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Islamic Sciences and the Theory of Multiple Systems: A Question of Openness

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Abstract:
This article examines the relationship between Islamic sciences and Polysystem Theory to address the long-debated question of openness versus closure. It argues that early Islamic scholarship exemplified an "open" epistemic posture – combining rigorous criticism and foundational methodology (e.g, ḥadīth criticism, uṣūl al-fiqh) – that enabled cross-fertilization with other knowledge systems. Over time, however, secondary exegetical corpora gained quasi-sacrosanct status, narrowing methodological plurality. Building on Polysystem concepts (dynamism, hybridity, relationality), the paper proposes a calibrated model of methodological openness under textual sacrality, whereby contemporary Islamic sciences may integrate external methods that respect the ontological uniqueness of revelation while expanding their analytical toolkit. The contribution is twofold: (1) a normative framework to distinguish permissible methodological borrowing from uncritical importation, and (2) criteria for renewing reading practices without dissolving scriptural constants.

Keywords: *Islamic sciences, multiple systems, openness, closure, ijtihād.*

Les sciences islamiques et la théorie des systèmes multiples : une question d'ouverture

Résumé :
Cet article examine la relation entre les sciences islamiques et la théorie des polysystèmes afin d'aborder la question longtemps débattue de l'ouverture par opposition à la fermeture. Il soutient que les premiers érudits islamiques incarnaient une posture épistémique « ouverte », combinant une critique rigoureuse et une méthodologie fondamentale (par exemple, la critique des hadiths, l'uṣūl al-fiqh), qui permettait un enrichissement mutuel avec d'autres systèmes de connaissances. Au fil du temps, cependant, les corpus exégétiques secondaires ont acquis un statut quasi sacro-saint, réduisant ainsi la pluralité méthodologique. S'appuyant sur les concepts du polysystème (dynamisme, hybridité, relationnalité), l'article propose un modèle calibré d'ouverture méthodologique dans le cadre de la sacralité textuelle, grâce auquel les sciences islamiques contemporaines peuvent intégrer des méthodes externes qui respectent le caractère ontologique unique de la révélation tout en élargissant leur boîte à outils analytique. La contribution est double : (1) un cadre normatif permettant de distinguer les emprunts méthodologiques autorisés des importations non critiques, et (2) des critères pour renouveler les pratiques de lecture sans dissoudre les constantes scripturales.

Mots-clés *: sciences islamiques, systèmes multiples, ouverture, fermeture, ijtihād.*

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Introduction:

Knowledge is a human activity; it is not given ready-made, nor does it emerge from nothing; rather, it is built and established through the mechanisms of knowledge construction, which are: reasoning, proof, and experience. Therefore, it undergoes continuous development and change depending on the interaction of these elements and their ability to generate new ideas through dynamism, interaction, continuity, and extension. The very idea of construction and interaction reflects the emergence of a system within a set of systems, each arising as knowledge is constructed. Human perceptions, sciences, and knowledge have evolved since the beginning of history, leading to a vast accumulation of knowledge and experience through continuous additions and accumulations over time, including inventions, discoveries, theories, and opinions. Scholars and thinkers strive to either align with their predecessors' views or innovate to the extent of revolutionizing human understanding and opening new horizons and alternative perspectives.

The real revolution in this development occurred at the level of research methods and methodologies, which led to a reexamination of all previous scientific knowledge and beliefs, especially in line with the latest research foundations and scientific methodologies humanity has reached.

Nowadays, Islamic sciences require a constructive perspective capable of diagnosis, critique, and treatment to

produce paradigms([1]) that guide the completion of the scientific and knowledge-based civilizational contribution. These sciences also need theoretical and methodological determinants that diagnose the flaws, propose methodologies capable of renewing their paradigms, activate their relationship with revelation, and suggest ways to overcome the existing challenges.

Some believe that the Islamic legal sciences (such as Hadith, the science of narrators, jurisprudence, etc..) have remained stagnant since their inception, remaining largely resistant to scientific methodological development. The pioneers of these sciences were unable to adopt and apply the scientific method to their theories to verify their validity and the soundness of their foundations. Therefore, according to this view, these sciences remained hostage to the opinions of scholars and confined to their scientific status. (al-Hamad, 2022)

Regardless of the entity that made this critique or the extent of its accuracy, the underlying implication points to the idea of the closed system. Here, an important issue arises regarding the openness or closure of Islamic sciences toward or against multiple systems that adopt new research methodologies. Given the deep-rooted nature of some of these sciences in the religious text (Qur'an and Hadith), and their stability since their inception, the idea of critique represents a destabilization of fixed systems that have been able to defend themselves for centuries. Are these systems

[1]- The term "paradigm" can be translated from Latin as Paradigma to mean an intellectual model, a cognitive model, or a theoretical framework. This word emerged in the late 1960 in the English language with a new meaning, referring to any pattern of thinking within any scientific discipline or subject related to the theory of knowledge, or epistemology.

