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Ibn-khaldūn's *Political Economy*: A Reflection on the Theological, Epistemological, and Methodological Foundations of Ilm-al-Umrān

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ABSTRACT

Based on Al-Fārābī's classification of knowledge, Islamic intellectuals traditionally approached the social sciences through two branches: practical wisdom and *Fiqh*. A historical study of Islamic civilization reveals that these branches remained focused on ethical and *Sharia* (legal) recommendations, without contributing to the development of theoretical knowledge about human sciences. However, Al-Fārābī's classification also recognized a branch that dealt with nature through an empirical methodology. Ibn Khaldūn challenged the philosophical approach in both theoretical and practical fields, assigning the practical domain to *Fiqh* and introducing the newly-developed Ilm-al-Umrān (science of culture and political economy) to offer theoretical explanations for social and human phenomena using a natural and empirical method. This marked a significant departure from tradition and laid the foundation for early political economy within the Islamic intellectual framework. Despite the potential for advancing social sciences, Ibn Khaldūn's ideas did not gain further momentum after his time. This paper examines the theological, epistemological, and methodological foundations of Ibn Khaldūn's Ilm-al-Umrān and its relationship with practical wisdom and Fiqh, seeking to answer the question of why his natural methodology failed to shape the development of political economy in Islamic civilization. The paper also explores the divergence between reason and revelation in Islamic and Christian civilizations, highlighting how the separation of reason and revelation in the Christian West, as seen in the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, paved the way for modern sciences, while the inseparability of the two in the Islamic tradition impeded the progress of Ibn Khaldūn's natural method.

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1. Introduction

Did Muslim intellectuals in the Islamic civilization offer theoretical explanations about the nature and essence of the objective reality of social and economic phenomena and the causal relations between these phenomena? (Choudhury and Silvia, 2008). The Muslim intellectuals' ideas about social and economic matters, discussed under the title "practical wisdom", were mainly idealistic ethical recommendations to attain happiness (*sa'ada*). But when the Islamic civilization was in its sunset, a thinker with novel thoughts came to the fore in the western part of Islamic territory, who seems to offer an answer to our question; his name is *Ibn-Khaldūn*. Through his *Ilm-al-Umrān*, *Ibn-Khaldūn* sought to provide a realistic interpretation of social phenomena by adopting a method that can be described as a proto-political economy. Ibn-khaldūn's book was translated into some European languages in the eighteen and nineteen centuries and some contemporary thinkers, like Toynbee (1935) and Sorokin (1951), believe that Ibn-khaldūn is the pioneer of modern sociology and "positivism" in the West (Corbin 1993). In other words, His work prefigures many modern social sciences, including economics, in its analysis of labor, production, and state dynamics, making him a forerunner of political economy. In addition to exploring the development of Ilm-al-Umrān, it is crucial to consider a broader historical comparison with Western intellectual history. In the Christian tradition, thinkers like St. Thomas Aquinas played a pivotal role in separating reason from revelation, which allowed for the development of modern sciences, including economics. By breaking away from religious authority, rational sciences could follow a different path from theology. This significant shift never occurred in the Islamic tradition. Despite the contributions of scholars like Ibn Rushd and Ibn-Khaldūn, reason and revelation remained deeply intertwined. This intertwining of the two domains in Islamic intellectual tradition may help explain why disciplines like Ibn-Khaldūn's Ilm-al-Umrān, despite their potential, did not lead to the development of modern social sciences (especially political economy) in Islamic civilization.

The second part of this paper deals with the social, theological and epistemological backgrounds of the development of his *Ilm-al-Umrān*. In the third part, we will discuss the status of Ibn-khaldūn's *Ilm-al-Umrān* in the classification of knowledge in Islamic civilization, and its relationship to practical wisdom and *Fiqh*. The fourth part is concerned with the natural methodology of Ibn-khaldūn. In the fifth part we try to answer the fundamental question why was the natural methodology of Ibn-khaldūn was not followed in Islamic civilization and did not lead to the establishment a theoretical social science.

2. The backgrounds of the development of Ibn-khaldūn's realistic thought

Abū Zayd ʻAbdu r-Raḥman bin Muḥammad bin Khaldūn Al-Hadrami, was born on May 27, 1332 AD/732 AH, in an Andalusian family which had immigrated to Tunisia, and passed away on March 19, 1406 AD/808 AH in Cairo. Most of his ancestors were politicians and administrative authorities in Andalusia. He entered the political scene when he was young, and took up administrative and political positions in different cities of Tunisia and Egypt like Fas (Morocco), Granada, Andalusia in a critical period. After twenty years of work as a politician, he left political struggles to concentrate on his studies and research, and spent his time in solitude in Ibn Salama Castle. In this period he wrote his most important work, *The Muqaddimah*, an introduction to *Al-Abar*, in which he talks about founding a new independent field of knowledge which he calls "the science of human society and social changes" and he divides it into six branches: human society (sociology, anthropology), Bedouin *Umrān*, urban *Umrān*, institutions and governing methods, sciences and literature, livelihood and economy.

At the first glance, the reason for the formation of *Ilm-al-Umrān* by Ibn-khaldūn, as a historian, was to "expurgate history" and prevent the intrusion of false information into history. From his viewpoint, history is more than

the mere account of events and news of the past; in fact it is a science that deals with true causes of social phenomena (1967: 1):

> "The inner meaning of history, on the other hand, involves speculation and an attempt to get at the truth, subtle explanation of the causes and origins of existing things, and deep knowledge of the how and why of events. (History,) therefore, is firmly rooted in philosophy. It deserves to be accounted a branch of (philosophy)".

Muqaddimah is the first part of Ibn-khaldūn's history book named *Kitābu l-'ibār*[1]. The primary aim of Ibn-khaldūn in *Muqaddimah* was to establish a science that could validate the reasonable possibility of an event recorded in the history by "analyzing causes and principles of social phenomenon and its natural effects". So Ibn-khaldūn believes that the purpose of *Ilm-al-Umrān* is to cleanse the history of errors and superstitions. In the beginning of *Muqaddimah* he wrote (1967: 9):

> "If he trusts historical information in its plain transmitted form and has no clear knowledge of the principles resulting from custom, the fundamental facts of politics, the nature of civilization, or the conditions governing human social organization, and if, furthermore, he does not evaluate remote or ancient material through comparison with near or contemporary material, he often cannot avoid stumbling and slipping and deviating from the highroad of truth".

So Ibn-khaldūn aimed to develop some theories and principles about nature of civilization and human society based on his natural methodology, and as the next step, he wanted to verify their accuracy by testing them out against these general principles (1967, 9). But to form such a science, special social backgrounds and theological and epistemological foundations were needed, and this was not fulfilled until the final stages of the glory of Islamic civilization. Social crises in Ibn-khaldūn's life time were the first inducement to establish this science with the purpose of resolving the crisis practically. Also, this newly-developed knowledge needed its own theoretical bases.

1. Full title: *"Kitābu l-'ibār wa Diwānu l-Mubtada' wa l-Habar fī Ayyāmu l-'arab wa l-Ājam wa l-Barbar wa man 'Āsarahum min Đawlu s-Sultānu l-Akbār* ": "Book of Evidence, Record of Beginnings and Events from the Days of the Arabs, Persians and Berbers and their Powerful Contemporaries".

