʿah*, whose guidance helps to purify people's souls. Thus if it is correct to say "the Islamic *sharīʿah*," it is also correct to say, "the Islamic methodology."

(2) *Qur'anic Terms of Relevance to Minhāj/Manhaj*

The essential meaning of the term *manhaj/minhāj*, namely, 'way' or 'path', occurs scores of times in the Qur'an in the form of words such as *sabīl*, *ṣirāṭ*, *ṭarīq* and *ṭarīqah*. The contexts in which these terms appear are associated consistently with right guidance and error. We are told, for example, that God Almighty leads people to *sawā' al-sabīl*, that is, "...the right path" (*sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:108; cf. 28:22). Believers ask God to lead them along the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*), the path of those upon whom God has bestowed His grace, thereby guiding them to the right way – not those who have earned God's wrath and lost their way, but, rather, those who recognize the right path and commit themselves to it. They pray, saying, "...Guide us the straight way (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) – the way of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, not of those who have been condemned [by Thee], nor of those who go astray!" (*sūrah al-Fātiḥah* 1:6-7). "...God speaks the [absolute] truth: and it is He alone who can show [you] the right path (*al-sabīl*)" (*sūrah al-Aḥzāb* 33:4). The revelation sent by God Almighty leads to the truth and to a straight way: "They said, 'O our people! Behold, we have been listening to a revelation bestowed from on high after [that of] Moses, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains [of the Torah]: it guides towards the truth, and onto a straight way (*ṭarīq mustaqīm*)" (*sūrah al-Aḥqāf* 46:30). God declares that steadfast adherence to the path will cause abundant rain and blessing to flow down. God says, "[Know,] then, that if they [who have heard Our call] keep firmly to the [right] path (*al-ṭarīqah*), We shall certainly shower them with blessings abundant," (*sūrah al-Jinn* 72:16).

Another Qur'anic term with a related meaning is *sunnah* (plural, *sunan*). One of the ways in which God blesses people is to lead them along the paths trodden by their righteous forebears, since they are

clear paths that will lead them to their intended destinations. These paths are a source of wisdom and experience that will benefit those who travel them: "God wants to make [all this] clear unto you, and to guide you onto the [righteous] ways of life (*sunan*) of those who preceded you, and to turn unto you in His mercy: for God is All-Knowing, Wise" (*sūrah al-Nisā'* 4:26).

It will be clear from the foregoing that the terms *minhāj*, *ṭarīq*, *ṣirāṭ*, *sunnah*, *hidāyah* (guidance), and *nūr* (light) share a number of significations in common, as they all have to do with human striving to tread the straight, clear path that leads to their intended destination and goal. If human beings' purpose in this earthly existence is to worship God in the broadest sense, to be God's stewards (*khalīfah*) on earth, and to achieve human development, then the *minhāj* is the means of achieving this end, or the path leading to this goal. This means or path will take the form of various intermediate goals. One might strive, for example, to go from one physical location to another along a path in a specific direction, or to move from one epistemological state to another along paths of research, study and the acquisition of knowledge. Alternatively, the goal may be to move along God's straight path from this earthly life, the realm of testing and affliction, to the life to come, the realm of reward and recompense.

Guidance along God's path is contrasted with going astray from it, and God knows best who will be guided aright and who will lose his or her way: "Call thou [all mankind] unto thy Sustainer's path (*sabīl*) with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner: for, behold, thy Sustainer knows best as to who strays from His path, and best knows He as to who are the right-guided" (*sūrah al-Naḥl* 16:125). And just as the path is associated with guidance, this guidance is associated with light:

And thus, too, [O Muhammad,] have We revealed unto thee a life-giving message, [coming] at Our behest. [Ere this message came unto thee,] thou didst not know what revelation is, nor what faith [implies]: but [now] We have caused this [message] to be a light (*nūr*), whereby We guide whom We will of Our servants:... (*Sūrah al-Shūrā* 42:52)

Faith is the light we need in order to walk along the path to which God's revelation points. Similarly, faith confirms that it is indeed the path that leads to our intended destination, that is, to God Himself, the final authority and the source from which everything originates and to which it must return. By faith we can be assured that we are on "…the straight way (*ṣirāṭ mustaqīm*) – the way that leads to God, to whom all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth belongs. Oh, verily, with God is the beginning and the end of all things!" (*sūrah al-Shūrā* 42:52-53). "O you who have attained to faith! Remain conscious of God, and believe in His Apostle, [and] He will grant you doubly of His grace, and will light for you a light wherein you shall wa alk, and will forgive you [your past sins]: for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace" (*sūrah al-Ḥadīd* 57:28).

God Almighty has committed Himself to guiding people to the right path. To this end He makes the path plain while warning us that there are paths that lead to error rather than to truth. "And [because He is your Creator,] it rests with God alone to show you the right path: yet there is [many a one] who swerves from it. However, had He so willed, He would have guided you all aright" (*sūrah al-Naḥl* 16:9).[6] The terms *manhaj*, *sabīl*, and *ṣirāṭ* all refer to a path or way that leads to the fulfill-ment of a specific purpose for which human beings strive to obtain knowledge or benefit of some kind. However, they can also refer to the path one follows in this life in order to attain to the life to come. In other words, they include the idea of a path that leads to a life of perfec-tion, and it is in this sense that the term *manhaj* is used most frequently in the Qur'anic revelation.

(3) *Variant Uses of the Term Manhaj*

There is an intimate link between the terms *minhāj* and *maqṣid* (inten-tion, aim). In his commentary on Imam al-Bayḍāwī's *Minhāj al-Wuṣūl ilā ʿIlm al-Uṣūl*, al-Subkī states:

> *Minhāj* – the title of this book – means 'road' or 'path.' One arrives at something at the end of a road or path. Hence, when al-Bayḍāwī speaks of *minhāj al-wuṣūl ilā ʿilm al-uṣūl* (the '*minhāj* of arrival at the knowledge of principles'), he means the

path by means of which one arrives at the knowledge of principles. We might speak, for example, of *ṭarīq Mekkah*, 'the Mecca road', by which we mean the road by means of which one arrives in Mekkah. Arrival is not part of the road; rather, arrival takes place at the end of the road. Or, one might say, arrival is the road's purpose or goal.[7]

The value of a *minhāj* is that one takes it as a path to reach one's intended destination, or *maqṣid*. One thus moves in the direction of the intended destination. It is in the nature of movement to be directional, and in this movement, through which people commence their journey along a straight path toward their goal or destination, they have a history which they write by means of their movement and purposeful striving. Movement is meaningless without a path that has a beginning, a direction, and an end.

The aforementioned terms are often synonymous, and are used interchangeably. However, they can also be used with varied meanings. Thus, one might speak of *al-manhaj al-islāmī* (the Islamic path, method or approach) or *al-manhaj al-mārkisī* (the Marxist path, method or approach) in reference to an epistemological system or a worldview, philosophy, or an overall idea about the cosmos, life, and human beings. When we speak of *al-manhaj al-tarbawī* (educational method or approach) in Islam, we are speaking of a specialized science. Similarly, we speak of Shāfiʿī's *manhaj fī al-uṣūl* – Shāfiʿī's method or approach to Islamic principles – or *manhaj al-Muʿtazilah fī al-Kalām*, that is, the Muʿtazilites' approach to, or method of, studying theology. In such situations, the term *manhaj* or *minhāj* refers to the philosophy or school of thought to which a particular researcher, thinker, scholar, or group of thinkers or scholars belongs. We might say that a certain study employed the historical method (*al-manhaj al-tārīkhī*) or the empirical method (*al-manhaj al-tajrībī*), in which case we are referring to a style of research that involves specific procedures and ways of doing things.

(4) *Methodology (Manhajiyyah) vs. Minhāj / Manhaj (Method)*

Some situations call for a study plan (*manhaj dirāsī*), that is, a set of materials and skills that have been specified for the purpose of achieving certain educational aims. Other situations call for a scientific method

(*manhaj ʿilmī*), that is, a scientific manner of going about research based on observation, the formulation and testing of hypotheses, and drawing and generalizing conclusions. As for the Arabic term *manhajiyyah*, it can sometimes be translated as "Methodism," which refers to the philosophy of religious renewal that emerged in eighteenth century Europe. Methodism witnessed its early beginnings at Oxford University, where the study of religion and evangelism was undertaken on systematic, orderly bases. Adherents of this philosophy are still known as Methodists.[8]

The term *manhajiyyah* can also be rendered in English as "methodology," which is defined as "the science of method," or "a branch of logic which analyzes the principles and procedures that govern research and investigation in a given field of knowledge." The term "methodology" can also be used to refer to the theoretical foundations of a given philosophical school, that is, its fundamental assumptions, premises and concepts.[9]

Method (manhaj): Research procedures
Methodology (manhajiyyah): The science that concerns itself with these procedures

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"Methodology" thus refers to a modern discipline that concerns itself with methods and ways of engaging in research and investigation, and which is of relevance to all sciences. However, it is most closely related to the history of science, the philosophy of science, and, most particularly, the theory of knowledge. The term can form part of any science; it can also form a branch of any epistemological field (physics, history, etc.) that studies this field's logic and structure, and means of acquiring knowledge and research methods proper to this field. One might refer, for example, to the methodology of the science of history.