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multiple, open to sciences within themselves and to other external sciences? And can we talk about openness and closure in relation to these systems?

Method and Contribution:

This study adopts a conceptual-analytical approach rather than textual analysis. It does not examine sample texts or specific exegetical works; rather, it investigates the epistemic behavior of Islamic knowledge itself — how the disciplines historically evolved between methodological openness and epistemic closure. By tracing the internal logic of these sciences and their interaction with external systems of thought, the study reveals the extent to which classical Islamic epistemology preserved, lost, or reconfigured its openness as theorized by Polysystem Theory.

The paper thus contributes a meta-theoretical framework that reinterprets "Islamic sciences" as a dynamic knowledge system governed by self-regulating mechanisms, and proposes criteria for renewing their methodological vitality without compromising their sacred foundations.

1. Identification of Concepts:

1.1. Multiple Systems Theory:

The theory of multiple systems was developed to encompass literary texts, and ultimately, it is a theory centered around a specific text, much like Islamic sciences, which were established to understand the religious text, explore its secrets, and derive the rulings associated with it. It is important to note that the religious text, in relation to the critical process, is twofold: a sacred text that is immune to the mechanisms of critique applied to other texts due to

the uniqueness of its source, and an explanatory peripheral text that has gained a degree of sanctity.

This critical tendency toward texts initially targeted ecclesiastical religious texts, given that they are considered immune to critique and reject it, despite being filled with contradictions, myths, scientific errors, historical inaccuracies, and more. Thus, the theory of multiple systems and fixed systems emerged, which can be simply defined as follows:

1.1.1. The Concept of "System" in Philosophy and Science:

The concept of the system has philosophical origins, as indicated by Jean-Pierre Vernant, who suggests that Greek philosophers were the first to conceive of the system[2](Al--Durar, 2014) in its precise cultural context. He says: "In order to resolve the theoretical difficulties it faces, philosophy invented its own language, creating its concepts and building its logic and rationality". (Vernant, 1987, P118)

The early conceptualizations of the philosophical system were later developed by Plato and Aristotle. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, these philosophers "actually invented the great philosophical systems". (Nietzsche, 1983, P41)

In the scientific sense, a system refers to an integrated and interconnected set of theoretical constructs that the mind forms around a specific subject, such as presenting a

[2]- The concept of "immanence" (Al Muhayatha) is one of the concepts introduced by structuralism in the early 1960s, which later became a central concept upon which texts are understood and read. Immanent analysis means that the text is considered only in itself, separate from anything outside of it. Immanence, in this sense, refers to isolating the text and removing all surrounding contexts. The meaning is produced by a text that is self-contained and possesses its own significance, independent of anything else.

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mathematical model to explain a physical phenomenon. A system also refers to a set of rules, principles, hypotheses, assumptions, and conclusions that constitute an abstract theoretical theory, or a comprehensive scientific system, such as the Aristotelian system in philosophy, etc. A system can also mean a collection of methods, theories, and procedures organized institutionally to perform a specific function, such as the educational system, the production system, the defense system, etc. (Hamdaoui, 2006, P9)

Our modern era has become known as the age of cultural systems, with these systems multiplying. There is talk of central systems and peripheral systems, primary systems and marginal systems, fixed systems, and evolving and multiple systems. There is also discussion of various systems, such as the literary system, the artistic system, the religious system, the ideological system, the historical system, the societal system, the political system, and the economic system**.** (Hamdaoui, 2006, Introduction)

1.1.2. The concept of Multiple Systems Theory:

It refers to the theory that believes in the existence of multiple, interwoven, and interacting cultural and literary systems, both internally and externally. Therefore, this theory goes beyond the static, closed system of Saussurian structuralist linguists and opens to a dynamic and functional theory, known as dynamic structuralism or functional structuralism. (Hamdaoui, 2006, p4)

This definition refers to the idea of a collection of cultural and intellectual systems, such as the literary system, the artistic system, the religious system, the ideological system, the historical system, the societal system, the political

system, and the economic system. Each system or field branches into sub-systems or sub-fields (Hamdaoui, 2006). It encompasses the meaning of pluralism, abundance, and diversity, which connects to the concept of system or field in Pierre Bourdieu's theory (Bourdieu, 1992, p282), who argues that society is divided into a variety of sub-fields such as the religious field, the political field, the sports field, and so on.

