Towards a Unified Approach to the Shari'ah and Social Inference

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Forging a new methodology capable of analyzing complicated social phenomena on the one hand, and facilitating the derivation of rules and concepts from divine revelation on the other, is one of the paramount concerns of contemporary Islamic scholarship and the sole concern of this paper. In dealing with this concern the paper pursues two main themes. First, an attempt is made to underscore the need for reestablishing revelation as a primary source of social theorizing. Second, a primordial model of a unified methodological approach for analyzing both revealed texts and social phenomena is outlined.

The first difficulty confronting any attempt to develop an alternative methodological approach, especially one rooted in Islamic ontology, lies in the exclusion of divine revelation from the realm of science. This exclusion originated within the confines of western scientific traditions due to internal conflict between western religious and scientific communities. While revelation and science were never perceived as mutually exclusive in the Islamic scientific tradition, modern Muslim scholars cannot ignore the fact that divine revelation is out of place in contemporary scientific activities. Thus we choose to begin by exploring the grounds for recognizing revelation as a major source of scientific knowledge.

The campaign against revealed knowledge, which led to its exclusion from western science, consisted of two phases: a) revelation was equated first with ungrounded metaphysics and established as a rival knowledge in contrast to knowledge deemed as true by reason (Locke 1977), and b) it was then asserted, à la Kant (1969), that scientific activity should be confined to empirical reality, since human reason cannot ascertain transcendental reality. We argue that scientific activity presupposes metaphy-

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sical knowledge and is even impossible without transcendental presuppositions. In addition, we contend that the truth of revelation is rooted in empirical reality and that the quality of evidence supporting revealed truth is of no less caliber than that justifying empirical truth.

Metaphysical Presuppositions of Empirical Knowledge

To begin with, the effort to separate religious (metaphysical) truth from scientific truth is mistaken and untenable, for knowledge of the physical is rooted in the metaphysical and the latter is not altogether divorced from the former. To appreciate their interconnectedness, one has to remember that science and scientific activity are the result of a specific ontology that relates an individual's scientific endeavor to the environment and furnishes their motivational basis. Put differently, scientific activity presupposes several assertions about the nature of existence, the truth of which must be acknowledged prior to any engagement in empirical studies. Among these metaphysical assertions, the following three are stressed: a) the natural world is governed by laws that endow the behavior of natural objects with order and regularity; b) laws governing natural order are rational and thus discoverable by human rationality; and c) knowledge is an important human value and is superior to ignorance.

These transcendental principles, presupposed by all scientific activity, form the foundation of the scientific tradition, even though they cannot be examined by those methods currently accepted by the modern western scientific tradition. However science, as a vocation, owes its existence to such transcendental principles.

James Rosenau, a leading scholar of international relations, contends that the seemingly disordered nature of international relations results from a failure to discover the underlying order beneath the apparent disorder of world politics. Explaining his reasoning, he wrote:

> While it may at first seem absurd to search for order beneath the disorder of world affairs, this contradiction is resolved when it is recognized that two different concepts of order are involved. In one case, the concept denotes the presumption of causation, the idea that there is a cause for every effect, that nothing happens at random. The causes may not be presently knowable because the technology, resources, or time necessary to observe them is not available, but the premise of an underlying order springs from theoretical and not empirical possibilities. That is, when causative rather than random factors are presumed to be operative, nothing is theoretically beyond comprehension. In this sense, the world

> is, by an initial, unprovable (but also irrefutable) assumption, an orderly place even though it may also be baffling and mysterious because the tools of observation are inadequate to the tasks of explanation. So as to avoid confusion, this underlying order that is taken on faith and that organizes inquiry will hereafter be referred to as Order I. (Rosenau 1990)

He fails to state that it is not simply a belief in causality that justifies the postulation of order beneath observed disorder, for causality can only establish links between an antecedent and a consequent. Rather, the postulated order is rooted in a suppressed belief in transcendental order and the rationality of the world.

In addition to constituting the basis of the metaphysical assumptions of science, belief in transcendental order is the foundation of scientific impetus. While current scientific activity can be motivated by utilitarian motives, this was hardly possible in the beginning, when scientific devotion was rarely rewarded.[1] It should be noted that the emergence of the utilitarian grounding of ethical behavior in the western tradition coincided with an increased emphasis on positivistic approaches and a decline of interest in the transcendental. Throughout these formidable changes, however, the transcendental principles that gave rise to science continued to form the metaphysical foundation—a foundation that is widely presumed but rarely acknowledged—for scientific activity.[2]

Thus the dependency of empirical and transcendental knowledge is not one-sided: it is reciprocal, for the truth of transcendental principles is substantiated through their empirical manifestations. In other words, although the transcendental principles of a postulated universal order are rooted in religious beliefs, their truth is manifested in the behavior of empirical objects.

The Rationality of Revelation

We saw earlier that the undermining of revelation as a source of knowledge began by contrasting scientific with revealed knowledge and resulted in excluding the latter by associating it with mystical faith while grounding science in "rationality." It was therefore only a matter of time

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[1]Scientific pioneers in medieval Europe were often harassed and persecuted as heretics.

[2]Examples of works that acknowledge these principles are Nachmias and Nachmias (1990) and Burtt (1980).

before revealed knowledge was relegated to the realm of irrationality. The question that must be asked is: Is a distinction between reason and revelation possible?

