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# ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN ECONOMICS: ISSUES AND AGENDA

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## Abstract

This paper discusses three issues — worldview differences, revelation-reason relationship, and the question of methodology — important for Islamizing knowledge in the field of economics, and presents also the outlines of an agenda for action. Western worldview separates the mundane from the spiritual aspect of human existence while Islam keeps the two unified. This makes the goals, scope, and principles of secular economics in many ways different from those of Islam in the area.

Reason alone is the basis of theoretical formulations in secular economics. Islam too encourages people to use intellect for analyzing observations and draw inferences to discover the truth but within the confines of the *Shari'ah*: reason is not allowed to violate revelation. Evidently, procedures priorities, and prescriptions, can rarely be the same in the Islamic as in secular economics.

Methodology of secular economics essentially is a posterior development. It has invariably sought to rationalize what economists have actually been doing over the centuries so as to fortify the evolving doctrine of free enterprise. In contrast, for Islamic economics the doctrine was already contained in the revelation. To discover — not to invent — has been and remains the task of methodology in Islamic economics. Unlike the secular dispensation, the glide here is from methodology to economics, not *vice versa*. The agenda outlines focus on considerations in preparing reading materials, and in developing curricula.

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## 1. Introduction

The prime aspiration of the Muslim *ummah* after the Second World War has been to hasten the restitution of Islam's past status and glory at the global level. An important plank of the effort to achieve the end has been the Islamization of human knowledge, especially since the late Al-Farūqī presented his ideas on the subject way back in 1982.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, his programme is still viewed as *the* key for unlocking the doors of real progress and prosperity on the decadent Muslim societies of today.<sup>2</sup>

Islamization of knowledge has been a cardinal theme for discussion at the international conferences and local seminars. Various institutions, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in particular, university departments, research centers, state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and individuals all remain seized with the problem. Even so there is a growing perception, which this author shares, that Islamization of knowledge has barely taken off the ground, and there is urgency to increase the pace. It is in this context that the present paper looks at the case of economics for a variety of reasons.<sup>3</sup> It seeks to clarify some of the basic theoretical issues in the area, and also outlines an agenda for action.

As a preliminary, it may be noted that economic events are interwoven in a political, legal, moral, and ideological pattern with each element influencing the other. The pattern keeps on changing, and commits all social sciences, including economics to a sort of evolutionary holism. A purely economic analysis must pose as it does serious demarcation problems.<sup>4</sup> This fact is well acknowledged but is invariably ignored in economic writings. Again, even as much of the discussion in the secular area is characterized with increasing conflict, and confusion,<sup>5</sup> there remains a remarkable agreement among the economists on an issue of importance. They are almost unanimous in the opinion that value judgments cannot be admitted into economics unless they meet the criterion of 'objectivity.' Common reasoning and evidence or *positive* economics is considered to be the surest means to

resolve normative disputes.<sup>6</sup> Of late, this view seems to be dissolving into the new current of thought, but textbook economics is still not willing to relent on the issue.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the secular economics literature rarely accords significance to the holistic nature of the social dynamics, and insists on defining the 'normative' within the limits of human reason. Both are the issues relevant to our main theme, and we may return to them later. What is important for now is the question: What do we mean by Islamization of knowledge? A brief but clear explanation of the phrase is needed to understand its scope and implications.

The views on the point are blurred, but two shades of thought are presumably discernible. First, there is the view which adopts what may be called an all-or-nothing approach to the process of Islamization. It insists that Islamic economics must not brook any intrusions that the classical interpretations of the *Shari'ah* cannot accommodate. Here, the basic assumption is of a performing Islamic society being in existence. Islamization here results in producing pure economic models. In contrast, the second view looks at things in a rather pragmatic frame. It prefers a step-by-step movement towards the ultimate in an evolutionary manner. It seeks to progressively modify the existing secular structures, and advocates for reopening doors of *ijtihad* in the light of modern needs, and compulsions. Both approaches are, in fact being pursued, and are useful, in the development of Islamic economics. Pure models may look sterile, but they do help, as in secular economics, identify the relevant variables under complex social situations, highlight their relationships, indicate the direction of movement and unveil important policy implications. An evolutionary approach is obviously much more appealing. In fact, this approach to Islamization of knowledge is as old as Islam itself. For, Islam started, though with a rejection of what was inconsistent with its tenets — anyone who embraced the faith had to immediately cut off from the *jāhiliyyah*, the state of awareness (knowledge) ignorant of the guidance from God<sup>8</sup> — it is well to note that even then not a few concepts, trade practices, and previous economic ideas not in line with the Islamic ideas were retained

for the time being with or without modifications. The resurgent Islam finds today the same sort of polluted knowledge dominating the world, Muslims included. The process of Islamization may take this knowledge in manageable segments in the same vein: it can be sifted, pruned, and modified, where possible, to conform with the *Shari'ah* tenets. In other words, we may retain in economics, as elsewhere, those valuable parts of secular knowledge which do not defy the *Shari'ah*, and modify or reject those which do. Broadly, it is this approach to Islamization which is currently popular in Islamic disciplines including economics.

This approach is somewhat alluring. It makes research easier; introduce in a suitable main stream economic construct any of the *Shari'ah*'s behavioural norms, *zakāt* payments, zero rate of interest, and profit-sharing ratio or their relevant mix, for example, and an apparently impressive Islamic model is ready at hand. Islamic economists mostly consider these four as the more relevant variables for designing an economy of their vision. But the difficulty is that models thus erected remain reflective of their parent structures' worldview, norms, and methodology. The pitfalls must make us understand that we are not so much in need of Islamizing knowledge as of *creating* Islamic knowledge.<sup>9</sup> In the latter case, one can still take advantage of the mainstream tools, postulates, and positions to the extent that they do not violate the *Shari'ah* norms, but creation insists on a positive change in attitude.

Disciplined knowledge is science which is a sort of man's cognitive enterprise.<sup>10</sup> The issues which concern science are of epistemic import. They belong to the philosophy of science, largely a part of the theory of knowledge. It deals with these issues under the subject of methodology. Mainstream economics has of late attracted much attention of the philosophers, ironically though, the relevant issues have become all the more entangled. On the other hand, one finds that philosophical discussions concerning Islamic economics are few, illuminating ones even fewer.<sup>11</sup> The following section which deals with the issues including the worldview differences, revelation-reason relationship, and methodology, takes special note of the matter. The

idea is to provide a feel of the nature of Islamic economics, and its main points of departure from its secular counterpart. Section three deals with some of the factors impeding the progress of Islamic economics as an academic discipline, and presents the outlines of an agenda for action. Section four collects the main points of the foregoing discussion, and makes a few concluding remarks.

Finally, the paper deals with issues concerning the process of Islamization of knowledge; however, it does not seek to evaluate its progress or performance. Also, the analysis is mainly based on the literature available in English. But this need not detract from the depth and range of the argument. For the leading Islamic economists, writing on the subject in other languages, more so in Arabic, mostly are the same as contributing to it in English. Their views, and positions are generally well-known to different language users.

## 2. The Issues

The worldview underlying any social system makes it what it is in all its ramifications. In the field of knowledge, including economics, it latently specifies the cognitive medium, the ontological positions, the methodological rules, the behavioural norms, the value frame, and the like. The essential distinctions between the two economic disciplines — secular and Islamic — primarily arise due to differences in these specifications. Accordingly, it is better to start our discussion with a brief comparison of the worldview conditioning the two disciplines. It may be noted that the concept of worldview in Islam is of an all embracing sort. For that reason, some writers do discuss the reason-revelation relationship and questions of methodology as part and parcel of the same issue, but not a few treat them separately for a variety of reasons. We prefer to follow the latter for our purposes.