In brief, the goal of multiple systems Theory is to depict the natural and eternal struggle between tradition and innovation, or between the fixed and the changing, or between authenticity and modernity. This means that "every primary genre, which occupies a central position due to its novelty and experimental, disruptive nature, quickly becomes a conservative genre as time, decades, and generations pass, replaced by a secondary, sub-genre, following a dialectical struggle with it" (Hamdaoui, 2006, p23). This implies that any system, which takes centrality in terms of functional importance, eventually becomes a sub-system as time passes and new critical systems form around it. The creative process leads to the emergence of new systems that align with the many developments across various levels.

Thus, there is an inevitable process that governs the importance and centrality of a system, linked to the dynamics of intellectual, literary, and scientific evolution. It is implicitly connected to the factor of time, though it may appear unrelated to time at the surface. What happens within the other systems in terms of updating and change takes priority, and in turn, they take the lead and prominence.

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1.1.3. The Pillars of Multiple Systems Theory.

This theory is based on a set of characteristics that form the fundamental pillars distinguishing it from the Saussurian structural linguistic system.

These characteristics are summarized as follows (Robert, 2002, p p 456-457):

- ✓ **The characteristic of multiple systems:** Multiple systems theory views discourse, or cultural phenomena, as a central system that branches into multiple sub-systems. The system is a comprehensive structure of structural elements that interact with each other, either harmonizing or opposing and differing.
- ✓ **The characteristic of dynamism:** The system is a dynamic, functional entity that changes with alterations in its environment, context, or surroundings. Thus, it transforms from a stable state to a variable one.
- ✓ **The characteristic of hybridization:** The term hybridization is borrowed from various fields such as biology, chemistry, physics, science, technology, literature, and linguistics. It refers to cultural interaction, acculturation, and the merging of languages, civilizations, and cultures. This is a feature of postmodernism, which advocates for the intermingling of cultures and civilizations, whether central or marginal(Wikipedia, Heteroglossia, no date).

Therefore, researchers in this field conclude that "there is no pure, untainted, or pristine system; rather, there is a duality or multiplicity of systems, reflecting class, social,

cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, as well as the intermingling of cultures and civilizations, and their integration at the level of relationships and systems"(Hamdaoui, 2006, p27).

Bakhtin, however, excludes a certain type of discourse, which he calls "authoritative discourse," that requires the reader or listener to fully accept it, such as religious doctrine, scientific theory, or popular books. This type of discourse is viewed as a discourse of the past, finished, and hierarchically superior, thus demanding "unconditional loyalty" rather than allowing for interpretation. For this reason, Bakhtin argues that official discourse often seeks to preserve a certain authority or present a single perspective, making it less open to multiple interpretations. In contrast, dialogic discourses involve multiple voices, making them hybrid, whereas official discourse cannot engage in hybrid speech(Bakhtin, 1987, p108).

- ✓ **The characteristic of openness:** In the theory of multiple systems, the system is viewed as interconnected with other systems, whether central or marginal, aiming to replace centrality. It is not limited to internal structures but is open to the periphery, the context of discourse, and cultural and referential frameworks. The system is functional in its openness to the surrounding environment, encompassing local, national, and global cultural realities.
- ✓ **The characteristic of regulation through the register:** The register refers to a set of rules, standards, laws, and principles that define a particular intellectual, literary, or cultural phenomenon, granting it legitimacy and institutionalization in a specific time and place. It is used to distinguish between the good

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and the bad within the prevailing cultural, literary, and artistic phenomena in each society(Hamdaoui, 2006, p28).

- ✓ **The relational characteristic:** The overall system itself branches into a set of sub-systems or fields, which in turn are subject to internal structural relationships among the various elements within these systems, and in relation to the central system. There is an internal interaction that needs to be observed, recorded, described, and interpreted.

1.2. Types of Systems:

The nature of the system is determined through its relationships with other systems and the surrounding environment. Therefore, the system is divided into two types based on this characteristic:

1.2.1. The Closed System:

It refers to a system that views the societal apparatus or institution as not interacting, or as having no form of exchange with other institutions, meaning there is no reciprocal relationship. It is considered "an intellectual, legislative, or cognitive system that tends to close itself off and stops at a certain limit without surpassing it"(al-Alwānī, no date).

Taha Jaber al-Alwānī cites Judaism and the Jewish community, as a precise example of what is called a closed system. He supports this with references to religious texts, the history of the Jews, and their laws, which they have chosen to seal off as a system exclusive to Jews, not to be transcended by time, place, or ethnicity, despite the

existence of many elements in their religion that could be generalized to other people.

1.2.2. The Open System:

It involves creating a type of communication channel between the marginal system and the central system, or between the system and the general system and some other systems within society. This refers to coordinating between systems, institutions, and other existing systems within society(al-Salami.,1970, p30). An example of an open system would be a university or a library.