Based on *Ash'ari* theological foundations and his natural epistemology, Ibn-khaldūn, criticized the deductive methodology of philosophers, and replaced the rationalistic methodology of philosophers in metaphysical sciences with the empirical methodology. Hence he laid the foundations for a theoretical positivistic science, though it was not continued after him.

2-1. Social Grounds of the *Umrān* Knowledge

According to Gaston Bouthoul (1930), "the greatest intellectual evolutions about social phenomena have occurred in critical time". Thomas Spragens also elaborates on the formation of social theories in response to critical situations (Spragens: 2009)[1]. This crisis could be sociological or epistemological. The history of science shows the objective relationship between critical situations and the development of social and scientific ideas. Ibn-khaldūn was born in a period when Islamic civilization was struggling with great social crises like the Succession crisis due to deviating from *Sharia*, Mongols invasion, plague, bloody civil wars, the decline of dynasties and the like. In this unstable critical situation, Ibn-khaldūn dealt with political issues for about a quarter of a century; he closely examined cultural crises and social changes in cities, and gained direct experience about social changes and crises. Some thinkers believe that the long period of decline and cultural and social instability, that threatened the foundations of Islamic civilization, paved the way for reflecting on the nature of society and human culture and understanding the natural conditions of society. These reflections, along with his great knowledge of history and personal ingenuity, laid the basis for *Ilm-al-Umrān* (Shojaei Zand 2008). Some intellectuals believe that Ibn-khaldūn was aware of the decline of Islamic civilization in his time and his purpose of examining social phenomena in

1. Thomas. A. Spragens Jr. in his book "*Understanding Political Theories*" (2009) emphasizes that political theories are formed in critical situations and examines political theories. Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli and stability crisis, Thomas Hobbes and power crisis, John Locke and legitimation crisis, Edmund Bruke and civilization crisis, Karl Marx and capitalistic system crisis, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and moral equality, Plato and Athenian justice are some theories discussed by writer in this work.

the framework of *Ilm-al-Umrān* was to explain the natural situation of society for Muslims and their leaders so that they could preserve Islamic society; he tried to find a way out of the existing critical situation and bring the glory back to the Islamic civilization (Mahdi 1957)[1].

2-2. Theological bases of Ibn-khaldūn's natural ideas

The theological basis of Ibn-khaldūn's natural methodology was influenced by his *Ash'ari* approach. He adopted Al-Ghazzālī theological approach to the relationship between the reason, religion, and perception. By highlighting the limitations of human reason, Al-Ghazzali tried to prove the theological belief that reason is subordinate to revelation (*al-Vahi*) and cannot surpass it. In this approach, metaphysical facts belong to the realm of faith and revelation, and reason is unable to understand the divine truths. The domain of rational knowledge does not include religious issues, and cannot affirm or deny them. Due to the limitations of reason and rational knowledge there is no way but to follow the revelations in *Sharia*. Therefore, by discussing the concept of the "legitimate philosophy" (the philosophy accepted by *Sharia*), Al-Ghazzali limited the philosophical knowledge to logic, mathematics and natural knowledge, and entrusted practical knowledge, like ethics, household administration and politics, which were part of practical wisdom in Al-Fārābī's classification, to religious sciences. He considered practical wisdom a part of religious sciences because he believed that the teachings of Muslim philosophers on the ethical and political sciences were directly adopted from revelation and religious texts (Al-Ghazzali 1957). The basis of Al-Ghazzali,s distinction between *Sharia* and rational knowledge is methodological. Any knowledge which is derived from rational methodology is rational (*aqli'ia*), and those which are acquired from revelation are juridical (*naqli'ia*). Because of his theological approach to the relationship between wisdom and revelation, Al-Ghazzali considers these two separable, which are not

1. But Henry Corbin criticizes the belief that Ibn-khaldun had any knowledge of the decline of Islamic civilization and considers this as a prediction after happening (Corbin 1993).

contradictory at all, and are even complementary (Bakar 1999). As is shown in al-Ghazzali's classification of sciences (figure 1), there is no place for rational practical sciences. This is because Al-Ghazzali, unlike philosophers such as Al-Fārābī, denies a mental ability named practical reason in humankind; thus Al-Ghazzali entrusted this area to *Sharia* because he did not deem human reason able to determine its own mundane and otherworldly goodness, and according to him it has to follow *Sharia* (Shari'atmadar 1999: 86).

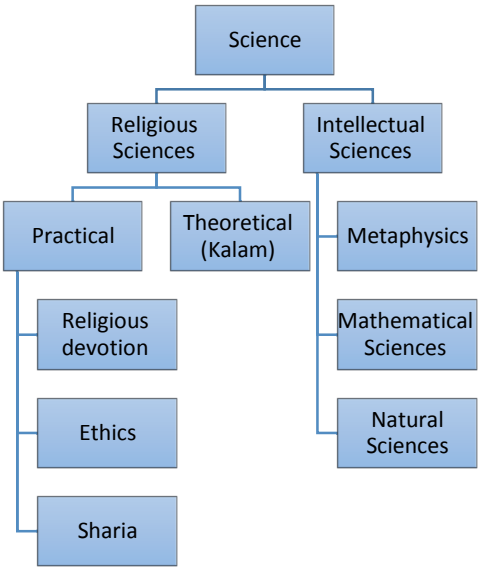

Fig 2. Al-Ghazzali Classification of Knowledge

As an *Ash'ari* scientist *of Fiqh*, Ibn-khaldūn, like Al-Ghazzali, believed in differentiating reason from *Sharia* (and rational knowledge from religious beliefs)[1]. In his opinion, religion has a divine source and rational knowledge

1. According to *Ash'ari's* theological system, the fundamental principle of religious life is to have faith in unseen divine truth (*ghaib*). Adherence to reason as absolute criterion (as *Mo'tazilah'* –schismatiques- do believe) is opposed to faith (*Eiman*). *Abulhasan Ash'ari*, founder of this doctrine believed that Muslims should have faith that God has hands and face, without any rational question. According to the concept of "belief without question", faith has no need for reason and these two oppose each other. One of the most important reasons for opposition to philosophy in Sunni's world was the domination of Ash'ari's approach; Al-Ghazzali and Ibn-khaldun criticized philosophy from this theological approach (Corbin 1993).

has a human source. *Sharia* deals with issues which cannot be understood by rational mundane sciences. In contrary, reason can just understand and explain nature and human mundane life, and cannot understand metaphysical issues because they have an intangible and non-empirical nature. The source of metaphysics (like God, the beginning of universe, the otherworld, humans' happiness, the ultimate and the like) is religious revelation, so reason should not get involved in metaphysics, and this is the real meaning of *Tawhid* (monotheism)[1]. Ibn-khaldūn entrusted the practical issues to *Fiqh*, and also entrusted the theoretical metaphysical issues to the religion. Therefore, reason can understand nature and material universe. He only accepts rational knowledge which has no metaphysical content and is limited to logic, experience and sense (1967: 538-9):

> "As a rule, man is able only to comprehend the causes that are natural and obvious and that present themselves to our perception in an orderly and well- arranged manner, because nature is encompassed by the soul and on a lower level than it. … This shows the wisdom of the Lawgiver (Muhammad) when he forbade (us) to speculate about causes and to stop with them. Such speculation is a field in which the mind becomes lost and gets nowhere, nor gains any real insight. … Therefore, we have been commanded completely to abandon and suppress any speculation about them and to direct ourselves to the Causer of all causes, who made them and brought them into existence, so that the soul will be firmly colored with the oneness of God. So were we taught by the Lawgiver (Muhammad) who knows better (than we do) the things that are to the interest of our religion and the ways that lead us to happiness, because he saw that which is beyond sensual perception."

