

honors both truth and shared values. The book, however, presents an inconsistent theological lens, alternating between parallelism and pluralism, which risks obscuring the nature of the Buddhist-Islamic dialogue. More importantly, the proposed parallelism approach remains unexplained and lacks a consistent framework from both Buddhist and Islamic perspectives. Its scope, content, implications and limitations should be reassessed in future research. Both religious traditions may critically receive Obuse's parallelism proposal if it goes to the religious compromise as Buddhists do not recognize the Buddha as a prophet, nor do Muslims consider Muhammad an enlightened being. Therefore, this approach should be reevaluated and redefined within the framework of Buddhist-Muslim studies.

In conclusion, Obuse's work is a valuable resource for scholars of comparative religion and interfaith studies, offering a unique approach to addressing the longstanding methodological challenges in the comparative study of Buddhism and Islam. By highlighting historical depth and doctrinal intricacies, this book expands the understanding of Buddhist-Muslim relations beyond the conventional focus on conflict.

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**Jasser Auda, *Re-envisioning Islamic Scholarship: Maqasid Methodology as a New Approach*. London: Claritas Books in association with Maqasid Institute, 2021. 282 pp. ISBN: 978-1-80011-977-2.**

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Over the past three decades, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah has emerged as a vibrant and evolving field of inquiry. It has expanded beyond its classical legal applications to engage with diverse epistemological, ethical, and sociopolitical dimensions. Jasser Auda's *Re-envisioning*

*Islamic Scholarship* contributes significantly to this intellectual development by offering a “New Maqāṣid Methodology” that seeks to reconfigure Islamic scholarship around purpose-based inquiry. In doing so, Auda joins a broader wave of scholars—including Aḥmad al-Raysūnī, Ṭaha al-‘Alwānī, and Ibn ‘Āshūr—who have attempted to renew the tradition of maqāṣid-based reasoning for contemporary contexts.

The book is structured into six chapters, prefaced with a reflective introduction and concluded with a “Way Forward.” The opening chapters contextualize Auda’s methodology within both classical Islamic thought and modern intellectual crises. He critiques existing approaches for their limitations, including their compartmentalized structure and overreliance on inherited categorizations. What follows is a detailed exposition of a new composite framework rooted in Revelation, structured by maqāṣid (objectives), and intended to respond to contemporary societal needs.

Auda's redefinition of key concepts is foundational to his methodology. He argues that *fiqh* (deep understanding) is not restricted to Islamic law but should extend to all disciplines when approached through an Islamic epistemological lens. Similarly, he broadens the scope of *ijtihād* to include all sincere efforts at knowledge production guided by Revelation. In this light, scholars from various fields—such as medicine, engineering, or economics—may be regarded as *fuqahā’* if their inquiry is purpose-driven and aligned with divine guidance.<sup>1</sup>

The methodology itself is organized around seven interrelated elements: *mafāhīm* (concepts), *maqāṣid* (objectives), *qiyam* (values), *awāmir* (commands), *sunan* (universal laws), *fi’āt* (social groups), and *hujaj* (proofs).<sup>2</sup> These categories are not isolated but function in a dynamic interplay that guides both the identification of problems and the formulation of responses. Crucially, Auda insists that research should not begin with a problem to be solved but with a purpose to be

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<sup>1</sup> Jasser Auda, *Re-envisioning Islamic Scholarship: Maqasid Methodology as a New Approach* (London: Claritas Books, 2021), 36–39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–75.

fulfilled. Inverting this conventional order of inquiry, he argues, leads to more holistic and revelation-based knowledge production.

The author also critiques prevalent ideological labels within Islamic discourse—such as “moderate,” “fundamentalist,” or “modernist”—as products of political discourse rather than methodological clarity. He identifies five key methodological crises—*taqlīd* (blind imitation), *tajzīʿ* (fragmentation), *tabrīr* (apologism), *tanāquḍ* (contradiction), and *tafkīk* (deconstructionism)—that afflict contemporary Islamic scholarship.<sup>3</sup> His new Maqāṣid methodology seeks to overcome these by reestablishing Revelation as the foundation and logic of knowledge.