### 2.1 Worldview Differences

Western in origin, the notion of a worldview is contextual. We

cannot explain it without specifying whose worldview we are talking about, at what point in time, and for what purpose. Discussions on the subject often refer to the individual's perception of the world, though the role external factors play in shaping the same is recognized.<sup>12</sup> But then we are likely to have almost as many worldviews as the number of individuals in a society. Such a wide diversity cannot make for the thrust and content of knowledge in a discipline. For this purpose, we have to look at the worldviews the different social systems rest on and attempt to promote. Individuals can still have their own variations, but their average behavior would tend to conform to the norms of what has socially been agreed.<sup>13</sup>

Under the influence of education (including religious) and environment, individuals in a community develop, rather unconsciously, a shared mental image of God's creation and its purpose, i.e., of men's place and role in the universe, and of their relationships with the social phenomena by which they are influenced, and which they influence. Such a collective mental image constitutes the society's worldview. It is an architectonic whole from which various human activities in general follow. Islam provides man with a worldview shaped by revelation which is flexible but not replaceable. On the other hand, the West has what it calls a 'scientific' worldview based purely on human reasoning and changeable almost at will. Both these versions have their own approaches to the material and spiritual aspects of human existence. Also, both create their own visions of truth and reality.

Islam inculcates in man a perception of his own significance in the universe.<sup>14</sup> The *Qur'ān* tells us that man is the best of all creation, even superior to angels. He is a combination of earth and divine spirit, and is gifted with the attributes of consciousness, discretion, and creativeness.<sup>15</sup> God made him His vicegerent on earth: His trust-keeper and co-worker. He stocked the earth (and heaven) with His inexhaustible treasures and made them submit to be worked up by man for his use and enjoyment.<sup>16</sup> However, man has to run his affairs in the world on the terms and conditions of the Trust as laid down by its Creator and enshrined in the *Shari'ah*. He will be accountable in the

hereafter for his deeds here, getting reward for following the prescribed norms of behaviour, and punishment for their violation (*Qur'ān* 2:38-39). Thus, from its very inception, Islam is a man adoring religion: it empowers him to enjoy life in this world and teaches him, if he cares, to do so in a way that the pleasures in the hereafter also remain open to him.

In other words, the Islamic worldview links inseparably the life in this world (*al-dunyā*) with the life in the hereafter (*al-ākhirah*), the latter being of ultimate significance. The *dunyā* aspect of human life is seen as a preparation for its *ākhirah* aspect. "Everything in Islam is ultimately focused on the *ākhirah* aspect without thereby implying any attitude of neglect or being unmindful of the *dunyā* aspect."<sup>17</sup> The notion centers around the Islamic concepts of *tawhīd*, vicegerency, and *al-cadl*.<sup>18</sup>

A worldview is evolutive, and is locked in a two way relationship with knowledge. The formation of the Islamic worldview to its maturity followed the course of revelation over time. During the process, and after, it shaped the content, and direction of the growing disciplines — science, jurisprudence, *tafsīr* (interpretation), *kalām* (philosophy), literature, history, economics, and others — during the commanding centuries of Islam. But to what extent the growth of knowledge over time affected, or can be allowed to affect in future, the Islamic worldview are questions on which opinion remains divided.<sup>19</sup> However, there is a sort of consensus about a 'hard core' concept, akin to the one in Imre Lakatos's Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes or MSRP,<sup>20</sup> which the impact of growing knowledge in any discipline cannot be allowed to dilute or violate.

We call it the 'hard core' because it provides the Islamic answer to an eternal question — the question of faith with two aspects: the divine and the human, and the nature of relationship between them. Thus, its main elements are explanations concerning the attributes of God, the nature of revelation, the purpose of man's creation and his place in the universe, the faith imperatives, the notion of justice, and the meaning of reality and truth (*Qur'ān* 31:30). These elements and

the terms and implications they unfold have a profound bearing on the Islamic ideas about change, development, and progress.<sup>21</sup> They all have been, and remain open for interpretation, and elaboration among Muslim scholars but within restrictive confines.

Islam's economic frame is inlaid with its above described worldview. Since Islam is not a 'theory' based on assumptions but a 'way of life' dealing with 'actualities,' orthodoxy prefers to talk of an Islamic economy or system rather than economics. We may use the terms here interchangeably.<sup>22</sup> An Islamic economy has some distinctive features of wide import. Property ownership constitutes a right restrained by responsibility.<sup>23</sup> Financial arrangements have to shun all forms and shades of interest. Business transactions must remain free of *gharār* (indeterminacy). Market cannot be an instrument of any sort of exploitation. Profit carries a much wider meaning than it has in customary accounting. Establishing social balance, equity, and reciprocal responsibility is a fiscal policy imperative. Basic needs fulfillment is a growth priority. Social gain has preference over private benefit, cooperation over competition. And there are no barriers to the Islamic state's intervention in economic matters if unavoidable for promoting the *Sharī'ah* objectives.<sup>24</sup> The Islamic approach to economics is holistic, and it centers around its all pervading concept of *amānah*.<sup>25</sup>

It is not that economics as a formal discipline wears the religious garb in the resurgent Islam for the first time. In fact, secular economics could not completely free itself of the Christian bearings until barely a century earlier.<sup>26</sup> The alienation process, starting with the Enlightenment movement, perhaps culminated in a total separation of the two only when in 1929, the Vienna Circle published a position paper called the "Scientific World-View."<sup>27</sup>

What initiated this development was a new set of ideas, the rising businessmen with significant political clout needed to help remove the lingering feudal institutions and the restrictive controls of the mercantilist era. Ancient truths such as the immorality of interest, the virtues of charity, and the contentment with one's inherited station in life were considered barriers to progress, and had to be removed. For

all this, economists found the revolutionary ideas and methods then characterizing natural sciences much fertile and welcome. Newton's science provided a nature as effective as was the earlier will of God. "If the Divine Will had created a mechanism that worked harmoniously and automatically without further interference, then *laissez faire* was the highest wisdom in social affairs. Natural laws would guide the economic system and the actions of people."<sup>28</sup> Adam Smith articulated the pursuit of self-interest as the natural law for economics and held that it was in harmony with social interest.<sup>29</sup> He saw great spontaneity in the evolution of economic institutions like division of labour, money, and capital accumulation.<sup>30</sup>

The legitimacy of *laissez faire* as derived from the natural order illustrated by the solar system in Newton was reinforced by the key ideas of Darwin — the struggle for existence, natural selection based on individual differences, the survival of the fittest, and the evolution of species — which led social scientists to natural order from the biology end. "Both ideas accepted the environment as given and not to be manipulated or changed; both ideas were suitable for those who had no basic grievance against the existing order."<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, what was natural was thought as beneficent and just also.<sup>32</sup> Again, even though in social sciences, including economics, a relativistic outlook developed independently, there is room for presumption that Einstein's theory of relativity — what is true for an observer in one system may not be true for an observer in another system — had an inspiring effect. The development of such terms as "frame of reference," "value system" and "point of view" are illustrations of the influence.

The impact of the three revolutions in natural sciences induced major changes in social sciences both in thought and practice. Indeed, many, including Popper, clearly advocate "a unity of method among all disciplines and a 'naturalistic' view that rejects any telling difference between the social and natural sciences."<sup>33</sup>

In what way the 'unity of science' gospel affected economic theory and method we shall see later. Of concern at present is the separation it enforced between religion and ethics on the one hand and

social sciences on the other. The separation was intended to expel from their purview all transcendental ideas to promote a scientific worldview, especially for economics. These ideas were attacked with a skeptical scalpel as they were believed to constitute the illogic of trying to deduce evaluation and prescription from analysis and description: in short, an 'ought' from an 'is.'<sup>34</sup> Science, it was asserted, dealt with 'is' alone, and could accommodate 'ought' only when supported by objective logic. Thus the scientific worldview thought of the universe as a self-acting machine following the natural laws, even when God remained its original creator. It restricted man's vision to his existence in this world without any thought of the hereafter. It relied on reason alone as a tool for explanation and inquiry.

Thus the so-called scientific worldview essentially projects rationalistic materialism reflecting and caring for only the mundane desires of man. It sees the universe merely as a source of material requisites of well-being. It takes the sky as devoid of any feeling, sense, and divine power. Man does not find any meaning in existence: he feels existing because he exists. In the absence of the hereafter and accountability to any supreme being, he hardly sees any difference between an act of suicide and a feat of sacrifice as, to him, there is no system for ultimate reward and punishment.<sup>35</sup> Here, the exclusive focus is on the materialistic component of human existence, the spiritual and moral component being taken care of, if at all, by ethics or religion.