Based on this theological approach, Ibn-khaldūn criticized knowledge with metaphysical content in section 30 of chapter IV of his *Muqaddimah* named "On the Refutation of Philosophy; The Corruption of those involved in Philosophy".

1. "Thus, (recognition of the) oneness of God is identical with inability to perceive the causes and the ways in which they exercise their influence, and reliance upon the Creator of the causes who dominates them. There is no maker but Him. All (causes) lead up to Him and go back to His power. We know about Him only as much as we have created by Him. One of the great religious people says: "The inability to perceive is perception." (Ibn-Khaldun 1967: 539)

Another theological foundation of Ibn-khaldūn that led him to natural methodology was his approach to causation. He rejected Ash'ari's beliefs (who did not accept causal relationship between things, and recognized God as the direct cause of every phenomenon), and maintained that the ultimate source of every issue is God, but there could be causal relationships between beings as well (1967: 537):

> "It should be known that the things that come into being in the world of existing things, whether they belong to essences or to either human or animal actions, require appropriate causes which are prior to."

The purpose of observation and induction is to recognize this casual relationship between these phenomena and objects. Therefore, knowledge and human understanding are but a mere understanding of causal relationships among phenomena (Azadarmaki 1992). The purpose of knowledge in Ibn-khaldūn's viewpoint is the explanation of causal relationship (discovering relationships among real issues). But how should we understand these causal relationships? Ibn-khaldūn answers (1967: 538):

> They are only known through customary (experience) and through conclusions which attest to (the existence of an) apparent (causal) relationship".

Thus it can be concluded that by criticizing *Ash'ari's* approach to causality, Ibn-khaldūn, paved the way for understanding the causal relationships based on empirical methodology.

2-3. Epistemological basis of Ibn-khaldūn's natural methodology

Following Al-Ghazzali's harsh criticism of philosophy in his book *Tahafut al-Falsafia*[1] (The Incoherence of Philosophers), an epistemological crisis occurred in the Islamic civilization, whose destructive impact on Eastern philiosophy, according to some historians, was irrevocable"; it resulted in the decline of philosophical methodology in Islamic world (Corbin 1993: 186). This statement is slightly exaggerated, and is true mainly about *Ash'ari*

1. In this book he challenges the Greek philosophy aiming at Avicenna and Al-Al-Farabi; and about this Averrroes wrote his famous refutation *Tahafut al-tahafut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence).

followers, especially in the western regions of Islamic civilization; the fate of philosophical thoughts in the eastern parts of Islamic civilization (especially Shi'a intellectuals of Iran) was determined otherwise. However, it left a noticeable impact on Ibn-khaldūn as an *Ash'ari* religious scientist (Corbin 1993). By approving of Al-Ghazzali's criticism of philosophy, Ibn-khaldūn accepted the incompetence of reason in understanding the other-worldly issues, and maintained that the true knowledge about natural issues is the knowledge based on natural and empirical methodology. He criticized peripatetic philosophers, such as Avicenna, Al-Fārābī and even Averroes, who tried to gain a rational cognition of metaphysical objects (1967: 642, 644):

> "There are (certain) intelligent representatives of the human species who think that the essences and conditions of the whole of existence, both the part of it perceivable by the senses and that beyond sensual perception, as well as the reasons and causes of (those essences and conditions), can be perceived by mental speculation and intellectual reasoning. They also think that the articles of faith are established as correct through (intellectual) speculation and not through tradition, because they belong among the intellectual perceptions. Such people are called "philosophers". … It should be known that the (opinion) the (philosophers) hold is wrong in all its aspects."

He criticized philosophers epistemologically because he maintained that due to impossibility of observing metaphysical beings, reason is unable to understand them (1967: 644):

> "The arguments concerning the existentia beyond sensual perception – the spiritualia - constitute what the (philosophers) call "the divine science" or science of metaphysics. The essences of (the spiritualia) are completely unknown. One cannot get at them, nor can they be proven by logical arguments, because an abstraction of intelligibilia from the individual existentia of the outside world is possible only in the case of things we can perceive by the senses, from which the universals are thus derived. We cannot perceive the spiritual essences and abstract, further quiddities from them, because the senses constitute a veil between us and them. We have, thus, no (logical) arguments for them, and we have no way whatever of affirming their existence …".

About material and sensible beings, Ibn-khaldūn's criticized deductive-analogical methodology on the basis that there is no need for the conformity of general subjective deduction with external partial reality; and in this case only sensual perception leads us to certainty. Thus, by accepting the sensual perception as the "true understanding", he criticized the deductive methodology of philosophy (1967: 643):

> "The arguments concerning the corporeal existentia constitute what they call the science of physics (natural science). The insufficiency lies in the fact that conformity between the results of thinking - which, as they assume, are produced by rational norms and reasoning - and the outside world, is not unequivocal. All the judgments of the mind are general ones, whereas the existentia of the outside world are individual in their substances. Perhaps, there is something in those substances that prevents conformity between the universal (judgments) of the mind and the individual (substances) of the outside world. At any rate, however, whatever (conformity) is attested by sensual perception has its proof in the fact that it is observable. (It does not have its proof) in (logical) arguments. Where, then, is the unequivocal character they find in (their arguments)?"

Ibn-khaldūn, who adopted a sensible approach, believed that the cognition of outside beings is possible only through external senses; and the criterion for the truth of the subjective theory would be its accordance with the reality through verification by senses and experience. According to Khaldun, reason is limited to nature and should not deal with metaphysical issues. So Ibn-khaldūn's interpretation of reason opposes the interpretation of the philosophers in the eastern parts of the Islamic civilization. Platonic philosophers believed that with God's help, the cognition of metaphysical reality would be possible and reason's final purpose is to attain this transcendental truth[1]. These philosophers believed in *Logos* and expressed that reason, with the aid of the logos, could know both natural and metaphysical matters. The discursive method considered by eastern Islamic civilization philosophers, like Avicenna and Al-Fārābī, could not be separated from rational insight and metaphysical intuition. The source of rational knowledge

1. For more information see: Burtt (1932).

is the same as that of religious knowledge, and since both are rooted in divine reason and logos, they are complementary and coherent (Nasr 1988).

