

The roots and constructs of Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking

Salah Machouche* and Benaouda Bensaid**

Abstract: Many current researches have sought to explore the thought and contributions of Ibn Khaldūn to the various disciplines of human knowledge including philosophy of history, historiography, politics, economics, and education. Little interest, however, is given to his contributions to the theory of critical thinking. This research investigates Ibn Khaldūn's perspective on critical thinking and critique of intellectual disciplines while exploring its origin and dimensions. The research shows that Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking is essentially entrenched in the fundamental vision and origins of Islam, and reflective of the broad Islamic scholarship and the practices of Muslim scholars across the different religious and rational disciplines. What characterises Ibn Khaldūn's contribution to the field of critical thinking is his ability to apply it across various fields of scholarship yet with a conscious attention to society's dynamics, particularly the practical dimensions and implications of his theory of human society (*'umrān basharī*).

Keywords: Critical thinking; Ibn Khaldūn; *muqaddimah*; *'umrān*; Islamic rationality.

Abstrak: Terdapat banyak kajian terkini yang telah mendalami pemikiran dan sumbangan Ibn Khaldūn yang menjangkau pelbagai bidang pengajian kemanusiaan termasuklah falsafah sejarah, pensejarahan, politik, ekonomi, dan pendidikan. Walau bagaimanapun, minat yang rendah turut dilihat dalam

* Salah Machouche is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Malaysia. Email: bentahar@iium.edu.my. (✉)

** Benaouda Bensaid is an Assistant Professor in the Department of General Education, College of Science and Humanities, Effat University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Email: bbensaid@effatuniversity.edu.sa.

sumbangan beliau terhadap teori pemikiran manusia. Kajian ini menyiasat perspektif Ibn Khaldūn terhadap pemikiran kritis dan kritikan bidang intelek selain mengkaji asal usul serta dimensi pemikiran kritis yang telah diajukan oleh Ibn Khaldūn. Kajian ini mengumpul penulisan Ibn Khaldūn selain daripada kajian-kajian lain yang sejagat, terutamanya tulisan-tulisan yang menitikberatkan pemikiran Ibn Khaldūn serta implikasi epistenologinya. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pemikiran kritis Ibn Khaldūn diperlukan dalam pembentukan asas visi serta asal usul Islam itu sendiri. Lagipun, ia mencerminkan keserjanaan Islam yang luas serta amalan-amalan pemikir Muslim melampaui pelbagai agama dan bidang yang rasional. Apakah sifat-sifat sumbangan Ibn Khaldūn terhadap bidang pemikiran kritikal, selain daripada kebolehannya untuk menggunakannya keserjanaan dalam berbagai bidang. Namun begitu tumpuan yang nyata terhadap dinamik kemasyarakatan, disamping dimensi praktikal serta implikasi teorinya terhadap kemasyarakatan (*umrān basharī*) dilaksanakan.

Kata Kunci: Pemikiran kritis; Ibn Khaldūn; *Muqaddimah*; *'umrān*; rasionaliti Islam.

Over the course of more than six centuries, extensive studies have sought to explain, criticise, and interpret Ibn Khaldūn's (d. 808/1406) thought and works. For example, the works of Taha Hussein (1925), M. Kamil Ayad (1930), H. A. R. Gibb (1933), Abū Khaldūn Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī (1967), Muhsin Mahdi (1957), Nassif Nassar (1967), and Mahmoud Dhaouadi (2005) have explored the roots of Ibn Khaldūn's thought from different perspectives. They addressed different topics and issues that may conveniently be placed beneath the contemporary broad themes of politics, economics, history, education, literature, and language. In those studies however, different approaches have been used, including but not limited to those of orientalist, secularist, positivists, nationalists, and so forth. Because of the repetitive and seemingly uniformed type of questions often raised, contemporary studies on Ibn Khaldūn seem to have hit a glass ceiling or a point of redundant saturation, if not stagnation.

To avoid this destiny, and to move forward with studies of Ibn Khaldūn's works, new questions need to be raised, alongside novel approaches, methodologies, objectives, and fields of inquiry; all needing to be generated in the light of current branches and conditions of learning. Such a shift is critical to the effective shaping of Khaldūnian studies, and would be immensely helpful to the understanding,

repositioning, and *relevantizing* of Ibn Khaldūn's methodology in an ever-changing environment of human association/civilisation (*'umrān basharī*). It is with this in mind that the current study seeks to explore the question of critical thinking according to Ibn Khaldūn, which to a great extent highlights the Islamic worldview, modes of thinking and human experience, equally responsible for giving birth to the science of civilisation (*'umrān*).

One must, however, acknowledge the challenges associated with revisiting the diverse intellectual contributions of Ibn Khaldūn in the light of a new perspective, as the original text of his work is nonetheless still resourceful. One also needs to retain a constant awareness of the extent to which Ibn Khaldūn's thought is embedded in an intricate framework of the Islamic worldview, personal practice, socio-historical experience, taxonomy of knowledge, and certainly not to forget about his particular technical language.

General background of critical thinking

Critical thinking is defined as the use of cognitive skills or strategies which increase the probability of desirable outcomes (Halpern, 1996). Critical thinking denotes thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed; a form of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions when employing skills that are thoughtful and effective for the particular context of thinking. Critical thinking also denotes the formation of logical inferences (Simon & Kaplan, 1989), a development of cohesive and logical reasoning patterns (Stall & Stahl, 1991), and the careful and deliberate determination of whether to accept, reject, or suspend judgments. These definitions capture the general idea of a mental activity that is useful and instrumental for a particular cognitive task

Although not regarded as an independent discipline in the history of Islamic thought (Solihu, 2010-2011), critical thinking has expressed itself through individual and collective scholarship practices, the use of cognitive skills, strategies, and thought processes having unique specifications that belong to particular religious and civilisational origins. In order to ensure the criticality of the intellectual exercise, the Islamic literature contains forms of cognitive thought operations, such as examination (*taḥqīq*), critic (*naqd*), review (*tahdhīb*), critical evaluation of narrators or (impugnment), (*tajrīḥ al-ruwāt*), simplifying/

approximation (*taqrīb*), justification (*ta'līl*), refutation (*radd*), and validation of the cause in new cases (*tanqīh al-manāṭ*). Procedures of critical thinking are commonplace amidst branches of Islamic studies, including Qur'ānic exegesis, the science of *ḥadīth*, scholastic theology, and history.