A system cann ot function in isolation. Closed systems are defined as "systems that do not exchange inputs and outputs with their environment and consistently acquire the trait of deterioration, eventually vanishing in an involuntary manner" (Khashaba, 1987, p30). The best example of such a system is 'a clock,' which continues to operate as a system without any relationship with its environment until the battery runs out or it needs repair, both of which require intervention from the environment. Thus, closed systems are rare, and those that exist are relatively or partially so(Khashaba, 1987, p30).

Meanwhile, Taha Jaber Al-Alwani considers the Islamic system as an example of an open system. He states that it is an open system in its message to all of humanity without exception: "Say, 'O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all'" (Qur'an, Al-a'raf 158). He emphasizes that the entire Earth is the domain and field for this system, and it should not close off any part of it. If it does become closed under certain circumstances, such closure is temporary and will inevitably disappear once those conditions or factors cease(al-Alwānī, no date). He connects this to the

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universality of the Islamic message and its comprehensive address to all people.

It is noticeable that Taha Jaber al-Alwānī addressed the idea of the closure and openness of systems within a specific framework governed by the factor of place (spread) among individuals within the same society, as well as time. The factors of openness and closure remain linked to time, existing or non-existing. This context achieves a specific type of concept of openness and closure that is intended to be explored in this approach. The aim here is to investigate the possibility of the Islamic sciences system opening to other systems, or at least to examine whether it is feasible to discuss such a possibility.

It is possible that this idea could extend to the openness of Islamic sciences to other systems previously mentioned in the theory of multiple systems, or perhaps Islamic sciences might close off to themselves, content with what has been achieved in the past.

What can be observed through addressing the idea of openness and closure of systems is that they possess flexibility, dynamism, and change. This is what makes the question of openness regarding Islamic sciences essential and vital, especially when it comes to the creativity of elements that contribute to improving quality in presentation and achievement.

This idea can be further emphasized by what Mohammed Shawqi Al-Zein discussed in his article concerning these systems at the philosophical level. He argues that what allowed the transition from the closed system to the open system is the redefinition of philosophy as a creative process in concepts. According to him, creativity places elements of

the system "in a dynamic and dialectical relationship, under continuous revision, they align but do not merge, they conflict but do not dissolve, maintaining distance between them to ward off the inevitable closure that all systems ultimately fall into"(al-Zein, 2013).

2. Revolutionary Genesis and the Open System:

The Islamic intellect made tremendous qualitative leaps in knowledge during the foundational era. The verses of the call to knowledge and reflection in both the written and observed signs of God directed it towards mechanisms of exploration and research, as well as the vast knowledge realms surrounding the Qur'anic and Hadith texts. The intellect began to interrogate language at one time, the verse at another, and the prophetic Hadith at yet another. This transformative effort aligned with a fundamental idea in the evolution of sciences and knowledge: they develop—regardless of other factors and circumstances—when human consciousness transitions from one stage to another, and from one level to the next. This revolutionary emergence of Islamic sciences occurred through two mechanisms that embody the ideas of destruction and construction, clearly reflecting its characteristic openness. The process of destruction represents criticism, while the process of construction represents thinking and foundational development.

2.1. Mechanism of Critique:

Behind all this urging for knowledge and understanding, there was a firmly grounded religious and moral reference that protected it from blind dependence on prevailing and previous sciences. It also prevented a complete rupture with

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the beneficial and fruitful sciences of the past, and from the arrogance and scientific tyranny that corrupts in its attempt to reform. It also protected against limiting goals to worldly aims and mere livelihood, which in turn activated the critical mechanism to sift through the prevailing knowledge, distinguishing the sound from the flawed, in accordance with, and even subsumed under, the foundational and absolute principles of Islam. The most important aspect of all this was the presence of that strong and original driving force in the creation of sciences and knowledge. These sciences could only be realized in the context of a comprehensive awareness of "the truth of existence, in terms of understanding, jurisprudence, and interpretation," which reveals a material and philosophical connection to life. This requires two things: understanding the self and understanding the universe (Shaheed, 2011, p12). The critical mechanism was essential, as it sifted through previous sciences both within the Islamic environment and beyond, extending its reach to monitor subsequent developments, while remaining a method that ensures adherence to the path of Islam and its ethical and epistemological principles.

2.1.1. Critique of Previous Sciences

When the sciences of previous nations, especially Greek sciences, were translated, Muslim scholars focused on natural philosophies, logic, and mathematics, while excluding the content of Greek heritage and literature that did not align with Islamic-Arabic sensibilities, which had been strengthened by QurAnic awareness and the prophetic guidance.