Given the foregoing, "method" can be defined as the procedures proper to a given epistemological field, while "methodology" can be defined as the science that concerns itself with these procedures and which identifies their distinguishing features such as purpose, clarity, and integrity.[10]

Modern Arabic dictionaries define the term *manhajiyyah* in a variety of ways. These range from the definitions cited above from *Webster's New World College Dictionary* to those given for the term *manhaj*. Most of these dictionaries trace the word's meaning to one or more of the foreign dictionaries from which they were translated. The dictionary of philosophical terms published by the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo defines the term *manāhij al-baḥth* (research methods) as a branch of logic that studies method in general, as well as the specific methods proper to the various sciences.[11] By contrast, the philosophical encyclopedia edited by Abd al-Rahman Badawi unites the science of method with the science of logic, that is, the rules of thought in the partial sciences.[12]

Authors have used these three terms with various but similar senses, although they may add dimensions derived from a particular field of knowledge or from a general intellectual framework. Without attempting to trace these various usages, suffice it to note that the Arab writers who have used these terms most frequently have attempted in their usage to combine the meanings the terms bear in the Arab Islamic heritage with the translations of their uses in English and French, particularly in specialized dictionaries in these two languages. The various senses associated with the term *manhaj/minhāj* continue to range from specific, limited meanings to senses derived from a general intellectual framework. It has been used, for example, to refer to an aspect of the philosophy of sciences having to do with ways of thinking and general rules applied to the search for truth in the sciences, which influence the course of the mind and define its processes until it arrives at a known outcome.[13] As for the term methodology, it largely parallels what was known in the history of science and philosophy, in both ancient Greek civilization and Arab-Islamic civilization, as the "science of logic." Parallel terms from the Islamic heritage include Shāfiʿī's "principles of jurisprudence" (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and al-Ghazālī's "scientific standard" (*miʿyār al-ʿilm*) or "investigative criterion" (*miʿyār al-naẓar*). Al-Ghazālī states:

> Their assertion that logical arguments need to be made airtight is correct. However, logic is not their sole province. Rather, it is the source to which we

refer in the art of argumentation as reasoned reflection. However, they have given it the name "Logic" to make themselves look impressive. We might also refer to it simply as "debate" or "mental perceptions" (*madārik al-ʿaql*).[14]

Methodology also has a parallel in what al-Tahānawī refers to as "how work is to be done" when he states, "That which is, in and of itself, an instrument for obtaining something else must be related to the manner in which this something is to be obtained. As such, it is related to the manner in which a task is to be accomplished."[15]

It is clear, then, that the terms *manhajiyyah* and *manhaj/minhāj* intersect with human ways of thinking, as well as with logic as a branch of philosophy; with the theory of knowledge and epistemology as a branch and science of philosophy; and with methods of searching for knowledge in this or that field. All three of these terms are used in relation to knowledge, which in turn touches on all realms of existence, both the seen and the unseen, and on both the individual and communal levels. In the last analysis, however, such knowledge is limited by the limitations on human beings' capacity for perception and understanding.

Knowledge-related Methodological Assumptions
• Assumptions relating to the knower or researcher
• Assumptions relating to the object of research and knowledge
• Assumptions relating to the tools of knowledge

Given the fact that knowledge in its various fields is the sphere in which methodology operates, we would expect a methodology to be associated with a set of knowledge-related assumptions. Moreover, we would expect these assumptions to cover three areas,[16] namely, (1) the knower or researcher (a positive attitude, openness to new data, integrity, an inclusive perspective), (2) the object of research and knowledge (for example, the testability and knowability of the object, and the possibility of replicating such knowledge in others), and (3) the tools of knowledge (reliance on data, reliance on the rules of reason in relating to the data, putting data on trial, evaluating data in light of its realistic validity, etc.).

It will also be clear from the foregoing that the sphere of operation for methodology encompasses all fields of knowledge in their various categorizations, whether they pertain to revelation, reason, Islamic law, nature, society or other topics. Methodology may have to do with the manner in which we think about these fields, the research conducted to acquire, test and apply knowledge, or day-to-day conduct and scientific practices engaged in based on the guidance provided by such knowledge. However, the terms *manhaj/minhāj*, *nahj* and *manhajiyyah* are more closely linked to scientific research and its associated procedures than they are to issues relating to thought and individual conduct and practice. The various meanings associated with these terms have been linked with specific research topics, as well as the groups into which such topics can be classified based on the relevant criteria.[17] Consequently, the methodological issues that arise most frequently have to do with the tools and procedures used to gather research data such as tests, experiments, questionnaires, surveys, interviews and the like.

Our purpose in this chapter is not to detail such matters. Rather, our aim is to confirm and emphasize the importance of engaging in thought and research in an orderly manner that will enable us to achieve our aims in the clearest, most direct way possible. These thought processes have more to do with what we might term the philosophy of research, the philosophy of science generally speaking, or the philosophy of method. In this chapter our aim has been to consider the topic of method – *manhaj* – and related issues, leaving to future chapters the matter of how method is to be put into practice.[18]

If methodology (*manhajiyyah*) is the science that concerns itself with ways of thinking about, relating to and investigating a particular subject, then it will also include a preconceptualization and overall vision of this subject's component elements. It will also yield detailed plans and approaches that define the way to achieve relevant aims by means of practical procedures and operational methods. After all, there can be no action or execution of a plan or procedure without some sort of forethought and prior conceptualization.

Second: THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH INTO ISLAMIC METHODOLOGY AND SYSTEMATIC THINKING

(1) *The Need to Research Islamic Methodology*

Islamic methodology has to do with the process of thinking Islamically and the nature of the ideas that arise from this process. Hence, it is associated with Islam's overall aims and intents. The issue of methodology in its intellectual dimension is thus inseparable from the way of life that Islam seeks to promote and nurture in Muslim society. The aim of Islamic thought is to establish an Islamic way of life in this earthly realm so that it becomes a passageway to felicity in the life to come. If Islamic thought diverges from an Islamic way of life or is isolated from people's daily concerns, it will lose its effectiveness and life will pass it by. Similarly, if Muslims' way of life diverges from Islamic thought, it will lose its way and cease to be truly Islamic, falling into the labyrinths of non-Islamic values and conceptions. However, even when Islamic life and thought are in harmony, Islamic methodology will yield a variety of distinct approaches and methods in keeping with the distinctive features of the different sciences and epistemological fields.

The issue of methodology is one of a number of questions relating to the philosophy of science, which is divided by modern classifications into numerous areas of scientific knowledge and their sub-specializations. An examination of the contemporary literature dealing with the Islamic perspective on the various areas of the philosophy of science yields little apart from scattered individual efforts having to do with the history of the Islamic scientific heritage. As for other topics that fall under the rubric of the philosophy of science – having to do with an analysis of the language, history, method and theory of science and everything of relevance to its evolution and progress – they have yet to be subjected to a careful academic treatment from an Islamic perspective.[19]

The need to study Islamic methodology is multifaceted. The epistemological practices that prevail in today's world, particularly in powerful, influential societies, are not haphazard or impulsive. Rather,

they are based on methodological foundations with clearly defined principles, values and premises. In order for us to understand these societies and their impact on our countries, then discern the ways in which we need to confront and relate to them, we will need to familiarize ourselves with their methods, that is, how they operate. We must then adopt an appropriate methodology of our own in light of our Islamic view of the world. Any discussion or comparison of these contrasting methodologies will necessarily involve a discussion of their respective principles and theoretical foundations.[20]

Those engaged in the Islamization of knowledge view the issue of Islamic methodology as a major factor in the intellectual crisis being faced by the Muslim community. Consequently, they recognize the need to join efforts to construct and clarify such a methodology as a basic foundation of the Islamic culture and civilization that the Muslim community seeks to establish. Unfortunately, however, there is a dearth of Islamic literature and research on the topic of method and methodology in their capacity as epistemological fields. We also find that few Muslim writers have forged a path toward constructing methodological foundations, that is, an Islamically grounded theoretical perspective on method (*manhaj*). The few writings available on this topic are, for the most part, attempts to draw attention to the problem of method, the importance of applying a systematic perspective, engaging in systematic reading and interpretation, etc. Rarely, however, do we find systematic *practice* on the part of Muslim specialists in the various epistemological fields.

In what follows I summarize what a number of contemporary Muslim thinkers and scholars have to say about the importance of research into Islamic methodology. Within the space of a single chapter it would be difficult, if not possible, to analyze all scholars' contributions to the discussion and treatment of any given topic. Hence, my aim here will simply be to confirm the existence of a methodological awareness that constitutes a foundation for the contemporary Islamic intellectual reform movement. The present choice of authors and writings is thus not intended to understate the importance of other contemporary reformist Muslim thinkers whose contributions do not appear here. Nor is it intended to understate the

seriousness of the destructive methodological orientations adopted by numerous contemporary thinkers who – in the name of deconstruction, interpretation, secularism, modernism, post-modernism, and the like – have attempted to drive a wedge between modern Muslims and their religious principles and heritage.[21]

Issues for Investigation

• Search on the Internet for five studies (either academic or professional) that aim to construct the desired Islamic methodology, or which trace the methodological efforts of Muslim writers and scholars.
• Search on the Internet for five studies (academic or professional) that undertake a critical analysis of destructive methodological orientations.

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(2) *Examples of Modern Islamic Awareness of the Issue of Methodology*

Ismaʿīl al Fārūqī

Ismaʿīl al Fārūqī viewed methodology as central to the Islamization of knowledge enterprise. In his explanation of the question of methodology, al Fārūqī[22] began by defining the nature of the effort required to rebuild the Muslim community and empower it to carry out its God-given responsibilities. He based this approach on the notion that the Muslim community is suffering from a serious loss of direction which threatens its ability to shoulder its responsibility to lead the world. Al Fārūqī was convinced that the source of the malady afflicting the Muslim community is the prevailing educational system, which was established under Western colonialism and perpetuated by national governments after winning their independence. This system is based on a split between two parallel educational systems. One of these is a secular public educational system, which is little more than a distorted version of the system found in the West. Although it is responsible for graduating society's leaders, this secular system fails to provide learners with an Islamic way of thinking because its content is devoid of an Islamic perspective on the world. The other is a traditional Islamic educational system that is out of touch with reality, and whose graduates

have such a circumscribed role that they are unable to compete with the graduates of the secular public educational system.[23]

In al Fārūqī's view, the way to begin addressing the crisis facing the Muslim community is to unify the two educational systems described above into a single system that aims to instill an Islamic worldview in students' minds and familiarize them with the nature of Islamic civilization and its defining features. Such a system would aim to reformulate all branches of modern knowledge from an Islamic perspective in the context of a well-rounded curriculum. This would enable members of the Muslim community to construct a contemporary Islamic knowledge that combines revelation and reason, thought and action and, in so doing, leads to earthly prosperity and felicity in the world to come. In short, it would be a monotheistically based system in every sense of the word.