Disciplines of Islamic sciences apply customised apparatus of demonstrations as is the case with juristic inferences made of religious texts and leading to formulation of principles and maxims, or treatment of juristic cases and further building of legal apparatus, extract the decisive cause (*'illah mu'aththirah*) through established steps of extraction (*istikhrāj*), investigating (*imtihān*), inferences (*istintāj*) or determination of the original reason/cause. In the field of Islamic jurisprudence, one also finds extensive usage of contrasting and weighing of legal/juristic evidences (*ta'āruḍ wa-tarjīh al-adillah*). Those strategies pertain to linguistics, prophetic traditions, and fundamental rules.

Ibn Khaldūn's perspective of critical thinking reflects serious dedication to protect the essence and originality of Islamic thought. For instance, he discloses the undesirable impact of Greek logic on the development of sciences. In his survey of the historical development of Islamic knowledge, whether related to revelation, nature, or *'umrān*, Ibn Khaldūn sought to demonstrate the detrimental influences of foreign ideas and sciences on Islamic disciplines, particularly on Muslim speculative theology and mysticism.

Roots of Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking

To a large extent researchers have sought to identify the intellectual origins of Ibn Khaldūn. While coming up with various interpretations, each set accords to a specific approach of inquiry, including that of the French colonials, as is the case with early French translators of the *Muqaddimah*. In addition to the known orientalists, such as Gibb, Arab apologists and semi-utilitarian writers produced early studies on Ibn Khaldūn. Those approaches generally sought to accommodate the contributions and epistemic methodology of Ibn Khaldūn within their own intellectual circles and interpretations, their respective worldviews, methodologies, and objectives, as well as their historical and cultural experiences. Generally speaking, those intellectual models have hardly escaped subjectivism, partiality, and even bias. The thought of Ibn Khaldūn has in fact been re-interpreted instead of being explained, and

has been depicted as isolated fragments of thought rather than being introduced as an organic intellectual thesis.

One of the most subjective endeavours of note perhaps relates to the attempt to employ every possible methodological tool to *deracinate* Ibn Khaldūn's thought from its original intellectual cradle. Perhaps the best example of this category of studies are those which assign some sort of secular identity to his thought, including Muhsin Mahdi (1957), Wardī (1994), and Baali and Wardī (1981). In fact, biased treatment of the thought of Ibn Khaldūn might have caused the stagnancy of his thought today, which is understood in view of the fact that his thought requires rather native, original, and genuine context of interpretation.

Ibn Khaldūn's works and thought have also been notably compared to classical and modern eminent Western figures and thinkers, such as the Greek historian Thucydides (Goodman, 1972), Machiavelli, Giovanni Battista Vico, Montesquieu, Adam Smith, August Comte, Ludwig Gumplowicz, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim (Baali & Wardi, 1981), Max Weber (Ardız, 2008), and Arnold Toynbee (Irwin, (1997). Some sought to examine the nature and styles of thinking according to Ibn Khaldūn, as with Muhsin Mahdi who attempted to study "the science of culture" (*'ilm al-'umrān*), further examining Ibn Khaldūn's early dual-education, including both Ibn Khaldūn's religious education under Abū Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Muḥaymin al-Ḥaḍramī and his philosophical education under 'Abdullāh Muhammad al-Abilly (Mahdi, 1957).

Muhsin Mahdi for instance studied the impact of legal Mālikī thought on the thinking of Ibn Khaldūn, and on his understanding of the association existing between revelation and reason and their implications for the study of society. The idea is that the Mālikī School of law depends on the living tradition of Medina (*'amal ahl al-Madīnah*) to tackle and evaluate the diverse yet practical problems of the social order, and the order of doing in the Muslim community (Mahdi, 1957). Mahdi notes Ibn Khaldūn's preference for philosophy, as opposed to dialectical theology (*'ilm al-kalām*) as was the case with many later scholars (Mahdi, 1957, p. 35). He further argues that Ibn Khaldūn's thinking style should be explained according to his training in philosophical sciences. For him, "...his [Ibn Khaldūn] early training in philosophical sciences had taught him that the understanding of a subject requires an investigation that progresses from the external data, transmitted from the past or acquired through personal experience, to

the explanatory and demonstrable knowledge of their cause and nature” (Mahdi, 1957, p. 48).

Along similar lines, Nasif Nassar conducted his study on Ibn Khaldūn’s thinking or “*La Pensée*”. In the first chapter of his work entitled ‘Critique de La Raison Speculative’, Nassar explains the fundamentals and directions of Ibn Khaldūn’s thinking using a philosophical perspective. He also stresses that Ibn Khaldūn’s mode of critical thinking cannot be compared to some other common styles known among European philosophers, such as Cartesian rationality, Kantian criticism, or Hegelian idealism. These modes of critical thinking, Nassar further argues, “...have nothing in common with Ibn Khaldūn’s thought” (Nassar, p. 46). In a similar spirit, Baali and Wardī (1981, p. vii) explored Ibn Khaldūn’s thinking styles in an attempt to “construct Ibn Khaldūn’s frame of reference” and to demonstrate that the Khaldūnian theory conveniently fits into the contemporary sociology of today. Both described Ibn Khaldūn’s thought as “realistic” and both agree that Ibn Khaldūn sought to develop ‘a realistic kind of logic to replace the old idealistic one’ which, they labelled as temporalistic-relativistic-materialistic logic (Baali & Wardī, 1981, pp. 77-78). According to Dhaouadi (2005), the three determinants of the great Khaldūnian mind include broad knowledge, a stimulating external milieu, and special humanity traits.

On the other hand, a number of Arab researchers sought to use conflicting views in their explanation of the relationship between Ibn Khaldūn’s thought and his own faith and religion. Baali’s (1988, p. 6) following statement illustrates the point: “Ibn Khaldūn can be highly considered the Islamic version of Machiavelli,” for the reason that “both Ibn Khaldūn and Machiavelli distinguished themselves from their scholastic contemporaries by treating social affairs within a highly realistic frame of reference.” A significant difference does distinguish them from one another however, “...Machiavelli rejects idealism for realism, Ibn Khaldūn acknowledges the validity and importance of both.” Moreover, “Ibn Khaldūn, unlike Machiavelli, does not belittle the significance of the ideal and religious...the thing he [Ibn Khaldūn] dislikes most in this respect is the interference of religious idealism in the actual affairs of life” (Baali & Wardī, 1981, p. 21). He shows that the ‘religious’ is placed with ‘ideal’, and both—as they are attributed to Ibn Khaldūn—should not interfere with the actual affairs of life. One

may question however, as to how can someone acknowledge Islam as religion (way of life) and at the same time exclude its role from shaping people's lives. This sort of reasoning only adds confusion and distortion on the relationship between religion and human life in Ibn Khaldūn's thought.

