EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS IN CLASSICAL ARABIC TEXTS: REASSESSING CONTEMPORARY EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This article examines the epistemological foundations embedded in classical Arabic texts and evaluates their relevance to contemporary epistemological debates. It argues that revisiting these intellectual traditions, through figures like al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn al-Haytham, al-Jāḥiẓ, and Ibn Khaldūn, offers a necessary reconfiguration of knowledge frameworks that extend beyond the constraints of modern Western paradigms. The study highlights the key epistemological values such as justice, neutrality, ethical commitment, and methodological pluralism. By interpreting these classical insights within their historical and civilizational contexts, the paper aims to contribute to a broader, more inclusive epistemological discourse-one that bridges between civilizations and reorients the humanities and social sciences towards ethical and imaginative inquiry.

In this context, we will attempt to interpret Arabic texts within their historical and intellectual frameworks, maintaining scientific neutrality in line with research ethics. Ultimately, the study aims to pose a series of thought-provoking questions, beginning with the inquiry: "Why not?"

Keywords: Epistemology, Texts, Arabic, Science, Contemporary.

1.0 Introduction

Before laying out the question of method and discourse in the social sciences, it is appropriate for us, at the beginning of the study, to break free from the question: Can social sciences become a science?

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That is, no matter how accurate and rigorous their method is, they will not become a science, for they are by nature far from certainty and constancy, which means the opposite orientation suggested by positivists to direct philosophy, sociology, and psychology. Logical Positivism claims that science is the only mental activity for searching, so that the single activity (planned) is divided into linked activities of scholars applying the synthetic method (observation, collection, hypothesis, testing), and the activity of philosophers replete with logical analysis. The first aims to translate the sensory data therefore arriving at conclusions, the second seeks to help scientists in developing science and opening its field to logical possibilities.

This logical positivist conception has led to considering philosophy as a science as it starts from the science and ends with it. However, the only difference between science and philosophy is that the latter establishes the logical rules for the experimental scientific activity and gives it the possibility of continuing through what it presents in terms of possibilities and probabilities, while science gives results and laws. The social discourse after World War II tended towards liberation from narrow scientific tendencies. Philosophy, for example (a model of the social and human sciences) in its essence, is related to suffering, astonishment, strangeness, criticism, consideration, action, etc. and multiple questions in its field may be derived from the same answer. All these features lead us to say that philosophy is too great to be reduced to the question of method:

> The method is not just a systemic construction or just a deaf machine that protects the mind from falling into slips and exaggerations when it is taken into account. Rather, it carries a philosophy and hidden dimensions related to the knowing subject and the subject. We do not choose the method because it is a machine or a technique, but rather we choose it because it fulfils deep desires within us. [2]

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[2] Abdelkader Bouarfa, "The Problem of the Method in Islamic Studies," *Al Kalima Magazine*, no. 72 (2011): 69.

Epistemology attempts, as much as possible, to restore the value of the self-knowing, which has been overshadowed by the subject and then dominated by technology. Perhaps the most prominent contribution that epistemology can make today is to reshape the cognitive landscape based on the requirements of postmodernity, which Christopher G. Preston tried to review when he considered "epistemology" to be the study of what happens when we claim to know something about the world.[3]

When postmodernity calls for an epistemic stance, it relies on the work done in the late twentieth century, which began to uncover modernist views on how we know the world.

According to what has been mentioned above, we emphasize the need to liberate the philosophical and social discourse from the rationalities that have dominated it for a long time. No Cartesian or Hegelian rationalism or other tendency can direct the social discourse towards completeness and efficacy. Edmund Husserl showed that Descartes had been transformed over time into an intellectual idol by excellence, which made philosophical thought captive to his mental approach. This, later, turned out to be a flexible approach that could not tolerate the rigor with which it was described for centuries, where Friedrich Nietzsche revolted against these major patterns, describing all great philosophers such as Kant and Hegel as idols.[4]

Husserl acknowledges Descartes' importance; He recognizes Descartes as a great philosopher who sparked a significant "cognitive revolution."