Topic for Discussion

There has been a great deal of talk about the need to unify the modern secular educational system and traditional Islamic education. However, the more important question is: How can this be accomplished?

It follows, then, that the methodology required for this purpose can be derived neither from the prevailing Western methodology, nor from traditional Islamic methodology. Al Fārūqī observes in this connection that the Muslim community has lost the monotheistically inspired methodology on the basis of which Muslim society and civilization were originally built. After the Muslim community was afflicted with successive catastrophes, its academic leaders lost confidence in their ability to nurture and preserve Islamic character, and were content to cling to the apparent meanings of the texts of Islamic law without consideration for its higher intents and aims. In so doing they closed the door to innovative interpretation, viewing any reform of the tradition inherited from their pious forebears as a blameworthy innovation.

These developments took place at a time when the West was in the ascendency in the areas of political power, industrialization, and colonial discovery and expansion. As a consequence, the West took over

most of the Islamic world. It even confronted the Ottoman caliphate and did away with it, then partitioned what remained of the Muslims' states. Under the sway of ignorance, backwardness and colonialist pressure, high-ranking Muslim leaders in Turkey, Egypt, and India attempted to launch a renaissance on Western foundations in the hope that life might course anew through the Muslim community. However, Westernization did nothing but alienate certain sectors of the Muslim community from their Islamic faith in some countries, and open a divide in others between the secular Western system and the traditional Islamic system.[24]

Consequently, al Fārūqī saw the modern Muslim community as being divided between two methodologies: a secular Western methodology, and a traditional Islamic methodology, both of which are equally powerless to revive and reform the Muslim community. In al Fārūqī's view, the ineffectiveness of traditional Islamic methodology has two primary causes. The first cause has to do with the fact that traditional Islamic methodology confines the concept of ijtihad, or reasoned interpretation, to the area of jurisprudence, which is in turn confined to the legal rulings and laws set down by early schools of jurisprudence. In so doing, this methodology disregards the broad, inclusive Qur'anic understanding of the term "jurisprudence" (Arabic, *al-fiqh*, which means literally "understanding"), and which was appreciated rightly by the great jurists of Islam. The Qur'anic concept of jurisprudence, or fiqh, includes the notion of understanding, realization, perception, the acquisition of knowledge, and specification of the fundamental principles of life and reality. By contrast, however, today's jurists have so confined themselves to the practice of issuing legal rulings (fatwas) concerning what is permissible and what is not that they have lost the ability to take on the responsibilities that were shouldered by earlier scholars of Islamic jurisprudence.

The second reason for the ineffectiveness of traditional Islamic methodology is its propensity for distancing itself from earthly concerns. Engrossed in the pursuit of mystical ideals, proponents of this methodology have tended to neglect practical issues, leaving them instead to the world's tyrants, megalomaniacs and workers of corruption. At the same time, of course, Sufism remained the sole source of openness and

spiritual vitality during the period of stagnation in Islamic thought. Through the spiritual discipline and purity it fostered in its adherents, Sufism helped to protect and preserve Muslim identity and provide a degree of spiritual satisfaction. It was Sufis who, by providing a good example to others on the level of personal conduct and relations with others, drew many people to Islam. It was also Sufis who, during certain critical periods of history, stirred up others to engage in armed resistance against tyrannical foes. However, this source of vitality has also dried up to a significant extent, advocating an isolationist, quietist approach based on sheer intuition and subjective experience which has perpetuated the alienation between reason and revelation.

In response to this state of affairs al Fārūqī called for the formulation of a new methodology the likes of which traditional jurists could never have anticipated. The methodology al Fārūqī envisioned is derived from a new understanding of the nature of principles or sources (*uṣūl*) in Islam. According to this new understanding, the principles or sources of Islam are viewed not as principles of Islamic jurisprudence in its traditional sense, but, rather, as sources of Islamic knowledge.[25] Al Fārūqī called for the Islamization of knowledge as a necessary starting point for overcoming the dichotomy in the educational system, the dichotomy in the life of the Muslim community as a whole, and the ineffectiveness of traditional Islamic methodology. Al Fārūqī defined numerous features of the desired methodology, which revolves overall around the principles of Islamic monotheism (*tawḥīd*). As such, it is a monotheistic methodology based on the oneness of the Creator, the oneness of the creation, the oneness of knowledge, the oneness of life, and the oneness of humanity.[26]

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman

AbuSulayman has drawn attention to the methodological issues in contemporary Islamic thought and the importance of methodological, systematic thinking. In addition to writing and publishing on the subject of methodology, AbuSulayman has founded institutions whose activities and programs have promoted awareness of its importance. Indeed, the terms "method" and "methodology" occur in nearly every paragraph of what he has written.[27]

There are those who claim that there is no such thing as an "Islamic methodology." Such people argue that methodology is an objective tool that is independent of the culture of the researcher and the topics he or she is researching. By contrast, AbuSulayman holds that there exists an Islamic methodology which can be clearly distinguished from the methodologies of other cultures and peoples. However, he does not view this methodology as a revealed text in relation to which human beings are mere recipients. Rather, it represents a human effort to understand the interaction that needs to take place between the instructions contained in the revealed text and the issues people face on the ground in order to fulfill the religion's purposes and aims. This methodology is in a constant state of evolution and development, in an ongoing response to newly arising circumstances and challenges.

The concept of method, the course of its development, its initial successes and its subsequent failures are matters that call for study and investigation. AbuSulayman has found, for example, that the Islamic method that was developed and applied in the early phases of Islamic history, and which involved integrating the two God-given sources of knowledge – the written revelation and the created universe – liberated human reason and released its powers. Consequently, this method helped lay the foundations of Islamic civilization and contributed to the progress of the world's nations in virtually all areas. However, this same method proved unable to resolve a number of difficulties relating to the understanding of revealed texts, such as the issue of abrogation in the Qur'an, or certain financial and economic practices of relevance to the question of usury. In AbuSulayman's view, the traditional method ceased to be effective because of problems that soon began to emerge in the social and political life of Muslim society. As rulers began taking arbitrary control of public administration and policy, Muslim scholars retreated, or were forced to retreat, from society's public issues and concerns to occupy themselves solely with theoretical juristic and intellectual issues. As a consequence, Muslim scholars from that time on contented themselves with subordination and imitation rather than the creative use of their reason.

AbuSulayman may not have written prolifically on the topic of Islamic methodology. However, in everything he wrote, he emphasized

the need to develop such a methodology and to put it to use for the purpose of recovering the Qur'anic view of the world and culture. He also emphasized that the Islamic intellectual reform which he advocated was essentially a methodological issue, and that the efforts expended in this area should not be haphazard, but founded on a disciplined, scientific plan. Like al Fārūqī, AbuSulayman has frequently taken issue with what both thinkers have referred to as "the traditional methodology" that was developed by jurists and scholastic theologians in the early centuries of Islam, but whose development was later aborted, thereby hindering the progress of Muslim society and civilization over the centuries.

AbuSulayman has posited a number of processes that are essential to Islamic methodology. The most important of these are: understanding Islamic texts based on the higher aims and intents of the religion, viewing all texts relevant to the topic under investigation in light of one another, and interpreting these texts within the temporal and geographical context in which they were written as a way of discerning the most prudent way to apply them to current realities. It bears noting that AbuSulayman practices the methodology he preaches, particularly in the way he relates to texts, in the realms of economic thought, international relations, psychology and education alike. And this practice has often led him to unexpected conclusions.

Taha Jabir Alalwani

The central place occupied by the issue of "method and methodology" in Alalwani's thought is easily discernible, although space does not permit us to trace this theme throughout al-Alwani's works. In the present context it will be sufficient to examine the working paper he presented in 1989 at the First Seminar for Advisors of the International Institute of Islamic Thought. In this paper Alalwani presented the five focal points of the Islamic intellectual reform project: thought, method, science and knowledge, culture and civilization, and the Islamic and human heritage.[28] Alalwani later expanded these four themes into the following six: (1) formulation of the Islamic worldview, (2) construction of the Islamic methodology, (3) the Qur'an, (4) the Prophetic

Sunnah, (5) the Islamic heritage, and (6) the contemporary humanist heritage, which Alalwani identified as the field of operation for this desired methodology.[29]

Issues for Discussion
• How was the notion of integrating the two sources of knowledge (written revelation and the created world) manifested in the early phases of Islamic history?
• How did this integration contribute to the construction of an Islamic methodology capable of resolving issues that were newly arising at that time?