3. *Ilm-al-Umrān*'s status in the Islamic classification of knowledge

The classification of sciences is a useful instrument for studying the relationship between fields of knowledge, which deal with social matters such as practical wisdom, *Fiqh*, and *umrān*. The classification of knowledge provides us with valuable insight about the ideas of a thinker, and reflects the thinker's attitude about reason, religion and sciences; it also outlines his teleological, ontological, epistemological and methodological approach. As discussed in the previous section Al-Ghazzali's classification of knowledge was based on the distinction between reason and *Sharia*. However, one of the most comprehensive classifications in Islamic civilization, which is based on ontological hierarchy of the knowledge's subjects, belongs to the great thinker "Al-Fārābī" who has an important position in Islamic civilization; because of the same classification he was called the "second teacher". Al-Fārābī's classification of knowledge, according to his book *"iḥṣāʾ al-ʿulūm"* ("Gaining Knowledge") (1953), is:

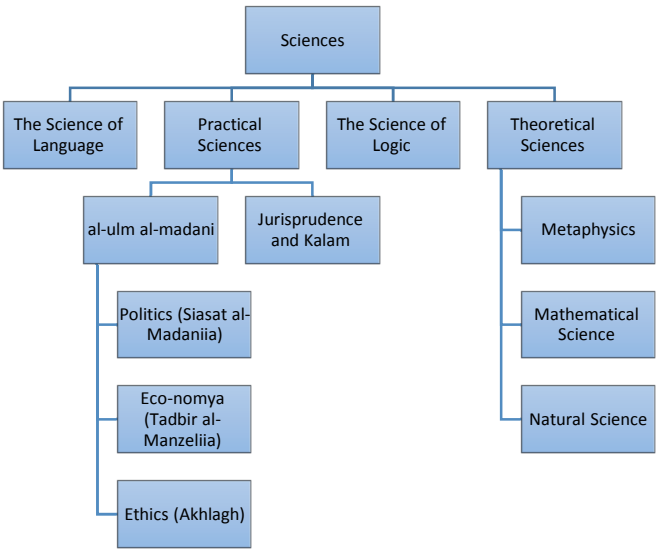

Fig 2. Farabi's Classification of Knowledge

According to this classification, studying human and society was a part of "social sciences" (*ulūm al-madaniah*), so in the book, "*Tahsil el-Sa'adat*" (Obtaining Happiness), Al-Fārābī says (cited from: Fakhri 1983): «Hence human could not reach perfection and knowledge without others' help, humankind has to live in the human society and that is why he is called "social animal" or "civic animal"; and the science that deals with this [object] is called "social science"». Social science has two main branches: (1) civic knowledge (in its specific meaning); and (2) *Fiqh*. In these classifications there is another branch of science called "natural science" which, prior to Ibn-khaldūn, was devoted to the study of nature, and no philosopher before him had used it to develop a science of human association or culture; for the first time Ibn-khaldūn used natural method to study the social phenomena and therefore Ibn-khaldūn's *Ilm-al-Umrān* is a sub-branch of natural science. As Mahdi rightfully maintains, Ibn-khaldūn's argument about using this method for the social phenomenon is (Mahdi 1966: 897):

> "Since the basis of man's sociability, and its primary manifestations, can legitimately fall within the scope of natural science, the elaboration of this natural property of man, and the investigation of the various aspects of social organization to which it leads man, can also legitimately belong to natural science and be counted as one of the natural sciences."

Here we try to clarify the status of *Ilm-al-Umrān* from Ibn-khaldūn's viewpoint. To determine the status of *Ilm-al-Umrān*, Ibn-khaldūn changed the conventional classification of science. In his classification of science, he divided them into two general categories (1967: 508): One that is natural to man and to which he is guided by his ability to think; and the conventional religious knowledge. *Philosophical knowledge* can be acquired by humankind through his nature and reason. This knowledge includes logic, mathematic, natural science (physics) and metaphysics. This classification[1] is in contrast with other classifications, like that of Al-Fārābī's, and results in the fundamental separation of rational (natural) sciences from traditional

1. it is said to be based on Averroes' theory of "double truth".

knowledge. Ibn-khaldūn believed that the natural science is common among all cultures and could be transferred from one culture to another; however, religious science is specific to each culture (Al-Rabe 1984, 171).

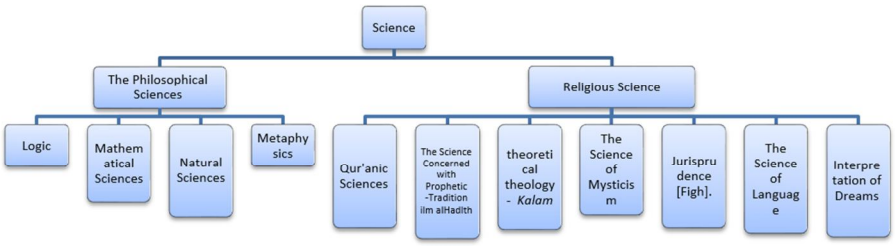

Fig 3. Ibn-Khaldun Classification of Knowledge (Al-Rabe 1984)

3-1. a comparative study of *Ilm-al-Umrān* and practical wisdom

According to Aristotle, the criterion for identifying and separating sciences includes «subject», «method» and «telos». Every field of science which has its particular characteristics in terms of these three concepts is considered independent. Ibn-khaldūn claims that his *Ilm-al-Umrān* has different characteristics in terms of subject, method, and telos, so it is a novel science (1967: Ch. 1). In Ibn-khaldūn's viewpoint, practical wisdom is based on rhetorical method with the aim of persuading people to accept specific beliefs and values and is not based on true reasoning (which in his idea is the natural-empirical reasoning). In Mohsen Mahdi's opinion, Ibn-khaldūn's reason for turning away from practical wisdom is that according to him there is no theoretical science on practical wisdom (ethics, household administration and politics), except in a strict and limited concept, because practical wisdom is not based on or derived from nature, and rules of practical ethics are not necessary for human and society » (Mahdi 1957).

Ilm-al-Umrān is different from practical wisdom in its teleological characteristics, too, because the purpose of practical wisdom is not recognition,

but seeking the good and fulfilling it to achieve happiness and perfection[1] (Nassir Aldin Toosi1954); the end of *Ilm-al-Umrān* is empirical knowledge, causal explanation, and the description of objective reality. So the essential difference between *Ilm-al-Umrān* and practical wisdom is that *Ilm-al-Umrān* has no practical and normative telos but is trying to understand human nature and natural causes of the changes in human society (Ibn-khaldūn 1967)[2].

Also these two sciences are different in presumptions and preliminaries. *Ilm-al-Umrān* is based on «natural» and «necessary» preliminaries derived from natural philosophy; but for practical wisdom these would never be adequate. Practical wisdom seeks what is good for human and society in terms of philosophy, ethics and divinity. But unlike the method chosen by practical knowledge in Islamic civilization, *Ilm-al-Umrān* was just based on natural preliminaries and refused any preliminary that could not adapt to the natural (empirical) methods.[3] From this point of view, Ibn-khaldūn's method was novel, too. Mahdi maintains that, "before Ibn-khaldūn no other philosopher had tried to found a science about human society merely on natural science preliminaries (without taking moral and philosophical preliminaries into account) (Mahdi 1957).