In Islam, the matter-spirit interlock in man's personality would rarely allow him to follow either asceticism or mammon worship. But once the two were separated by the Enlightenment in the West, capitalism never permitted them to rejoin. Economics overpowered human thought and action to the exclusion of ethics. The scientific vision capitalism promoted awakened the body, slumbered the soul. It tailored Christianity for perpetuating itself, locally and internationally, as a logical and credal system. In fact, what the Vienna Circle advocated for was not a 'scientific' but a loaded worldview that took society along a route dominated by materialism. The achievements of modern capitalism on this path have, indeed, been glorious.<sup>36</sup> But unfortunately

“it went far to replace quality with quantity, intuition with reason, search for truth with search for power, life for the sake of an ideal with life for the sake of life . . . and so on. Beauty, truth, and charity — the three most cherished, lasting values in human culture — were dismissed and in their place were installed the three popular principles of capitalism: realism, power, and consumption.”<sup>37</sup>

Material progress, unrestrained by ethics, has been achieved at an incalculable cost to society in terms of environmental damage and human suffering, especially spiritual. Fragmentation of the unitary religious worldview in the name of science made the capitalists the dominant social class to which belongs power, wealth, and even clientele religion in a dualistic setting.<sup>38</sup> The process of Islamizing knowledge must restore the unity of its worldview which the alien influences dismembered in the Muslim mind as well. Required for this is, above all, a closer look at the “relationship between revelation and reason,” an issue we now take up.

## 2.2 Revelation-Reason Relationship

The revelation-reason relationship may be looked at in two different ways: (i) reason operating as an *inside* element in discussions on revelation, and (ii) reason confronting revelation from *outside* the faith. The first way of seeing it is Islamic, the second secular. And the meaning of reason changes between the two. The monistic view of Islam includes both sapience and rationality in the ambit of reason. But secularism dichotomizes intellect, rejects sapience, and treats only the rational as reason.<sup>39</sup> For distinction, we shall refer to reason in its Islamic import as ‘intellect’ leaving the term as it is for secular usage.

Intellect is a faculty that transcends the realm of understanding, and provides prelusive principles for human guidance in worldly affairs. It makes comprehensible to man the metaphysics of the visible and the invisible worlds and of their mutual linkage, thus enabling him to develop a holistic and integrated vision of life. Indeed, there are intellectual foundations to the Islamic conception of God as enshrined

in the revelation. For, unlike rationalism, Islam does not see Nature merely as a material physical object for human exploitation and use but accords it a further and deeper significance. The *Qur'ān* upholds Nature — the entire universe — as an open book which man is exhorted to understand and interpret. It is bestowed with a cosmic relevance and must be revered for containing symbolic evidence of God's existence and supremacy: an evidence that intellect alone could grasp and seek to fathom.<sup>40</sup> Thus man can experience and perceive God through His creation.

Intellect invokes *commitment* to faith and ennobles ideas like beauty, love, *ihsān*, and sacrifice. It can appreciate — not rationality — why Abraham unhesitatingly plunged into the fire of Nimrod, what made Edward VIII to abdicate the mighty British throne to marry the woman he loved, what fired the legendary Jameela to stand up and face the full fury of the French tyranny during Algerian revolution, or why did Neitzche, the great philosopher, sacrifice his life for attempting to protect a helpless horse from his owner's brutality.<sup>41</sup> Intellect creates ideologies, systems, and revolutions. In Islam, the divine wisdom packed them all into one.

In economics, one may perceive a gain where reason sees a loss. To illustrate, take the first revelation on interest. The *Qur'ān* declares: "That which you give as interest to increase the peoples' wealth increases not with God; but that which you give as charity seeking goodwill of God multiplies manifold," (*Qur'ān* 30:39).<sup>42</sup>

Rationality would at once be skeptical of the precept. For, interest payments apparently increase the wealth of the recipients while charity outflows reduce that of the givers. Intuition may, however, convince the committed of the verse's wisdom when, the non-pecuniary gains in terms of spiritual solace and mental tranquillity it must promote are taken into account.

Thus, intellect confirms, not refutes, revelation. However, semantics often tends to become a source of confusion. Tension arises

when Islamic scholars unwittingly use intellect and reason interchangeably in their discourses. Consider, for example, the following paraphrased statements: (i) the call for reconciling *wahy* and *‘aql* leads us to the complementarity of revelation and logical positivism, (ii) the truth of revelation was always appreciated in the light of reason, and (iii) Islam provides a telling illustration of unity and harmony between human reason (*‘aql*) on the one hand, and the divine and prophetic references on the other.<sup>43</sup> Notice that statements (i) and (iii) use ‘reason’ in its secular meaning while statement (ii) employs it in the sense of intellect. The indiscreet use of the terms apart, there seems to be a lurking desire to depict that reason can always explain revelation. The desire has caused much conflict between orthodoxy and the reform seeking modernism in the literature.

Overdoing the revelation-reason relationship is perilous, and for two reasons. First reason invariably resides under the shadow of error in a dynamic uncertain world. It requires a conscious adoption of the *critical* method for scientific thought as criticism alone can help detect our mistakes.<sup>44</sup> The imperative raises a sensitive question: what portions of the revelation can, if at all, be open to argument, and to what extent? Second, undue emphasis on the relationship is most likely to provide a tunnel for the secular forces to attack Islamic positions from *outside* the system. A dilemma arises for the Islamic scholars because complete seclusion is also neither possible nor desirable. Let us have a brief look at each of the two cases.

Islam exhorts man to use reason for two purposes: (i) to understand the truth underlying revelation and (ii) to interpret its provisions for application in worldly affairs so as to stay on the ‘right path,’ that is, for *ijtihad*. Of course, the two uses are ordered in a gliding relationship. So the issue of exposure to criticism is much more serious in (i) than in (ii). Over the past two hundred years, the discussion concerning the relationship, as seen in (i), has tended to lurch from one extreme position to another: reason was either largely shunned, or almost nothing was thought explicable save in terms of reason.<sup>45</sup> During the period, both streams of thought have run counter to one another in the

Islamic revivalist movement, though overlaps in individual views have not been uncommon.

Orthodoxy with a 'limited scope for reason' argument was typically represented in recent times by such eminent personalities as Abul A<sup>o</sup>lā Mawdūdī, Ḥasan al-Bannā, Sayyid Quṭb, and in some measure, al-Attas. The common element in their writings broadly is a scathing criticism of modern philosophy, political orders, economic structures, societal conditions, and the role of science. Paraphrasing Moussalli, philosophically, they reject the claim that man is a possessor of truth or that there is no truth. Politically, they discard the notion that authority belongs to people. Economically, they do not accept that societies are no more than market places where desires of any and every sort are satisfied. More essentially, they advocate Islam which offers a way of life and thought regulated by the divine laws and by nature (*Qur'ān* 30:30); Islam which strives to erect societies whose basic components are justice, virtue, and equality.<sup>46</sup>

They insist that human nature (i.e., *fiṭrah* (*Qur'ān* 30:30); instinct or intuition) being the recipient of revelation, is the *true* and *exclusive* repository of moral principles; man cannot arrive at them through reason. Revelation, to them, is axiomatic, requiring no logical proof. Reason, they say, is powerless to comprehend revelation: its proper role is to demonstrate the truth and validity of Islamic *teachings*. In other words, the question primarily is not, as Quṭb puts it, what the *Qur'ān* has said or taught but "*why* the *Qur'ān*, and to a lesser extent, the *Ḥadīth* are accepted as the source of politics, laws, philosophy, economics, and, for that matter, all aspects of life."<sup>47</sup>

In contrast, modernity which sees revelation almost entirely in the range of reason has had among its advocates such illustrious men as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad <sup>c</sup>Abduh, Amīr <sup>c</sup>Alī, Muḥammad Iqbal, <sup>c</sup>Alī Sharī<sup>c</sup>atī, and al-Farūqī. Their writings differ in many ways but depict a remarkable attitudinal affinity. Rationalism was then sweeping Europe in the wake of scientific revolutions, alluded to earlier. The idea that Islam allowed rational inquiry was being challenged: it was dubbed as a religion of miracles and superstitions.