In his subsequent writings Alalwani stressed the need to build Qur'anically inspired foundations for what he termed a "cosmic Qur'anic methodology." Alalwani holds that,

> …apart from *al-tawḥīd*, the notion of Qur'anic method is the most important of all Qur'anic concepts. Consequently, a single verse such as *sūrah al-Māʾidah* (5:48) must not be the sole basis for formulating the concept Qur'anically. Rather, one must read all the verses that, together, form a network of subthemes and Qur'anic terms revolving around the notion of method (*minhāj*)…Such terms include *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (the straight path), *al-sabīl* (the way), *al-hudā* (right guidance), *al-nūr* (light), *al-ittibāʿ* (following, emulation), *al-iqtidāʾ* (emulation, following an example), *al-shifāʾ* (healing), *al-uswah al-ḥasanah*) (good example), and *al-ṭarīq* (road or way)…[30]

When connected to other, related terms, the Qur'anic term *minhāj* can be seen to refer to a clear, straight path with easily discernible landmarks and an unmistakable beginning and end. Alalwani states that,

> the person who travels this path can rest assured of reaching his intended destina-
> tion. This is why God Almighty has drawn a link between *minhāj* (way of life) and
> *shirʿah* (law). There is a law – a *shirʿah* – that people want and need in their search
> for uprightness, integrity and truth as they strive to organize their lives, carry out
> their duties as God's stewards [*khalīfah*] on earth, and achieve true justice among
> themselves. However, these aims can only be achieved by means of a clear, easily
> discernible path…Hence, the *minhāj* needs to provide exacting criteria on the
> basis of which we can discern higher aims and intents, regulate our behavior, obey
> God's law, and tread the path of right guidance…[31]

In Alalwani's view, contemporary scientific methodology and reason-ing are "an advanced stage along the path leading toward a cosmic methodology, the sole source of which is the Qur'an, because the Qur'an is the only book capable of accommodating, purifying, and elevating scientific methodology to the level of a cosmic methodology. It is the only book capable of bringing scientific methodology out of its crisis, releasing its potentials, and protecting it from the perils and threats of relativism, probability, and the tendency to make final pronouncements without clear foundations."[32]

For this reason, Alalwani stresses the need to bring to light the "logic" of the Qur'an and what he terms "the cosmic Qur'anic methodology." This methodology is distinguished by a set of Qur'anic methodological determinants of which he details three: (1) *al-tawḥīd* as the pivotal element of the Qur'anic worldview, (2) combining the "two readings," that is, our reading of the Qur'an and of the created universe, and (3) the structural unity of the Quran and the cosmic truths it encapsulates. Alalwani then links these three Qur'anic methodological determinants with construction of the epistemolog-ical integration methodology we are advocating. He explains:

> The Majestic Qur'an is a single book in its structure and in its organic unity, and every single word it contains is preserved by means of these structural unity. The act of bringing together the 'two readings' is the most important methodological step, and the most significant methodological factor in revealing the remaining Qur'anic methodological determinants.[33]

It was his ongoing reflection on *sūrah al-Mā'idah* 5:48, "Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law (*shirʿah*) and way of life (*minhāj*)" that led Alalwani to develop his understanding of the word *minhāj* in its Qur'anic sense. In the beginning he followed Ibn ʿAbbās, al-Shāfiʿī, and other commentators, who understood the term *minhāj* to refer to the Prophetic Sunnah, which helps us to see how to apply the teachings of the Qur'an. He later leaned toward the view that the term refers to the science known as the fundamentals or principles of jurisprudence (*ʿilm uṣūl al-fiqh*). By the year 2010, however, he had concluded,

that just as the Holy Qur'an contains the divinely revealed law (al-Sharicah) in all of its details, it also contains the way or path we are to follow (al-manhaj) with all of its determinants, and that just as God Almighty has completed the religion for us, bestowing grace upon us in all perfection and detailing the divinely revealed law for us, so also has He deposited within His written revelation a path or method (minhāj) which is capable of ratifying and directing all of the various methods (manāhij) human beings have formulated....In order for human understanding to reach a level where it can properly apprehend the Qur'an, it needs an introduction that begins from the individual researcher's epistemological ceiling, that is, from the level people have attained thus far in their ways of thinking and reasoning, and the reason-related phase through which humanity is passing, because only in this way will we know what questions to pose about the crisis we face and its attendant difficulties. As for the answers to these questions, they are revealed by the contents of the Qur'an on the same level where we find ourselves. In other words, the answers provided by the Qur'an are always in keeping with the epistemological ceiling that obtains at any given time in human history.[34]

Alalwani goes on to say:

It is to be hoped, after methodological awareness has spread, that those who have dealings with the various sciences, particularly those relating to divine revelation, will be able to rethink both these sciences and the divine revelation, and to look critically at relevant issues and questions that call for further examination in light of the guidance provided by the Qur'an's own methodological determinants. We are fully confident that this methodological orientation will restore the vitality and effectiveness of these sciences, rendering them susceptible to being confirmed and directed by the Qur'an and achieving "the revival of the religious sciences" to which so many religious authorities of early times and godly scholars have aspired.[35]

Nevertheless, Alalwani reminds his readers that, ultimately,

the issues of relevance to method will not be fully clarified, nor will its tools be complete until it has become the topic of discussion – that is, until scholars' dialogues and exchanges have brought them to maturity and its premises have been empirically tested.

Alalwani calls upon scholars with specializations in the various branches of science,

to unearth 'the Qur'an's epistemological methodology,' thereby enabling the Muslim community to clarify the rules governing this approach and, with its help, to resolve the problems that face the wider human family. For the Qur'an, like its Source, is generous and ever-giving, and its wonders never cease.[36]

Taha Abd al-Rahman

From early in his academic career, Moroccan philosopher Taha Abd al-Rahman noted that the Muslim community was suffering from "a serious methodological shortage." The reason for this is that many of those who are undertaking a reexamination of Islamic methods have less mastery of rational methods than did the scholastic theologians of Islamic history, and are less skilled than their intellectual forebears were at gleaning and using sound rational evidence. According to Abd al-Rahman, we are indebted to scholastic theologians for the ways in which they confronted non-Islamic faith currents and rationalistic, atheistic philosophical orientations by going beyond a focus on the principles and foundations of Islamic doctrines to the introduction and use of theoretical and dialectical methods and approaches. Consequently, he calls upon the Muslim community to recover its creative energy in the realm of intellectual and theological production in order to confront the materialist and historistic tendencies that dominate the modern world, and to prepare itself for this confrontation with the necessary methodological equipment.[37]

Taha Abd al-Rahman takes issue with the manner in which many researchers study and evaluate the Islamic heritage, because they employ a methodology that has been adopted unthinkingly from a cultural context other than their own. In Abd al-Rahman's view, it would be better for such researchers to derive their own methodology through adherence to a set of theoretical and practical principles, the most important of which is to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of the methods and approaches used by early Muslim scholars and thinkers from various scientific fields, as well as a good knowledge of modern methods and approaches. In so doing, researchers can go beyond the practice of imitation and the borrowing of theories to that of innovative interpretation and the formulation of original methods, approaches, and theories.[38]

Abd al-Rahman describes the methodology he employs in his dialogue and debate with modern researchers as an "infra-methodology." According to Abd al-Rahman, this "infra-methodology",

> involves debate, which was the dialectical practice in which the early Muslims specialized and which we have adopted as our topic of study, analysis and evaluation. [We also employ] an 'ultra-methodology', which we have made use of in this investigation, analysis, and evaluation.[39]

Abd al-Rahman derives his methodological techniques and theoretical concepts from two precise sciences that have only recently gained wider circulation – viz., Linguistics and Logic – by "inverting" their tools, principles, and content. At the same time, he affirms the importance of the methods and approaches employed by Muslim scholastic theologians and of giving thought to "the things they were right about, so that we can benefit from them in assessing the degree of 'creative energy' in their production."[40] Applying his methodology in the context of theological debate, he undertakes a sober, critical analysis of Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri's notion of "the critique of the Arab mentality," which tends toward rhetoric and metaphor, and Muhammad Arkun's idea of "the critique of the Islamic mentality," which emphasizes the derivation of legal rulings.[41]

Taha Abd al-Rahman has dealt in many of his writings with the thought of his contemporary and colleague, Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri (1936-2010), and the latter's approach to evaluating the Islamic heritage. Abd al-Rahman distinguishes between the "differential evaluation" in which al-Jabiri engages, and which he seeks to refute, and the "integrative evaluation" which he himself has adopted. At the same time, Abd al-Rahman sets out to familiarize readers with traditional Islamic methodology, and begins by specifying several aspects of a contemporary application of the traditional method. These include the clarification of concepts, definitions and principles, formulation of claims, compilation of evidence, and the critique of various points of view. Hence, Abd al-Rahman's work is not "merely theoretical discourse on the traditional method."[42] Rather, in evaluating the Islamic tradition, he adheres to,

a methodology which derives its essential characteristics from principles that lay at the heart of traditional Arab Islamic practice. In intent, this practice was a function-based methodology, not a content-based one, a practical methodology rather than a theoretical one. It was a methodology based on firm foundations, and which did not simply present facts without analysis or discussion….This functional methodology…led to ten outcomes that were supported by clear evidence. Some of these outcomes were oppositional, and some of them served to build foundations. The oppositional results revealed the weaknesses in the empirical view of tradition, while the foundational results, which revealed the benefits of the integrational view of tradition, were divided into two groups: (1) those having to do with overlapping integration, and (2) those having to do with approximative integration."43

Though a contemporary philosopher himself, Taha Abd al-Rahman views most Arab researchers associated with philosophy as little more than disciples who imitate the philosophers of the West on the pretext of being engaged with global modernism. He writes, "Look at the modern Arab philosophizers, who 'interpret' if others interpret, who 'dig' if others dig, and who 'deconstruct' if others deconstruct…." Considering "where bad philosophizing has led this [Muslim] community," Abd al-Rahman undertook an in-depth study of statements made by philosophy's innovative interpreters. He began investigating philosophy the way a scientist investigates natural phenomena, that is, "through observation, description and explanation." In so doing, he left the beaten path by challenging the commonly held notion that philosophy is mere words, asserting that in fact, philosophy is "double-speak in action." He refers to his work as "the jurisprudence of philosophy," concerning which he has published the first of two volumes. The purpose of this project is to "liberate philosophical discourse." In other words, it aims,

to replace the practice of recording philosophical statements that have been passed down from others and which bequeath you nothing but dependency with the practice of recording philosophical statements that have a solid grounding, and which bequeath you the ability to form your own opinions. In other words, they give you the ability to make the transition from conformity and imitation to innovative interpretation and renewal.