To answer this question, we must examine the internal structure of both reason and divine revelation. The term "revelation" refers to a body of written statements in the form of a discourse making far-reaching claims about the origin, nature, and destiny of humanity and the universe in addition to prescribing a set of rules for guiding individual and collective action. There are several such discourses, which, though having some important differences, share common features: Judaism (the Torah), Christianity (the Bible), and Islam (the Qur'an).

The term "reason," on the other hand, has two distinct references. It is sometimes used to denote a number of self-evident principles that govern the thinking process of mentally competent people, regardless of their cultural or educational backgrounds. The most basic principle, which has been widely acknowledged, is that of noncontradiction: the simultaneous assertion and denial of the same fact is impossible. Reason, according to the foregoing conception, is an instrument or a canon used for examining the coherence of a body of statements. This examination allows us to conclude whether the examined statements are coherent and hence in conformity with the principles of reason, or contradictory and thus in violation of reason. As such, revelation can be deemed irrational only when it presents contradictory statements.

The term "reason" is also used frequently to denote the capacity of rational beings to acknowledge the truth of certain assertions and deny the truth of others. At first glance, reason appears, according to this second conception, to be a human faculty, an organon possessed by all human beings. On closer examination, one can see that "reason" in this usage is a body of knowledge that has been examined and systematized by the principles of logic. Further, our examination of this systematic body of knowledge reveals that "reason" and "reasonable" consist of a) transcendental assertions whose truth is postulated, and b) empirical assertions whose truth is based on sensory experience. In other words, "reason" possesses a structure that resembles very closely that of revelation. Clearly, only by being a body of knowledge can reason pose itself as a rival to revelation.

The above conceptualization leads to three important conclusions:

1. Whether it is perceived as a mental instrument (canon) or a mental faculty (organon), reason manifests itself through several universal principles (i.e., identity, noncontradiction, excluded middle, causality) and procedures (i.e., abstraction, analysis, synthesis)

employed by individuals for ascertaining the truth of assertions. As such, it has to be associated with the methods and mechanisms used in science and, hence, cannot be seen as a source of knowledge.

2. The denial of revelation's scientific validity cannot be attributed to the nature of the revealed assertions or to the structure of revelation itself, for both reason and revelation consist of transcendental and empirical assertions. Thus it is safe to say that the complete exclusion of revelation from the realm of science is not due to any inherent contradictions between the universal elements of revelation and reason, but can be attributed to the internal contradictions between reason and western revelation and the internal conflict between the western scientific movement and the Christian church.

3. Although the western scientific tradition has postulated the irrelevance of revelation and religion to science, it has appropriated several metaphysical assertions rooted in the worldview furnished by divine revelation, albeit without ever acknowledging this debt.

Revealed and Empirical Reality: The Quality of Evidence

In light of the foregoing, we may define science as that activity aimed at ascertaining the truth of assertions on the nature of reality. The modern western exclusion of revelation from the realm of science is not based on a denial of the fact that divine revelation makes assertions on the nature of reality, but on the claim that only empirical reality can be ascertained. Since nonempirical (metaphysical) reality is not susceptible to verification through experiment, it cannot be included in the realm of science (Kant 1969).

The above argument is simplistic and misleading because it ignores and obscures the nature of revealed and empirical evidence. The argument overlooks two essential facts: a) our knowledge of empirical reality is not based on knowledge received immediately from the empirical environment, but on theories that describe the underlying structure of reality. These structures are never immediately encountered by the senses, but are inferred through the use of categories abstracted from the sensible and mediated by purely "rational" categories and statements. Using Lockean terminology, we could say that theories describing empirical reality consist of complex propositions acquired by combining several simple

propositions. For example, our understanding of the relationship between the earth and the sun is mediated by mental constructs and hence is completely at variance with the immediate sensory impression; and b) revelation, at least in its final and Islamic form, seeks its justification in empirical reality. From the viewpoint of divine revelation, empirical reality is the manifestation of a transcendental reality and can have meaning only in relation to the transcendental. Indeed, the Qur'an is rampant with verses, or signs, that emphasize the interconnectedness of the empirical and the transcendental.[3] Most importantly, revelation underscores the fact that the empirical is meaningless when severed from the whole, which, as western science is willing to admit, transcends the boundaries of empirical reality (ibid.).

As such, revelation must be approached not as an immediately accessible set of statements but as a given "phenomenon" consisting of signs whose understanding requires constant and recurring interpretation and systematization. The Qur'an makes it abundantly clear that it consists of signs (*āyāt*) whose understanding is contingent upon the processes of thinking, contemplating, and rationalizing: "Verily, in these things are signs for those who understand" (13:4); "Verily, in these things are signs for those who consider" (13:3); and "We detail our signs for people who know" (6:97).

The foregoing observation underscores the fact that to understand the truth of revelation, one has to approach it as one would approach social phenomena or even natural phenomena. This is because the truth of these phenomena is contingent upon the ability of theories, which scholars and scientists construct from data generated by these phenomena, to produce consistent and "satisfactory" explanations of experienced reality.