However, Husserl criticizes the tendency to elevate Descartes to an "intellectual idol par excellence." This excessive reverence, according to Husserl, restricts philosophical thought.[5]

Just as scholars have rejected the domination of inductive rationality and critical rationality throughout science, we must

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[3] Christopher J. Preston, *Grounding Knowledge: Environmental Philosophy, Epistemology, and Place* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), xi.
[4] See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale and Walter Kaufmann (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014).
[5] See E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 7th ed., trans. Dorion Cairns (Martinus Nijhoff; Publishers London, 1982).

liberate social thought from these formalist rationalities, which in their entirety, express ideologies more than they express epistemic principles.

Social sciences are more creative when they come out of the cage of alleged rationalities. The philosopher and the sociologist are more flexible than the experimental and abstract world, for their subjects are not defined in terms of quantity or quality, and they are not subject to a strict and precise approach. Rather, philosophy finds itself more refreshed when it engages in what is called unreasonable. Plato, for example, is still present to this day through his utopian theories, which, in every age, are characterized by the unreasonable and the imagination.

To liberate the social and human sciences from the influence of a strict, one-pointed approach, we must rely on some Arab and Islamic visions, which express the epistemic presence at a time when they were not scientifically framed. Rather, they are attempts to moralize science, and then model it within open frameworks subject to the possible and probable flexibility. The epistemic presence of Arab and Muslim scholars can be monitored through the following epistemic pauses:[6]

2.0 Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Modern epistemology—especially within the social sciences—often inherits a legacy of methodological closure, shaped by positivist assumptions that prioritize uniformity, determinism, and objective neutrality. This legacy, while influential, fails to account for the plurality and contingency inherent in human experience. In response, this study articulates an alternative framework: an open epistemological methodology grounded in classical Arabic thought and oriented by pluralism, ethical deliberation, and the imaginative capacities of the human mind.

2.1 Epistemological Premises

This study builds upon the principle of *al-imkān* (*possibility*), central to the intellectual projects of Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Rushd. Both

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[6] See Abdulkader Bouarfa, *Epistemological Reflection on the Social Sciences* (Republic of Moldova: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2021).

thinkers rejected rigid epistemological schemes in favour of interpretive flexibility. In his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn distinguishes between the necessary (*ḍarūrī*), the accidental (*ʿaraḍī*), and the impossible (*mustaḥīl*), emphasising plausibility and critical evaluation over mere transmission. For him, the historian must scrutinise social narratives not only for their factual accuracy but for their inner coherence with the laws of society and nature.

Ibn Rushd complements this view through his theory of *al-quwwah* (potentiality) which recognises epistemic openness as a condition for rational inquiry. Rather than seeing possibility as epistemic weakness, Ibn Rushd understands it as a site of unfolding—akin to modern notions of fallibilism—in which knowledge emerges through trial, hypothesis, and imaginative reasoning.

2.2 Methodological Implications

This study adopts content analysis as the most appropriate methodological approach, due to its ability to explore and interpret the underlying meanings embedded in diverse texts, written, visual, or oral. This method enables a critical engagement with the epistemological structures present in the selected corpus through the following stages:

2.2.1 Content Description: The study begins with a focus on the *introductions* of the selected classical works, as introductions in Islamic heritage texts often function as theoretical gateways and epistemological preludes. In many cases, these introductions—such as Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*—surpass the main text in conceptual depth and theoretical framing.

2.2.2 Meaning Interpretation: This involves decoding the connotations and latent significations behind terms and statements, contextualizing them within their broader epistemic frameworks.

2.2.3 Impact Evaluation: The influence of each selected text is critically assessed in relation to the central research questions.

2.2.4 Textual Comparison: The study conducts a comparative analysis of diverse textual patterns, especially focusing on how introductory sections reflect epistemological orientations and intellectual priorities.