An important point is that practical wisdom, according to its own particular methodology, acquires its preliminaries from two sources (i.e. practical reason and revelation). As Al-Fārābī maintains in his "*Fosul el-Montaziah*", deriving preliminaries through practical reason is possible by

1. In his definition of social knowledge (*ilm al-madanii'ah*) in his book " *Ihsa' al-ulum*", Al-Farabi said that social knowledge discusses the voluntary behaviors and those characteristics, habits, virtues and manners which voluntary behavior is derived from them. He discusses the purpose of these behaviors and determines which kind of manner is good and proper for human and how we could prepare conditions for those behaviors to be accepted by humans. He also classifies the results of these actions for human and declares that some of these results are true happiness and some others are imaginary and unreal.
2. Due to this teleological difference, Al-Farabi and Avicenna recognized «happiness» as the goal of forming a society (Ibn-Sina 1954) but Ibn-khaldun believed that the purpose of the formation of the society to is providing sustenance (Ibn-khaldun 1967).
3. To see the depth of difference between Ibn-khaldun's viewpoint and the viewpoint of traditional philosophers, we can consider their views about the cause of separation of nations: while Ibn-khaldun believes this difference is due to their different livelihood and economies, Al-Farabi, adopting a metaphysical approach, believed this difference comes from cosmic causes like the difference between first heaven and the heaven of the fixed stars.

experience and observing people's status (1984: 54): practical reason is a faculty through which, human can gain preliminaries that make perception of must and mustn'ts possible. Somewhere else Al-Fārābī (1964) emphasizes that one of the nearest methods to obtain this kind of knowledge is to think about people's various actions and behavior, because this kind of observation helps reason to perceive good and evil and the beneficial and harmful. Likewise, Avicenna in the book of "*Uyun al-Hikmah*" says that practical wisdom in human is completed by experience (Ibn-Sina 1954).

The second way of deriving the preliminaries of practical wisdom would be the teachings of revelations which provide us with must and mustn't about practical wisdom. After discussing this method (i.e. using practical reason), Al-Fārābī proposes the deduction of preliminaries from revelation and *hadith* (Prophet's words) and religious traditions (1984: 98): "As an alternative, the practical part [of wisdom] could be gained from the revelations and thereby one can be aware of fate". Also Avicenna discusses this method (Avicenna, 1954: 14), "the basics of these three fields of sciences (ethics, household administration and politics) are attainable through divine *Sharia*; and the perfection of these sciences and their boundaries can be illustrated through *shari'a*. The duty of human theoretical reason is to perceive these universal practical rules (on a general scale) and to apply them to specific cases". By "boundary" the rule of *Sharia* about prayers and transactions is meant (1954: 14). It seems that if practical reason relied on the preliminaries of practical reason, there would be a similarity between practical wisdom methodology and the natural methodology of *Ilm-al-Umrān*, in terms of relying on empirical preliminaries. This is true in the case of Aristotle; relying on practical reason, he actually used a natural method to find out the practical wisdom's statements (especially household administration issues) and thus he founded the first analytical arguments about social and economic phenomena (Aristotle 1958). Instead, in the Islamic civilization this preliminaries and *a-priori* statements of practical wisdom are derived from revelation and religious sources. According to Al-

Fārābī (1968), the reason Muslims use revelations is that reason is unable to understand rules of life. Since the aim of practical wisdom in Islam is not just worldly happiness but also the other-worldly happiness (*sa'adat*), revelation takes the lead (1967: 202):

> "… If these norms are ordained by the intelligent and leading personalities and (best) minds of the dynasty, the result will be a political (institution) on an intellectual (rational) basis. If they are ordained by God through a lawgiver who establishes them as (religious) laws, the result will be a political (institution) on a religious basis, **which will be useful for life in both this and the other world**". (Emphasis Added by this paper authors)

One of Ibn-khaldūn criticisms of the Aristotelian philosophers was how can reason, which is bound to sensible and natural issues and is limited to the corporeal and physical existence, lead us to the eternal happiness which is metaphysical and meta-sensual?

As Mullah Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji (1855) has stated, the ultimate effort of the reason is to understand universal concepts and principles, but human reason cannot understand the specific actions and behavior which intrinsically make human get close to or away from God. So in the divine wisdom it would be necessary to appoint prophets (Gohar-i Murad: part 1, 2). On the other hand human cannot perceive the everlasting happiness that our religion has promised (the happiness resulting from spiritual perception) (Ibn-khaldūn 1967). Islamic revelation and religious sources are full of ethical recommendations about worldly life which help Muslim philosophers derive practical wisdom about happiness, and this knowledge makes them needless of uncertain refutable empirical statements of practical reason. Nassir al-Din al-Tusi believed that in Islamic civilization the source of practical wisdom is divine commandments (in Qur'an) (Seddiqi 1966). Since practical wisdom obtains its preliminaries from revelation teachings, it is different from *Ilm-al-Umrān* which acquires its preliminaries from natural sciences (using empirical method).

3-2. a comparative study of *Ilm-al-Umrān* and *Fiqh*

As it was shown in the classification of knowledge by Ibn-khaldūn, the second type of knowledge included traditional and religious (*naqli*) knowledge (Ibn-khaldūn 1967: 508):

> "The second kind comprises the traditional, conventional sciences. All of them depend upon information based on the authority of the given religious law. There is no place for the intellect in them …."

In his opinion, *Fiqh*, religious doctrine, *hadith* (Prophet's words), interpretation (*tafsir*), theology (*kalam*) and mysticism (*tasavvof*) are parts of religious traditional knowledge. *Fiqh* is intended to infer God's commandments about specified conduct of Muslims from two sources of Quran and *Sunna*; following these recommendations guarantees this world and the other world's happiness. A part of these commandments deals with the duties (*Taklif*) of individuals with regard to society. As is shown in Figure (2), these duties are as follows: (Bakar 1999):

1. Knowledge of Transactions (*mo'āmelāt*), which discusses commercial and financial transactions;
2. Knowledge of duties, which deals with contracts and agreements.

Fiqh is the legal principle for regulating livelihood. The reason that Al-Fārābī (1953) has set *Fiqh* a part of practical knowledge is the dominance of *inshā'ei* commandments that deal with duties of individuals and governments; thus *Fiqh* can be regarded as complementary (even an alternative) for the practical wisdom. Whether *Fiqh* or practical wisdom (as rational knowledge) played a greater part in managing the actions of individuals and society depends on the viewpoint of Muslims about reason and its relationship with *Sharia*. What actually happened in the Islamic civilization was Muslims' reliance on politics of *Sharia* (governmental *Fiqh* and individual commandments) more than practical wisdom (household administration and civil politics). As Spengler (1964, 273) has rightfully stated, in the Islamic world all aspects of human life were under the administration of *Sharia*, and of course the social and economic issues were

a part of it. Ibn-khaldūn explains that although rational politics, which belonged to Persians, was of great importance, but (1967: 548):

> "Therefore, everyone should be suspicious of the comprehensiveness of his perceptions and the results of his perception, and should follow what the Lawgiver (Muhammad) commanded him to believe and to do. He is more desirous of his happiness (than man himself) and he knows better what is good for him. His level (of perception) is higher than that of human perception. The territory He covers (in His mind) is wider than that of human intelligence."

In Ibn-khaldūn's viewpoint (1967) the perfect justice could be achieved through *Sharia*. The Arab sociologist, Nassif Nassar, (1967) highlights the same point: It is not accidental that most Islamic political thinkers are scientists of *Fiqh* while philosopher's political theories were not accepted by the people. The problem was that Muslims could not (and didn't want to) follow philosopher's abstract political theories, but simply followed religious jurisprudents and preachers' recommendations. About the greater role that *Sharia* played in the life of Muslim he adds that *Sharia* rules are formed through contact with religious, political and social life, and the religious activities reflected the true needs of social life (Nassar 1967).