Regarding revelation as a phenomenon, and hence as a source of knowledge, can be justified on the grounds that the quality of evidence used to ascertain (i.e., to demonstrate objectivity) the reality described by empirical theories is of no higher caliber than that employed to ascertain the reality described by revelation. In both cases, the existence of the phenomenon under consideration is ascertained by being borne concomitantly in the consciousness of numerous individuals who have first-hand experience of its basic elements. As social or physical phenomena can be ascertained by those who have experienced their various elements, so can divine revelation be ascertained by those who have experienced the truth of its various signs. In both cases, the truth of the immediately acquired is intuitively ascertained, the only difference being that empirical

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[3]See, for example, Qur'an 3:190, 10:5, 45:3, 51:20, and 41:53.

reality experienced through the senses is apprehended through empirical intuition while transcendental reality experienced through revelation is apprehended through pure intuition.

Beginning with Kant, western science has confined intuition, defined as the unity of a phenomenon's apprehended elements, to empirical intuition and denied that transcendental elements can be apprehended. But Kant, as we saw earlier, achieved this reduction by confusing the process of pure intuition. Although he conceived, correctly, pure intuition as "all representations . . . in which there is nothing that belongs to sensation" (ibid.), he nonetheless insisted that the use of pure intuition should be limited to empirical reality. If pure intuition is obtained via successive abstraction from the multiple representation acquired by empirical intuition, leading to a singular representation in which all concepts are united, Kant's refusal to recognize the transcendental reality apprehended by pure intuition is both arbitrary and dogmatic.

Revelation and the Social Sciences

Having concluded that revelation cannot be excluded from science, since it lies at its foundation, we can discuss this fact with regard to the social or human sciences. In these fields, it is clear that the influence of transcendental principles emanating from divine revelation is not confined to providing the basic conceptual and motivational foundations, but rather extends to the formation of their central theoretical elements. Take, for instance, the important value of human equality that lies at the center of modern political theorizing. Obviously, human equality is a transcendental principle traceable to divine revelation. In classical Greek and Roman traditions people were never equal. They were divided into the sons of the gods on the one hand and barbarians on the other. The same attitude existed among nomadic Arabs who claimed racial superiority over others. It was Islam and, to lesser extent, Christianity that emphasized human equality.[4] This principle is, however, transcendental and does not lend itself to empirical verification. In fact, the historical record shows that, for the most part, human beings have been perceived as unequal.

The fact that western secularism continued to embrace principles and concepts generated within traditions rooted in divine revelation shows that western adherents of secularism sought, in the first instance, to undermine

[4]The Christian doctrine of the children of God, a doctrinal remnant of classical Greek and Roman religions, could be blamed for the liberty that Christians took in persecuting non-Christians. Similarly, the Jewish doctrine of the chosen people lent itself to even more pronounced ethnocentric tendencies, since Jewish identity is not acquired through faith but inherited matrilineally.

Church authority, not to repudiate religious beliefs and values. Many religious ideas and values—freedom, equality, or the rationality of universal order—became secular "values" and "beliefs." This was not true in the case of Muslim scientists, for classical Islamic sciences were inspired by revealed beliefs and values: "And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge; for every act of hearing or of seeing, or of (conceiving in) the mind will be inquired into" (17:36); "Many were the ways of life that have passed away before you: travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth" (3:137); "Say: Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation" (29:20); "Say: Are they equal, those who know and those who do not know?" (39:9); and "Allah will raise up many degrees in stature those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge" (58:11).

The Islamic scientific tradition has never experienced a crisis similar to that of its western counterpart. This shows that the conflict between science and revelation is neither imperative nor universal, but specific to the West's experience and religion. Any attempt to reproduce the conflict in Muslim culture is hence artificial and inspired by an irrational desire to walk in the footsteps of another culture.

Sources of Knowledge

Divine revelation has always been a source—but never the sole source—of knowledge for classical Muslim scholarship. Early Muslim scholars recognized the Qur'an's general nature and realized that they needed to acquire detailed knowledge about the structure of language and reality in order to derive rules and concepts. Hence the terms *qarīnah lafẓīyah* (linguistic evidence) and *qarīnah ḥālīyah* (existential evidence) were frequently employed by scholars using linguistic and practical knowledge to explain the Qur'an.

Early Muslim scholars developed elaborate schemes for analyzing the Qur'an, but their analysis of social and historical structures was never based on an articulated and well developed methodology. Consequently, their knowledge of society and history was based on common sense. It was not until the time of Ibn Khaldūn that the Islamic scientific tradition saw a serious attempt to develop theories designed to explain social interaction by identifying historical patterns. Although Ibn Khaldūn introduced highly matured theories of society and history, he never discussed the methodological foundation of his theorizing. Subsequent Muslim scholars made no attempt to elaborate upon his methodological approach.

The unbalanced growth of textual methods at the expense of practical and historical methods led to conceptual distortions, especially in those

areas where a knowledge of the structures of society and sociopolitical organizations was essential. Nowhere is this imbalance more apparent than in treatises intended to outline the structure of the Islamic political order. For example, al Māwardī (1404/1983) insisted that a ruler could designate (*'ahd*) a legitimate successor based upon the precedent of Abū Bakr's designation of 'Umar. This act, he argued, was supported by the consensus (*ijmā'*) of the Muslim community.

Yet neither al Māwardī nor any other scholar who accepted this practice undertook a systematic and probing analysis of the Companions' actions to determine the rules that guided them or to ascertain their compatibility with the Shari'ah's political principles. Without mature methods to facilitate a profound analysis of the purposes and rules determining the early Muslims' actions or the social and political structures governing their interactions, classical scholars elevated the actions of a historically determined community to the status of universality and idealized the behavior of fallible human beings.