After all, he states, "the [true] philosopher is free even if they put a yoke around his neck and a lock on his mouth."44

Taha Abd al-Rahman's approach to liberating philosophical discourse and the practice of "the jurisprudence of philosophy" have served to rehabilitate Qur'anic terms that had been abandoned by the would-be philosophers who do nothing but imitate thinkers in the West. Using the meanings of these Qur'anic terms as his foundation, Abd al-Rahman has constructed concepts and terms which, taken together, constitute the machinery of what he terms his "conceptual factory," which has its own distinctive pillars, mechanisms and models. His simple but detailed explanations enable readers to familiarize themselves with "the technical operations which the philosopher undertakes in manufacturing and using terms and concepts, thereby producing a distinctive, autonomous intellectual discourse that splits statements up as much as it generates points of view." Abd al-Rahman urges readers to throw off the shackles of imitation and tradition and to plunge into the sea of renewal, not preoccupying themselves with imitators' grumbling and complaints over,

> the difficulty or impossibility of being creative in our philosophical production, bemoaning our circumstances and heaping blame on our lack of understanding, yet without doing anything to show us practical ways of recovering our ability to be creative…In fact, when we found … what we thought would lead us to this practical solution, and when we spoke as precisely and as accurately as we could about the means by which we could develop our philosophical creativity, these imitators urged us to give up our striving to achieve creativity, to be content with what we could learn from Western philosophers, and to pass on their sayings unthinkingly to our progeny. So, they have gone from shedding crocodile tears over the loss of creativity to waging war on those who go in search of it.45

Not content simply to talk about methodology, Taha Abd al-Rahman puts it into practice. After providing a detailed description of his methodology's intellectual premises, practical steps and procedures, he encourages his readers to adopt these for themselves.

Ahmad al-Raysuni

Ahmad al-Raysuni occupies a place of respect in numerous fields, in all of which he is known for his systematic approach. As a scholar of the principles of jurisprudence, al-Raysuni is interested in the topic of renewal, particularly as it pertains to the higher aims and intents of Islamic law (*al-maqāṣid*). Al-Raysuni notes that Islamic methodological thought has been intimately associated with scholastic theology. This association has not been entirely successful, since one of the difficulties into which ancient Islamic thought fell was precisely on account of this association, and its failure to take proper account of the higher intents of Islamic law on the level of either content or method. Consequently, Muslim thinkers need to be cognizant of both the higher intents of Islamic law and aims-based method.[46]

Al-Raysuni mentions a number of reasons for being concerned with *al-maqāṣid*, or the higher aims of Islamic law, one of which is that *maqāṣid*-based (aims-based) thought is, first and foremost, systematic thought. He states, "With respect to their foundations and their purposes, their universals and their particulars, their divisions and their ranks, their paths and their procedures, *al-maqāṣid* constitute a distinctive manner of thinking and seeing, analyzing and evaluating, drawing conclusions and putting things together."[47] If our manner of thought is based on *al-maqāṣid*, our thought will be purposeful and able to define its objective. This will in turn determine the priority and legitimacy of a given line of thought and, hence, the feasibility of pursuing it. The need to concern ourselves with *maqāṣid*-based thought becomes even clearer when we realize that many thinkers and theorists lack the ability to see how interests and sources of harm should be prioritized in the various areas of life. They also lack the kind of synthetic mentality that would enable them to examine life's particulars in such a way that they can draw the necessary connections between them and perceive the larger, more universal issues and questions to which they point. A *maqāṣid*-based method or approach enables us to synthesize things and to place them in their proper order. For in light of the higher intents of Islamic law we are able to draw inferences, put pieces together, see how things compare, and how they are to be ordered. As al-Raysuni

observes, "Induction is the most advanced of all approaches, while universal, inductive knowledge is the most advanced and powerful knowledge there is."[48]

It is only natural that innovative interpretation (ijtihad), whether in the realm of the principles of jurisprudence, or in the realm of *al-maqāṣid*, should require a degree of academic competence. However, in al-Raysuni's view, mere academic competence is not enough to qualify an individual to engage in innovative interpretation. In addition, one must have what he terms "methodological commitment." When we are engaged in making academic judgments on ideas and points of view, there must be generally accepted "methodological rules."[49] When there are a range of interpretations – some sectarian, others denominational, geographical, individual, theological, or political – the result is a descent into a kind of chaos and laxity. In such a situation, al-Raysuni asserts, the solution has to be "balanced and scientific. It must involve a methodical approach based on rules and principles. This was the type of approach that was developed and perfected by Imam Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī."[50] This methodical formulation of rules and principles applicable to the practice of innovative interpretation and juristic reasoning was marked by a kind of inflexibility and exactitude, both of which were needed in order to deal with chaos and laxity. Al-Raysuni observes:

> It appears, in hindsight, that it would have been more helpful for the trend al-Shāfiʿī established toward restraint and control to stop, or at least become more moderate, once it had introduced a suitable degree of balance and thoughtfulness into the interpretative and investigative process. Instead, however, this trend continued in the direction of even greater severity and control until it began to shift from rules-creation to complication. So eventually it came to place shackles on innovative interpretation and investigation.[51]

Even though al-Shāfiʿī's juristic school took the lead in the realm of *uṣūlī* thought,[52] other schools – the Ḥanafī, the Mālikī, and the Ẓāhirī – made significant contributions to the dialogue with Shāfiʿī scholars. In addition, al-Raysuni states, "we find that a number of juristic scholars were known for their open-minded approaches and styles of

writing on the subject of the principles of jurisprudence or juristic application."53

Al-Raysuni has demonstrated the kind of methodological commitment to which he calls others. He has applied methodological rules to his discussion of a number of issues of relevance to the relationship between texts and human interests, illustrating his points with examples relating to the fast of Ramadan, women's manner of dress, and cutting off the hands of thieves. He has demonstrated this same methodological commitment in his outstanding work on "the theory of persuasion and preference" (*naẓariyyat al-taqrīb wa al-taghlīb*), whose features he has clarified and whose importance he has brought to light. Al-Raysuni has shown this theory, which encompasses and gives rise to a large number of rules that have served to guide Islamic thought down the centuries, to be one of the major underpinnings of Islamic juristic principles. It is, in al-Raysuni's words, "a methodological device which is complete and ready for use, and which can be used safely and with confidence." The effectiveness of this theory and its methodological value in relation to the principles of jurisprudence have been demonstrated through its use in treating numerous current issues relating to jurisprudence, Qur'anic interpretation and Hadith. This theory is foundational to Islamic legislation, thought, and evaluation.54

In his book entitled, *Al-Kulliyyāt al-Asāsiyyah li al-Sharīʿah al-Islāmiyyah* (Basic Universals of Islamic Law), al-Raysuni applies a comprehensive methodology to the process of demonstrating the perfection of the Islamic law, defining priorities relating to intellectual pursuits and outreach, and strengthening the monotheistic foundations that unite the Muslim community with its various currents and schools of thought. According to al-Raysuni there are four types of Islamic universals, each of which relates to a specific realm. The first relates to doctrine, the second to the higher aims and intents of Islamic law, the third to morality, and the fourth to legislation. These universals help both Muslim scholars and the Muslim community as a whole to draw up methodological rules that can guide them both to the beginning of the road and to its end. The source of these universals is the Holy Qur'an, which is the beginning. In fact, it is "the beginning

of the beginning." Al-Raysuni states:

> Its clear, unambiguous verses – which form the essence of its message – are the source of Islamic universals. Consequently, we must focus our sight and our understanding on these clear, unambiguous verses: calling them to mind, seeking insight through them, steeping ourselves in them. It is on the basis of these verses that we must relate to all other verses of the Qur'an, as well as to the Prophetic Sunnah and the events of the Prophet's life. Given this order of priority, we have a basis for relating to the Prophet's Companions fiqh – their understanding of things (I use the word fiqh here in this more general sense, not in the derived sense of jurisprudence), the fiqh (understanding) of the imams and the jurists, and our academic heritage overall. When we find ourselves perplexed and disquieted by the complexities of our lives, let us appeal once again to the beginning, and to the beginning of the beginning, knowing that there we will find refuge, safety and peace of mind.55

Those who read al-Raysuni's books will find that there is a clear method to his writing that sets him apart from other scholars. With the exception of this Masters and PhD dissertations, all of his books are small and deal with very limited, specific themes. Their ideas are masterfully organized, they reveal a constructive, reformist, practical bent, and they are so free of digressions and verbosity that all the ideas in a given book could be summed up in just a few words. Yet every sentence and every paragraph in the book has its place.

Take, for example, his book *Al-Shūrā fī Maʿrakat al-Binā'* (*Al-Shūrā*: The Qur'anic Principle of Consultation, A Tool for Reconstruction and Reform), which treats both general issues and particular questions of direct relevance to modern-day life. Relying heavily on the principles-based (*uṣūlī*) method and both principles-based and legislative rules, al-Raysuni examines verses from the Qur'an, passages from the Prophet's biography and the Prophetic Sunnah, and the jurisprudence of the Prophet's Companions and of later juristic scholars in the space of a mere one hundred and eighty pages. This piece of writing embodies a distinctive approach marked by both originality and a commitment to grounding statements in their documentary and historical sources. Taking care not to rehash things that have been said before, al-Raysuni inquires into what is new and beneficial. To this end, he limits himself

to a treatment of contemporary issues, new angles, and questions or aspects of questions that have received little attention in the past.[56]

Al-Raysuni concludes that consultation is not only a theme of relevance to political science and a set of mechanisms for decision-making in the public sphere. In addition, it is intended to be a way of life for the individual Muslim, Muslim society, and the Muslim state in relation to all issues, both private and public. This study by al-Raysuni also shows that consultation is an approach to thought and investigation in search of the truth in science and the right course of action in the social sphere, and a way of building relationships and regulating transactions on the level of society and state and in the realm of international relations.