Ibn-khaldūn, who believed in the necessity of following *Sharia*, announces that deviating from true *Sharia* is the reason for decline. He quotes Prophet Muhammad: «Caliphate will continue for thirty years after me, and then it will change into a tyrannical rule», and on this basis, he infers that the government of that period of Islamic Nation (*ummah*) deviated from the true *Sharia*. His rational analysis in the *Ilm-al-Umrān* started when true *Sharia* rule ended.

Most contemporary Arab sociologists (see: Amzyan 1991) claim that the empirical and sensible tendencies of Ibn-Khaldun were due to his *Fiqh* approach.[1] Their argument is that religious jurisprudents must inevitably observe the social and economic realities to understand the situations of their

1. Ibn-khaldūn was a judgeship official in the Egypt so he knew *Fiqh*.

time (*orf*), they should know about the time of revelation and Prophet (the conditions in which these religious verses descended)[1] for the purpose of understanding each special subject so that they can issue a *fatwa*. For example, Mohammad Amzyan (1991) says that the method based on *Fiqh* is a realistic, objective and sensible method which deals with the real conditions of society and people's life and manners (*orf*). He adds that Ibn-khaldūn's realism, in the first place, could be result of the same *Fiqh* approach which he, as religious jurisprudents, had adopted.

This argument is partially true but attracts some criticism. Obviously there is a fundamental difference between *Usuli* method of religious jurisprudents (as a logical method) and Ibn-khaldūn's natural method (as an empirical and sensible method). Although religious jurisprudents use the empirical method, it is a secondary and instrumental method for them, and the primary method is deductive method with the purpose of inferring divine commandment[2]. On the contrary, in the natural method of Ibn-khaldūn, experience and induction were used with the goal of studying human society circumstances, and the results were based on empirical observations. In Ibn-khaldūn's approach, the difference between *Ilm-al-Umrān* and *Sharia* sciences (*like Fiqh*) lies in the preliminaries which are natural and needed in *Ilm-al-Umrān*, however, in *Sharia* sciences these preliminaries are taken from divine sciences. These preliminaries are just applicable in the case of believers, and they have to accept them not because of logic but because of *Sharia*.

4. Ibn-khaldūn's natural methodology

According to Fārābī's classification, prior to Ibn-khaldūn, the economic and social issues were regarded as a part of practical wisdom and were dealt with

1. The fact that his new science (*umran*) was founded by a religious jurisprudents and not by a philosopher, and other religious jurisprudents like Ibn Taimiyah (1971), conducted the same analysis in their *Fiqh* issues, shows the close relationship between these subjects and approaches.
2. According to Mutahhari, notwithstanding the vastness and variation of *Fiqh* issues (including economic, social, political and mental issues, etc..) they all are sub-branches of the same science because they are all using preliminaries and methods of deduction, but if these sciences were regarded by different tentative preliminaries and methods they would be considered different sciences (Mutahhari,1981)

using a normative method which was based on ethics, or they were regarded as a branch of *Fiqh*. But Ibn-khaldūn founded a new science and named it *Ilm-al-Umrān* (knowledge of culture) and devised a new method for analyzing economic and social issues (1967: 3):

> "I chose a remarkable and truly method. In the work, I commented on civilization, on urbanization, and on the essential characteristics of human social organization, in a way that explains to the reader how and why things are as they are"

Ibn-khaldūn considered this knowledge a sub-branch of "natural philosophy" and stated that its method was a "natural" method. Mahdi (1957) rightly stated that the name of natural science will be appropriate for *Ilm-al-Umrān* if it follows the research methods used in the natural sciences.

Natural science concentrates on natural issues that are «natural» to human nature (and a necessity), and according to Ibn-khaldūn, just in this kind of science we can get credible results about what is necessary for human and natural society, and the results of other sciences are unreasonable. Ibn-khaldūn in his *Muqaddimah* used empirical evidence, and presented the information gathered through observation. He tried to gather the dispersed evidence, around a realistic basis, by using an empirical and inductive method[1]. Ibn-khaldūn recognized the objective and empirical cognition as an essential means for any form of cognition. Human knowledge is developed through these sensual perceptions (1967: 588):

> "The basis of perception is the sensibilia that are perceived by the five senses. … Man is distinguished from the animals by his ability to perceive universals, which are things abstracted from the sensibilia. Man is enabled to do this by virtue of the fact that his imagination obtains, from individual objects perceived by the senses and which agree with each other, a picture conforming to all these individual objects. Such (a picture) is a universal."

Because of his preference for sensual perceptions for obtaining cognition, some sociologists classify Ibn-khaldūn as an inductivist (Azadarmaki 1992):

1. Four characteristics of tentative method of ibn-Khaldun in social sciences were (Azadarmaki 1992): realism, abstinence from valuation, finding causes and inductive comparative analysis.

he believed that knowledge starts with observation and the statements of science are based on observation. An observation should take place without any prejudice and "ethical tendencies". Ibn-khaldūn goes further and states that one of the deviances in social analysis is to follow religious statements and beliefs (Mahdi 1966). According to Ibn-khaldūn, cognition is to infer general principles from reality, and then to deduce the issues related to these general principles (awareness about the causes of the facts). Also for testing out a statement he believes that empirical observation should be used to confirm its coincidence with the empirical observations, so from this viewpoint he could be classified among the empiricists, too (Mahdi 1966). Therefore, *Ilm-al-Umrān* is novel which is because of the cognition of general principles of human society (in Ibn-khaldūn's interpretation, cognition of essential and natural circumstantialities of human society) through empirical inductive methods in Islamic civilization for the first time (Ibn-khaldūn 1967: 2). According to Nasef Nasar, Ibn-khaldūn replaced “abstract existence” or cosmic existence with “objective perceptible existence” or social existence in the philosophers’ theoretical ontology (Nasar 1967). Though Ibn-khaldūn was influenced by various thinkers, it could be said that his method was different from that of his predecessors including philosophers (like Fārābī, and Avicenna), theologian (such as Nassir al-Din Tusi and Al-Ghazzali) and scientists of *Fiqh* (Ibn-Taymiyyah, and Al-Mawerdi).