While classical Muslim scholars considered history a source of knowledge alongside revelation, they could not make full use of it for two reasons. First, classical Muslim scholars, with the exception of Ibn Khaldūn, were primarily interested in identifying social and political models to be recreated and in specifying exemplary behaviors to be emulated—not in discovering patterns of behavior or isolating general tendencies that could explain political interaction and social relations. Second, this outlook made them incapable of developing a methodology for analyzing social phenomena. The example set by Ibn Khaldūn, despite its impressive maturity, came too late in the evolution of Islamic scholarship to attract a following. Its resounding impact took place in western tradition, where the scientific and methodological imbalance took the opposite form: the distortion was slanted towards the social and practical at the expense of the revealed.

The aim of developing a balanced scientific methodology should be twofold: a) including procedures for deriving rules (i.e., law-like statements) from revelation and history; and b) integrating rules derived from both sources. The remainder of this paper will sketch the general framework of a unified methodology for textual and contextual analysis.

The Revealed Source: The Rules of Textual Inference

Divine revelation has been given to us in the form of the Qur'anic discourse and its elaboration—the hadith collections. The Qur'an itself consists of statements revealed in a piecemeal fashion over a twenty-three year period. Qur'anic statements provided early Muslims with a universal

worldview and directed their actions towards establishing a community (ummah) based on the principles of Islam.

The Qur'anic discourse is unique in style and approach, for it is not organized in a thematic fashion whereby an issue or event is exposed at once in its entirety before the next issue is discussed. Rather, one finds facets and aspects of a question or an event revealed in different chapters and verses. In order for a person to understand the Qur'anic view or position on a specific question, therefore, one has to treat the Qur'anic discourse as a comprehensive whole. Any attempt to determine the Qur'anic position by contemplating isolated Qur'anic statements is bound to lead to inconsistencies or outright misconceptions.

Take, for example, the verse: "O you who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind intoxicated until you can understand what you say" (4:43). Based on this, the Qur'anic position on the consumption of intoxicants is that they are to be avoided shortly before the performance of prayer. But this is only partially correct, as the completely correct position is found in a verse revealed subsequently: "O you who believe! Intoxicants, gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (divination by) arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiwork: Eschew such (abomination) that you may prosper" (5:90).

Therefore, in order to derive rules and concepts from divine revelation, we must employ a method that is sufficiently developed to allow the derivation and systematization of these rules and concepts. The method proposed here comprise four procedural steps (see diagram 1).

Step One aims at identifying all Qur'anic and prophetic statements that are relevant to the question at hand. For example, to determine the Qur'anic position on the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, one has to compile Qur'anic statements relating to the terms *imām* (leader), *walīy al amr* (ruler), *ṭā'ah* (obedience), and *naṣr* (support). A comprehensive survey shows that these terms appear in the following verses:

imām: (15:79), (36:12), (2:124), (11:17), (25:74), (46:12), (17:71), (9:12), (21:73), (28:5), (28:41), and (32:24);

walīy al amr: (4:59) and (4:83);

ṭā'ah: (43:54), (24:51), (33:67), and (25:52); and

naṣr: (9:40) and (7:157).

It should be stressed that identifying relevant verses is not mechanical but involves a good deal of analysis and familiarity with semantic usages.

Step two involves understanding, both individually and in relation to each other, the meaning of relevant Qur'anic verses. Interpretations of revealed statements require that the rules of the Arabic language be observed. Any interpretation that violates these rules is bound to lead to distortion, as has happened in the cases of the liberal and unjustifiable use of metaphorical textual analysis by various scholars. For example, the Shi'i scholar 'Alī ibn al Ḥusayn al Qimmī (1985) interpreted the verse "Say: see if your stream be some morning lost (in the underground earth), who then can supply you with clear-flowing water?" (67:30) by saying that "this verse was revealed in relation to the established imam, saying if your imam disappeared one morning, who will bring a known imam?"

This is a clear violation of the first rule of metaphorical interpretation, which stipulates that such an interpretation is called for only when the text's literal meaning is deficient. The above verse's literal meaning is neither deficient nor incoherent: it reminds people of the favors God has bestowed upon them and exhorts them to heed His warning lest He deprive them of the goods they take for granted.

The meaning of Qur'anic statements cannot be apprehended simply by analyzing the lexical usage of individual terms. Rather, each one must be analyzed in three interrelated contexts: textual (*siyāq naṣṣī*), discursive (*siyāq khiṭābī*), and existential (*siyāq ḥālī*). One cannot ignore the context of the chapter in which the statement appears, its place within the context of the entire Qur'anic discourse, or the context of the sociohistorical events that accompanied its revelation.

The third context, found mainly in the *tafsīr* (Qur'anic interpretation) literature, is called *asbāb al nuzūl* (reasons of revelation). Examining this aspect of a Qur'anic statement is crucial for the derivation of a correct interpretation. For example, how is *fāsiq* to be understood in the following verse: "O you who believe! If a *fāsiq* (unprincipled) person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest you harm people unwittingly and afterwards become full of regret for what you have done" (49:6).