A major contribution of this work lies in its challenge to the inherited classification of academic disciplines. Auda proposes four new categories: *Uṣūlī Studies*, which cover foundational religious knowledge; *Disciplinary Studies*, which represent conventional academic fields; *Phenomena Studies*, which are oriented toward real-world issues and challenges; and *Strategic Studies*, which are focused on envisioning future scenarios for ummatic and global well-being.<sup>4</sup> In doing so, Auda critiques the secular division between “Islamic” and “non-Islamic” disciplines as artificial and epistemologically incoherent from an Islamic worldview.

Auda’s approach resonates with broader efforts to revive Islamic epistemology as an integrative force in knowledge production. This includes parallels with Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas’s concept of “ta’dīb” as the ultimate aim of education and with Ismail Raji al-Faruqi’s call for Islamisation of knowledge.<sup>5</sup> Unlike these earlier paradigms, however, Auda seeks to operationalize maqāṣid as a dynamic and transdisciplinary method rather than a static doctrine. While the book offers limited engagement with

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 110–113.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 162–212.

<sup>5</sup> See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993); Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1982).

critiques of the Islamisation of Knowledge project—such as concerns regarding superficiality or bifurcation—it simultaneously opens new avenues for its evolution. For instance, Auda's framework may be seen as a natural progression toward deeper integration between Islamic ethical frameworks and contemporary academic disciplines. His emphasis on practical application, systemic reclassification, and forward-looking scholarship expands the horizon of Islamisation beyond traditional limitations.<sup>6</sup>

Significantly, the book presents case examples demonstrating how the framework may be applied in areas such as urban development, economic justice, environmental ethics, and global peacebuilding. For instance, Auda argues that Islamic ethics in city planning must go beyond regulatory compliance to prioritize the maqṣad of *'umrān*—harmonious civilization—which encompasses beauty, sustainability, and social justice. Similarly, economic reform must prioritize *karāmah insāniyyah* (human dignity) over mere profitability. These applied reflections showcase the potential of maqāṣid methodology to inform practical decision-making in governance, policy, and public ethics.<sup>7</sup> Auda also outlines how maqāṣid-driven frameworks can guide responses to pandemics, educational reform, and issues of civilizational conflict, drawing on contemporary challenges such as COVID-19 and the moral crises of modernity.<sup>8</sup>

The book also emphasizes the dialogical nature of Islamic knowledge. Auda calls for collaborative efforts among scholars of various backgrounds—including scientists, theologians, economists, and educators—to co-produce knowledge that serves the ummatic mission. This aligns with the Prophetic tradition of *shūrā* (consultation) and positions the Maqāṣid Methodology as a framework capable of reconciling revelation with reason, theory with practice, and tradition with reform.

While the framework is visionary, the reviewer notes several

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid..

<sup>7</sup> Auda, *Re-envisioning Islamic Scholarship*, 174–188

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 188–212.

challenges. First, while the methodology's emphasis on individual reflection upon Revelation is grounded in a deep *uṣūlī* tradition—of which Auda is a notable representative—it still poses interpretive risks when detached from structured pedagogical frameworks. For readers or practitioners without rigorous training in *uṣūl al-tafsīr* or classical Arabic, there is a risk of misapplying nuanced concepts. The distinction between *ḥikmah* (wisdom), *'illah* (effective cause), and *maqāṣid* (purpose) is critical yet easily conflated by those lacking foundational training.<sup>9</sup> Thus, while Auda himself models this integration competently, the democratization of *maqāṣid* reasoning across disciplines may necessitate clearer guidelines, scaffolding, or institutional safeguards to prevent reductive interpretations.