This process was a critical methodology based on sifting, filtering, and selective inclusion, which required a scholarly background and religious knowledge to determine what was consistent or divergent from the foundational principles of Islamic creed and ethics.

An example of this critical methodology can be found in Ibn Kathir's book Al-Bidaya wa Al-Nihaya (The Beginning and the End), where he dedicated a section to criticizing the Israeli narratives and myths about previous nations that had been recorded in some historical and religious texts. His criterion for inclusion was whether they agreed with or contradicted the Qur'anic text and reason. He often presented and refuted these superstitions and stories, as indicated by his statement in the book: "We only mention the Israeli tales that the lawgiver has permitted to transmit, which do not contradict the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger, and these are the ones that are neither fully accepted nor fully rejected"(Ibn Kathir, 1990, p 10).

Muslim scholars also studied Greek philosophy and critiqued any aspects that conflicted with their belief in the unseen and the textual evidence, which provided them with a broader perspective on the universe and life. This led to what is known as Islamic philosophy. The critical mechanism in this philosophy was clear and impactful, influencing Western philosophers who were affected by what the Muslims had created, refined, and corrected. This critical engagement, revision, and correction laid the foundation for a new vision and methodology.

2.1.2. Critique in New Sciences:

As a model of this methodology, we find that the scholars or critics of Hadith (Muhaddithun) employed various types

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of criticism, regarding both the narrators of the chains of transmission (Isnad) and the content of the reports (Akhbar) they transmitted. They conducted comparisons, verification, scrutiny, and investigation, and studied the flaws of the narration and the chains of transmission, as well as the myths and lies surrounding them. To support this, they developed a new critical methodology, introducing terms and concepts that were later recorded in special works and books focused on this critical art, such as "Mustalah al-Hadith" (Terminology of Hadith), "al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil" (Disparagement and Certification), and "Siyar al-A'lam wa al-Tarajim" (Biographies and Histories), later known as "Ilm al-Dirayah" (Science of Knowledge and Understanding). Their precision in this area was so meticulous that they wrote detailed or summarized biographies of every narrator who transmitted even a single Hadith, resulting in several large volumes.

This methodology—partly considered a high-quality defensive mechanism—astonished scholars, who regarded it as a pioneering and unique experience. The Austrian Orientalist Alois Sprenger[3] expressed this in the introduction to his edition of "Al-Issabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah" by Ibn Hajar al-A'sqalani, published in 1856 (Indian edition), where he stated that the glory of Islamic works lies in the books of

[3]- Alois Sprenger (1813–1893) was not German, as is often claimed, but Austrian. He was born in the town of Nazareth (or al-Nasira in Arabic) in the Tyrol region, located in the southwest of present-day Austria. He was a subject of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a German-speaking citizen. Sprenger studied philosophy, medicine, and oriental studies at the University of Vienna and worked to master Latin, Ancient Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Persian, hoping to join the diplomatic service of the empire. However, he was not fair in his treatment of Islam, revelation, and Hadith.

the biographies of narrators. He emphasized that no nation, past or present, has produced a science of names of men as Muslims did, in this important field that covers the affairs of 500,000 men (Hasseeb, 2017).

Criticism, in a broader sense, means constructive criticism that recognizes the good and adopts it, while identifying errors and correcting them. In this sense, it is a process of development, movement, and progress forward, not one of stagnation, self-importance, or disregarding what others have. This was understood by early Muslim scholars but overlooked by later ones. The concept of criticism shifted from being a dynamic process aimed at development to a mere criticism for its own sake. Muslim scholars benefitted from lessons in philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and chemistry, excelling in these fields and adding to them. When these fields were returned to their Western and European originators, they had already developed significantly from the time of the Greeks and Romans. Thus, the Muslims were not mere transmitters, but researchers and developers.

2.1.3. Mechanism of Foundation:

The Muslim mind, with the acquired awareness from its intellectual, doctrinal, and methodological system, began by analyzing texts as a necessary first step. Its contemplation of the Quranic texts on one hand, and the Hadith on the other, produced many sciences that laid the foundation for other areas of knowledge. These disciplines relied on logic and various methods of reasoning to understand religious texts and derive legal rulings from them. This process resulted in the development of sciences specifically dedicated to these texts, built around them, and developed to fully

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comprehend and extract all that could be derived from them. Even in their engagement with ancient sciences, Muslim scholars made many contributions inspired by religious texts, ensuring that these additions aligned with and reinforced the Islamic monotheistic and doctrinal dimensions. This is evident in their approach to philosophy, where Muslim scholars critiqued much of what they found in Greek philosophy and reconstructed it.