The study of criticism current in Ibn Khaldūn thought only weakens the position of those scholars who view him as a pupil of Aristotle, one who based himself on philosophy and Greek logic. Until today, many continue to believe that the thought of Ibn Khaldūn is nothing less than a continuity of this philosophical way of thinking, an understanding of the world of man by means of extended Aristotelian logic. Dale (2006), for instance, argues that the Khaldūnian philosophical roots are identical with those of the French scholars and Western sociologists, as many Islamists have intuited but not explained. Ibn Khaldūn did not forget these principles; he did not fully appreciate them. For him, these roots are Aristotelian logic and Greek environmental determinism in essence. This first imbued him with a desire to understand, and the necessary intellectual tools to interpret historical change, whereas the second provided him with axiomatic truths regarding human society.

To move forward and to avoid an old yet biased reading, Khaldūnian studies need to be raised to higher standards of objectivity, and his *Muqaddimah* should be given the right to speak for itself by virtue of its substance, rather than through inferred associations. In fact, approaches that are materialistic, secular, or reductionist in nature have only tampered the originality of Ibn Khaldūn's work and thought. They have failed to appreciate any of Ibn Khaldūn's originality or intellectual criticality. In essence, they have lost sight of the most critical worldview of *Tawhīd* which poses itself as a quintessential *modus operandi* for Ibn Khaldūn's reasoning. For Ibn Khaldūn, *Tawhīd* represented the prime filter through which all undesirably foreign intellectual infiltrations were checked and parsed. And unlike the Aristotelian logic which is built on a foreign Greek worldview, religious beliefs, theory of knowledge, epistemology, socio-cultural experience, and language, the present dominance and effects of *Tawhīd* on Ibn Khaldūn's thought makes it difficult for foreign ideas, thoughts, interpretations, perceptions, and theories to survive.

The *Muqaddimah* demonstrates Ibn Khaldūn's thinking patterns on human society and organisation. Ibn Khaldūn refers to such innate or native reasoning as *tafkīr ṭabī'ī*, *burhān ṭabī'ī* (natural thinking) which

Rosenthal translated as the natural means for the perception of the truth (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 420). It was Ibn Khaldūn's distinct line of thinking that sets him apart from his fellow scholars like 'Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 756) and Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 1126). Ibn Khaldūn (1967) openly declares that his work is a divine gift, instead of being a result of the instruction of Aristotle or teachings of Mubedhan. The reader of the *Muqaddimah* quickly realises that the most critical yet Qur'ānically inferred concepts that define the Khaldūnian perspective are *'imrān*, *'aṣabiyyah*, *fiṭrah*, and *sunnat Allāh*. In spite of this, however, Dale (2006), among others, suggests reading the work of Ibn Khaldūn through the adoption of the "conceptual language" of Muslim philosophers. For him, the *Muqaddimah* needs to be read with a philosophical glossary such as al-Fārābī's *Lexicon*, as many of Ibn Khaldūn's terms carry multiple meanings, and the philosophical import of his vocabulary cannot be easily deciphered with the common dictionary.

Understanding the origins of Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking is possible with an appreciation of the context of his thought, including for example his learning, education, contributions, and a lifelong journey of many critical stages. His early madrasah education, his revelatory framework, Islamic sciences, the *'umrān* life of Muslims in both the East and the West, personal experiences and traits, and the many socio-political changes he endured throughout are to be seriously integrated in the process of analysis as keys to a holistic understanding of Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking. In the following section, we will highlight some of these serious keys of analysis.

The impact of religious education

Ibn Khaldūn's early traditional training opened his eyes to the highest sources of Islamic knowledge, including the use of the model of juristic problems (*al-masā'il*) and various other disciplines of traditional/transmitted knowledge. Those provided Ibn Khaldūn with the opportunity to train his cognitive faculties, and in this manner hone his intellectual and cognitive skills. Methods and styles of thinking such as the sharpening of mind and memory (*taqwiyyat al-dhākīrah wa-shahḍh al-dhihn*), methods of demonstration (*istidlāl*), deduction (*istinbāt*), induction (*istiqrā'*), analogy (*qiyās*), verification (*taḥqīq*), refutation (*daḥḍ*), testing (*imtiḥān*), observation (*mushāhadah*), dialect (*jadāl*), description (*waṣf*), critique (*naqd*), and comparison (*muqāranah*), all

contributed to the building of his system of religious scholarship and general intellectual make up. They provided Ibn Khaldūn with an order of reasoning that helped him apply religious learning to society, history, culture, economy, politics, and emerging life changes.

For Ibn Khaldūn, the application of the Islamic sciences should not be restricted to developing abstract knowledge; rather, it should be concerned with life, the state, exploration, and evaluation of practical cases. To show the position of practical knowledge, Ibn Khaldūn uses the example of a person who realises in theory the religious virtue and merit of showing mercy to orphans versus another who practices that knowledge and as a result achieves spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) and acquires its attribute (*ittiṣāf*) (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967). Those descriptions helped him move vertically, exposing the facts of his social reality in an attempt to observe and understand the true manifestations and reflections of human association (*'imrān*).

Prior to his socio-political exposure, Ibn Khaldūn had already been immersed in the learning and memorisation of Revelation at a strikingly young age. It was there, at an early age, when he acquired familiarity with various types of thinking and demonstrations. Among the important Qur'ānic lessons Ibn Khaldūn learned is the necessity of demonstration in human knowledge. In the Qur'ān, the term *burhān* is cited on eight different occasions and used with reference to different methods of valid, sound, and truthful demonstration. Revelation exhorts believers to use coining parables and verifying events. The relevance of Ibn Khaldūn may be explained with respect to his use of revelation throughout the process of thought and study of human conditions. Numerous evidences substantiate this hypothesis, including the effect of his worldview of *Tawḥīd* on all of his ideas, particularly the discussion of the nature of human association, the use of Qur'ānic terminology, style of explaining laws, and citation of Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīth* reports to support and substantiate his views.

The accessible knowledge

To a larger degree, critical thinking depends on both quantity and quality of accumulated knowledge, driving thinkers to push past the existing frontiers of multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary spheres of intellectual inquiry. For Ibn Khaldūn, two factors may be shown through his learning career. The first relates to the mode and nature of his inter-

disciplinary thinking and scholarly encyclopaedic character. The second is found in his knowledge and assimilation of current knowledge and literature, as shown for instance in his discussion of the history of sciences, crafts, and institutions of learning (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967).