Islamic modernists rose to provide the required adjustment, and response.<sup>48</sup> They saw philosophy essentially in terms of science. Reason was the main element in the development of science. 'Alī argues that Islam appeals to reason alone, and that the Prophet of Islam never travelled beyond the confines of reason. He finds Islamic teachings rationalistic and close to European liberal thought.<sup>49</sup> Al-Afghānī and 'Abduh "make science the ultimate judge not only when the *Qur'ān* is obscure or controversial, but also when the *Qur'ān* contradicts science."<sup>50</sup>

The modernists provide allegorical interpretations to those concepts of Islam which they find reason powerless to explain. 'Alī's description of the life beyond grave and of paradise and hell, as also Sharī'atī's account of *Mi'rāj* as a symbolic explanation of the Prophet's role in man's ontological ascension from earth to God are the examples. Cases can be multiplied. But in that, they perhaps went too far. Their speculations cannot be verified and at times tend to become heretical.<sup>51</sup>

Common reasoning has scope in expounding revelation, but such scope becomes exhausted beyond a limit (*Qur'ān* 7:3).<sup>52</sup> Reason can, for example, establish the existence of God, but cannot capture His essence. Eschatological concepts, like the Day of Judgment, existence of angels, *jinn*s, paradise and hell, or the reality of soul fall outside the range of reason. Some ritualistic practices too seem to lack logical basis. Reason implies that meaningful statements are verified by observation and experiment. Metaphysical statements rarely lend to such verification. In fact, logical positivism uses the verification criterion to exclude metaphysics from scientific discussions.

Indiscreet exposure of revelation to reason may encourage insiders to its rather speculative interpretations, the course which, according to some, *Mu'tazilah* took in our early history for revamping their discussions to restructure the social order.<sup>53</sup> Of course, they have their supporters even today. And remember, the *Qur'ān* claims to provide guidance to the believers alone (*Qur'ān* 2:2-7). *Outsiders* may only feel freer to attack Islam as did many of the orientalist in the past if we entertain liberal use of reasoning *vis-a-vis* revelation. Illustrative

of the Western hostility to Islam, even in academic circles, is the pleasure J.M. Keynes took in needlessly juxtaposing *Qur'ān* with Marx's *Das Kapital* to declare them both as outdated and uninspiring. He exclaimed: "How could either of these books carry fire and sword round half the world? It beats me."<sup>54</sup> The position of the *ummah* today is more vulnerable in almost every sphere of life than probably it ever was, especially in academics. We are in need of closing ranks, not of opening fronts if avoidable. Of course, one need not stand up in support of the tradition-ridden, cultic, divisive, and decadent Islam that pervades most of the Muslim world today. Islam was modern — ahead of time — when it made its advent on the scene; it must strive to regain its position lost over the centuries as the most modern, dynamic and progressive social system today — that is, in the *same* old vein.

Opinions may differ, but to me, it does not seem prudent to invite, much less provoke, outside confrontation at the present juncture. The issue of revelation-reason relationship may be kept somewhat muted for the time being except in matters of application. Application raises the problem of concrete formulations which brings us to another issue: methodology for economics.

### 2.3 The Question of Methodology

Methodology of economics broadly consists of a set of criteria, rules, and procedures which the philosophers of the subject have evolved over the years to examine the nature, scope, and performance of the discipline. Methodology belongs to the philosophy of economics, and has with the latter the same sort of relationship as has *uṣūl al-fiqh* with *fiqh*. However, the methodology of economics remains in a rather muddled state. In some measure, the confusion arises because of the failure to keep the issue of methodology separate from that of methods. The observation is all the more valid in the case of writings on Islamic economics.

Methodology is concerned with methods but does not belong to their category. Rather, it is an abstract sort of undertaking which seeks

to examine from *outside* the department of economics what methods are the right ones for the economists to use, what the proper way of using them is, and what kind of results are they capable of yielding. For this, it uses principles expressed in the form of certain criteria. Investigators employing the same method — that is, using the same steps in their research and analysis — may hold very different methodological positions, while supporters of the same methodological principles may decide to use very different methods, depending on their judgements concerning various aspects of the problem under investigation.

However, it is important to note that excursions in methodology — that is, the formulation of its principles or rules — is a posterior evolution aiming at formalizing what is right for economists to do after observing what the economists have actually been doing over the centuries. Methodology “provides arguments, perhaps rationalizations, which support various preferences entertained by the scientific community for certain rules of intellectual procedures, including those for forming concepts, building models, formulating hypotheses, and testing theories.”<sup>55</sup> It sets up a defense for the scope and method of secular economics, as articulated in current textbook literature.

But what can be regarded as the *right* scope and method of economics depends on the answers to some deeper epistemic questions: “What do we know, and what is the source of our knowledge?” and “How do we know that what we know is correct?” The course an attempt to answer these questions may take depends on the answer to a further question: “Is there an ultimate truth which the scientists are in a process of revealing or is there no truth?” We shall see that methodological differences between mainstream economics and its Islamic counterpart stem from differences in their answers to these basic questions.

The origin of knowledge lies in beliefs, however formed. But to earn the mark of knowledge, a belief has to be certified as true or verisimilar on some criteria commensurate with the goals of science. Methodologies set out such criteria, and are labeled, according to the

nature of these criteria as positivist or empiricist, for example. Beliefs, goals, and rules operate as mutual constraints. In secular economics, which shuns divine revelation, hypotheses or theories formulated on some logical (*a priori*) basis partake the nature of beliefs. Predictive success being the agreed goal of the discipline, these theories require empirical confirmation especially following the influential essay of Milton Friedman, *The Methodology of Positive Economics* (reproduced in Hausman). Thus, economics uses the scientific method — a fusion of deduction and induction — in its research and analysis. Logical positivism — the methodology — provides the philosophical foundation to the method.

Logical positivism though seemingly defunct still lingers in the literature for the simple reason that it fortifies the “unity of science” notion and spurs economic theory to continue providing a rationalization for the liberal democratic ideology of capitalism without normative commitments. A critical review of logical positivism does appear in the methodological contributions of Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, and Imre Lakatos and others, but the development their writings ushered in does not signify so much a departure from logical positivism as an attempt at its refinement, and a recognition of the limitations of empirical testing. They maintained the “unity of science” view, endorsed the predictive goal of economic theories, and did not give up the demand for their empirical testing. They remained *within* the ambit of positivism, though they modified and enlarged it in some ways.

A real departure from logical positivism is found in Paul Feyerabend’s anarchistic theory of knowledge. To him, the best approach to scientific investigation is freedom from commitment to any method, for, commitment to method limits creativity in problem solving. For him “anything goes.” Though the argument may itself look anarchic, it opened the doors of the rhetorical and sociological approaches on economic theorizing. Recent developments in the area of methodology under their impact further pinpoints the illogic of logical positivism, more so of its “unity of science” gospel. There are basic differences, it is argued, between social and natural sciences, including

economics. An economic theory known to the participants in economic activities affects the working of the economy itself. Such interaction between the theory and the object of the theory is certainly absent in natural sciences. The fact makes the formulation of theory in social sciences very difficult and restricts its application over time and space.<sup>56</sup> Social sciences, like economics, should presumably aim more at enhancing our understanding of the phenomena they deal with than pursuing the predictive goals. In social sciences one wants to know the details of specific happenings to appreciate their distinctiveness than to see them as mere instances of general uniformities. Uniformities in human behaviour do not depict operation of some natural laws, they result from rules and institutions shaped by cultural and religious forces. To understand these rules and institutions is a task requiring interpretation, not theorizing and empirical testing. Predictive power need not be the hallmark of a social theory. In fact, in the case of economics it is found that its theories remain weak for prediction. Ironically, much of the empirical work in economics does not attempt to refute testable predictions, but seeks to confirm them for reasons of relative ease. History has evidence of the discipline's indifference to predictive improvement in contrast to its desire for formal tractability.<sup>57</sup>

Though inspired by these meaningful developments, the *rhetorical* and *sociological* approaches could not, be free, like others, from the serious intellectual disorder that originated in the programme of Descartes to built knowledge on the foundation of radical doubt, and of which positivism had only been a symptom. This disorder continues to afflict both mainstream economics and its philosophy, and now seems to juxtapose them in a state of perpetual conflict and confusion because of the absence of a moral or ethical base.