The content analysis process incorporates the following analytical dimensions:
- Linguistic Analysis: Exploring the dialectic between meaning and expression.
- Structural Analysis: Investigating the internal relations within the text.
- Critical Analysis: Uncovering the assumptions and ideological underpinnings of the discourse.

In addition, the study integrates a framework for identifying epistemic beliefs across four core dimensions of knowledge that distinguish cognitive approaches among individuals. These dimensions are:
- Certainty of knowledge
- Simplicity of knowledge
- Source of knowledge
- Justification of knowledge

This model allows for a deeper understanding of the fundamental differences within epistemological theories, particularly as structured within Islamic intellectual traditions.

The following table summarizes the selected textual models analyzed in the study:

Work	Author	Epistemological Features
Risālah fī al-Manṭiq Iḥṣā' al-ʿUlūm	Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī	Demonstrates the intimate link between logic and philosophy, presenting logic as a foundational tool for understanding philosophical issues, avoiding fallacies, and practicing principled neutrality.

Work	Author	Epistemological Features
Al-Bad' wa Al- Tarikh	Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī	The first chapter addresses the problem of knowledge, its limitations, obstacles, mediators, and the notion of possibility.
Kitāb al-Manāther	Ḥasan ibn al- Haytham	Its introduction stands as a prime example of epistemological clarity, establishing conditions for knowledge and articulating the methodology of "the knowing subject".
Mīzān al-ʿAmal	Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī	Aims to purify the intellect from illusions and obstructions to truth, clarifying the interplay between sense, reason, and spiritual intuition
Mā Baʿd al-Ṭabīʿah Manāhij al-Adillah	Ibn Rushd	Engages in rationalizing knowledge through overcoming epistemic obstacles and proposing methods of inference and verification grounded in objectivity.
Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam Bulghat al-Ghawwāṣ	Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī	Explores illuminative knowledge, modes of unveiling, and the unity of the knower with the cosmos through the metaphor of spiritual diving.
Al-Muqaddimah	Ibn Khaldūn	Offers a comprehensive epistemological prologue discussing the nature, limitations, errors, and reform of human knowledge. It also introduces the notions of possibility.

3.0 Epistemological Shifts in Classical Arabic Thought

The classical Arabic intellectual tradition did not embrace knowledge as a neutral or purely technical enterprise. Rather, it underwent a series of profound epistemological shifts that questioned dominant paradigms and offered nuanced frameworks for understanding reality. These shifts may be outlined as follows.

3.1 From Mono-Method to Methodological Pluralism (plurality, diversity, and possibility)

Social thinking limited to a single method often fails, as it typically serves ideological ends rather than human needs. The monolithic

approach can become a "cemetery of ideas," as exemplified by the Marxist reliance on historical materialism, which ultimately collapsed in various fields, notably psychology.

Instead, social research should embrace methodological pluralism, choosing the approach that fits each subject's unique nature. Ibn Khaldūn emphasized this need for diversity, urging scholars to distinguish between what is essential, accidental, or impossible in human social organization (*al-'umrān*):

> As for news about incidents, it must be true and correct from considering its occurrence, and that became more important than modification and advance to it, as the benefit of the construction is taken from it only, and the benefit of the news from it and from the outside in conformity, if that is so, then the law in distinguishing truth from falsehood in news is possible and impossible to do that We look at the human social organization (*al-'umrān*), and We must distinguish the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization (*al-'umrān*) as required by its very nature; the things that are accidental (*to al-'umrān*) and cannot be counted on; and the things that cannot possibly attach themselves to it. [7]

Ibn Khaldūn examines social phenomena from the perspective of the potential rather than the static or the fixed. Each societal phenomenon, in his view, has a distinct approach suitable to its nature. Therefore, it is imperative to meticulously analyze, contemplate, understand, and delve deeper. Consequently, one can potentially attain the truth following his claims:

> If we do that, we shall have a normative method for distinguishing right from wrong and truth from falsehood in information (News) by means of a logical demonstration that admits of no doubts. Then, whenever we hear about certain conditions occurring in *al-'umrān*,