The term *fāsiq* is used in the Qur'an to denote a person who, despite his awareness of the principles of rightness, succumbs to his whims and vain desires. Thus an interpretation based solely on lexical meaning indicates the need for ascertaining the truth of the received news only when the person who brought it is a known *fāsiq*. But when the events related to the verse's revelation are examined, a new picture emerges. Ibn Kathīr (1399/1979) narrates, on the authority of Mujāhid and Qutādah, that the Messenger of Allah sent

> al Walīd ibn 'Uqbah to the Banū al Mustaliq to collect the zakah. (When they learnt of his arrival) they came out (to receive

him at the outskirts of their town) to give him the zakah. (Upon seeing their masses marching towards him) he turned back to Madīnah and told the Prophet that the Banū al Mustaliq are marching to attack you and they have abandoned their commitment to Islam. The Prophet then sent Khālid ibn al Walīd to investigate the matter, to inquire carefully (into the truth of the matter), and to avoid hasty decisions. (Khālid) arrived near their town at night and (immediately) dispatched scouts. They came back with the news that (the Banū al Mustaliq) were still committed to Islam and that they have heard their *adhān* and prayers. In the morning, Khālid visited them and was pleased with what he saw. He (later) went back to the Prophet and informed him about his findings. Thus Allah revealed the verse.

The above narration gives a markedly different understanding of the verse, for it shows that ascertaining the report's truth is required not only when the person bringing it is a known *fāsiq*, but even when this trait is not yet evident. Had al Walīd been a known *fāsiq*, he would not have been entrusted with collecting the zakah on behalf of the Prophet. Evidently, this was a trying mission for him, because it revealed his lack of courage, his willingness to exaggerate, and his use of imagination to cover his fear, the cause of his failure.

Step three deals with textual *ta'līl* (explanation)—identifying the efficient cause (*'illah*) for which the command or directive embodied in the text was made. Another objective is to identify the common property or attribute, possessed by different objects, that justify the use of the same term for their reference. Identifying a ruling's *'illah* is a first step in the endeavor to discover the universal principles regulating and governing the Shari'ah's pronouncements.

For example, scholars have contemplated the *'illah* of the following Shari'ah rulings: the prohibition of selling *juzaf* (unmeasured) for *mākil* (measured) commodities and of selling an *al ghā'ib* (absent) commodity. They discovered that the *'illah* of these prohibitions was to protect the buyer against deception (*gharār*) (Ibn Rushd 1406/1986). By understanding the general principles embodied in these rulings, we can apply these principles to other transactions that have not been ruled upon by revelation and can even allow the sale of an unmeasured or absent good if the buyer can be protected from deception. For instance, if the product's quality can be guaranteed before purchase, or if it can be returned if found defective, selling it sight-unseen can be permitted. Muslim jurists have permitted *'aqd al istiṣnā'* (the contract of manufacturing) on this basis.

Since *ta'līl* frees us from social and historical contingencies, it is crucial to analyze textual statements related to social and political action. The issue of the rules of peace and war is a case in point, for some verses tell Muslims to fight the enemies of Islam while others encourage the establishment of peace when the enemy is inclined to stop fighting. Developing a clear understanding as to when peacemaking is desirable and when war is advisable requires an elaborate process of *ta'līl*.

Step four seeks to bring unity and order to the rules and principles derived from the Qur'an by fitting them into a comprehensive and internally consistent system. This can be achieved through a process of successive abstraction in which rules derived from the text are subsumed under another set of rules belonging to a higher level of abstraction. This process should be repeated until a set of irreducible universal principles is obtained. It is at this level of high abstraction that the systematic ordering of rules, or law-like statements, can be attained, for now the interrelationship among a manageable number of concepts can be discovered. Thus that which is impossible at the level of the immediate apprehension of reality—the underlying structure of reality—is made possible at the level of high abstraction.

The process of successive abstraction, which also signifies a successive induction whereby the particular is subsumed under the universal, is followed by a process of successive deduction in which the internal consistency of the universal and the particular is ascertained.

The model outlined above is based on the principles (*qawā'id*) approach, which was developed by the Muslim jurist al 'Izz ibn 'Abd al Salām and became a full-fledged methodology in al Shāṭibī's (1395/1975) theory of *al maqāṣid*.

The Historical Sources: Rules of Historical Inference

The system of rules and concepts derived from revealed knowledge is insufficient for grounding action because a) it consists of general and universal rules, which means that its application to specific cases requires further deliberation and specification. This can be done by incorporating information about the nature of individual and collective action and interaction; and b) the application of universal rules requires knowledge of existing conditions. Only when an action's theoretical conditions correspond with its actual conditions is a rule's application possible. For example, to determine whether an individual should pay zakah, one must first identify the zakah payment's theoretical conditions (i.e., possessing *niṣāb* and being Muslim) and determine whether the necessary conditions are met. Similarly, when deciding whether a Muslim state should sign a

peace treaty with a non-Muslim state, it is not enough to know the theoretical conditions; the actual conditions have to be examined to determine whether they correspond with the theoretical.

It may be concluded, therefore, that a) a thorough study and analysis of human actions and interactions must be undertaken before a revealed rule can be implemented, and b) an appropriate methodology for the study of action must be identified. Western methodologies are unsuitable for studying human phenomena because their implicitly presupposed metaphysical foundations are not in accord with the ontology of revelation. In addition, they are deduced from models developed by contemplating western experience on the assumption that such experience is universally valid. Considering the ontological and ethical differences between Islamic and western scientific traditions, the need for models and systems that incorporate Muslim experience and Islamic concerns is obvious.