Nevertheless, the new approaches are distinct from their forerunners in a way which may be of some interest to the process of Islamizing economics. They exhibit an unmistakable skepticism about one's ability to discover the ultimate inviolable truth. A theory does not necessarily evolve, it is argued, because it is the closest to truth but because of a variety of other reasons: persuasiveness, institutional

constraints, and cultural norms may all influence the acceptability of a theory. The demands and interests of public policy makers or private employers do influence the questions economists ask and the solutions they choose to present for consideration. The claim of mainstream economics to neutrality towards the ends is naive; it basically is a normative science policy traveling in a positive disguise.<sup>58</sup> The departure from the "unity of science" theory, and inclusion of the normative and social considerations in methodological frames brings mainstream literature a step closer to Islamic demands, and may over time lead towards a narrowing of the gap between the two.

However, under Islamic dispensation, economics, like other disciplines, may still differ much from its mainstream counterpart on numerous matters including the question of methodology. Islamic economics does not rise from the shadows of doubt and presumption on the wings of human reason to take any direction the pilot chooses; it springs from the fountainhead of revelation — the epitome of truth for the believers — and remains anchored to it. Here, methodology does not seek to formalize what economists actually do. Instead, it sets the goals for Islamic economics, prescribes behavioural norms for their achievement, and formulates rules for evaluating the results. The glide from economics to methodology, as it obtains in secular order, is reversed in an Islamic arrangement. The reversal gives a purpose, unison, and direction to Islamic economics and makes the discussion of methodological issues all the more important in its case.

We may begin with the statement that every society has a method it agrees upon for organizing production and distribution of wealth. The method embodies a doctrine concerning economic activities. The doctrine signifies the course society prefers for solving its practical problems. It is based on some moral or scientific concept which impart to it a sort of intellectual balance. No economic doctrine is meaningful without a method or conceptual base. For instance, to understand the advocacy of capitalism for economic freedom, one must examine the fundamental ideas — self-interest, competition, extremum solutions, etc. — it relies on as also its *modus operandi* — the market. This is

true of all doctrines in secular economics. From its very inception, the discipline has traversed through a maze of economic thought.<sup>59</sup>

On this criterion, the term Islamic economics is clearly a misnomer. It relatively is a new subject, while Islam is a missionary religion, a way of life; its real job is not the pursuit of scientific investigation. We talk of Islamic economics more in a manner of speaking perhaps because no better expression is available. It is described as a science in the sense of "systematized knowledge," the stature it is fast acquiring.

In order to formalize matters, we may define Islamic economics as that aspect of Islam's social doctrine which deals with problems of choice in the face of uncertainty and resource scarcity so as to promote *falāḥ* in a holistic framework. Islamic economics is a science as well as an art. As a science, it has both positive and normative aspects. The positive aspect provides us with an understanding of "how it works" of the economy. The normative aspect is ideological and prescribes for the economy the goals to achieve. The art of Islamic economics links the positive with the normative aspect of the science, and seeks to answer the sort of questions such as: Given the normative goals and the way the economy works, how can the goals be best achieved? Anas Zarqa quotes from the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* some apt examples of positive, normative and mixed statements which support our position.<sup>60</sup> And, if the discipline is to make progress, we have to strengthen its scientific outlook, subject to the norms of the *Shari'ah*, for enabling it to explain, interpret, and modify economic phenomena as they develop and unfold in the expanding Muslim economies.

One inspiration for having such an outlook comes from the anomaly that afflicts the Western "unity of science" theorem. The Western philosophers of science agree in general that the physical world is governed by natural (read divine) laws. Natural sciences strive to discover these laws which are taken as expressions of *truth*. Innocuously, in the social arena also they use the same scientific method to reach the truth through establishing behavioural uniformities. We have already noted that the effort was misdirected and the pursuit of

ultimate truth in social sciences, including mainstream economics, stands abandoned. The failure stems from the partial and distorted worldview the West chooses to hail as 'scientific.'

In contrast, Islam takes the entire universe, including man and nature, as one *unit* whose components are *all* subject to the same general law which is ordained by its Creator. Nature is *destined* to submit to this law and no disruption or disturbance can touch it without God's will (*Qur'ān* 7:54). But, unlike nature, man is not obliged to obey the universal law. Instead, God prescribed for him the *Sharī'ah* and granted him *discretion* in its observance. The West used this discretion to belittle faith and rely on human reason alone in social sphere too, only to land in confusion. Human beings and their social interactions are clearly different objects of study than are planets and proteins; the two cannot be subjected to the same method of inquiry, and analysis. On the other hand, the *Sharī'ah* is a part of the same general law of God which governs the whole universe including the physical and biological aspects of man. We believe that if man follows the law, his life remains in harmony with his own nature, and with the rest of the universe. If he does not, he is seldom at peace with himself, and may spread corruption on earth. Truth is indivisible in Islam: it is the law we are talking about and everything in existence either follows it or is punished by it (*Qur'ān* 2:38-39; 21:10-20). The "unity of science" theorem is then consistent and cogent *within* the confines of the *Sharī'ah* which alone contains the absolute inviolable truth man could ever know (*Qur'ān* 10:108; 69:51). If the truth had been in accord with human desire, the heaven and the earth and all things therein would have been in confusion, and corruption (*Qur'ān* 23:71). The *Qur'ān* uses both intuitive logic and empirical evidence to convince man of the truth its verses express. In fact, the scientific method which is the dynamic spirit of modern Europe's industrial culture is a distorted borrowing from Islam: it originated in the universities of Muslim Spain and the East.<sup>61</sup> 'Distorted,' because the Islamic method never imposed self-interest as an exclusive limitation on rationality. It does recognize the link between them, but commitment to faith (*Qur'ān* 30:30) overrules reason, if they conflict.

The goals of Islamic economics can be quite flexible to meet temporal requirements without violating the prescribed norms. Scarcity of resources does not arise because of nature's niggardliness, as L. Robbins laments<sup>62</sup> or because of their wasteful use and inequitable distribution as some Muslim economists maintain:<sup>63</sup> the latter are merely the aggravating factors. God is benevolent and has stocked the earth and heavens with His inexhaustible treasures for His creatures (*Qur'ān* 15:20; 41:10). Scarcity of resources primarily is the consequence of man's insufficient knowledge of their existence and use. Knowledge flows to man from God, its primordial source. He releases it to man only bit by bit so that man may not become arrogant. Islamic economics guides people towards achieving *falāḥ*. The concept keeps in the forefront the significance of using life in this world as a *means* to having peace in the hereafter, the ultimate aim of human existence (*Qur'ān* 28:77). In fact, the notion of *falāḥ* is an epitome of the *Sharī'ah* objectives.<sup>64</sup> Justice or *al-cadl* is the guiding star of Islam's societal organization (*Qur'ān* 16:90). In principle, it prefers better distribution of wealth and income to their larger production. The 'normative' compulsions in the discipline generally overshadow the 'positive' ones if there has to be a trade-off. And it is just in this choice that Islamic economics acquires its practical significance, also distinction.

Normative compulsions need not shut out Islamic economics to the use of scientific procedures for research and analysis. Even the mainstream economic structures erected right from Adam Smith to more recent times have rarely been free of ideological underpinnings.<sup>65</sup> Still, the limitations of Islamic economics in the matter are more serious; for unlike mainstream economics, it seeks to make the reality of economic life adjust to a prefixed ideology or an ideal of justice. The essence of this ideal broadly is: help the needy, reward the deserving. This ideology or ideal is handed down to Islamic economics by revelation.

The ideal of justice is not scientific, as justice cannot always be easily observed or measured. But when the ideal touches human ideas or scientific formulations, it mostly changes their character, at times radically. To illustrate, it happens when an *amānah* or trusteeship

dimension is added to property rights, or the rate of interest is reduced to zero. The ideal does not usually intrude in such of the matters that fall in the domain of science. Examples of the sort are the laws describing input-output relations, and price formation by market forces. These are objective scientific facts deduced from reality. However, the product-mix and its distribution, or the behaviour of the market as economic arbiter must meet the prescribed norms to avoid social intervention. Islamic norms of justice are principles of social (economic) policy. They are summed up in the Islamic view of *ḥalāl* (permissible) and *ḥarām* (non-permissible). If some Islamic text prohibits an act, directly or indirectly, the act is *haram*, if not, it is *ḥalāl* (*Qur'ān* 7:157; 16:116).