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[7] Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Cultural Books Foundation, 1996), 39.

then we would know what to take as accepted or as falsified.[8]

The term ability (*al-imkān*) used by Ibn Khaldūn and other Muslim scholars opens the mind of man to the possible (why not). This was explained by Ibn Rushd, considering that the possible is the closest form of force that is preparing to be:

> The meaning, for which the name of power is referred when introducing, is the same intended by saying it is possible.[9]

The relationship between the possibility and the possible in mental consideration is developed through the ability of the soul to realize that the knowledge God has placed in the universe has made it between the limits of possibility and impossibility. Whereas the impossibility requires us to prepare to understand it through the possible, which is, according to Ibn Rushd, the strength of the readiness that is in the thing, the possibility is 'Which is when it exists'.[10] Adopting this idea of the possibility ability (*al-imkān*) and the possible makes us believe that the methods are multiple and the approaches are various, and this expresses our human nature. Ibn Khaldūn says when explaining the concepts of the possibility and the possible:

> Therefore, a person should look at his sources and rely upon himself. With a clear mind and straightforward, natural (common sense) he should distinguish between the nature of the possible and the impossible. Everything within the sphere of the possible should be accepted, and everything outside it should be rejected. (In using the

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[8] Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, 40.

[9] Ibn Rushd, *Mā Baʿd al-Ṭabīʿah (Au-delà de la nature)* (Beirut: Maison de la Pensée Libanaise, 1994), 100.

[10] Ibn Rushd, *Mā Baʿd al-Ṭabīʿah*, 102.

> word "possible") we do not have in mind "possible" in
> the absolute sense of what is intellectually possible.[11]

Exploring the realm of possibilities offers a refreshing perspective in scrutinizing phenomena, as delving into the unknown expands the horizons of understanding. The more rigidly we confine our research methodologies, the narrower our scope of knowledge becomes. Conversely, embracing diversity in our approach broadens the avenues for deeper comprehension. Embracing the unfamiliar holds the promise of unlocking new realms of knowledge and enriching our understanding of the world around us:

> That covers a very wide range, so that it cannot be used
> to determine what is possible in actual fact. What we
> have in mind is the possibility inherent in the matter that
> belongs to a given thing. When we study the origin of a
> thing, its genus, (specific) difference, size, and strength,
> we can draw conclusions as to (the possibility or
> impossibility) of the data (reported in connection with
> it). We adjudge to be impossible everything outside the
> sphere of (the possible, in this sense).[12]

The historian al-Maqdisī called for an open approach to studying human phenomena and facts, relying also on the term possibility, as belief in the idea of the possible opens science to broad horizons and allows research from different angles, so truth does not have only one face, and without that feature, the human being would have no moral existence. In this context, he wrote:

> I say that all things are in the minds in three types: a
> duty, a negative and a possible.[13]

3.2 From Certainty to Relativism

In *Al-Manāẓir* (The Optics), Al-Hasan Ibn al-Haytham emphasized a critical epistemological stance: scientific knowledge, no matter how

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[11] Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, 193.

[12] Ibid.

[13] al-Maqdisī, al-Muṭahhar ibn al-Ṭāhir, *Al-Badʾ wa al-Tārīkh*, vol. 1 (Egypt: Religious Culture Library, n.d.), 28.

accurate, never reaches absolute certainty. He affirms:

> Thus, perplexity prevails, certainty is hard to come by, and there is no assurance of attaining the object of inquiry.[14]

His view anchors knowledge in relativism, recognizing that judgments-moral, social, and cognitive-are shaped by cultural contexts. As cultures shift, so too must our claims to truth. Every judgment is thus valid only within its proper domain.