To achieve this objective, the "uniformity" of human purposes, motives, and goals should be rejected and social phenomena must be explained by analyzing their basic building blocks: human actions. In other words, the process of discovering the rules governing the underlying structures of social phenomena must begin by analyzing the basic elements that constitute these phenomena. Such an analysis may be done through four steps (see diagram 2).

Step one aims at analyzing the actions of an individual involved in a specific social phenomenon. This process involves uncovering an action's three determinants: a) Purpose, defined as the overall object to be realized; b) Motive, or the actor's psychological impetus (the motivation to act stems from either a commitment to moral principles or self-interest); and c) Rule, or the technical procedure followed in order to attain the action's purpose.

To illustrate, take the example of a party election. A primary actor here is the candidate. To analyze his/her action, the three components of action must be identified. In this example, the purpose is to win the election. The motive could be either commitment to a moral principle expressed in a stated policy, material and/or psychological benefits to be attained by the candidate and his/her supporters, or a combination of both. The technical rule—the available means that must be used to achieve the objective—is then designed and used. Thus winning the election unites the candidate and his/her supporters into one purposive group. This group's unity of purpose is the result of shared value commitments or interests, for their support for the candidate may be based on the latter's declared intention to actualize value commitments shared by the group or from their interest in seeing certain legislation passed.

Step two deals with classifying modes or types of action on the basis of their components' similarity or difference. Actions having similar purposes form a homogeneous group, while those having differing purposes divide the population into heterogeneous groups. Differences in technical rules divide identified purposive groups into functional subgroups.

This step is not completely separate from the first one, for occasionally the division of the population into groups and subgroups precedes the in-depth analysis of individual action. Since it is impossible to analyze each individual's action, we often select those individuals whose actions are considered representative of their groups. Yet the early grouping is usually done intuitively and therefore must be modified and refined according to an analysis of the actions of selected individuals who are considered representatives of the various groups.

Step three consists of identifying universal rules that govern the interaction between the groups identified in step two. To isolate universal rules (or laws) of interaction, such patterns as cooperation and conflict, domination and submission, and growth and decline should be analyzed and compared across time and geographical space. Clearly, research in this area could be quite complex and hence requires further elaboration.

Finally, in step four, universal rules uncovered in the previous step need to be systematized in a fashion similar to that employed in textual derivation. It must seek to eliminate internal inconsistencies within the system of rules acquired through historical derivation as well as those derived form revelation.

A Unified Methodological Approach

A glance at the rules of textual and historical inference discloses a general pattern of scientific inference shared by both approaches. The general pattern (see diagram 3) may be summarized as: a) Analysis of the text/phenomenon into its basic components: statements/actions; b) Grouping similar statements/actions under one category; c) Identification of rules that unify the various categories; d) Identification of general rules and purposes that govern the interaction/interrelation of various categories; and e) Systematization of the body of rules obtained through the previous procedures (i.e., eliminating contradiction).

The unity of textual and actual (historical) inference patterns is not confined to the similarity of the proposed procedures for textual and historical analysis; it is extended to the structure of action and discourse, as collective action and discourse consist of systems of rules and purposes that bring unity and coherence to each and allow comparison and contrast. By comparing the rules and purposes of the system of action

(social phenomenon) and the system of text (discourse), one can examine the extent to which the two are, or are not, compatible. The significance of this is twofold: a) The system of rules derived from revelation can be used as an evaluative framework without confusing the ideal with the actual; and b) When actual practices depart from confessed rules and purposes (divine or otherwise), the actual rules and purposes embodied in those practices can be reconstructed and contrasted with the ideal.

Theoretical Framework and Theory Building

The set of universal statements derived form revealed and historical records constitutes a theoretical framework that serves as the basis of any theorizing about social phenomena. The system of history-based and revelation-based rules is neither absolute nor closed, for it is subject to a process of constant refinement and perfection based on the efforts aimed at utilizing the available universal rules in order to explain social phenomena or guide collective action. These efforts lead to theory building, whereby specific rules and concepts are employed for explaining a specific phenomenon (see diagram 4).

The process of theory building provides us with the opportunity to verify, clarify, and enlarge the theoretical framework. This process consists of two phases: a) A set of universal principles is incorporated into a theory designed to explain or predict, and hence guide, the action of a specific human interaction; and b) The theory's soundness is examined by contrasting hypotheses derived from the theory with observed actions or events. If the theory can provide a clear explanation or accurate prediction, it should be considered sound. A repeated mismatch between the observed behavior and the deduced hypothesis indicates the incorrectness or inaccuracy of some of the universal rules and points to the theory's inadequacy. In such a case, it is necessary to modify the developed theory and/or the universal rules and concepts.

Conclusion

We have attempted to provide a methodological approach that recognizes revelation as a primary source of knowledge and seeks to use both text and action analysis techniques as necessary theory-building tools. Technical procedures (i.e., methods) have not been identified. However, these can be appropriated from the textual methods of classical Muslim scholarship and modern western scholarship, either immediately or after refinement and modification.