Second, the abstract nature of the framework—while theoretically compelling and intellectually rigorous—stands out as a major strength of the book, as it encourages scholars to move beyond reductionist and legalistic readings of Islamic knowledge. Auda's seven-element structure offers a flexible yet principled model that resonates with interdisciplinary thinking. However, it still requires further empirical studies to demonstrate its practical implementation across disciplines. For example, while the author outlines a purpose-based approach to scientific inquiry and economics, concrete case studies of implementation remain sparse or underdeveloped. In the section on economic justice<sup>10</sup>, Auda proposes the *maqṣad* of *karāmah insāniyyah* (human dignity) as a central guiding value for rethinking social and economic structures. This paradigm opens important avenues for re-envisioning fiscal policy, taxation, and financial ethics in Muslim contexts. However, these applications remain open-ended, inviting future researchers to explore how this principle might translate into concrete reforms in banking systems, tax justice, or public welfare policies. Similarly, his articulation of 'urban ethics' grounded in the *maqṣid* of *'umrān* (civilizational flourishing) is both innovative and spiritually resonant. Yet, the exploration of its operationalization—through zoning laws, architectural principles, or

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 188–212.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 178–180.

municipal governance—is still in its nascent stages. In this sense, Auda’s framework serves as a powerful normative foundation that now calls for empirical elaboration and methodological expansion.

Third, the reception of Auda’s methodology among traditional religious institutions—while potentially transformative—faces significant hurdles in terms of institutional acceptance and curricular integration. To his credit, Auda demonstrates a strong command of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and articulates his framework with deference to classical jurisprudential reasoning. For example, in Chapter 3, he revisits the debates surrounding *maqāṣid* and *‘illah*, grounding his arguments in works by al-Ghazālī, al-Shāṭibī, and Ibn ‘Āshūr.<sup>11</sup> This shows a serious and commendable effort to align reform with tradition rather than opposing it.

However, the challenge lies in the uptake of his methodology by institutions that are historically cautious of paradigm shifts. Institutions of traditional learning—such as *madāris* and faculties of Shariah in many Muslim-majority countries—tend to adhere to inherited juristic paradigms with deeply embedded curricular structures. As Auda himself notes, there is widespread *taqlīd* (imitation) in the Islamic intellectual world, which can impede methodological renewal.<sup>12</sup> Despite his call for *uṣūlī studies* to evolve and embrace a purpose-based logic, the practical adoption of this shift remains elusive in educational institutions where change is often perceived as a threat to orthodoxy or institutional continuity.

Moreover, the integration of *maqāṣid* in the curricula of many traditional seminaries remains limited or minimal. As Auda observes, *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* is frequently taught as an elective or minor subject rather than being infused throughout the structure of legal, ethical, and theological education.<sup>13</sup> This institutional inertia is a critical barrier to the broader implementation of his vision. It reflects not a rejection of *maqāṣid* per se, but a hesitation to reorganize long-standing methodologies around new epistemic foundations.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 76–82.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 110–113.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 95.

Fourth, one of the most innovative aspects of Auda's contribution lies in his proposal of 'Phenomena Studies' to foreground contemporary social challenges within the epistemological structure of Islamic scholarship. This reconceptualization deserves recognition for transcending rigid disciplinary boundaries and urging scholars to address issues like climate change, AI, and social injustice from within an Islamic worldview. As Auda explains, "Phenomena Studies allow the researcher to begin with real-world issues rather than abstract disciplinary categories, and to reformulate them through the maqāṣidic lens".<sup>14</sup>

However, while the author convincingly outlines the *what* and *why* of Phenomena Studies, the *how* remains less developed. The mechanisms for translating these studies into concrete curriculum design, pedagogical methods, or institutional policy frameworks are not comprehensively theorized. For example, while he argues that gender justice should be approached through the lens of *karāmah insāniyyah* (human dignity) and *'adālah* (justice),<sup>15</sup> he offers limited guidance on how this reorientation might shape actual teaching content, learning outcomes, or governance practices.

Of course, it may be unrealistic to expect a single volume to furnish ready-made modules or toolkits. Still, the onus now falls on researchers, educators, and institutional actors to further explore how the maqāṣid framework can be operationalized. Without such continued development, the transformative potential of 'Phenomena Studies' risks remaining an aspirational concept rather than a fully enacted methodology.

Fifth, the notion of 'Strategic Studies' introduced in Auda's framework represents an ambitious and visionary expansion of Islamic scholarship. It calls upon scholars to project alternative futures for the ummah and humanity at large by applying maqāṣid-based foresight to emerging global challenges. This forward-thinking orientation reflects a significant strength of the book, as it encourages Muslims to reclaim leadership in thought, values, and global

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 182.

solutions. By proposing that Islamic scholarship contribute to scenario building and long-term planning, Auda positions maqāṣid not merely as a legal tool but as a civilizational compass.