Ibn al-Haytham deepens this view by noting the inherent fallibility of human inquiry:

> For the truths are obscure, the ends are hidden, the doubts manifold, the minds turbid, the reasonings various; the premises are gleaned from the senses, and the senses (which are our tools) are not immune from error. The path of investigation is therefore obliterated and the inquirer, however diligent, is not infallible.[15]

In social research, the multiplicity of meanings and perspectives makes certainty even more elusive. The researcher's findings remain partial and contingent, illuminating only fragments of a broader reality. Truth, then, becomes a moving horizon- an ideal, not a fixed destination.

Karl Popper echoes this in his philosophy of approximation:

> The idea of approximation to the truth, like the idea of truth as a regulative principle, presupposes a realistic view of the world. It does not presuppose that reality is as our scientific theories describe it, but it does presuppose that there is a reality and that we and theories – which are ideas we have ourselves created and are therefore always idealizations- can draw closer

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[14] Ibn bn al-Haytham, *Al-Manāẓir (The Optics)*, trans. A. I. Sabra (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1989), 2.

[15] Ibn al-Haytham, *Al-Manāẓir*, 2.

and closer to an adequate description of realty, if we employ the four-stage method of trial and error.[16]

Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī takes a more radical stance. For him, life is chaotic and full of illusion; certainty is but a temporal construct. He writes:

I imagined good in time and its people
And it was a fantasy that is not right to delusional
As for the light is not shining, and the dawn is not a river
The sun is not a Dinar, nor a full moon is a Dirham

Al- Maʿarrī went further when he believed that most human knowledge is closer to lying than the truth, and that this tendency dominates man until the end of the world:

Reason forbade me many things which,
Instinctively, my nature was attracted to;
And a perpetual loss I feel if, knowing,
I believe a falsehood or deny the truth.

3.3 From the System to Contextual

The reliance on the "system" in social research, in particular, makes it research that overturns the nature of the social sciences themselves, as they tend towards the horizon context more than the horizon system. This can be explained by the fact that the context makes the social discourse more flexible and dynamic, and it becomes multiple explanations and interpretations, which opens the horizon of meaningful dialogue and debate.

It is known that despite the contextual view being related to the method, it is flexible and diverse compared to the systemic view. This approach prompts the researcher to deal with the topic in the following contexts:

3.3.1 Linguistic context: It follows the outcome of the use of words and signs within the same sentence system, when it coincides with other words and phrases, and

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[16] Karl Popper, *All Life is Problem-Solving* (Routledge: London & New-York, 2013), 21.

opens the mind for discovering new meanings and connotations, and it can be said that it gives the researcher more capabilities. This is what we find in most of al-Jāḥiẓ,'s books, he believes that:

> The meaning is not honor to be one of the private meanings, nor is it clear that it is among the general meanings. Rather, the focus of honor is on the right and the attainment of benefit with the approval of the situation, and what is required is for each maqam (status) to have a statement (to every context a saying).[17]

Al-Jāḥiẓ's statement reinforces that the system does not reflect the truth, because every maqam has a statement, this means that searching for the context is what leads to understanding the intended meaning.

> 3.3.2 Affective context: Refers to the determination of the nature of the use of words between their objective connotations that benefit the general public, and their emotional connotations that benefit the individual. So, the researcher discovers through it the degree of strength and weakness in emotions. Thus, he can probe the depths of the self and dive into its places, which makes the researcher able to discern several turns that were not visible through the systemic look.

We have found this in the writings of Ibn ʿArabī who considered the emotional context to be more important than all other contexts and systems, starting with that the human being is inner, not apparent, and that the world itself is not known through its outwards but through his interior, which is perceived only through taste (*al-dhawq*) and emotional disclosure:

> A preceptor and a perceptive one each on two paths, a preceptor knows and has the power of imagination, and

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[17] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, vol. 1, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, n.d.), 132.

a preceptor knows what has the power of imagination.

A perceptive is on two paths, a perceptive with an image that informs of his image who has no power of imagination and does not perceive it. And he knows and imagines who has the power of imagination. And a perception without an image only knows.[18]

> 3.3.3 The *Maqāmic* context: It is related to the temporal and spatial relationships from which the speech emerged as an intellectual load, so the *maqāmic* context is a symbolic suggestive context rather than a direct expressive context for the subject.