The methodological approach delineated above provides a primordial model of social scientific inquiry and serves as a first approximation towards developing an alternative methodology friendly to Islamic ideals and aspirations. It requires, as such, further elaboration, modification, and refinement, whereby the interrelationship between rules derived from revelation and those abstracted from experience is specified. This relationship must be determined separately within each social science discipline.

In addition to the important task of incorporating divine revelation into scientific research, the proposed methodology enjoys a number of advantages over the currently dominant western methodological approaches:

1. While the approach allows us to generalize about a group's characteristics based on an analysis of representative members, it permits further modification and refinement of our conception of group behavior by looking into the actions of previously unexamined members. The fact that the procedures provided for by the proposed methodology allows grouping individuals on the basis of the similarity and difference of an action's components guards against unwarranted assumptions of uniform behavior.

2. The proposed approach combines an action-theoretical perspective with a systems-theoretical perspective. Thus, while it permits us to deal with collective interaction as a system, it regards the system as open and capable of change. The approach, therefore, avoids the static nature of pure system-theoretical approaches.

3. The proposed approach, while accommodating change, avoids the relativist tendencies of western approaches geared towards recognizing differences and changes as well as absolutism and relativism. The former is avoided due to the recognition of the transient nature of the theoretical framework derived from revealed and historical records, and the latter by realizing that the framework itself is anchored in divinely revealed truth.

4. In addition, this approach does not hide its ethical and ontological commitments nor lend itself to ethnocentrism, as do western methodologies. The latter is the direct result of attributing universality to western-based theory while embracing values and categories peculiar to western experience.