The religious text activated the thinking mechanism in the Muslim mind and freed it from stagnation, allowing it to engage with the world and history through numerous sciences. However, it also gave rise to methodologies centered around the text and for its sake. This led to the development of sciences and knowledge that culminated in the understanding of the cosmos. This foundation supports existential and divine knowledge, directing attention to the profound, inspiring, and productive relationship that inevitably leads to many sciences based on the cultural representation of humanity and the doctrinal knowledge of existence(Shaheed, 2011, p 13).

Thus, the world experienced a tremendous renewal and intellectual and scientific development with the emergence of Islamic sciences, which were based on a rigorous and strong methodology. This is clearly demonstrated in the field of "Usul al-Fiqh" (Principles of Jurisprudence), as it is a methodological framework for reasoning and understanding. It is very logical that this methodology should not be limited to the field of jurisprudence alone, but rather extend beyond it to work across a wide range of disciplines, contributing to the formation of a

methodological perspective in diverse and varied fields of knowledge.

The intended idea here is that this noble science, which serves as a scientific methodology for intellectual thought in general and linguistic study, emerged out of necessity and interest. As Mustafa Abdul-Raziq explained, "The science of Usul al-Fiqh is the direction of scientific reason that does not concern itself with details and branches, but with the regulation of detailed reasoning through principles that unify them, and this is philosophical contemplation" (Abd ul-Raziq, 1944, p230). It is a newly established science, created in response to necessity and interest. It was not needed in the early days of Islam because of the Muslims' inherent ability to understand, given their linguistic capabilities and the presence of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) among them.

Mohammed Al-Nassiri considered the science of Usul al-Fiqh as the fruit of proper engagement with the Qur'an, viewing it as a methodology for examining various aspects of life. He emphasized that it encompassed the foundations for systematic practical construction in the fields of life, with scholars of Usul al-Fiqh relying on the processes of deduction (istimbat) and induction (istiqra), which are essential elements in any methodology(al-Nassiri, 2009, p364).

Therefore, due to its significance and its relationship with other sciences, it was a newly developed science that relied heavily on logic, analogy, and other tools. The need for it was recognized, and it was not considered an innovation or deviation from the fundamental beliefs of the ummah. This was acknowledged by Ibn Khaldun in his discussion of the origins of the science of Usul al-Fiqh, considering it one of

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the newly established sciences within the religion(Ibn Khaldun, 1988, p575). He explains this by stating: "When the earlier generations passed away and the first century ended, and all sciences turned into practical crafts, jurists and scholars needed to establish these rules and principles to derive legal rulings from evidence, so they recorded them as an independent discipline, calling it Usul al-Fiqh"(Ibn Khaldun, 1988).

Muslim scholars and philosophers also developed the field of "Sciences of the Qur'an," which revolves around the Qur'an both in form and meaning. They also established sciences related to theology, such as the science of Tawhid (monotheism), the science of sects and doctrines (Ilm al-Milal wa al-Nihal), and others. Additionally, there emerged sciences related to understanding legal rulings, such as the science of Hadith narrators (Ilm al-Rijal) and the science of Hadith criticism (Ilm al-Dirayah), which focuses on the transmission and authenticity of narrations.

Thus, it is no longer accurate to speak of a single, static system. The constant changes in life and the development of human thought, driven by advancements in research tools and discoveries, require the existence of multiple systems. The interaction between sciences and their interdependence also necessitates this.

3. Reading and Method: Surpassing the Closed System:

The idea of renewal in Islamic sciences is thus bound to two challenges:

1. **The first challenge** is the renewed reading of texts (the Qur'an and the Hadith): It is expected that novelty will emerge from the renewed reading of

these texts. Any openness in perspective comes with openness to new interpretations, whether it concerns what is intrinsic and specific or what belongs to the other. The phrase "re-reading" evokes, for many Islamists, a great deal of unease and discomfort, fearing that it might disrupt the established texts that explain and accompany the Qur'anic and Hadith texts. These texts have occupied a significant place of reverence in the minds of Muslims, and they have been accepted and sanctified due to their connection with the sacred texts (the Qur'an and Sunnah). Any critical approach to this heritage (the classical interpretations and methodologies) is often seen as an infringement on the original sources, and every scholar who attempts this is often labeled as an innovator or heretic, accused of challenging the foundational beliefs or colluding with foreign theories and ideas.

This concern is reinforced by what Idris Naghash said about the impossibility of achieving scientific knowledge integration without methodological pluralism that allows for a variety of approaches and methods to fit different contexts. This cannot be realized within a closed system but must be achieved by opening to another system, which stands in contrast to the closed one, a system that is open (Naghash, 2009, p162).