Through an approach embedded in the pedagogical principles and assessment of methods of Islamic education, Ibn Khaldūn demonstrates a deep yet rich knowledge in the field through accumulated knowledge. This helped him use a variety of exploratory methods to problems and cases. His reasoning shows the wearing of different intellectual hats so to speak; the ability to think as a jurist, theologian, legal theorist, Qur'ānic exegete, Sufi and spiritualist, historian, and a scholar of *'umrān*. These highlighted the limited, or perhaps the failing attempts of limiting and as such reducing his thought to specific confines, as is the case with Cheddadi who chooses to emphasise instead the role of Ibn Khaldūn as a 'sociologist and historian' to the exclusion of all else (Cheddadi, 2000).

Life and professional experience

Ibn Khaldūn chose to engage in public-civil life before the age of twenty. In the year 1370 he left politics, opting for seclusion in an idyllic, calm refuge among the people of Banī 'Ārif in the village of Banī Salamah. At this time in his life, his diverse interactions had showed two forms: one pointing towards public life and society, while the other pointing towards the self through the use of silent dialogue, meditation, introspection, thinking, and reflection upon the ideas of the world, events, facts, and changing conditions. He contemplated how those phenomena related to the signs of human association could be arranged and related to one another in such a way they would be comprehended according to the patterns which compose the essence of human beings and the nature of *'umrān* (*sunan*/ divine laws).

His public life shows a busy schedule with various functions and assignments, especially under Sultan Barqūq of Mamluk Egypt over a period of twenty-three years (1382-1406) (Fischel, 1967). His public functions included the Protégé of the Sultan, Maghribi Consul, Professor in the Madrasah of al-Qamḥiya in 1384, Master of Mālikī jurisprudence at the Zāhiriyyah Madrasah, Professor of *ḥadīth* at the Sarghitmishiya Madrassah in 1389, Head of Baybars Khanqa, Mālikī Chief Qāḍī in 1384, the examiner of complaints under the Merinid

ruler Abū Salīm in 1359, or his mission to Tamerlane in 1401 CE. Ibn Khaldūn's thinking may be said to have been grounded in diversity and as such characterised by active interactions with the public; these have contributed significantly to the shaping of his critical thinking.

Physical and social environment

Throughout his many discussions of the nature of human reasoning, Ibn Khaldūn gives due attention to the social and physical environment together in view of the fact that they both exercise varying degrees of influence and perhaps constraint on human characters and perceptions, while contributing to the shaping of society's traditional customs. The understanding of this reality, however, did not cause Ibn Khaldūn to fall into some sort of absolute determinism that overlooked the position of human responsibility in its effort to mend or ameliorate social conditions through effective decision-making and planning, adequate effort, or efficient methods.

For Ibn Khaldūn, humans are endowed essentially with the power of reasoning and divine guidance, which help them to build society (*'umrān basharī*), meet their needs, and face constraints and challenges. Humans can actively draw on themselves and their communities in accordance with the norms of true humanity through the worship of God. His convictions led him to criticise some of the then popular myths resulting from misunderstanding the impact of the social and physical environment on the human being. For him, culture, which combines all those influential factors, "is not an independent substance, but a property of another substance, which is man. Hence the natural character of culture must have been the reference to what is natural to man, i.e., to his nature and to what differentiates him from the rest of the animal world" (Mahdi, 1957).

Ibn Khaldūn dealt with a number of factors beginning with his second prefatory discussion until the fifth. Those factors for instance include "the parts of the earth where civilisation is found," "some information about oceans, rivers, and zones," "the temperate and intemperate zones," "the influence of the air upon the colour of human beings and upon many other aspects of their condition," "the influence of the air (climate) upon human character," and "differences with regard to abundance and scarcity of food in the various inhabited regions (*'umrān*) and how they affect the human body and character."

In examining the physical factors of geographical regions, Ibn Khaldūn introduced the term moderation on the account of the moderate quality of the physical environment. He concluded that “the inhabitants of the middle zones are temperate in their physique and character and in their ways of life” (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 61).

It was with such an understanding that Ibn Khaldūn rejected some unacceptable popular interpretations of abnormal behaviour such as levity, excitability, and great emotionalism found generally among Africans. According to him, both Abū al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 956) and Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb al-Kindī (d. 873) adopted their views from Galen (Claudius Galenus) (d. 217). Al-Mas‘ūdī undertook it upon himself to investigate the true reason of emotionalism, whereupon his explanation “that the reason is a weakness of their brains which results in a weakness of their intellect” is “inconclusive and unproven” (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 64).

The nature of human thinking

Dhaouadi (1997) believes that a substantive proof that Ibn Khaldūn’s major perceptions are drawn from Islamic revelation is found in the way he defines and approaches human nature. In his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn did not preach what was contrary or opposed to the thoughts, meanings, and descriptions of the Qur’ān or *ḥadīth* on *fiṭrah*; rather, he kept away from the influences of foreign knowledge which had tremendous impact on Muslim philosophers like Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb ibn Ishāq aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ al-Kindī, Abū Naṣr Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Fārābī, Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Sīnā, or Abū Ḥāmid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazālī.

Human nature represents a significant starting point in Ibn Khaldūn’s work and shapes the exercise and direction of his critical thinking. The term *fiṭrah* appears twenty times in the *Muqaddimah* along with other related terms such as human (*insānī*), and humanity (*insāniyyah*) being mentioned approximately one hundred and ninety-eight times (Machouche, 2012). It was the concept of *fiṭrah* that essentially led Ibn Khaldūn to acknowledge human potential, undertake upon himself an understanding of their limits, and to perceive feelings, reasoning, thinking, and understanding as divine gifts upon humans. As a result, the intellect is not viewed as an absolute tool for certain knowledge (*‘ilm yaqīnī*). Ibn Khaldūn uses this statement in

his critique of the three branches of knowledge, namely, philosophy, theology, and Greek logic.

According to Ibn Khaldūn, critical thinking rests on the perception of the innate human nature which Dhaouadi (1997, p. 106) noted "... have been largely if not completely neglected by those who have studied Ibn Khaldūn's work" as a result of the "prevailing positivist spirit of the author's work." The reason is found in the beginning of the *Muqaddimah* when Ibn Khaldūn explains the metaphysical origins of man and the basis of his nature. He highlights the perfection of human nature as per the Qur'ān's description. Ibn Khaldūn uses *fiṭrah* to support his thoughts, assumptions, explanations, and theories. He believes that *fiṭrah* is the highest creation according to which God endowed humans with enormous potential and abilities whether spiritual, emotional, cognitive, communicative, or behavioural so as to sustain the purpose of creation, namely the worship of God.

