

**Interdisciplinary Seminar on Islamic Methodology
for Human Sciences
International Islamic University, Malaysia
14 Rajab 1413/January 7 1993**

The Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIU, organizes monthly interdisciplinary seminars. On 14 Rajab 1413/January 7 1993, an interesting paper was presented by Dr Louay Safi of the Department of Political Science, IIU. Though an internal affair of the Kulliyah, the seminar generated interest among the IIU community and was attended to the full capacity of Al-Tabari Conference Hall. It was chaired by the Deputy Rector (Academic Affairs) of the University, Prof. Dr. Mohd. Kamal Hassan.

Dr AbdulHamid Ahmad AbuSulayman, the Rector of IIU, in his introduction, emphasized the need for Muslims to tackle the problems confronting the ummah and to regain the intellectual dimension. This could be done only if Muslim scholars succeed in integrating the two sources of knowledge - the revealed and the human. This, in turn, requires paying attention to methodological aspects and devising an Islamic methodology for human sciences.

Dr Louay Safi argued that the current interest in the Islamization of knowledge has its beginning in the work plan proposed by the late Dr Isma'il al-Faruqi over a decade ago. Al-Faruqi spelled out a general strategy for achieving the objectives of 'Islamization' which consisted of twelve steps.

If the twelve steps of the plan are literally taken as successive steps, the time frame for accomplishing the task is immediately stretched into infinity. The conditions needed for the implementation of such a strategy are neither available nor are they likely to materialize in the near future. Consequently, Louay Safi suggests a possible alternative strategy. This schema provides a markedly simplified procedure consisting of three steps: mastery of substantive knowledge, mastery of methodological knowledge, and production of university textbooks, (or generally intellectual works). The knowledge produced through this procedure will be subjected to the critical scrutiny of other Muslim scholars before being elevated to the level of Islamized knowledge.

Al-Faruqi's work plan, argues Louay Safi, does not provide detailed methods for guiding scientific research, but only a set of ontological principles, having epistemological and ethical implications. The work plan, however, has elicited three types of responses. The first two (represented by Muhammad Said al-Buti and Fazlur Rahman) deny the need for the development of an Islamic methodology, either because the methodology has already been discovered by classical Muslim scholars or that methods are basically tools independent of any religious orientation. The third group consists of scholars (like AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Muhammad Arif, Abdul Rashid Moten, Muhammad Umziyam and Muna Abul-Fadl) who have supported the project of Islamization, and have made significant contributions towards the Islamization of their respective disciplines.

Louay Safi's review of literature reveals that all studies made thus far in search of an Islamic methodology engage the 'Western-disciplinary' track of the Islamization workplan, while almost completely overlooking the 'Islamic legacy' track. To Louay Safi, 'the project of Islamization of knowledge is still in its pre-methodological stage' and is susceptible to criticisms from both traditional and Western methods. This calls for critical engagement of both classical Muslim and modern Western methods. Such an engagement would serve not merely the immediate needs of contemporary Muslim scholarship but would also pave the way for the emergence of an Islamic methodology. In examining the classical and modern methodologies, contemporary Muslim scholars must specify, Louay Safi concludes, the rules: (1) for deriving social concepts and categories from revealed sources; (2) for deriving concepts and categories from empirical sources; (3) for the differentiation (horizontal ordering) and stratification (vertical ordering) of concepts and categories derived from both revealed and empirical sources; and, (4) for linking revealed concepts and categories with empirical ones.

Professor Malik Badri, one of the discussants, appreciated Safi's presentation but reminded the audience not to belittle the contributions made by scholars like Hassan al-Bannah and Abul A'la Mawdudi. He suggested further that 'the Western disciplinary track' evident in contemporary literature on Islamic methodology is the result of Western psycho-social and cultural influences on the Muslim mind. These must be countered to ensure the success of the Islamization of knowledge project. Professor Zafar Afaq Ansari, another discussant, considered Louay Safi's alternative workplan as dynamic rather than linear. He stressed the need for extensive 'normal science' activity, in the Kuhnian sense, which is so lacking in Muslim societies. Other participants in the discussion included Professors Sharif al-Mujahid, Akram M. Saadeddin, Fazlur Rahman and others. They

discussed different aspects of the paper but were of the view that more work needs to be done along the same lines in order to quicken the pace for the Islamization of knowledge.

Abdul Rashid Moten
Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge
and Human Sciences
International Islamic University
Malaysia