5. Why was the natural methodology of Ibn-khaldūn not followed in Islamic civilization?

Perhaps if the knowledge of culture of Ibn-khaldūn was continued, there would be an empirical social science or a theoretical economic knowledge in Islamic civilization. But his natural thinking was not continued and his *Ilm-al-Umrān* was neglected. Ibn-khaldūn is called a “solitary genius” who had no sequel and no followers (Lacoste 1966). The reason for this has occupied minds of many contemporary Islamic intellectuals and orientalists, who have offered many hypotheses. Joseph Spengler (1964), who has reviewed

economic ideas of Ibn-khaldūn, wonders why Ibn-khaldūn did not establish economics. He believes that this was because he was not concerned about the analysis of the economic phenomena, but wanted to analyze society's natural state, so as a result of his interdisciplinary viewpoints he regarded economic issues of society in relation to its other dimensions, like the political, sociological, cultural and psychological aspects. Spengler believes that one reason Ibn-khaldūn's economic analysis was not followed after him was the unoriginality of economic analysis for Ibn-khaldūn (Spengler 1964, 305). As a criticism of this hypothesis it could be said that the interdisciplinary nature of one's thought cannot be an obstacle to its continuation; moreover, even the cultural and social analyses of Ibn-khaldūn, which according to Spengler were genuine in Ibn-khaldūn's *Ilm-al-Umrān*, were neglected and not followed in Islamic civilization. Some others, like Lacoste (1966), think that this phenomenon was due to unreadiness of institutional circumstances and epistemological condition. Even Ibn-khaldūn himself was too busy to train students and form circles for the discussion of his ideas; also his successors and the thinkers of his time did not pay sufficient attention to his ideas. If we accept the first part of this hypothesis, it will be difficult to accept the second part because it seems emotional, not logical. To provide an answer to the question, why did Ibn-khaldūn not found the modern sociology before Auguste Comte? Shojaii Zand (2008) studied the eras these two thinkers lived in. in his opinion social knowledge, because of its natural and empirical characteristics, grows when it is equipped with natural and empirical methods. When Auguste Comte founded sociology on the empirical methods of his time, he attracted disciples and followers who accepted this positivistic approach; unfortunately, Ibn-khaldūn was born in a time when this method was unacceptable epistemologically, so he did not find any followers to continue and develop his ideas and his *Ilm-al-Umrān*; his natural method was not paid attention to until the end of Islamic civilization's glory. Just in the positivistic climate of five hundred years later in Europe his ideas were paid

attention to and praised (Shojaii zand 2008: 35). In Islamic civilization, the empirical cognition[1] was not practiced seriously, even Fārābī, in his hierarchy of knowledge, regarded it as low rank knowledge, and Al-Ghazzali, in his classification, neglected it (cited by: Bakar 1999): empiricists, those who take the sensual experience to be the source of whole perception, have no place in Al-Ghazzali's classification [of knowledge]. Also, (from Al-Ghazzali and others' viewpoint) they could not be regarded as the followers of truth and knowledge about reality. For the same reason in his review of *Muqaddimah*, Mohsen Mahdi (1966) states that Ibn-khaldūn's work could be regarded as a short and small attachment to a background that his predecessors regarded unimportant and not deserving philosophy's attention.

Some other intellectuals believe that the reason for the discontinuation of the natural ideas of Ibn-khaldūn was his separation from the principles of Islamic civilization. Perhaps the hypothesis of Henry Corbin, in his book *The History of Islamic Philosophy*, is more acceptable than other hypotheses. He believes that Ibn-khaldūn's ideas were not followed in Islamic civilization because he was detached from the foundations of Islamic civilization and his theories were not truly "Islamic". In this regard, Ibn-khaldūn's methodology and the subject that he was concerned with were alien to Muslim philosophers' metaphysical reflections. In fact, Ibn-khaldūn's conception of "the real" was different from that of truly Islamic philosophers; the reason for rejecting traditional philosophy by him was in fact, the reduction of the real to mundane dimensions. Unlike the modern belief that traditional philosophers just dealt the abstract issues, he dealt with "absolute reality", in comparison with which mundane matters are unimportant; this attracts the whole attention of the philosopher. According to Al-Fārābī, even while studying mundane reality, divine philosophers and thinkers try to cast a "divine look" upon things. The Islamic philosophers and thinkers all agreed that the knowledge about of all beings should be theoretically related to the

1. Here by empirical perception we mean applying empirical methods to social phenomena as it was used in ibn-Khaldun's *Iilm-al-Umrān*; otherwise there is no doubt that other philosophers like Avicenna used empirical methods to understand natural phenomena especially in medicine.

knowledge about God (Bakar 1999). Contrary to their belief that even natural science is the "knowledge of monotheism" and should lead to knowledge about God and divine powers in the universe and self[1], Ibn-khaldūn's natural philosophy is based on material causality which denies any transcendence; it is, in fact, a breakaway from metaphysics and a kind of secularism in religious thinking. In fact, Ibn-khaldūn replaced divine knowledge with human science.[2] He believed that the philosophical way of life (based on human wisdom) contradicts the religious way of life (which is based on God's wisdom) and the happiness promised by philosophy is basically different from the happiness promised by religion (Mahdi 1957). This viewpoint was contrary to the philosophers of eastern parts of Islamic civilization, such as Fārābī, Avicenna, Mulla Sadra and others, because they considered these two kinds of happiness the same.[3]

To discuss the doubts about Ibn-khaldūn's Islamic originality of thought we need to relate a short brief history of thought in the eastern and western parts of Islamic civilization. While the metaphysical thinking reached its zenith, in the framework of Suhrawardi's illuminationism (587 AH) and Molla Sadra's transcendent theosophy (1050 AH), in the western part of the Islamic civilization, *Ilm-al-Umrān* epistemologically broke away from

1. In "Treatise of Three Principles" Molla Sadra says (1981, 121): «branches of the true science are two: first the science of monotheism or divine science … and the second is universal and individual science which according to natural thinkers are divided into two, one the science of firmaments and astronomy and the other science of the individuals, these two also according to their fruit and purpose refer to monotheism».
2. Even though ibn-Khaldn did not published anything on philosophy, he wrote some précises on Averroes' works in his youth which shows that he was affected by Averroes' ideas (Mahdi 1957). By human science here we mean a science that is just based on human reason and is independent from active intellectual or Holy Spirit (divine reason or Logos).
3. In Avicenna's viewpoint acquire the theoretical wisdom and acting according to practical wisdom would grant human happiness in the other world: «happiness and sadness in the other world would be proportionate to one's recognition». Farabi believed that, «there are four things, if to be gathered a society could grant mundane and everlasting happiness to its people and they are: theoretical, intellectual and moral excellence and practical arts». These words show that the purpose of the philosophy and wisdom is the same as the religion, and that is the mundane and everlasting happiness. *Mulla Sadra* maintains that getting close to the creator is the purpose of human life so the science that could accomplish this goal is preferred, and says (1981, 74), «getting close to the almighty God is the purpose of human life. So universe should be divine, all human actions should turn toward that truth, then even the knowledge and wisdom that human acquires will find sacred meaning. Therefore, the science that could help human to get closer to God is the divine science, not the knowledge of transactions or any other knowledge».

metaphysics and the true Islamic thought declined (Corbin 1993: 278):

> "What was thought to signal the coming of dawn may have been but the fall of twilight. And the fact that the echo of this work was not heard elsewhere in Islam may have been because the shadow of the twilight was not lengthening there."