Ibn Khaldūn's dependence on revelation guarded him from all possible pitfalls resulting from applications of secular methodologies, which intentionally de-spiritualise the nature of man and his experience. In Ibn Khaldūn's treatment of human nature, the reader is replete with concepts and rich details on human nature, alongside critical inroads into spiritual, psychic, cognitive, intellectual, individual, communal, religious, social, economic, educational, and political dimensions. For example, one commonly comes across terms such as *fiṭrah* (human predisposition), (thought), *tafkīr* (thinking), *malakah* (habit/skill), *ṣinā'ah* (artefact), *jamā'ah* (group/community), *ma'āsh* (livelihood), *tarbiyah* (learning and education), and *diyānah* (religion/religiosity). Ibn Khaldūn links those terms and concepts to human nature and uses them as a fundamental theoretical framework. Interestingly enough, Dhaouadi, among many others, indicates that those technical terms served as a methodological tool in Ibn Khaldūn's research to explain the birth, development, and decline of human civilisation (Dhaouadi, 2008).

Constructs of Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking

It is not a simple matter to define critical thinking according to Ibn Khaldūn, particularly if we choose to compare it with contemporary scholarship on the subject. However, one may examine the most significant constructs of this type of thinking in Ibn Khaldūn's legacy.

Perhaps one of the most important factors we need to appreciate in this regard is the impact of revelation on the powerful meanings of seminal concepts used throughout work such as lessons (*'ibar*), human association (*'umrān*), social solidarity (*'aṣabiyyah*), cause (*sabab*), human nature (*fiṭrah*), royal authority (*mulk*), state/dynasty (*dawlah*), religion (*millah*), nomad (*badw*), sedentary (*ḥaḍar*), luxury (*taraf*), a *'rāb*, Bedouins/ nomads (*ummah*), (highly structured community), knowledge (*'ilm*), and vicegerency (*khilāfah*). With this, the definition of critical thinking according to Ibn Khaldūn should be constructed on the basis of consideration given to a few cardinal elements of his discourse including revelation (*wahy/shar'*) from which he inferred the fundamentals of his worldview, concept, and laws.

Critical thinking according to Ibn Khaldūn has much to do with the way one understands the meaning of the divine order and guidance, beneficial knowledge, human nature, and its purpose in life. On many occasions Ibn Khaldūn describes *'ilm* (knowledge) as *'malakah'* (skill) which must be subject to at least two interrelated processes; the acquisition and development through repetition and perfection. Sound knowledge refers to facts, authentic reports and statements, substantial ideas, and valid acts. *'Ilm* is not static but dynamic. Critical thinking is also identified in the way one interprets the process of thinking per se. Here we can draw on the different types of reasoning Ibn Khaldūn mentions such as discerning reason (*'aql tamyīzī*), experiential reason (*'aql tajrībī*), and acquired reasoning (*'aql mazīd*).

Perhaps the most apt description one may give to critical thinking according to Ibn Khaldūn is as a way and level of reasoning based on the principles of the Islamic worldview and accumulated Islamic knowledge to produce forms of practical understanding. The quality of critical thinking is evaluated on the basis of its coherence, clarity, creativity, suitability, effectiveness, accuracy, problem solving, and social impact. Critical thinking thus forms an interactive relationship that links thinking with itself, knowledge, and society as a whole, and is viewed as a focused exercise of thought, accommodating and open, dynamic, and purposive or directive. The perspective of *fiṭrah*, as Machouche (2012) suggests, leads Ibn Khaldūn to confidently criticise some modes of thinking based on different metaphysical configurations and worldviews, the Aristotelian logic foremost among them.

Although Ibn Khaldūn acknowledges some intellectual and cognitive benefits of logic, he believes that it is not a suitable tool to understand the changing and diverse conditions of *'umrān*. Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking led him to offer natural thinking alternatives based on *Tawhīd-Fiṭrah-Tawhīd* different from Dhaouadi's view "the *'aql-naql mind*" or "the ideal mind" which combines knowledge derived from revelation with knowledge from human reasoning (Dhaouadi, 2005).

Application of Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking

Ibn Khaldūn attempts to excel in a number of intellectual disciplines drawing from the methods of *'ilm al-kalām* (Islamic scholastic theology), philosophy, and *Taşawwuf*. This, Cheddadi (2005, p. vol. I, p. xxxiii) calls, a disparagingly 'disappointing beginning' (*bidāyāt khā'ibah*). The value of critical thinking depends on the nature of intention (*qaṣd*), the reliability and accuracy of verification (*taḥqīq/burhān*), degree of correspondence (*muṭābaqah*), the strength of evidence (*dalīl*), and implications and consequences (*ma'āl*). Correspondence is used as the, "criterion of adequacy of the statements to the laws of historical events defined by the set of the sciences whose subject matters are derived from the new science, is substituted to the adequacy of the events themselves" (al-Marzouki, 2003, p. 61). This criterion is set to verify the relationship between statements made by researchers, thinkers, scholars, or scientists and laws of historical events. There is another higher line of verification however, which requires application of the same principle with reference to revelation, as Ibn Khaldūn himself did in numerous instances throughout his *Muqaddimah*.

Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking encompasses various fields. His multifaceted intellectual background provided him with a broad perspective for balanced judgments and thought as seen in his account on Muslim mystical practices and development in the Muslim world. While a number of Muslim scholars avoid negotiating some of its practices, Ibn Khaldūn tried hard to accommodate or at least to understand the Sufi's mind and the Sufi's behaviour in its own context. The Sufis, according to him, "have their particular form of behavior and linguistic terminology which they use in instruction" (1967, p. 395). For Ibn Khaldūn, this does not justify many of the deviated thoughts and practices of Sufi orders. He sought to retrace infiltrations of Sufi doctrines and practices. Ibn Khaldūn's perspective provides him with the ability of critiquing

Sufism using synchronic and diachronic approaches. The treatment of Sufism is appropriate when the time factor is taken into consideration. The Sufi legacy needs to be divided into the era of the *salaf* and the *muta'akhhirīn* for later periods to prevent anachronistic analysis (Ibn Khaldūn, 2005, vol. 5, p. 219).

Moderation and balance are what characterise Ibn Khaldūn's critique of the Sufi-Order. The reason being that Ibn Khaldūn focuses on the positive aspects of their mystical experience and the Sufis' deep knowledge of the self while calling on those who acquire it to exercise caution in regard to what they intend to communicate and share. In this regard, he highlights a number of crucial cognitive conditions and the limited nature of humans in their perception of what lies beyond the truth, by means of suspicious visualisations, imaginations, perceptions, sensations, and accidents.