Thus, one task of methodology of Islamic economics is to indicate what is *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām* for the discipline, and in that specify its ethical norms and values. This brings into the picture the intricacies of juridical procedures and principles, which this paper is not the appropriate place to deal with. However, some observations may be helpful. Economic doctrines and the systems they erect have in all cases been intimately related with civil law. Though the two are never identical, the study of a country's legal provisions may acquaint one with the key elements of its economic system and the reverse may also be true in some measure. However, their nature and interrelations are much different in the Islamic social order when compared to those in other dispensations. In contrast to position elsewhere, ethical doctrine in Islam is closely connected with law. *Fiqh* makes no special distinction between rules concerning conduct and those which other systems consider as belonging to the realm of civil law.<sup>66</sup> For this reason, in Islam, jurisprudence is the edifice on which its economic structure is raised while in other cases the relationship is reversed; primarily the civil law must adapt to changes in the economic doctrine.

Methodological goals in the case of Islamic economics are not the same as elsewhere. Here, one is confronted with an economic doctrine already in existence. The task is to bring out the reality underlying it, to make firmer the contours of its framework, to lay bare

its basic rules of thought, and to get rid of the impurities that invaded it over time, especially during colonial dominance of the Muslim lands. Thus, it is the *rediscovering* of what the dust of time and circumstances has largely blurred beyond recognition; the task is not to *create* or modify doctrines and systems on the basis of pure reason as it is, for example, the case in capitalism or socialism.

To embark on such a discovery is not an easy undertaking. The Islamic text does not provide us with a vivid picture of the economic doctrine it means to put into operation, not even any of its major aspects is made clear. To give just one example, it does not explicitly indicate as to whether the doctrine holds the principle of common property or of private property, and if it does allow private property, what its theoretical basis is: want, need, work or freedom?<sup>67</sup> The difficulty requires the search for another method to discover the doctrine, and illuminate its shady spots. The method is to adopt a juridical approach. When the text is unclear on a point, the law relies on some textual conception explained by tradition (*Ḥadīth*) analogy (*qiyās*), consensus (*ijmāc*) or relevant historical evidence. The Islamic position on land ownership is, for example, clarified in a tradition: "The land belongs to Allah, the Supreme. He has handed it over to men to be held in trust. So, it should be taken away from a person who leaves it idle and uncultivated for three consecutive years without reason, and be given to some one else."<sup>68</sup> Here it is the law that explains the doctrinal position.

However, textual conceptions may not always be available to fill the gap in the economic legislation. In such a situation, Islam empowers the state to make the necessary provision. For example, Islam sees exchange as a part of production. The state can, therefore, take steps to eliminate the middlemen operating between the consumers and the producer through a procurement and distribution policy, or by encouraging the cooperative movement, if social interest so demands.

Finally, in the present day complex and dynamic situation, Islamic economics has to be forward looking, expedient, and pragmatic. The door of *ijtihād* must remain open. The principle of *facility* assumes special importance. But it does not mean freedom to bend religion —

as sometimes Muslim economists and politicians tend to do — for justifying the existing realities, or for isolating a *Shari'ah* provision from its context to support or reject a viewpoint.<sup>69</sup> The temptation must be resisted.

### 3. Outline of Agenda

One implication of the foregoing discussion is that the issues concerning Islamization of knowledge in economics or other social sciences are not always taken note of by those venturing into the field. Partly, the reason is that education policies in Muslim societies still are in a large measure under the sway of their colonial past. Their institutional structures, course designs, reading materials, teaching programmes, and performance appraisal procedures all continue to carry deep Western imprints. By training, their scholars often are less receptive to Islamic ideas. The recent trend of extending privatization to the area of education may increase or decrease their estrangement, depending on its ultimate impact on the Western influence. There are presently many imponderables in the situation. But one thing is clear: there is going to be an increase in the flow of instruction from the market to the academy as modification of the present position. Its consequence for Islamization of knowledge has to be watched with great caution.<sup>70</sup>

The point is that not everything in the Western academic tradition is unwelcome; it offers much worth emulating with advantage. But if the objective is Islamization of knowledge, *much* is not conducive either. Be that as it may, the situation is in no way alarming: it may only make the task more difficult and challenging. The process of Islamization faces three basic problems at the implementation level: preparing the reading materials, restructuring of the curricula, and promotion of academic leadership. The three are interrelated and have to be dealt with simultaneously.

### 3.1 Reading Material

Among social sciences, the pace of Islamic economics has been faster in emerging as an independent academic discipline. The subject is now being taught at some secular institutions in the West with Islamic economics being a recognized area for accepting students in their Ph.D programmes. Interestingly, the school facilities seem to expand at a faster rate than the availability of suitable and adequate reading materials for the students studying the subject at various levels. The shortage of textbooks is, in particular, acute.

At present, for Islamic economics courses, the students have to rely on articles, monographs, and books which do not always serve the purpose for a variety of reasons. For example, some of the works presented for use as textbooks do not fill the bill because the material they put together was not originally meant to serve the students: they are largely collections, expansions, or translations of authors' writings contributed to journals or conferences or done earlier in vernacular. Again, much of the material available is in immediate need of revision, improvement, and updating. Some of the materials used at the university level is not entirely free of formulation errors and faulty equations or diagrams. Also, edited works from a limited literature base tend to proliferate. They *are* needed but the need for original contributions obviously is far greater. The editing norms are not always observed. At times, the editors neither contribute an introduction commenting on the material selected, nor care to put it in a cohesive arrangement. These observations are not meant to detract in any way the value of numerous learned contributions to Islamization of knowledge made by individual scholars and institutions.<sup>71</sup> However, they seldom cover more than the fringe requirements of an academic programme. The question is: where do we go from here?

The question is not easy to answer; it seemingly puts one on the horns of dilemma. A writing in the area of economics, for example, may not be considered fully Islamic unless, taking cognizance of the argument of the preceding section, it insists on gearing action in this

world to the requirements of solace in the hereafter, allows reason to operate only within the confines of faith, and demands adjustment of reality to the dictates of (Islamic) law and not *vice versa*. But such writings will be akin to those as produced on the subject by the jurists in the past, and would require such a revolutionary restructuring of the economy as any political authority would rarely venture to initiate in today's circumstances.<sup>72</sup> The present position of Muslim countries in the matter of their cultural values, thought processes, institutional structures, administrative arrangements, and economic positions is a departure from Islamic norms through history as they have remained for centuries under the spell of non-Islamic influences. Pure Islamic models, with an all-or-nothing approach, must, therefore, look unrealistic. They would rarely inspire the reader, or elate the policy-maker. Overnight transformation of history-determined phenomena in a peaceful orderly way is hardly possible. The economies of Muslim countries cannot be jerked off the global web without inflicting serious abrasions. What, then, looks desirable for Islamizing economics is to shape the discipline such that it seeks absorbable, even if partial, step-by-step departures from the mainstream bearings, the establishment of an independent identity being the eventual goal. Thus, the 'comprehensive' approach is not feasible, while the 'partial' one is uncertain and time consuming.

However, there is another way of looking at things. The two approaches to the Islamization of knowledge, in economics or other fields can be pursued simultaneously as they complement each other. Pure Islamic models, as stated in the beginning, may help indicate the direction for movement towards the ultimate goal, put in focus the behavioural norms, create the desired mental attitudes, make clear the system's key variables, and unfold their interrelations. These are invaluable contributions for designing partial models and shape policy prescriptions. Partial models, in their turn, are more flexible and facilitate the Muslim thinking to adjust to the imperatives of the contemporary world, and to deal with the challenges the *ummah* is currently facing. When put into operation, they may yield valuable

insights to modify the pure models *vis-a-vis* the changing realities of social dynamics in an Islamic framework.

If a step-by-step partial model approach to Islamizing knowledge is considered expedient, the textbooks planned for economics must have an appropriate blend of the Islamic and mainstream positions in a "compare and contrast" mould, where possible and relevant. In addition, a textbook must adequately cover the essential aspects of the subject it deals with. The material provided should commensurate with the level and duration of the course. Simple language and a lucid style are obvious advantages. The use of mathematics should not be overdone.<sup>73</sup> The work must exhibit awareness of recent developments in the literature on the subject, more so in the applied areas. Last but not the least, provision of appropriate questions and exercises at the chapter end may greatly help recapitulation and appraisal.