The idea of "re-reading" may suggest the exclusion and transcendence of old knowledge, although that is neither possible nor intended. However, the idea of "continuing to read" may help dispel this hidden rejection. No one has the right to reject new or additional readings of the text, as it aligns with the command of the Qur'an: "A Book We have

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sent down to you, blessed, that they may ponder its verses and that those of understanding may be reminded" (Qur'an 38:29). This command is not restricted to a specific time or a particular group of people. It opens the door to the ability of thought and reflection and, in other words, it is an opening to the act of reading with the freedom related to the reader's capacity.

The text can provoke infinite readings, but without allowing for readings that are not grounded in methodology or principles. It is not possible to declare one reading as the best interpretation of a text, but it is possible to consider some interpretations as incorrect. These considerations limit the reader's absolute freedom, confining the reader's intent to the intent of the text, whereas the author's intent remains a hypothetical goal that is difficult to identify definitively and absolutely. Interpretation is a dialectical dialogue between the reader and the text, a continuous oscillation between the reader's intention and the meaning intended by the text.

Although the terms "renewal" and "renewalist" are frequently used in Islamic thought, they are used cautiously and with limited scope. The concept of renewal here often refers to revival, reactivation, and activation, at the expense of exploration, understanding, and actualization, while respecting the original constants. Even though definitions and explanations of renewal exist, there is still an underlying caution about the deep concept of renewal, which can challenge old methodologies with new ones. It is rare to find studies that embrace "dual critique." Often, we encounter and suffer from discourse aimed at "self-assurance" (whether nationalistic or ideological), counterposed with the

demonization of the other (whether close or distant), and the condemnation of alternative thought.

So, how can we speak of openness while standing on repetition, not questioning the introduction of new methodologies and evolving realities that challenge the developed, knowledge-based reasoning? How can the Muslim intellect isolate itself from everything present in the field of knowledge and its questions and settle for answers that were once useful but no longer sufficient? Change is the nature of life, and development is an essential need.

Regarding the critical purpose of reading texts in general, Abdul Aziz Al-Saraj addresses reading in Umberto Eco's project, defining the kind of reading in this context as that which recognizes from the outset that it is interpretation, as interpretation is a phase in the reception strategy (Al-Saraj, 2015).

In Umberto Eco's view, reading is an activity that stimulates the text and requires a "model reader" who can actualize(updating) the text as the author intended. The Eco defends the active role of interpreter in the process of reading aesthetic texts (Kharmash, 1998, p53).

In his book The Open Work (1962), Eco supported the idea of "openness" in reading, a concept often misunderstood as encouraging limitless interpretations. However, Eco’s idea of "open reading" is a creative act that aims to provoke interpretation (Gaden, no date). He states that in his later works, such as The Role of the Reader (1985), The Limits of Interpretation (1990), and Interpretation and Multiple Interpretation (1996), he sought to demonstrate that

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the notion of endless semiosis[4] should not lead to the idea of the absence of interpretive guidelines (Eco, 2000, p p 12-22).

2. **The second challenge** is the renewal in the methodologies of reading texts:

It is essential to view modern methodologies from both the perspective of a scientific researcher and a jurist concerned with religious matters, ensuring that all methods and approaches are subjected to the principle of what is good or bad according to Islamic law (what is good in it is good, and what is bad in it is bad). Any approach that exceeds the boundaries of Islamic law or lacks respect for the sacred texts and even their explanatory interpretations, is considered unacceptable and harmful. However, any method that is scientific and respects the uniqueness of the texts, acknowledging their differences, carries no fault or harm in adopting it.

Specialists in research methodology and cognitive science have decided that the development of knowledge depends on the ability of researchers and scholars to apply a range of methodologies to acquire, deconstruct, and analyze knowledge. Sticking to a single method leads to stagnation in science (Atiyah, 2000, p169). This leads to the idea of cognitive integration, based on the interdependence of various sciences, arising from the blending of systems and methodologies, and the interaction of knowledge.

[4]- "Semiosis" is a semiotic term referring to the process that leads to the creation of a new sign. It was introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce and means the act of signification. Or, it can be defined as the pragmatic semiotics or semiotic pragmatics, which is a comprehensive and dynamic view of the sign. In this view, the sign is considered a triadic entity where the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic elements interact within an ongoing process known as the semiosis.

For this reason, Dr. Rushdi Fakkar emphasized "that a researcher should adopt a primary methodology and complement it, if necessary, with one or more supplementary methodologies"(Fakkar, 1982, p39).

The science of Usul al-Fiqh (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence) embodies the concept of cognitive integration between the various Islamic sciences. This is because Usul al-Fiqh is considered an interdisciplinary field, encompassing other sciences that are inherently connected to it through its methodology and epistemological framework. This represents a departure from the closed system of knowledge. Usul al-Fiqh consists of methodological principles and inferential rules designed to guide the process of understanding and deduction. It is not limited to the field of jurisprudence alone but extends to a broad range of knowledge, shaping methodological perspectives in various fields.