The research takes that human whiff, which tries to choose words that are euphemistic and expressive at the same time about a situation. If we deal with it systematically, it will have inhumane outcomes.

The philosopher Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī excelled in his book "*The Pleasure and Sociability*", and he arranged the forty nights in the fantastic context of *maqami*, so that the researcher can, during his tracing, discover the relationship between the subject, time, place, and people.

> 3.3.4 The civilized context: It reveals the cultural connotations according to the word outputs, which is related to the horizon of ethnic, religious, political, and geographic belonging, and those contextual outputs in the field of civilized meditation can open the horizons of understanding the analogous relations that control the production and creativity of the text. This could be seen as an intellectual feature in the writings of Malek Bennabi, who considers the cultural context as necessary data to know the network of social relations.

It may seem to some that we contradict the introductions of our research by branching out the theory of context. Some may understand that we have returned to the closed curriculum, but we

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[18] Ibn ʿArabī, Muhyī al-Dīn, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2018), 11.

just wanted to show through this aspect that we are not against the open, diverse method, but rather we are against the closed curriculum.

3.4 From the Limits of the Mind to the Spaciousness of the Imagination

Imagination is a divine gift, often stifled when confined within the rigid bounds of rational frameworks. Contrary to claims by methodologists, imagination does not undermine inquiry- it expands its horizons. What appears unreasonable today may, through imagination, become plausible or even real tomorrow.[19]

In the social sciences, imagination plays a foundational role, enabling us to transcend both the "realistic rational" and the "rational realism." The unreasonable coexists with the reasonable. History shows an inverse relationship: what was once rational becomes irrational when surpassed, and vice versa, as human understanding evolves. The shift from Aristotle's geocentric model to Galileo's heliocentrism reflects not a change in reality, but a transformation in human conceptual tools.

Ibn Khaldūn, despite his structured methodology, acknowledged the role of imagination in discovery. He advocated for what he called "unfamiliar alternatives," such as intuitive and imaginative methods. He writes:

> The power of imagination is strong in augurs, and they exert that power in their researches, while depending on the help given by things they have seen or heard. This gives them some supernatural perception. The power of imagination acts here as it does in sleepers. When the senses are asleep, (the power of imagination) intervenes among the things seen in the waking state, and combines them with the products of its own thinking. Thus, the power of imagination brings about vision.[20]

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[19] al-Fārābī, *Kitāb fī al-Manṭiq*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Egyptian General Book Organization, 1986), 9.

[20] Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, 116.

Similarly, Ibn ʿArabī redefines knowledge itself. For him, method does not deliver truth, but merely a version of it that we assume to be real. He notes:

> Science is not the perception of the known, nor is it the meaning that conceives the known, for it is neither every known nor every world is conceivable, because the perception of the world is from being imagined, and the image of the known is to be in a state that can be attained by imagination. Thus, there is information that cannot be reached by imagination at all, so it is proved that they have no image.[21]

For Ibn ʿArabī imagination bridges the visible and the hidden. Truth always appears through its shade, never in full clarity. He illustrates:

> The Real is, in relation to a particular shadow, small or large, pure or purer, as light is in relation to what veils it from the onlooker through colored glass which tints it. At the same time, it has no color.... If you say that the light is green by the greenness of the glass, you will have spoken the truth as your sensory vision testifies. If you say that it is not green and has no color as evidence accords you, you will have spoken the truth as sound logical consideration testifies.