Nevertheless, this study makes clear that it is not sufficient simply to declare consultation to be a principle for ordering private and public life, or to say that commitment to this principle may lead to the desired reform. Rather, in order for the aims of freedom and justice to be realized, the members of society must establish the detailed laws, mechanisms and practical procedures necessary to make consultation a concrete reality.

Third: BASIC CONCEPTS OF RELEVANCE TO METHODOLOGY

Scholars and thinkers use specific terms to convey their ideas, beliefs, and ways of thinking. These terms are methodological tools which help us to understand the factors that determine many cultural and social phenomena. Modern academic literature is replete with terms expressive of concepts that are closely related and, to a great extent, overlapping. There is a range of attitudes and schools of thought on how acceptable it is to use these terms. Some of these terms are used to convey a meaning that is conveyed by other terms as well, and some researchers have no qualms about using a number of terms synonymously, not because they make no distinction between the words, but because they see them as all belonging to a single thought group. In the course of his discussion, the researcher will be concerned primarily not with terms, but with an idea, and as long as the idea comes across clearly, it makes no difference (or so he assumes) which term the reader or hearer associates it with!

We find, for example, that some of the researchers to whom reference will be made shortly are not concerned to distinguish between science (ʿilm) and knowledge (maʿrifah), religion and philosophy, worldview and epistemological model, worldview and ideology, epistemological system and epistemological model, the philosophy of science and the theory of knowledge, theory and paradigm, methods and methodology, or the object of scientific research and scientific method. Those who do concern themselves with such distinctions may find themselves in a forest dense with trees of varying sizes, shapes and colors, any one of which may take on a new size, shape or color before their very eyes!

It is undoubtedly helpful and important to know the roots of terms, their semantic evolution, and the relationship these bear to intellectual clarity (or chaos), particularly during periods of cultural interaction between peoples and nations. Such interaction is taking place in our own day with the globalization of ideas and practices and mutual borrowing of concepts and terms. During such periods of exchange, weaker nations may fear the loss of their historical, linguistic and cultural identities. Hence, a writer may wish to avoid the use of a this term or that for fear that its meaning may be laden with foreign cultural associations. However, the alternative term chosen might itself be laden with associations from the writer's own cultural background. Be that as it may, human civilizations have often witnessed the migration of terms from one culture to another and from one epistemological field to another. When a term migrates, efforts are made to settle it in its new environment so that in its new habitat it will bear specific meanings that are not necessarily bound to its country or culture of origin.

Jungle of shapes, colors and directions
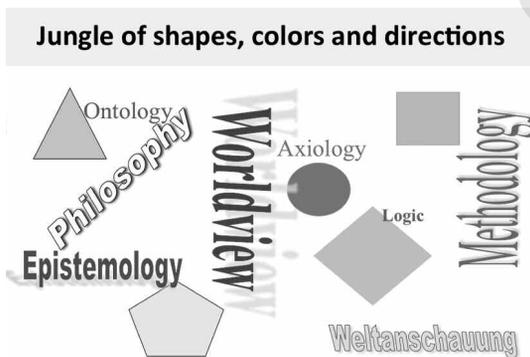
Worldview

The concept of "worldview" is one that has moved out of its original habitat in philosophy and taken up residence in numerous other epistemological fields, particularly the natural and social sciences. The importance of the concept of worldview will be clear when we realize the degree to which worldview impacts the ways in which we perceive the world we live in, our place in that world, and the way we understand the natural and social sciences.

The concept of worldview is found in fields of knowledge as varied as religion, philosophy, the social and natural sciences, the arts, applied sciences such as medicine and engineering, and so on. Religious terms such as faith, doctrine and macro-conceptualization express the ideas, concepts and beliefs that address the major existential questions which the term "worldview" attempts to answer. These are the same questions with which philosophy has concerned itself from the dawn of human history. They also make up the essential content of the philosophy of any of the modern sciences, the theories that underlie these sciences, and their methods of research. Virtually every film we see in the cinema or on television, from comedy to tragedy, is presenting us with specific values and views of the world. There is no such thing as a film that presents a "neutral" story that is not colored by the author's, actor's, producer's or director's beliefs and cultural values.[57]

Although many new terms have come into use among scholars in various fields over the centuries, there are some individuals who prefer not to use any term which is not found in the Qur'an or the Prophetic Sunnah on the pretext that some of these terms may have roots and associations that obscure their intended meaning and distance them from the concepts the writer wants to convey. Beginning in the 1950s, the late Sayyid Qutb worked on linking the ways of thinking and acting required by Islamic doctrine, and the overall idea one has about the universe, life, and human beings. In his book, *Khaṣā'iṣ al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī wa Muqawwimātuhu* (The Distinguishing Features and Components of Islamic Conceptualization), Sayyid Qutb discussed the importance of using a particular term that would express Islam's "overall idea about the universe, life, and human beings." Qutb was

not satisfied with the terms "doctrine," "overall idea," or "Islamic philosophy." Instead he chose the term "conceptualization" (*taṣawwur*). According to Qutb, worldview in its Islamic framework is an expression of the overall belief-related conceptualization presented by Islamic doctrine. This conceptualization, which contains a comprehensive explanation of existence, provides realistic guidelines for human activity in light of human beings' understanding of their place in the cosmos and the ultimate purpose of their existence.[58]

An overarching vision is the basic starting point for epistemological work on all aspects of a given project, and one's methodological approach is of relevance to both the project's ends and its means. In fact, it would seem that all aspects of human behavior can be attributed ultimately to worldview. Hence, there is ample reason to look further into the significance of worldview in the realms of individual and social life and academic activity. Such an investigation is certain to confirm the central role played by worldview in everything we do. This is not to deny the importance of other factors, such as state of mind, and one's physical and social surroundings. However, worldview – from the epistemological point of view, at least – is more important by far than any other factors of relevance to human behavior because it is the only framework in which human reason can operate to acquire knowledge. Consequently, worldview constitutes the foundation for any epistemological theory.

People form an overall picture of themselves and of the world around them within the limits imposed by the location from which they are viewing things, the angle they take, their natural, psychological and social environment, and the prevailing system of thought with its linguistic components and authoritative frameworks. It is this overall picture – variously referred to as cosmic vision, overall idea, cosmic conceptualization, general philosophy, comprehensive explanation, explanatory paradigm, or ideology – that has come to be known widely as worldview.

Exercise
How can worldview be put to use as the foundation for a
theory of knowledge? Cite examples of this use.

Seen from the Islamic perspective, worldview is not merely a theoretical, theological issue. Rather, it operates on three interconnected, integrated levels. First, worldview is a mental perception of the natural, social and psychological realms. As such, it is like a set of stationary and moving pictures which draw people's attention and call them to reflect and contemplate with the aim of acquiring understanding and insight. Second, worldview is an attitude toward the world, a state of mind that requires one to relate actively and constructively to the world, in peace and harmony, reverence and respect, desire and wonderment. Third, worldview is a plan to change the world, that is, a set of goals through the achievement of which people hope to make the world more harmonious and balanced, and to put resources to use towards creating a better life for themselves and others in the realization that our earthly life is a place of preparation for life in the world to come.

It would be a mistake to deny the political and economic aspects of the crisis in which the Muslim community finds itself, or the corruption of our ruling regimes and the hostility of our adversaries. However, it would be an even greater mistake to disregard the intellectual and cultural dimension of our crisis, which manifests itself in our view of ourselves and of the world around us.

Worldview in Islamic Thought
- A mental perception of the natural, social and psychological realms.
- An attitude that requires one to establish a relationship with these realms.
- A plan to change the world.

Worldview is related to our overall perception of the Creator, the universe, life, and the human race, and how we answer the ultimate (or initial) questions about human life in this universe: When? Why? Whither? The answers we provide to such questions will impact our mental perceptions and our actions. Similarly, they will impact the way in which a community or nation sees itself and its place among other communities and nations.

Exercise
How can an individual's view of himself be part of his worldview?

Worldview in this sense undoubtedly formed part of Muslims' geographical jurisprudence, that is, the juristic rulings of relevance to land and home and the legal rulings pertinent to residing in a country, migrating there, or migrating elsewhere. This juristic perspective was part of the political jurisprudence that governed Muslims' relationships with others both within "the abode of Islam" (*dār al-islām*) and elsewhere. Many studies indicate that this political jurisprudence did not develop and mature to the degree that the jurisprudence pertaining to acts of worship and individual religious rites did. At the same time, Islamic jurisprudence witnessed a development whereby people were classified in terms of their attitude to the Islamic message. A group of people might, for example, be termed "a nation of response" (*ummah istijābah*), that is, a nation that had accepted the Islamic message and begun carrying it to others, while another would be termed "a nation of invitation" (*ummah daʿwah*), that is, a nation to whom the message of Islam was still being directed. However, this categorization simply perpetuated a divisive view of the world. Consequently, there is a need for thorough methodological studies that investigate what elements have led to the formation of this juristic vision within the contemporary Muslim mentality, and the respective places of Qur'anic authority, events in the life of the Prophet, and the Prophetic Sunnah, in determining these elements. In short, we need to explain the persistence of the divisive juristic perspective that has been passed down by Islamic tradition. Similarly, we need to ask how relations between Muslims and others have been understood both in historically Muslim countries and elsewhere, and how they ought to be understand in the present and the future.[59]

If contemporary individual Muslims' worldview were determined by their place in this world, they would no longer see themselves as distant from others either historically or geographically. On the contrary, they would find themselves vitally linked to other parts of the world, and responsive to what happens to others just as others are responsive to what happens to them. Worldview has thus become an explanatory paradigm for understanding the nature of the problems that arise between different groups of people, while the act of clarifying how people's worldviews compare in terms of both differences and

similarities has become a way of dealing with and overcoming these problems.