Islam presents an action programme. But contemporary Islamic writings look 'theoretical' because Muslim societies mostly operate along secular lines. For this reason they often show traces of drift and qualitative unevenness. Since students take recommended readings as devoid of errors, it is advisable to have a system of expert clearance before materials are included in the list. Also, the vernacular should in principle be the medium of instruction at all levels, with only unavoidable exceptions. Teaching through a foreign language seriously tells on the students' interest and capacity for learning. Thus, until after the beginning of the present century almost every university in Europe maintained a strong translation department to transfer into Latin the treasures of knowledge from Arabic and other Eastern sources. Russia, Japan, and China are some of the later examples to use the method for acquiring the Western scientific and technical knowledge. It is well to note that the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) has made a modest beginning in the direction: it has established a translation unit in its Research Centre.

### 3.2 Curricula Development

In general, the universities in the Muslim world are maintaining the same curricula structures as the countries inherited from their colonial past. Adjustments in response to local demands have been marginal, though not rare. Real modifications follow mainly the changes in the West, to stay 'international.' Islamic instructions, where part of the university programme, are a secluded matter, and have little impact on the mainstream curricula. The dilemma of the Islamization of knowledge is how to shun this dualistic character of education in Muslim societies? The difficulty is a close and growing linkage between the mainstream course designs and the job market where requirements are being increasingly determined by the Western business culture and life styles for obvious reasons.

The situation makes the partial step-by-step approach to the Islamization of knowledge even more appropriate: it would smoothen the process of removing curricula dualism from the Muslim institutions of higher learning. All the same, the task requires courage, sacrifice, and sagacity of no mean order. It may be noted that several institutions engaged in teaching, research, and training, including the IIUM, are making earnest efforts in that direction, and that these efforts are beginning to bear fruits.

The approach for ending the dualism has three broad features. First, there are some foundation courses in Islamic revealed knowledge compulsory for all undergraduate students. To the list may probably be added a course in Islamic history to give students a feel of their glorious past for promoting self-esteem. This has already been done at the IIUM, albeit presently on a selective basis. Arabic is vital for Islamizing knowledge. Even so, it should be obligatory only on a selective basis.<sup>74</sup> Second, the individual subjects have a category of courses primarily Islamic in content but with a blend of mainstream positions. Lastly, there are courses from the Western mainstream where effort is made to present things in an Islamic perspective, if possible. The idea is to infuse progressively more of Islamic content and

perceptions in the latter categories. And it is here that the pace is painfully slow, and requires regular effort and monitoring. The crux of the matter is how to have the overall course structure in such a way as would keep the students competitive in the job market vis-a-vis those coming from the secular education stream? One requirement clearly is that the students in the Islamic institutions must be willing to sacrifice leisure in some measure to learn more for achieving the parity.

This would depend, among other things, on the quality of academic leadership all along the line, popular support and political action. Required at the top is a scholar of eminence — firm, tactful, tolerant, and committed. Down the rungs, administrative hierarchy — deputy rectors, faculty deans, department heads, etc. — must, in principle, follow the academic standings with departures only when unavoidable. In any case, the men in these positions must be competent and devoted to the mission. Simultaneously, if political leadership can put Islamic models into operation, especially in the field of economics and management, market demand for Islamic stream students may emerge and expand to their elation. This is what is being done in Malaysia today in such important areas as banking, capital markets, insurance, and investment, and the process is gathering momentum. The linkage, thus, being forged between Islamization at the IIUM on the one hand, and the job market on the other promises to make the country a roll model for the Muslim world, and beyond, in the field of Islamization of knowledge and its successful application.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

We started the present discussion with the sharing of a common perception that Islamization of human knowledge is the key for restoring the prestige and prosperity the Muslims enjoyed at the global level not too far back in history, and that the work has yet to pick up the right course or pace, even in economics — a relatively more developed discipline. Broadly, two interrelated factors seem to impede the progress in the area: (i) the lack of a clear understanding of the relevant issues,

on the part of many, at the theoretical level, in a comparative setting, and (ii) the inability of leadership — academic and political — to evolve a satisfactory trade-off between the Islamization imperatives and the secular job market compulsions during the transitory period.

The approach to Islamization of knowledge in a discipline can be comprehensive or partial. The first takes an all-or-nothing view of the matter and insists on radical changes in the social structures. It has little operational value in today's circumstances but keeps the ultimate objectives in focus, and helps construct instructive 'pure' Islamic models. The partial or step-by-step approach is a transitory expedient and gets its inspiration from the comprehensive model. However, in either case one is to have a clear grasp of the main and intertwined theoretical issues — the worldview, reason-revelation relationship, and methodological constraints in an Islamic dispensation vis-a-vis their secular counterparts for useful writings.

Implementation of the programme requires a gradual approach inspired by the ultimate goal, an inspiring leadership, competent academia, and unflinching political support. More reading materials, especially textbooks, evaluated for quality have to be produced for students' use. Despite shortcomings, the present state of Islamization of knowledge in economics, is not so dismal as some may want us to believe.<sup>75</sup> But then, it is a matter of taste — of seeing the glass half-filled or half-empty.

## Endnotes

1. The latest restatement of his ideas is contained in AbūSulaymān (ed. 1995). Its Introduction and Appendices provide a useful thumbnail history of the evolution of Islamization theme as part of the wider Islamic reformist movement.
2. Although the importance of Islamizing knowledge is emphasized in almost every writing on the subject, AbūSulaymān (1985 and 1993) projects it in a way that makes the idea almost his own.
3. Writings on Islamization of knowledge invariably assume a general overtone. Subject specific deliberations are not many, penetrating ones even

fewer. The present paper seeks to fill this gap in the case of economics, which is also the author's area of professional interest.

4. The demarcation between economic and non-economic welfare, objectivity and value judgements, ends and means, positive and normative statements, and many other social positions is really difficult and confusing. Pierre Duhem raised the issue in the area of methodology. See Redman (1991, 38-9, 128).

5. See, for example, Roy (1989, 1-4) and Hausman (1984, 1-2).

6. Roy (1989, 17-32) summarises the views of leading economists to show the agreement that arguable values have 'normative' status, those beyond reason are mere 'opinions.'

7. For example, in Lipsey's *An Introduction to Positive Economics* (1963, 4) we find, "Positive statements concern what *is*, and normative statements concern what *ought to be*." This distinction, of course, has since long come under fire (Redman 1991, 95, 100 n. 16; Hausman 1984, 15).

8. See Quṭb (1978, Chap. 2), "The Nature of Qur'ānic Method."

9. Even Ismā'īl al-Farūqī emphasized this point: "How long are we going to content ourselves with the crumbs that the West is throwing at us? It is about time that we make *our own original* contribution. As social scientists we have to look back at our training and reshape it in the light of the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*. This is how our forefathers made their own original contributions to the study of law, history and culture. The West borrowed their heritage and put it in a secular mould. Is it asking for too much that we take this knowledge and Islamize it?" Quoted in Ilyas (1988, 16). Emphasis added.

10. Rosenberg (1992, 39).

11. In this category one may like to include AbūSulaymān (1985), Dhaouadi (1993), Safi (1993), Ibrahim (1990), and Moussalli (1990).

12. For a vivid explanation of the point, see Shari'atī (1982, 22-5).

13. *ibid.*, 25-32. Examples are provided to clinch the point.

14. This has been one of the central themes in Muḥammad Iqbal's poetry. See for example, Shari'atī (1982, 18 no.2).

15. *ibid.*, 10-3.

16. *The Holy Qur'ān* (31:20; n.3605; 67:15).

17. Al-Attas (1995, 1).

18. For their integrated explanation and implications, see Siddiqi (1989). Good explanations are also available in Shari'atī (1982) and Quṭb (1978).

19. For example, it seems to us that Al-Attas's attitude to change in the

Islamic worldview as a consequence of social dynamism is too restrictive, while that of Shari'atī is too liberal.