This is light projected across the shadow, and it is the same as the glass which is a luminous shadow because of its purity. It is the same for one of us who has realized the Real. His form manifests itself in him more than it manifests itself in another. [22]

3.5 From the Status of the Scientist to the Station of the Knower

Many Sufis and supporters of the gnosis tried to differentiate between two denominators, the status of the scientist and the knower, for the scientist is who knows things from its appearances, and uses inferential methods that oscillate between the sensory and the

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[21] Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 50.
[22] Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*,104.

evidentiary. He also believes that he knows what is available to him as a means of investigation, but his place is the status of the beginning and the threshold. The position of the knower is greater than him because the acquaintance is more encompassing than the scientist for its characteristics, such as a variety of paths, the power of imagination, and high energy which is the basis of science: By illusion, every human being creates in the power of his imagination, he does not exist except in it, and this is the general matter. The knower creates by the enthusiasm of what he has presence from outside the position of enthusiasm, this still preserves it.[23]

Ibn ʿArabī tries to establish knowledge on a subjective and not objective basis because he believes that science does not develop unless there is high energy that drives the knowing subject to research, and that when motivation weakens, knowledge is absent, and it is overcome by tradition and repetition:

> Know that one of the greatest of them is: the people of beginnings look at the conditions of the people of the endings, and they themselves (the people of beginnings) demand their conditions (the people of the endings), so it becomes difficult for them, and they exclude that, and their motivation weakens ...[24]

The position of the scientist differs from that of the knower[25], and it is the same when we compare between Prophet Moses (the scientist) and the Khidr, the knower because despite the status of Moses' prophethood, he was ignorant of the facts and events that occurred to him with the righteous man, and he could not be patient with the station of companionship. This is what Ibn Khaldūn talked about:

> No one would deny to himself (the existence of) certain knowledge. In addition, competent recent Sufis say that during the removal (of the veil), the Sufi novice often has a feeling of the oneness (of existence). Sufis call that

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[23] Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 73.

[24] Ibn ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn, *Bulūgh al-Ghawāṣ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2010), 121.

[25] Abdulkader Bouarfa, *Epistemological Reflection on the Social Sciences* (Republic of Moldova: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2021), 92.

the station of "combination". Butt hen, he progresses to distinguish between existent things. That is considered by the Sufis the station of "differentiation" (*farq*). That is the station of the competent Gnostic[26]

3.6 From the Truth Unity to the Truth Composite

Many Muslim scholars are convinced that there is a single truth. The truth is multi-faceted; it has various kinds, and accordingly, it manifests itself in different ways, and its manifestation is often according to the equation on which the place of recognition is based, and from this point, many Muslim scholars divided the truth into the outward and inward. The truth of text (Revelation) and the truth of the mind. Ibn al-Haytham concludes that the truth must be thought as a composite according to the nature of the sciences, and that this discrepancy between the sciences makes it difficult to say with certainty. Rather, science in itself developed as a result of this combination that occurs between the sciences:

> Our subject is obscure and the way leading to knowledge of its nature difficult; moreover, our inquiry requires a combination of the natural and the mathematical sciences.[27]

3.7 From the Objectivity to the Justice

Western epistemology was famous for a set of basic principles, especially the principle of objectivity, which has become an epistemic requirement par excellence. However, after more than a century, science critics discovered in particular that adherence to the strict method does not achieve objectivity as promoted by the scholars of the twentieth century, but rather objectivity must be searched for other mechanisms that can be achieved in a world, in which the "knowing subject" is still the center. This refers us to texts written by Muslim scholars, stating that objectivity in science is achieved only through "the self" in the event that it adheres to the

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[26] Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, 167.

[27] Ibn al-Haytham, *Al-Manāẓir*, 4.

principle of justice. Here, justice is not intended in the legal sense, but rather the scientist submits himself to personal justice, the basis of which is a lack of inclination and following whims and desires (ideology). Ibn Al-Haytham said in this regard:

> Our aim in all that we make subject to inspection and review being to employ justice, not to follow prejudice, and to take care in all that we judge and criticize that we seek the truth and not to be swayed by opinion. We may in this way eventually come to the truth that gratifies the heart and gradually and carefully reach the end at which certainty appears; while through criticism and caution we may seize the truth that dispels disagreement and resolves doubtful matters[28]

3.8 From Technical Strength to Human Power

Modernist epistemology has almost been drawn into the reverence of technical power, as it is the most important mechanism that helps man to acquire knowledge and control it. The world is currently moving towards the generalization of technology in all areas of life, which lets the machine marginalizes man, and represents him in many major roles and perhaps many Western philosophers warn of the tragic fate of man if the human mind succumbs to the accelerated technology.