If Islamists were to use worldview as a unit of analysis for ideas, attitudes, individuals and institutions, they might be better able to understand the perspectives of others. Even more helpful, perhaps, would be for them to explain their own worldview to others in terms that others can truly understand.

A worldview is, essentially, the view one holds of oneself, and on the basis of which one's view of others is formed. This view will permeate a person's way of looking at other individuals, both those who share many of the same convictions and commitments and those who do not. Similarly, it will permeate the way a person views the adherents of various religions, juristic currents, schools of thought, partisan organizations and social institutions, each of which he views as something "other," and different from himself.

The various aspects of an individual's worldview interact with elements of religious doctrine, which instills a particular understanding of the universe, life, and human existence, as well as with the human knowledge he or she has acquired in the natural, social, and behavioral sciences. Worldview is affected by a wide of factors, including concepts such as the roundness of the Earth and its movement, space exploration, issues relating to geographical and astronomical jurisprudence, human interaction with natural elements and phenomena, the concept of the self and its various ways of behaving, human personality types, and the plurality of human societies and their varying values and norms.

It is clear, then, that an individual does not necessarily construct his or her own worldview. Rather, it comes into being in every individual's mind in a more or less spontaneous manner. As such, worldview is a component of human beings' innate makeup given their tendency to be influenced by the intellectual environment in which they live and to assimilate prevailing social customs and traditions. An individual is shaped by family upbringing during the early phases of his or her

development. However, this does not mean that the educational system and the media are incapable of influencing the formation of an individual's worldview, or of modifying worldview after it has been formed through the design of suitable interventions.

AbuSulayman believes that the thought and culture of the Muslim community has undergone palpable distortions that have prevented its cultural enterprise from fully achieving its aims. He states:

> The first and most serious of these distortions was the distortion of the Islamic worldview that provided the framework for the Muslim community's thought and culture. As a consequence, it ceased to be a positive, comprehensive, monotheistic worldview capable of providing well-founded, universal guidance for Muslims' thought, ethics, relationships and systems.[60]

AbuSulayman sees this distortion as one of the reasons the social sciences failed to develop in the Arab world from an early date.[61] Distortion in the Islamic worldview led in turn to methodological distortion which resulted in a one-dimensional, unbalanced view of the sciences and knowledge. The various epistemological fields were divided into religious sciences (which were classed as "central") and worldly sciences (which were viewed as "marginal"). As a consequence, thought began to atrophy and the worldview that discerns the order and unity of the universe died out. The effect of this development, according to AbuSulayman, was to "deprive the Muslim community of the growth of the social sciences which complement the universals of the divine revelation and its guidance by providing the proper direction for Islamic social life and renewing it and developing its concepts, its institutions, and its resources alongside growing knowledge, potentials, and escalating challenges."[62]

Paradigm

The concept of paradigm has been attributed to the American scholar Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996), who began his career as a researcher in theoretical Physics. When he began reflecting on historical events that represented important way stations in the growth and advancement of scientific knowledge, his interest shifted to the history and philosophy

of science, in which connection Kuhn was influenced by the works of James Conant.[63] However, Kuhn acknowledged that it was the works of Michael Polanyi on personal and tacit knowledge that led him to the "strange" conclusions he reached.[64]

Kuhn's ideas are based on the concept of "paradigm" and scientific revolutions. According to Kuhn, it is in the nature of the scientific mind always to engage in research within the parameters of a particular paradigm, or standard model, which embodies a view of the world that is comprehensive, scientific, methodical, and metaphysical. In Kuhn's view, worldview lies at the heart of academic and scientific activity. Hence, it plays a critical role in scientific practice, since it defines the link between the data, the content of observations, the importance of problems, and the acceptance of solutions. Worldview supplies us with our values, criteria and research methods. In short, every model or paradigm that defines the way in which science progresses is an all-inclusive view of the world.

Scientific revolutions take place in response to ordinary scientific practice in keeping with the prevailing paradigm, since ordinary practice is what generally leads to the appearance of anomalies which later form springboards for change and revolution. These anomalies lead to the discovery of new, unexpected phenomena, or things that were not known before. This may lead ultimately not to the development of existing theories but, rather, to their total abandonment and subsequent replacement with other, newer, theories. In other words, there are times when an existing paradigm is no longer capable of explaining observed phenomena, in which case it becomes a harbinger of an approaching shift, and the existing paradigm is overthrown in a scientific revolution. The scientific revolutions that have taken place in the West have been associated with names such as Copernicus, Newton, Lavoisier, Darwin, and Einstein.

Progress in science, according to Kuhn, is not a result of a linear accumulation of knowledge. Rather, it takes place as a result of radical changes in which new theories replace previous theories that have lost their explanatory power. When a scientific revolution takes place, the scientific community rejects a scientific theory that has heretofore been accepted by all in favor of a different theory. Every scientific

revolution produces a subsequent shift in the problems that are posed for scientific research and the way in which the scientific community determines which problems merit researchers' attention. Every revolution alters the scientific imagination in ways that we need in order to understand the world more clearly. These shifts and the debate that accompanies them are the distinguishing features of scientific revolutions.[65]

The publication of Kuhn's book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, in 1970 fell like a bombshell into the fields of science and the philosophy of science, and for better or for worse, its reverberations are still being felt to this day. The notion of a paradigm in the sense of a standard model was based on the intimate link that exists between history and the philosophy of science. This link was established in a way that Edwin Hung has described as a worldview revolution, a revolution in the way we view life.[66] Scientific research and the nature of scientific reasoning really did undergo a revolution after we realized that such research always takes place within the parameters of a particular view of the world.

Basically, Kuhn took the concept of "paradigm" to mean scientific achievements that had been recognized worldwide because they supplied the research community with both problems and solutions. In fact, Kuhn meant two things by the word "paradigm": (1) Scientific content embodied in laws, methods, and theoretical, metaphysical explanations, which in turn represent a highly general worldview, and (2) the significance and nature of the scientific community's achievements embodied in the rules and regulations that researchers generally agree on using in the ordinary practice of science.

> Kuhn's "paradigm" relies on
> (1) scientific theories and (2) research methods that are prevalent in the society.

Kuhn asserts that paradigm shifts and scientific revolutions result in a change in worldview because, when they take place, scientists are obliged to deal with a seemingly new world. After the Copernican revolution, for example, astronomers came to live in what appeared to be a different world. Similarly, after Lavoisier discovered oxygen, he

found himself operating in a world that seemed different from the one in which he had been operating previously. Of course, the world as it really was had not changed. Rather, it only appeared to scientists that they were operating in a different world. The world as it appears to the observer results from realms of perception and modes of understanding. It is the world constructed by the human mind. Hence, the change had taken place in the subject, not in the object.

The Explanatory Model

The concept of worldview overlaps with a number of epistemological methodological tools which are used by thinkers when analyzing phenomena, events and ideas with the aim of achieving a comprehensive view of disparate topics. Such a view helps the thinker or researcher to link the whole with the parts, the universal with the particular, the general with the specific, so that he or she gains a fuller, more comprehensive grasp of the phenomenon under study. One of these tools is what Abdelwahab Elmessiri refers to as "the explanatory model," which might be defined as "a set of characteristics that have been transformed into a coherent picture that has so permeated our minds and consciousness that we see all of reality through it, since it is an integrated vision of existence."[67]

This explanatory model is an epistemological map which is constructed by the human mind. One arrives at such a model by abstracting a great number of relationships, details and facts, then linking them to construct an overall pattern that takes the form of a comprehensive perceptual map. This "perceptual model" is the tool human beings employ in perceiving reality. However, the act of perception takes place for the most part in an unconscious manner that becomes part of an individual's psyche, inborn disposition, and immediate perceptions based on his culture, the details of his life, and the objects, symbols, signs, images, dreams and various cultural products that go to make up his world.

Perceptual models are paired with conscious, creative "analytical models" which a researcher formulates based on his reading of various texts and his observation of phenomena. By means of such analytical

models, the researcher deconstructs reality, then reconstructs it in such a way that the reality or text before him comes to be understood and absorbed on a profounder level. Analytical models serve to broaden the range of the explanatory model through the phenomena and data that the model attempts to explain. Since these data challenge the model and expose its areas of weakness, it will sometimes be necessary to modify the model so that its explanatory capacity is increased. Hence, the relationship between the explanatory model and reality consists of an interchangeable spiral.[68]

Those who read Elmessiri's writings may draw a correlation between his "explanatory model" and Thomas Kuhn's "paradigm" given the closely related senses in which Elmessiri uses the two terms. However, Elmessiri also uses the terms differently in certain respects. He frequently uses the term "explanatory model" almost synonymously with the term "worldview." Hence, one should be cautious when reading Elmessiri's works to distinguish in what precise sense he employs this term. Elmessiri's language is not easily conformable to the traditional terms one finds in the dictionary. Nor can it be brought easily into conformity with the terms employed by other researchers in similar or identical senses. Elmessiri employs a terminology which he is at pains to make uniquely his own. Moreover, he strives constantly to ensure that he uses each term consistently, that is, with the same meaning, in all of his writings. Consequently, it might be difficult to understand fully what he means by this or that term based on a cursory reading of one of his works. Rather, one needs to have some familiarity with his various writings in order to gain a good grasp of his terminology. One reason for this is that Elmessiri uses his terms in a variety of epistemological fields: the history of science, literature, philosophy, politics, etc. Thus, for example, the term *maʿrifī* (literally, "of or pertaining to knowledge," and generally rendered in English as "epistemological") as used by Elmessiri does not bear the same significance it does in other writers' works, where it is sometimes associated with the theory of knowledge (as it is in English language dictionaries), or the philosophy of science (as in French language dictionaries). As used by Elmessiri, the word *maʿrifī* has to do with what is universal and ultimate. Hence, Elmessiri's explanatory model does not correspond

entirely to Kuhn's paradigm, however great the resemblance between them. Rather, Elmessiri's "explanatory model" is closest in meaning to the term "comprehensive worldview."