In the process of applying critical thinking, Ibn Khaldūn chooses Islamic revelation as his highest terms of normative reference in regards to what is right, true, suitable, or moderate. On some occasions, he would quote verses from the Qur'ān or *ḥadīth* while on others he would simply draw indirect inferences. For instance, in order to mark the type of authentic Sufism, Ibn Khaldūn proposes self-purification as a way to the truth and guidance introduced in the early periods of Muslim history.

The best example showcasing Ibn Khaldūn's thinking exercises may be found in the introduction of the *Muqaddimah* where he questions the very epistemological foundations of historiography and philosophy of history. The selection of these two branches of knowledge is significant in view of their critical position in the making of the edifice of knowledge (*'umrān al-ma'rifah*) and the civilisation at that time. As indicated, Ibn Khaldūn perceives history as news and information on human association with both its achievements and failures. Historical knowledge according to Ibn Khaldūn deals with all conditions that the states of human association, civilisation, or culture (*al-'umrān al-basharī*) "...savagery [*tawahhush*] and sociability, group feelings, and the different ways by which one group of human beings achieves superiority over another. It deals with royal authority and the dynasties that result (in this manner) and with the various ranks that exist within them. It further deals with the different kinds of gainful occupations and ways of making a living, with the sciences and crafts that human beings pursue as part of their activities and efforts, and with all the other

institutions that originate in civilisation through its very nature” (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 35). For Ibn Khaldūn, history is a discipline with two levels: The appearing surface which contains the reporting news (*al-akhbār*) and the deep (*a‘maq*) which deals with the inner meaning that involves speculation and attempt to explain the happenings in human association according to their real causes (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 5).

Interestingly enough, the technical language Ibn Khaldūn has used to discuss or criticise numerous shortcomings of historians’ old methods reveals his deep knowledge of the field. He speaks for instance about the inner meaning of history, speculation, verification, subtle explanation of causes, realisation of facts, and profound causes. In contrast, he uses negative technical terminology to describe the shortcomings of traditional historical methods and models such as the collection of apocryphal and untrue gossip, inventions, false statements, discredited reports, inattention to causes, nonsensical stories, error, poor revision, weak assumptions, blind trust, mere dictation, and imitation (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967). He also criticises the styles of later Muslim writings whose authors exaggerated the narrowing down of the content of historiography to the extent that it reports only events related to kings and rulers as found in the work of Ibn Rashīq’s *Mīzān al-‘Amal* (Criterion of Action). He also made a visible reference to names and works of some outstanding Muslim historians like Ibn Ishāq, al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Kalbī, al-Wāqidī, al-Azdī, and al-Mas‘ūdī setting them all on an equal footing (Fischel, 1967).

The most significant axiomatic and methodological rule of Ibn Khaldūn which may better illustrate his critical thinking is his ‘verification of narration against the laws of ‘umrān’. He comments: “Civilisation [*umrān*], in its (different) conditions, contains (different) elements to which historical information may be related and with which reports and historical materials may be checked” (1967, p. 6). He identifies factors that weaken the scientific aspects of the methodology adopted by most poor historians (*maghālīṭ al-mu‘arrikhīn*) before and during his time. Those factors include disregard of changes in conditions and in the customs of nations and races that the passing of time brings about, partisanship for opinions and schools, reliance upon transmitters, unawareness of the purpose of an event, unfounded assumptions as to the truth of a matter, ignorance of how conditions conform with reality, and people’s approach towards great and high-ranking persons with praise

and encomiums, and making untruth unavoidable. More detrimental than all previously mentioned reasons is the ignorance of the nature of the various conditions arising in civilisation (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967).

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldūn sets out to shun some of the epistemological and methodological dilemmas in history and to request historians to meet necessary pre-requisites which include a working knowledge of the principles of politics, the true nature of existent things, and the differences among nations, places, and periods with regard to ways of life, character qualities, customs, sects, and schools. He equally emphasises the need for acquiring comprehensive knowledge of present conditions in all these respects, using comparative methods whether synchronic and diachronic, knowledge of the origin and development of dynasties and religious groups, cause of events, knowledge of reporters, and the verification of transmitted information using the basic principles he is aware of. In a very descriptive prose, Ibn Khaldūn exposed his critical approach, particularly in the field of history. He highlights the use of a number of critical thinking processes such as making corrections, convergence, proposing alternative methods of arrangement and classification, introducing original thoughts and ideas, explanation, and avoiding imitation.

One of the significant critical moves Ibn Khaldūn made was regarding the performance and impact of dialectic theology on Muslim society. He emphasises the limited nature of human cognitive abilities and the societal outcomes of theoretical Islamic theology which he defined as, “a science that involves arguing with logical proofs [*adillah ‘aqliyyah*] in defense of the articles of faith and refuting innovators who deviate in their dogmas from early Muslims and Muslim orthodoxy” (Ibn Khaldūn, 2005, vol. 5, p. 348). In order to develop a critical approach to this discipline, Ibn Khaldūn uses a number of key terms mostly around *Tawhīd* (The Unity of God), reasoning, evident natural causes, worship, states, perception, facts, established habits and customs, and happiness.

Ibn Khaldūn believes that intellectual reasoning as a way to defend Muslim beliefs is not the ideal method because of its constraints and limitations. The world of faith is far beyond the world of perception. For him, one of the meanings of *Tawhīd* is to omit series of material causes to justify the articles of belief. Ibn Khaldūn (2005, vol. 5, p. 351) said, “Thus, (recognition of the) oneness of God is identical with an inability to perceive the causes and the ways in which they exercise

their influence, and with reliance in this respect upon the Creator of the causes who comprises them.” We see at this stage his rejection of the utility of *‘ilm al-kalām* and a criticism of some of its primary epistemological foundations which essentially rest on the capacity for intellectual reasoning.

Ibn Khaldūn then proceeds further to assess the implications of theology for individuals and community society in general. To move towards this stage of criticism, he operates the key term *‘al-ḥāl* (state or attribute), referring to what lays beyond mere knowledge or speech. He argues that realisation of true *Tawḥīd* needs to be preceded by a realisation of *aḥwāl*, and not necessarily through obtaining its knowledge or uttering its words alone. Ibn Khaldūn (2005, vol. 5, p. 352) says, “The original knowledge (*‘ilm*) which was devoid of being an attribute is of little advantage or use.” Another key term Ibn Khaldūn uses is happiness, which he defines as fruit of the, “acquisition of a habit firmly rooted in the soul, from which a necessary knowledge results for the soul.” In his conclusion, Ibn Khaldūn showed some of the basis of his critique of Muslim theology. These include the principle of necessity, function, availability of better alternatives, and allowing certain exceptions in other (Ibn Khaldūn, 2005, vol. 5, pp. 353-354).