Muslims believed that science, regardless of its methods of accuracy and immunity, remains deficient and incomplete, and it always needs what Ibn al-Haytham called "the human power" to guide it and pilot it, and this human power was absent from the proponents of the centrality of science, and this was reflected negatively on the knowledgeable subject.[29]

The truth is not without the "distress of humaneness" and we also add the "Technology imperfection" which makes the cognitive situation oblige scholars to always use human power to rationalize and direct science in accordance with what guarantees the interest of

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[28] Ibn al-Haytham, *Al-Manāẓir*, 6.
[29] al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿādah, 1931), 15.

man in the world, and this is what postmodern societies call for. Ibn al-Haytham says:

> For all that, we are not free from that human turbidity which is in the nature of man; but we must do our best with what we possess of human power.[30]

4.0 Conclusion

The concept of an open method should not be dismissed as idealistic or naïve. When methodology becomes diversified and open, it gains in flexibility and productivity. Unlike rigid frameworks, it avoids reductionism and excessive complexity while allowing for coherence by integrating reason, imagination, and intuition.

This approach is not exclusive to the social sciences; it is applicable to experimental and abstract sciences as well. The liberation of research from rigid methodological constraints can foster innovation and move scientific inquiry beyond its historical entanglement with ideological reproduction.

In this light, even the idea of "no-method" becomes significant. It challenges the hegemony of the knowing self and unsettles the ideologies embedded in much of social research. Scholars in the humanities and social sciences should abandon the belief that success depends solely on rigid, technical protocols. These disciplines, with their cultural and civilizational particularities, require a more situated and responsive epistemology.

As one scholar noted:

> The dual stance of the concept of science, both objective and utilitarian, focuses extremely on the social sciences and on relations between basic research and applied research, as it's a human tradition, and the subject of its works itself make it shy towards applied research and resistance to what is easily transformed into attempts to address and prescriptions. However, the sudden expansion of the social sciences in the climate of applied science and its desire to be recognized for its scientific

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[30] Ibn al-Haytham, *Al-Manāẓir*, 6.

standing and finally the many problems that real life poses, force it to take a stand**.**[31]

Thus, any new epistemological foundation for the human sciences must acknowledge the cultural context as a central epistemic source. As Mona Tarif al-Khouli writes:

> The aim of human sciences, and the solution to their problems is to solve many problems of the civilized world .... The cultural context and its values are a necessary tributary to the cognitive content in the human sciences, if not is the source, it is itself the core of its subject and the theatre of its phenomena, but its enrichment, and the solution of its problem and many problems for it, require a proper fruitful interaction between them.[32]

Muslim scholars historically initiated such open inquiry through the empowering question: "Why not?"—a methodological spirit grounded in both reason and openness to the unseen. The Qur'ān itself speaks in different levels of certainty, suggesting that full, divine certainty lies beyond human grasp. Human knowledge progresses from empirical certainty, to rational certainty, to intuitive certainty, yet the ultimate truth remains with the divine.

Revisiting the works of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn al-Haytham, Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn Rushd, and al-Bīrūnī may offer the foundations for a renewed epistemological project. Their intellectual legacy, if re-engaged critically, can provide the tools to address persistent challenges in curricula, scholarly autonomy, and the deeper aims of human inquiry.

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[31] Madeleine Grawitz, *Methods for the Social Sciences*, trans. Sam Ammar (Damascus: The Arab Center for Arabization, 1993), 178.
[32] Youmna Tarif El-Khouly, *The Problem of the Human Sciences* (Cairo: Hindawi Foundation, 2012), 136.