Nasr Arif has used the term "epistemological model" (*numūdhaj maʿrifī*) in a manner that corresponds to Kuhn's "paradigm."[69] Nevertheless, he has attempted to establish the meanings of relevant terms such as science/knowledge (*ʿilm*), epistemological model (*numūdhaj maʿrifī*), theory (*naẓariyyah*), method (*manhaj*), explanatory model (*numūdhaj tafsīrī*), etc. by tracing each of them back to its Latin origin and tracing the term's semantic development in its European context from the days of ancient Greece to the days of post-Modernism. Hence, the authoritative point of reference for this analysis was a Western European one. This may have been done in compliance with the requirements of the Ph.D. thesis in which the aforementioned analysis appears, and which was written for Cairo University's Political Science Department. However, Nasr Arif went on to produce pioneering academic works in which he applied a different methodology in his treatment of issues relating to Arab Islamic tradition in the political sciences.

The Epistemological System

The elements that go to make up the theory of knowledge, or epistemology, are sometimes referred to as "the epistemological system." We had occasion to mention earlier that the first focal point of the Islamization of knowledge project is construction of a worldview, and that the two fundamental issues of relevance to this focal point are epistemological system and methodology. An epistemological system concerns itself with issues of relevance to the history and evolution of human knowledge, the sources and tools of this knowledge, methods of classifying knowledge, and a clarification of its functions.

Sources of knowledge are most closely linked to worldview, while tools of knowledge are most closely linked to methodology. Divine revelation and the universe are two complementary sources of knowledge within the Islamic worldview, while reason and the sensory faculties are two complementary tools for relating to divine revelation

and the universe for the sake of acquiring knowledge and putting it to use. Hence, it is worldview (the greater range of vision) that determines both the sources and tools of knowledge, while the nature of these sources and tools (the epistemological system, which is a subsphere within worldview) defines the methods of dealing with the knowledge acquired. Methodology can thus be seen to be a subsphere within an epistemological system or theory of knowledge. Given this overlap and mutual interdependence, we find that many thinkers and writers use the terms "worldview," "epistemological system" and "methodology" interchangeably.[70]

A Suggested Model of the Relationship Between Worldview, Epistemological System and Methodology

This suggested explanatory model begins with Islamic doctrine, which represents the belief system. One's belief system has to do with the greater existential issues and ultimate questions relating to the Creator, the universe, human beings and life. This system bears close resemblance to what we are terming cosmic vision, or worldview. The primary fact within this system is the existence of God as Creator, which human beings have an inborn ability to perceive. God Almighty created human reason with the built-in capacity to understand the world, and He created the world in a way that makes it understandable. This is a universal, natural knowledge that exists within human reason all over the world and which constitutes what we are terming "natural life structures." Such structures are an element shared by all worldviews.

The structures formed by the Muslim mind having to do with God the Creator, prophethood, the Last Day, etc. are comprised of numerous detailed concepts. Some of these are epistemological structures which the individual obtains through the acquisition of knowledge. Taken together, they constitute what we term "the epistemological system," which recognizes certain sources and tools of knowledge, as well as certain ways of acquiring and using such knowledge.

The epistemological system and the belief system are linked by certain key concepts having to do with human beings' place in the universe and the Muslim community's place among other communities.

Hence, terms such as "community," "caliphate," "empowerment" and "resource utilization" are part of the epistemological system and, at the same time, part of the belief system.

Given the centrality of the Islamic belief system and the epistemological structures it forms within the Muslim mind, there is a value-related, ethical framework that will take shape as a result of an overall Islamic understanding of things. This ethical framework or value system, which clarifies issues relating to truth, justice and goodness, complements and intermingles with the epistemological system.

The Islamic system = the system of doctrine +
the system of knowledge + the value system.[71]

These three systems are interlocking and interdependent. Hence, our understanding of the elements of one of these systems will reflect on our understanding and way of relating to the other two. The elements that make up the epistemological system will necessarily be defined in light of the doctrines pertaining to the seen and unseen worlds, the nature and purpose of the universe, the nature of human beings and their place in the universe, and the nature of life, from the way it began to the way it will come to an end. Similarly, the conduct people engage in and their attitudes toward the values of truth, justice and goodness will be determined by their understanding of the outcomes of such conduct, outcomes which are defined based on the source of their beliefs.

The Islamic worldview, which takes all parts, elements, components and systems into consideration, is marked by an integrative view of knowledge that has enabled the Muslim mind to develop a distinctive perspective. As a vision of the true nature of things within their more inclusive framework, the Islamic worldview includes authoritative rules and frameworks for thought and behavior as parts of the society's overall value system. It defines the way in which the human mind perceives the realities of the universe, life, and human beings, as well as the answers to the major existential, epistemological and ethical questions that pertain to these realities and the relationships among them.

It is in the nature of human reason to distinguish between entities that are varied and separate based on the features that set them apart from one another. At the same time, it recognizes them as belonging to categories or groups that make up larger units. Such entities are located at particular coordinates within time and space and are related to each other in defined ways. Distinguishing features are also perceived by human reason as they pertain to types of behavior and conduct, social issues, religious values, and so forth.

As noted earlier, our mental images of existence have a direct impact on our actions, our social conduct, and our individual and communal lives. Hence, all individual and collective behavior arises out of an overall worldview.[72]

CONCLUSION

This chapter has concerned itself with the concept of method (*manhaj*) from a Qur'anic point of view, and clarified the distinction between method (*manhaj*) and methodology (*manhajiyyah*) in their modern technological usage. We have discussed the need for research and writing on issues pertaining to method and methodology, and the importance of promoting a methodological culture among members of the Muslim community at large. We have examined some of the forms methodological awareness has taken, and the ways in which contemporary scholars and thinkers have understood method and methodology. This chapter has also touched on a number of key concepts of direct relevance to method and methodology, particularly those of worldview, epistemological system, paradigm, and explanatory model. The following chapter will discuss the ways in which the concept of method has been treated by scholars in the Islamic tradition.

It has been noted that modern scholars hold differing views on the importance of method and methodology and the extent to which they are needed in the context of modern Islamic reform. Some scholars point to the ways in which method manifests itself in specific Islamic sciences such as the principles of jurisprudence, scholastic theology and logic. Some hold that method consists of general rules governing thought and research in all academic disciplines, while others see it as

consisting of rules that pertain specifically to this discipline or that. Seen from such a viewpoint, there is one method that pertains to scholars of Hadith, another that pertains to interpreters of the Qur'an, another to scholars of jurisprudence, another to philosophers, another to natural scientists, and so on.

Some contemporary Muslim scholars are content simply to apply a given method to whatever they say or write, while others speak explicitly about their method and the ways in which they reach their conclusions. There are some whose understanding of method has remained static, while others' understanding of method and its implications within the Islamic context has evolved, and may still be developing and changing.

The approach we have followed in this book is to adopt the Qur'anic point of reference as a guide to the definitions of concepts. The concept of method – *manhaj/minhāj* – as seen from the Qur'anic perspective is characterized by both generality and comprehensiveness, in which respect it is like all other Qur'anic concepts. Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that any meaning we associate with the term *manhaj/minhāj* will inevitably be a particular meaning which is tied to a specific time, place, and set of circumstances and experiences. We find, for example, that the method of the Prophet's Companions, may God be pleased with them, was that of receiving things on the authority of the Messenger of God. In other words, it was what we have come to know as the Sunnah as passed down on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās and other narrators, which clarifies the meanings of the Holy Qur'an, thereby providing us with a way (*manhaj*) in which to emulate the Prophet. The term *manhaj/minhāj* also refers to a set of rules that regulate the process of deriving precise legal rulings from their original sources. Given this sense of the word *manhaj/minhāj*, the principles of jurisprudence constitute a methodological science par excellence. Similarly, the Hadith sciences are methodological sciences which employ a set of processes involving precise definition, scrutiny, documentation, and criticism of both the account's chain of transmission and its text. All of these are methodological processes. Nevertheless, every hadith scholar has a method of his own which is distinct from those of other hadith scholars. And the same applies to all other

sciences pertaining to divine revelation and realms of human discovery and reason.

Method is associated with general rules that regulate the ways in which human thought deals with knowledge-related issues and themes. It is also associated with specific rules that pertain to particular sciences. Some methods and rules are colored by the worldview adopted by scientists and researchers. There is, for example, one positivist method that is based on the adoption of modernist views, and another that is based on post-modernist perspectives. Similarly, there is a Christian religious method, an Islamic religious method, and so on.

Although the examples discussed in this chapter may give the impression that there is a high degree of awareness of the importance of method, the literature on methodology outside the Islamic sphere may be just as plentiful and thorough as what we encounter on the Islamic side. In fact, it may reflect an even greater awareness of the methodological crisis through which some disciplines are passing, particularly the social sciences and the humanities.

There are also a number of matters that deserve note:

- Most of the research and studies on prevailing scientific practice adhere to customs, traditions and procedures that researchers have not traced back to their origins, and the authoritative point of reference for which they have not attempted to identify. Rather, they content themselves with the knowledge that these methods are familiar and widely practiced. Alternatively, they may not adhere to any particular method at all, or a method that one could not easily describe or define.
- The studies that we might view as direct applications of Islamic methodology – that is, studies that explicitly adopt this methodology and consciously adhere to its principles – are quite rare.
- Discussions of method and methodology are generally restricted to academic and professional studies rather than including practical applications of Islamic methodology to thought, research and conduct.
- Although there is some awareness of the need to develop an Islamic methodology, there is still little awareness of the principles and

distinguishing features of such a methodology. Weaker still is the awareness of what we have termed "the methodology of episte-mological integration" – which we are advocating in this book and encouraging others to develop.

Worldview

Epistemology

Methodology

Circles of belonging