Another example of Ibn Khaldūn’s critical thinking is showcased in his refutation of philosophy and his purposeful limiting of the scope and function of Aristotelian logic. For him, sciences are never neutral bodies of knowledge for they carry with them the colours of the very civilisations that discovered, invented, and developed them. The development of sciences is also affected by the general conditions, particularly the social and political phenomenon of civilisation (Al-Rabe, 1984). Some sciences succeed to cross their native geographical borders because of their benefits and strengths of theoretical foundations, facts, and thoughts. Learning and transmission of those sciences create in Ibn Khaldūn’s view, sites of learning and knowledge (*aswāq al-‘ulūm*), or from a more contemporary bent, a ‘knowledge economy’ which are included in what is known as science of the ancients (*‘ulūm al-awwalīn/al-mutaqaddimīn*).

The central theme in Ibn Khaldūn’s criticism of philosophy lies in his definition of reason/intellect, functions, scope and limitations of philosophical knowledge, validity, and practical impact on society. Although many have underscored the influence of Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut al-*

Falāsifah (Incoherence of the Philosophers) on Ibn Khaldūn as a whole (al-Rabe, 1984), the character of his thought may be well detected in his intellectual approach, especially in his doubts and scepticism in the potential of philosophy to guide people to happiness without the assistance of revelation. For him, the detriment of philosophy to religion may be great. This begins with the philosophers' claim (*qawman min 'uqalā' al-naw' al-basharī*) who argue that "...the essence and conditions of the whole existence, both the part of it perceivable by the senses and that beyond sensual perception, as well as the reasons and the causes of (those essences and conditions), can be perceived by mental speculation and not through tradition because they belong among the intellectual perception" (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 398).

For Ibn Khaldūn, logic is the tool used by philosophers to distinguish truth from falsehood. The process through which judgments are abstracted according to the norm (*qānūn*) involves three abstractions: an abstraction from individual forms or pictures, an abstraction from universal ideas, and an abstraction from simple universal ideas (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 399.). At this level, Ibn Khaldūn indirectly questions how simple universal ideas are related to the individual. He (1967) concludes the following, "...in the books of the logicians, one finds a statement to the effect that perception has precedence and that apperception depends upon it. This statement must be understood in the sense of (arriving at) consciousness and not in the sense of (achieving) complete knowledge" (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 399).

Following the sphere of cognition, Ibn Khaldūn criticises the philosophical concept of achieving happiness (Korkut, 2008) which according to philosophers consists of arriving at a perception of all existing things, both the *sensibilia* and the (things) beyond sensual perception, with the help of (rational) speculation and argumentation (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967). Again, Ibn Khaldūn explains some of the fundamentals which philosophers use to make such claims, including observation of lower substance, consciousness of the existence of the soul, and the power of the soul generating awareness of the dominant position of the intellect. Ibn Khaldūn's issue in this context concerns the limitations of the cognitive and epistemological tools (intellect and abstraction) that philosophers use in their pursuit for certainty in moral values.

Using a direct yet rigorous language, Ibn Khaldūn (1967) criticised the arguments that philosophers use. For example, he says, "it should be known that the (opinion) the (philosophers) hold is wrong in all of its aspects," or "The arguments that (the philosophers) parade for their claims regarding the *existentia* and that they offer to the test of the norms of logic, are insufficient for the purpose" (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 401), or "The (philosophers) say that happiness consists in coming to perceive existence as it is, by means of (logical) arguments. This is a fraudulent statement that must be rejected" (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 402). In view of the pitfalls of philosophy in its search for happiness, Ibn Khaldūn not only sees it as a wrong avenue, but also believes that its sources are impediments to real happiness (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 403).

Nevertheless, Ibn Khaldūn does not ignore or deny the advantages of philosophy. His critique of the knowledge of philosophy is much catered to the claims of philosophers. He acknowledges the benefits of philosophy and its sharpening of the minds through the order of presentation of proofs and arguments, and its importance in developing the habit of excellence and proper argumentation and building of solid methods. However, the learning of philosophy requires students to be fully cautious of its pernicious aspects. Students of philosophy must study philosophy after proper saturation with the religious law and study of the interpretation of the Qur'ān and jurisprudence (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967). Ibn Khaldūn's criticism is thus directed with attention to religious and social welfare. When social welfare is at stake, the current set of thinking needs to be re-evaluated and criticised irrespective of the stage of development, whether it is Sufism, theology, philosophy, or logic.

The reference of *al-'umrān al-basharī*

Exploration of the laws of human association and development require higher sources of knowledge (revelation), high and low intermediary sciences (*'ulūm*), and medium-sciences (*'ulūm 'āliyah*). According to Mahdi, philosophy is by far the most dominant medium in Ibn Khaldūn's scientific thought (Mahdi, 1957). Mahdi supports this using a number of arguments relating to Ibn Khaldūn's perception of history, classification of knowledge (Mahdi, 1957), meta-methodology, and ground and scope of the *'umrān* sciences, not to forget his methodological procedures. To address those issues in a different track of analysis however, we need to re-position the factor of philosophy and give due consideration to the evidences of the revelation which cannot be ignored as far as Ibn

Khaldūn's early education and career are concerned. The survey and categorisation of the *Muqaddimah* point to a discussion of philosophy and revelation as evidently present in the first few pages of his introduction.

The active presence of revelation in the *Muqaddimah* cannot be superficial, for it is revelation that built Ibn Khaldūn's distinctive yet diverse thought and played multiple roles in making Ibn Khaldūn's thought. Revelation is taken as the absolute reference for truth and certainty, a comprehensive worldview, a psycho-spiritual ground of motivation, a source of law and patterns of change (*sunan*) pertaining to human association, a spring of perception for understanding the nature of both man and society, a source of technical language and meanings, and a series of basic fundamentals necessary for the process of knowing (human cognitive and intellectual abilities and limitations). Not limited to this, it extends itself as a source of understanding the general order of the physical world and beyond. It provides man with a comprehensive perception and requirements for beneficial knowledge, and guiding principles leading effectively towards developing effective patronage, generating knowledge, and using its products for the betterment of society and ethics.

The laws and patterns of the *'umrān* represent just one among many other references Ibn Khaldūn uses to verify the validity of statements, data, and opinions. According to Ibn Khaldūn, in the establishment of the truth and sound judgments regarding the states of the *'umrān* and its happenings, one needs to consider the ratio of conformity existing between reported information and what actually has occurred or would occur in reality. This exercise needs a measure of personal criticism and checking against external evidences (Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 38).