20. For explanation of the 'hard core' concept in MSRP see Redman (1991, 36).
21. See Şadr (1983, 7-9), Al-Attas (1995, 5), and Quṭb (1978, 57).
22. Islamic jurists' writing on economic matters, including Şadr, do not make a distinction between economy or economic system and economics, and invariably use the terms interchangeably.
23. See in Hasan (1988), the section on Amanah.
24. It is so in secular social orders also, but in Islam the two are integral parts of a whole. See Quṭb (1978, Chap. 9) for an implicit argument.
25. For an elaboration of the concept in an economic context, see Hasan (1988, Supra n.23).
26. Redman (1991, 176 n.11). See also Gide and Rist (1953, 516-70) on the economic role and impact of Christianity through history.
27. Redman (1989, 9).
28. Oser and Blanchfield (1975, 496).
29. See relevant passages quoted in Chapter II Section II of Gide and Rist (1953, 87-8, 103 n.1). See also Roy (1989, 29).
30. *ibid.*
31. Oser and Blanchfield (1975, 497).
32. The view originated in Physiocracy, "The natural order, so the Physiocrats maintained, is the order which God has ordained for the happiness of mankind," Gide and Rist (1953, 28). Later on the secularists detached nature from God, treating Physiocracy as the bridge to make economics cross from the moral end to the 'natural' end of human thought. Naturalism in this form survives, rather dominates, in mainstream economics even today.
33. Redman (1991, 104).
34. It is now widely accepted that often an 'is' implies an 'ought,' and the line of distinction between the two is largely a matter of opinion. See, for example, the discussion in Roy (1989, 47-9).
35. Shari'atī (1982, 28).
36. For a brief statement of these achievements, see Hasan (1995, 57-8).
37. Shari'atī (1982, 50).
38. *ibid.*, 56-67.
39. Hasan (1995, 59); also, al-Attas (1993, 18, 35).
40. al-Attas (1993, 35).

41. Shari'ati (1982, 97-8), provides the full narration of the incidence.
42. See also (*Qur'an* 2:276) on this point.
43. The paraphrasing is from (i) Arif (1987, 54), (ii) Safi (1993, 35) where he refers to Moten and (iii) Dhaouadi (1993, 155). Notice also Safi's comment on the first two.
44. Popper always emphasised the value of criticism for improving economic theories. He wrote: "This hint, very simply is that *we must search for our mistakes* - or, in other words, that *we must try to criticise our theories*. Criticism, it seems, is the only way we have of detecting our mistakes, and of learning from them in a systematic way," quoted in Redman (1991, 133).
45. Moussalli (1990, 317). He provides a balanced account of the two opposite streams of thought and also brings out the overlap between individual writer's views across the lines.
46. *ibid.*, 315.
47. *ibid.*, 318.
48. *ibid.*
49. Ahsan (1985, 193). He compares Comte and Amir 'Ali on the point. The whole article is interesting and illuminating.
50. Moussalli (1990, 316).
51. For Shari'ati's account of *Mi'rāj* see Yadegari (1985, 58). An American convert, Maryam Jamilah, for example, observes about Amir 'Ali's work: "If the 'ulamā' had been alive to their duty instead of sleeping, the contents of this book (The spirit of Islam) should have been denounced as heretical," quoted here from Ahsan (1985, 205).
52. Two of the supportive verses may be mentioned: "if you have difference of opinion concerning something, refer to God and His Messenger," (*Qur'an* 4:59). And, "Whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it; whatever he forbids you, refrain from it," (*Qur'an* 59:7).
53. "Maintaining as they did that Islamic thought could be based essentially on the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, the orthodox 'ulamā' did not consider rationalism a legitimate approach for finding the ideal social order. Yet, in the early years of Islam, there had been a significant number of thinkers who upheld it. Among them were the Mu'tazilah, whose popularity and strength peaked in the eighth century. While not denying the validity of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, the Mu'tazilah tried to accord reason a systematic role in discussions about the social order. Considered a threat to Islam, they were persecuted and their writings destroyed. What little we know about their

specific views is based on summaries provided by their critics," (Timur Kuran in Lowry, 1987, 108).

"(Amīr) ʿAlī criticizes the Abassid Caliph Mutawwakil and for his suppression of Muʿtazilī thought, as well as Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal for his, as ʿAlī puts it, anti-rational attitude. He believes that it is because of this kind of attitude that Muslims of the modern age have fallen far behind their European contemporaries," Ahsan (1985, 189-90).

The controversy led to what AbūSulaymān (1985, 270) calls the "split of leadership" detrimental to the progress of the *ummah*. He aptly observes: "... the crisis (in the Muslim mind) lies in the perception of the relationship between revelation and reason," and calls for its rectification. But how this can be brought about is *the* question.

54. Ghosh and Ghosh (ed. 1991). The authors reproduce interesting correspondence on the point between J.M. Keynes and J.B. Shaw. Shaw wrote back "Lord help you, you know nothing. . . Mahomet was an epoch maker, and there is much excellent doctrine in the *Koran*. Marx with his manifesto and his *Capital* also made an epoch . . . And you Maynard . . . are . . . a bright and promising youth . . . frightfully handicapped by the Cambridge nullification process . . . Hence, my writing . . . to save you from one or two blunders as to things which happened before your time," (Ghosh and Ghosh, 1991, 54).

55. Redman (1991, 96) quotes from Fritz Machlup's classic discussion: "What is meant by Methodology, selective Survey of the Literature," (Redman, 1991, 54-5).

56. Hausman (1984, 27). Also, Rosenberg (1992, 11-7).

57. Predictions are considered self-defeating. See Redman (1991, 107, 134 n. 3).

58. Mark Blaug in Hausman (1984, 375).

59. Landreth and Colander (1994, 7-8) put in a brief sketch of the main developments through history.

60. Zarqa (1989, 23-8).

61. Quṭb (1978, 208-9).

62. Robbins, L, *Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, in Hausman (1984, 116).

63. For example, Khan subscribes to this notion of scarcity of resources (Khan, 1994, 45).

64. The word *falāḥ* occurs many times congenerically in the *Qur'ān* and refers to what it regards *ṭayyāb* for human beings. A good exposition of the

concept is found in Khan (1993, 33-44).

65. Schumpeter, "Science and Ideology," in Hausman (1984, 267-71) gives an interesting account of the visions of three great economists — Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and J.M. Keynes.

66. Levy (1957, 204, 255, 256). Also, Şadr (1983, 15).

67. The private ownership of property in capitalism is institutional while in Islam it is derived from the concept of *amānah*. The implications of the concept in the two disciplines are, therefore, different with reference to such questions. See discussion in Şadr (1983, 17-8, 31-2).

68. Quoted in Şadr (1983, 33).

69. *ibid.*, 39-53. Interestingly, while Şadr wants to see the 'reality' adjust to the Islamic 'norms' (Chap. 1), Naqvi advocates for a movement "from the ideal to the reality!" (Chap. 12). Each viewpoint has its supporters. Only time will decide the trade-off between them.

70. Privatization of education provides a chance for Islamic movements to establish more institutions of their choice and can facilitate Islamization of market structures. On the other hand, globalization of trade, and import of foreign educational materials, and systems would work in the opposite direction. The result is, at present, any body's guess.

71. However, the recent tendency of many writers, even of some at the top, to churn almost the same material in various combinations, with not much new addition, does increase the number of publications but hardly adds to the pace of Islamization of knowledge.

72. Even on the mainstream front, take for example, the disenchantment from the once elating occupation with the basic needs fulfilment as one of the top development priorities for the simple reason of the politicians developing cold feet to give the economy the "shake up" it needed for the purpose.

73. Even in mainstream economics, the use of increased mathematics is now being seen more as a matter of professional politics than need. Notice the title of Rosenberg's book. Also, see Roy (1989, Chap. 9) and Mark Blaug in Hausman (1984, Chap. 21). Islamic economics essentially deals with values and perceptions which are difficult to quantify.

74. For example, in certain professional courses where the bulk of the students do not go for graduation or research, burdening them with learning an extra foreign language may not have commensurate utility. To that extent, it may represent a waste of valuable time and resources.

75. An interesting example is Naşr's work. His tone is acrimonious and

conclusions overdrawn, though his anguish is understandable. Few will dispute his remark on Islamization of knowledge: "It has claimed much, but delivered little," (Naşr, 1992, 1). However, his observations often lack clarity or supportive documentation.

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