From the two peripatetic philosophers of Islamic world - Avicenna (428 AH) and Averroes (595 AH) - the ideas of Avicenna which were compatible with the illuminationism, found their way into the eastern parts of Islamic civilization, and finally resulted in the combination of three epistemological areas of reason, religion and mysticism into the transcendent theosophy of Mulla Sadra. But Averroes's philosophy, which was based on deductive reasoning and the separation of reason and religion, was followed in the western parts of Islamic civilization and after that in the school of Latin Averroes (13th century A.D) and political Averroes (14th century A.D). In fact, with Averroes something ended that could not continue in the truly Islamic civilization, but it had to orient the European ideas. The ideas of Averroes formed a different fate for Europe and the western parts of Islamic civilization. In the Middle Ages Europe, the great Scholastic philosopher, Saint Thomas Aquinas, rejected any direct relationship between individual and divine wisdom, which was confirmed in theory of active reason by Avicenna, and proposed the authority of the church to be the source of this mundane relationship; by doing so, he replaced a divine order with a social order. When this divine relationship changes into a social matter, it is no longer religious and reduces from *Tawhid* (monotheism) to social embodiment. Also, in the school of the political Averroes, transcendence of an individual was due to following ethical values in a socio-political ground, and not following a transcendental divine path. Finally, this scholastic idea resulted in the secularization of metaphysics (separation of theology from philosophy) and ironically, the philosophy which was developed by followers of *Sharia* to defend religion, was used against it in the Renaissance and challenged the religious authority.

Ibn-Khaldun appeared about two century after Averroes in the western Islamic parts.[1] His thought could not be regarded as "philosophy" in the Islamic philosophy sense, but in fact, it was what empiricist thinkers like Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbs named "natural philosophy", which was in fact "knowledge about material causes by empirical methods". Interestingly, Ibn-Khaldun's (14th century) contemporary, the British thinker, Gueilelmus de Ocamm, had similar ideas to him. The way these two cultures responded to the ideas of these two thinkers, explains the general path of western and Islamic civilization. These two thinkers believed in the separation of religion from the peripatetic Aristotlian philosophy, and by adopting an empirical approach they criticized metaphysics. Their argument was that reason is limited to nature and cannot deal with metaphysics, so the true rational knowledge would be sensual knowledge verified by empirical evidence. Ibn-Khaldun's natural thought was not followed in the Islamic civilization, but Ocamm became the founder of sensible philosophy in the west (Ilkhani 2008). His successors, empiricist philosophers like Francis Bacon and his student Thomas Hobbs, tried to eliminate metaphysics by focusing on empirical and sensual perception. According to Hobbs, philosophy is the perception of the effects through their causes (synthesis) and the perception of causes through their effects (analysis), using correct reasoning. According to Hobbs, since synthesis and analysis belong to matter, nothing but matter could be the subject of philosophy (Copleston 2003). Therefore, the basis of philosophy and science is sense and experience, and things that are not material and sensible have nothing to do with philosophy and science, but they would be dealt with in religion because religion is not governed by rational reasoning. Because of the limitations of human reasoning and impossibility of the rational cognition of metaphysics, human rational cognition is limited, just and only, to the natural sphere, and the natural perception would be preferred.

1. Even though Ibn-Khaldun did not publish anything on philosophy, he wrote some précises on Averroes's works in his youth which shows that he was affected by Averroes's ideas (Mahdi 1957). Despite his respects to Averroes, in his book *Muqaddimah,* he seriously criticized Averroes's Aristotelian philosophy, which was discussed earlier in this paper.

6. Conclusion

Ibn-Khaldun was the first thinker in the Islamic civilization who in his *Ilm-al-Umrān* dealt with the social phenomena through an empirical, naturalistic method, which laid the groundwork for an early form of political economy. Prior to his work, social and economic issues in the Islamic civilization were regarded as a part of practical wisdom or *Fiqh* and were dealt with by adopting a normative approach. Using *Asha'ri's* theology and Al-Ghazzali's criticism of the rationalistic epistemology of philosophers, Ibn-Khaldun founded a new science by the name of *Ilm-al-Umrān* or the science of society and regarded it as a division of "natural philosophy"; in his opinion the method of this science is natural or empirical. Ibn-Khaldun entrusted the practical sphere to *Sharia* and the theoretical sphere of metaphysics to religion. Therefore, rational cognition was accountable for nature and material world, whose general causal relations could be perceived using empirical methods.

Although this method paved the way for the formation of realistic and theoretical social science in the Islamic civilization, it was not followed. Since in the Islamic civilization the empirical cognition was not paid close attention to, ibn-Khaldun's natural method could not attract any followers. But it might be claimed that the main reason for the discontinuation of his ideas in was the breakaway of his thoughts and methods from Islamic principles. In fact, his perception of the *reality* was different from the truly Islamic thinkers. His natural philosophy was based on causal relationship that disregarded the transcendental, and this was in fact dissociation from metaphysics and a kind of secularization of religious thoughts. This reductionistic approach could not be accepted by Islamic thinkers after him.

In contrast, the Western intellectual tradition experienced a crucial turning point with the separation of reason from revelation, particularly through the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, which facilitated the rise of modern scientific disciplines, including political economy. In Islamic civilization, however, this intellectual break did not occur. While figures like

Ibn Rushd and Ibn-Khaldūn attempted to promote rational inquiry, they remained embedded in a framework where reason and revelation were interwoven. This fundamental difference between the Islamic and Western intellectual trajectories may explain why disciplines like political economy, as an independent theoretical science, did not emerge within the Islamic world. Instead, economics remained confined to its traditional scope as "household management" (tadbir al-manzil), without evolving into a broader theoretical framework.

Ibn-Khaldūn's doubts regarding certain elements of tradition did not lead him to question the nature of the era that was inevitably about to commence in Europe, culminating in the Renaissance. Such a questioning could only have been possible if his doubts had prompted a reconsideration of foundational principles, which would subsequently allow for the establishment of a new philosophical system capable of addressing the critical issues that had emerged during the Islamic period within the framework of these new categories. In other words, the crisis that compelled Ibn-Khaldūn to reflect on the decline of Islamic countries needed to facilitate a shift in Islamic thought away from stagnation, requiring not merely a revival of tradition but a fundamental reevaluation of its foundations. This would imply a kind of abrogation of tradition that could pave the way for the establishment of a new science. However, Ibn-Khaldūn was unable to transcend the confines of the intellectual framework of the era that had come to an end, nor could he establish a system compatible with the requirements of the emerging period that was beginning to take shape in Europe.

Despite his profound knowledge of religious sciences, Ibn-Khaldūn struggled to reflect on the relationship between reason and Sharia while maintaining distance from their underlying principles and logic, particularly in light of the prevailing zeitgeist. This could explain why, even with his familiarity with philosophy, he chose to critique its foundations, which were regarded as the only rational discourse available during the Islamic period. Ibn-Khaldūn, while rooted in tradition, also claimed to be innovative.

Nonetheless, he did not explore the potential for reconciling tradition with innovation without reexamining its foundational principles. As a result, his attempts to innovate and establish Ilm-al-Umrān ultimately proved unproductive and did not yield substantial results.

From a policy perspective, the stagnation of empirical social science in the Islamic world, especially as it relates to economic thought, highlights the need for a reevaluation of the role of revelation and reason in shaping intellectual inquiry. A deeper engagement with empirical methods, and an openness to a separation of metaphysical and material analysis, could have facilitated the development of a more robust political economy in the Islamic tradition. Such a shift might have allowed Ibn Khaldūn's innovative insights to be more fully integrated into the broader intellectual and economic landscape of the Islamic world. Today, the integration of political economy into Islamic intellectual traditions requires revisiting the methodological foundations laid by thinkers like Ibn Khaldūn, while recognizing the importance of an independent, empirically grounded analysis of social and economic phenomena.

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