Diagram 1: Procedure of Textual Inference

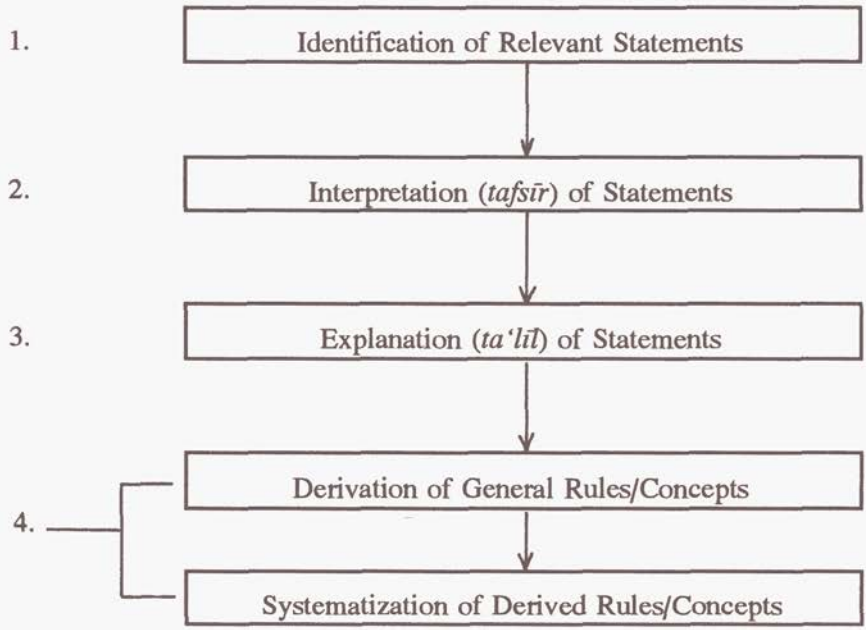


Diagram 2: Procedure of Historical Inference

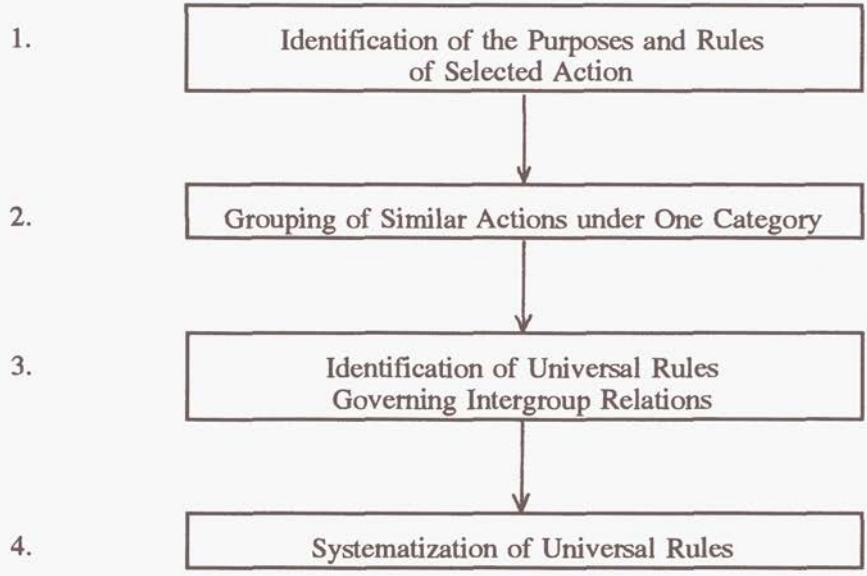


Diagram 3: Unified Procedure for Textual and Historical Inference

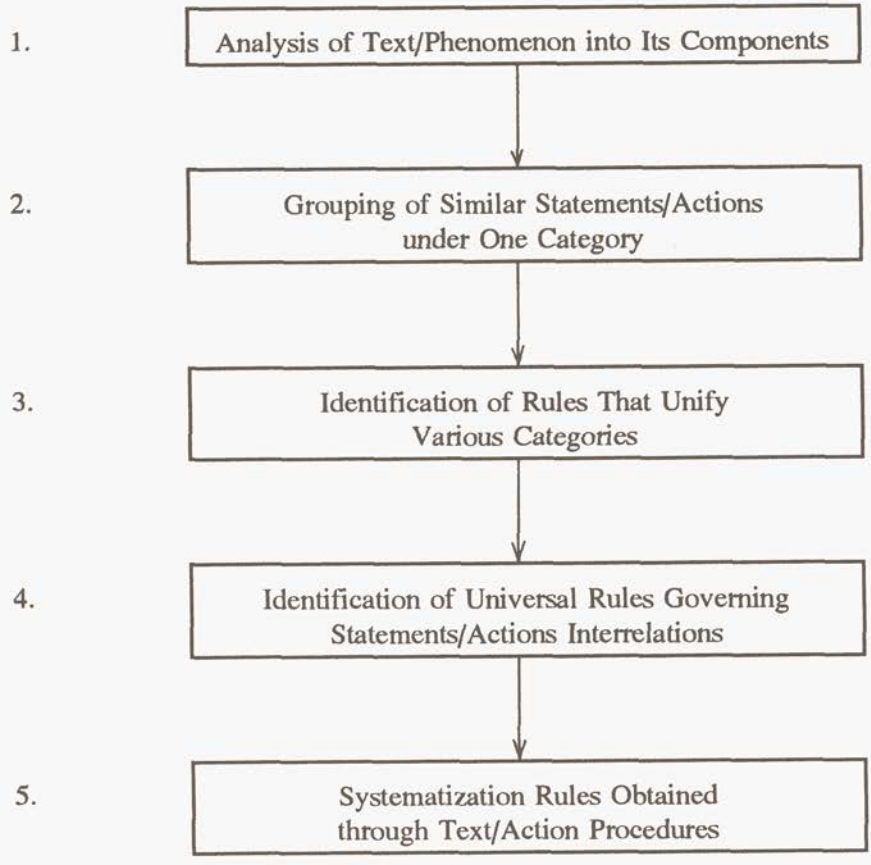
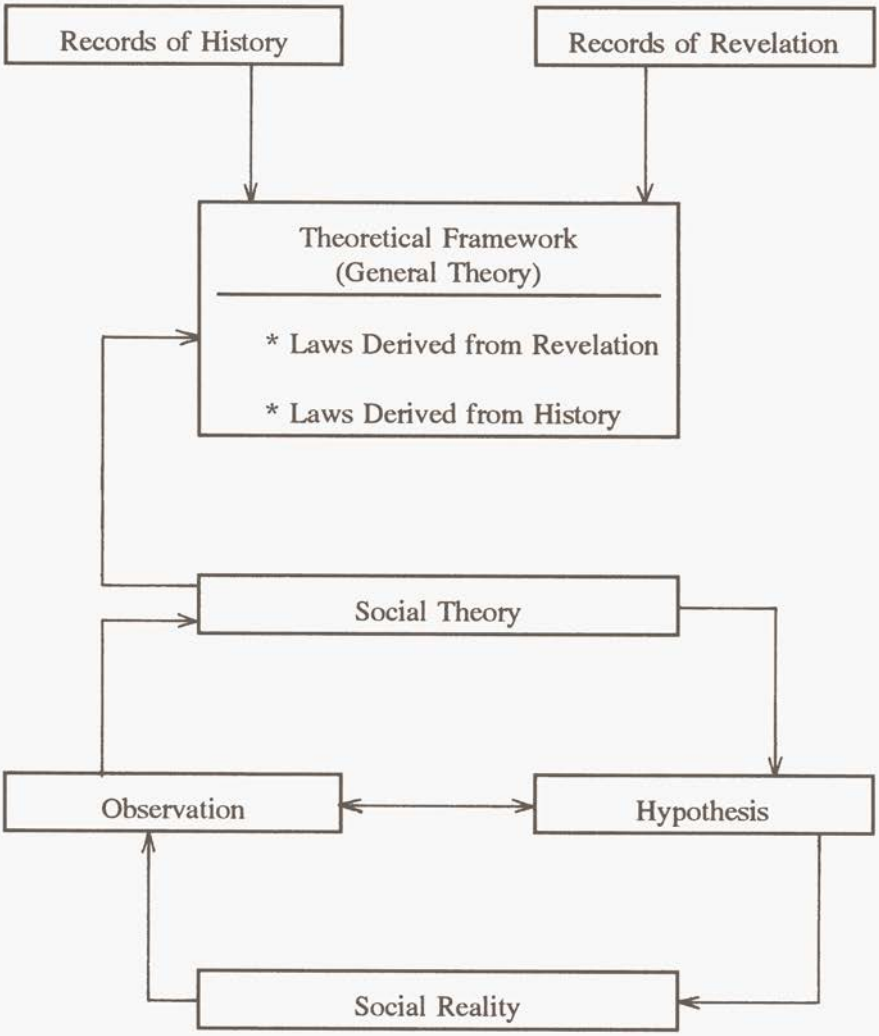


Diagram 4: Proposed Model of a Unified Approach to Textual and Contextual Analysis



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