On sixteen occasions in his *Muqaddimah*, and to highlight the principle of conformity, Ibn Khaldūn uses different descriptive determinants including self-conformity, conformity by way of questions-answers, conformity of wisdom and society, perceptual conformity, conformity of the defined with the definition, comprehensive conformity, and conformity of the state. The course of this principle is often reduced to the relationship between the facts referred to as the order of the creation and the claimed statement/reported narrations. The higher source of the knowledge of the revelation is often oversight in defining

the direction of conformity. The *Muqaddimah* did not fail to refer to the premier conformity within the divine law, objectives of the divine law, scholarly consensus, rules and rulings of the divine law, legal logic, decrees of divine law, Islamic law and jurisprudence, legal evidences, religion, legal truth, beliefs, legal texts, clear legal texts, Islamic legal sciences, scholars of legal sciences, method of legal narrations, and religious practices. The conformity relationship is described either as a textual cause, natural cause(s), universal/popular, sufficient, valid, natural, hidden, the cause of causes, objective, and Allah's wisdom. Thus, one may conclude that Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking through its 'umrānī outlook operates according to three independent yet concordant references, namely, revelation, knowledge, and social experience. Those references are inter-related by the criterion conformity which help scholars to make their judgments and evaluate the credibility of ideas and actions.

Characteristics of Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking

The basis of Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking draws on revelation as ultimate term of reference, faith, intellect, body of knowledge, and problematic subjects. Agil (2008) believes that the Khaldūnian mind has not only reconciled reason and religion, but has further proven the compatibility of science and religion with the application of the scientific method in the understanding of social phenomena with the Qur'ānic conception of history, establishing the structure of the Khaldūnian mind. Critical thinking in the light of Ibn Khaldūn's experience is one whole activity having different constructive features that can be placed according to the following seven segments:

- i. 'objectives' as found in introducing alternatives, seeking and preserving the truth, resisting falsehood and its implications for the society, and the making of scientific knowledge;
- ii. *method* which entails identifying correspondence, comparison, contrast, explanation, verification, review, illustration, classification, organisation, and raising genuine questions (*tahdhīb, taqrīb, taḥqīq, muṭābaqah, muqāranah*);
- iii. operative *laws*, encompassing revelation, laws of 'umrān, customs, innate human nature, and sound and natural reasoning;
- iv. *applied knowledge* involving the review and assimilation of existing knowledge with effective access to primary sources;

- v. *core skills*, comprising personal, scientific, linguistic, professional, and social uses of the high sources of knowledge (revelation), the integration of knowledge, developing constructive questions and approaches, investigation, positive thinking, observation, using rich, fine, precise and succinct language;
- vi. *values* inherent in championing the truth, inclusiveness, creativity, seeking the common good, rejection of sectarianism, adherence to moderation, humbleness, and acknowledging the merits of other scholars;
- vii. *achievement*, as embodied in the discovery and development of new science (*'ilm al-'umrān*).

The operational components of Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking, however, include alternatives, criteria, information input and output, preference, and objectives. The highest positive values are thus measured according to the criteria of truth and validity, public welfare, and virtue. Those criteria, however, are subject to revelation. Ibn Khaldūn's model of critical thinking is a multi-levelled, multi-purpose, multi-dimensional, hierarchical, and 'revelation-based' thinking. Using this generic base of critical thinking, Ibn Khaldūn was able to express with clarity genuine Islamic thinking without falling into its alien forms strange to the fundamentals of his own Islamic worldview.

The reliance of Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking on universal sources such as the revelation, *fiṭrah* (human nature), and the laws of *'umrān* places it on a significantly universal scale. This may be illustrated in at least two different ways; reliance on examining the relevance of Ibn Khaldūn's thought to today's scholarship and life in general. Some researchers, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, have adopted few approaches to look into this relevance by way of comparison and contrast with Western scholars, while others, like Farid Alatas, suggest a more serious approach in their urging of researchers to incorporate Ibn Khaldūn into modern social sciences and develop a "systematic Khaldūnian sociology" (Alatas, 2006a, pp. 402-407). The second group, however, looks at the extension and influence of Ibn Khaldūn's thought on foreign scholarship, which according to Alatas (2006b) probably began with Gumpłowicz's publication of a part of *al-Muqaddimah* in *Soziologische Essays* in 1899 [French translation of *Muqaddimah* by Silvestre de Sacy 1810].

There is a strong consensus among researchers that Ibn Khaldūn's intellectual legacy is a living thought in need of more attention. Irrespective of the excess of one thousand six hundred works that have been published on him so far, researches still consciously examine and study his works. One can confidently argue that truly significant issues have yet to be discussed in Ibn Khaldūn's thought due to the quasi-monopoly and dominant positivists, secularists and their attendants following their worldview, methodology, epistemology and values that have been exerted in the last two hundred years. The question of critical thinking still challenges the current dominant Western paradigm of human knowledge which suffers from a serious crises in regards to issues of the truth, values, and objectives of human life. Dhaouadi was correct when he asserted that Ibn Khaldūn's high intellectual pioneering of *'umrān* (social sciences) raises serious questions about the assumptions of the modern Western mind's persistent claims that true science and authentic knowledge cannot be obtained if religion and science are not kept separate from one another (Dhaouadi, 2005). Ibn Khaldūn raised serious questions about knowledge and learning in general, nature of man, purpose and wisdom of life, functions of institutions, position of religion, wealth, and civilisations that have all yet to be answered today by means of the secular human and social science.

Conclusion

Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking may best be described as an *'umrānī* critical thinking in view of the fact that some have described his entire thinking as *'umrānī*, as was the case with Dhaouadi (2005). His contributions to the field of critical thinking was the result of his intellectual efforts and method of exploring the world of human knowledge and life. His contributions lay in his attempt to revive sound methods of thinking and understanding of human beings, either as individuals or communities in various branches of knowledge. Such an attempt was founded on three sources of knowledge, namely revelation, human experience and the study of society, and the impact of the physical environment.

The constructive critical thinking of Ibn Khaldūn is built on various evidences inferred from many sources which provide satisfactory explanations and reflect a good understanding of the causes and nature of things. The complexity of critical thinking, however, depends on the equal complexity of its domain and consequence on

human organisation (*'umrān*). Thus, critical thinking according to the Khaldūnian experience is nothing less than a form of holistic thinking which strongly relates to the well-being of society rather than the building of abstract or complex edifices of human thoughts and ideas. Critical thinking accordingly does not necessarily represent any new mode of thinking but demonstrates its efficiency through the theoretical and practical solutions it provides to real challenges. Ibn Khaldūn's critical thinking brought an intellectual revolution. The relevance of his critical thinking is still felt in our time.

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