However, the operationalization of 'Strategic Studies'—which would ideally involve futures thinking, systems design, and scenario analysis—is only briefly mentioned in this volume.<sup>16</sup> This is understandable given the book's broad scope and conceptual focus. As such, it falls to future researchers and interdisciplinary teams to build the necessary infrastructures—methodological, institutional, and pedagogical—to fully realize this vision. The strength of Auda's proposal lies in its capacity to inspire a new generation of Muslim scholars to move beyond reactive paradigms and instead think proactively about the direction of human civilization from an Islamic vantage point.

Auda's methodological vision also resonates with the foundational ideas of scholars such as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, and Taha Jabir al-'Alwānī, who each contributed uniquely to the Islamisation of Knowledge discourse.<sup>17</sup> Like al-Faruqi, Auda calls for the integration of Revelation into all domains of knowledge and emphasizes the epistemological crisis caused by the secular bifurcation of disciplines. However, Auda moves beyond al-Faruqi's structural framework by offering a purpose-based methodology grounded in maqāṣid that redefines not only content but also the intent and process of knowledge production. While al-Attas focused on the concept of *ta'dīb* (disciplining the soul through knowledge) as the goal of education, Auda prioritizes *karāmah insāniyyah* (human dignity) and *'adālah* (justice) as the teleological anchors of inquiry. Similarly, whereas al-'Alwānī emphasized the integration of the Qur'an's worldview into

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 174–182.

<sup>17</sup> See Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1982); Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1991); Taha Jabir al-'Alwānī, *The Qur'anic Worldview: A Springboard for Cultural Reform* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 2011).

contemporary knowledge, Auda provides a more systematic operational framework that categorizes disciplines and links them directly to social realities and future scenarios.<sup>18</sup> Together, these thinkers represent complementary but distinct paths toward reviving the Islamic intellectual tradition—Auda’s unique contribution lies in his attempt to make maqāṣid methodology a practical tool for transformation across fields.

Nevertheless, the book’s contribution to the Islamisation of knowledge discourse is substantial. It marks an intellectual transition from legalistic applications of maqāṣid to their integration within an epistemological system that can guide all fields of knowledge. Auda’s approach is transdisciplinary, rooted in Revelation, and directed toward renewing not only Islamic scholarship but the very architecture of knowledge in the modern world.

Moreover, Auda’s work holds implications for curriculum reform, policy development, and interdisciplinary research within Muslim societies. It challenges educational institutions to transcend disciplinary silos and rethink their goals in light of the higher purposes (*maqāṣid*) of education. Such a shift, if implemented with academic rigor and institutional support, could enable Muslim scholars to offer not only critiques of modernity but viable alternatives rooted in their own intellectual heritage.

In conclusion, *Re-envisioning Islamic Scholarship* is a timely and thought-provoking work that offers both critique and constructive alternatives. It challenges scholars to rethink their assumptions, restructure their methodologies, and reengage with Revelation as a living source of guidance for all domains of human inquiry. This book is essential reading for those involved in Maqāṣid studies, Islamic epistemology, and the broader project of reviving Islamic intellectual tradition in the 21st century. Its insights are especially valuable to institutions such as IIUM—and ISTAC in particular—which are currently advancing a Tawḥīdic Epistemology framework that resonates with Auda’s vision a commitment to integrating Revelation, ethics, and purpose into contemporary

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<sup>18</sup> Auda, *Re-envisioning Islamic Scholarship*, 162–212.

knowledge production.<sup>19</sup> By offering a purpose-based, maqāṣid-oriented methodology, Auda's work provides a robust theoretical foundation upon which such institutions can build meaningful, future-oriented research and curriculum reform.

**Acknowledgment:** The reviewer wishes to thank Asst. Prof. Dr. Nurul Ain Norman (ISTAC-IIUM) for her insightful feedback and academic guidance throughout the preparation of this review.

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<sup>19</sup> Osman Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam: A Study in Islamic Philosophies of Science* (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 1998). See especially his discussion on the integrative role of Tawḥīd in knowledge classification and the revival of Islamic intellectual traditions in modern institutions.