Upon reflecting on the nature of Islamic sciences, we find that they are distinct from other fields of knowledge in that they primarily rely on the Qur'an and authentic Hadith. This foundational reliance gives Islamic sciences inherent:

4. Sacredness of Reference and Methodological Constraints:

There are several factors that contribute to the distinctiveness of the texts studied in Islamic sciences. Among these factors are:

4.1. The Sacredness of the Reference:

- The Unseen Given: It is clear how the spiritual and unseen aspects are excluded from modern analysis and methodologies, even though reality is but a fleeting

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moment in human existence, quickly transforming into an unseen factor itself as time gates close between the present and the witnessed past, turning both into an unseen reality that cannot be observed. Thus, human beings, celebrated by these material philosophies in anthropological sense (not the economic one), fail to control their past, let alone their future.

- Uniqueness of the Source: The primary source in Islamic sciences is divine revelation (the Qur'an and authentic Hadith). The Islamic experience with revelation is considered unique and unparalleled. These sciences revolve around this centrality, which cannot be surpassed or altered due to its sacredness, truthfulness, and authenticity, unlike the distorted texts preceding Islam. This should not be overlooked when applying modern methodologies or critiquing systems. The Qur'anic text cannot be humanized simply because it reaches human reading and circulation, based on the same argument that plunged the West into darkness before its battle against clericalism and the church institution. The same mistake is made when assuming that the same outcomes would apply in the Muslim East. This is a fallacy that will not be retracted, no matter how evident the vast difference between sacred texts in any religion and the noble Qur'an. How can we explain the pre-reading assumptions mentioned in their critique through reception theory, considering the Qur'Anic text's openness to the future, its truths correcting misguided human thoughts, and its invitation to the human mind to look beyond its spatiotemporal

boundaries for insight and discovery into what is real but distant and requires much research and exploration?

- Controls on Reading in Light of Sacred Reference: Despite the theory of "the death of the author" or the deification of the reader in some modern methodologies, as seen in Barthes' idea of the death of the author, and Kristeva's view of intertextuality, the modern rational mind has often dared to challenge the sanctity of the Qur'anic text. It is worth noting that the beginning of this trend can be traced to Amin al-Khuli, who viewed the interpretation of the Qur'an as being purely literary, unaffected by any subsequent considerations(al-Khuli, 1982, p75). Despite this, readers of the sacred Islamic texts, who have been granted the right to transcend the text, failed to comprehend everything that exceeds human abilities in terms of information and facts. The text is not an exegetical product devoid of content; its meaning is open to reading, and its burden lies in the mind of the reader and his limited prior knowledge. If critics and scholars adopting certain theories and methodologies attempt to dilute the uniqueness of the religious (especially Qur'anic) text, it should be rejected.

On the other hand, there are those who maintain that these sciences revolve within a closed system. The methodological issue lies in the following:

4.2. Procedural Research Deficiency:

Deficiency appears through two opposing types of approaches common in the discussion of the Islamization of knowledge and cognitive integration:

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*The first type involves limiting the process of ijtihād (juridical reasoning) to legal analogy (qiyas), reducing the various problems faced by contemporary Muslims to legal issues, and placing the responsibility for ijtihād in all aspects of thought and life on the jurist. As a result, the scope of scientific and cognitive research is narrowed to the realm of fiqh (jurisprudence).

*The second type involves isolating Islam and confining it to narrow, priestly corners, leading to cultural distortion and complete intellectual substitution(International Institute for Islamic Thought, 1986, p11). This has been viewed as a plunge into spiritual mysticism, where approaches deviate from logical rules and scientific principles, replacing them with intuition and taste as scientific methodologies. There are also some excesses that have deepened this deficiency, including:

Transferring the sacredness of "religion and its belief concepts, its texts, and the belief of its followers in its divinity (the divine source) and the infallibility of its figures" to the Islamic legal sciences, assuming that the outcomes of these sciences necessarily reflect what must be believed in terms of religious duties (al-Hamad, 2022, p. 3).

Focusing solely on the theoretical aspects of religious sciences without making significant efforts to establish experimental methodologies to verify those theories. Although these sciences emerged in an era dominated by theoretical knowledge, they still need renewal and updating.

Some methodologies in religious sciences, such as the science of hadith criticism (jarh wa ta'dil), cannot be utilized for contemporary and practical problems. These sciences

were developed around hadith texts and cannot transcend them.

The truth is that focusing on comprehensive reform in Islamic sciences is essential, as they are the cradle and foundation that enables the youth to assimilate the doctrinal, intellectual, and cultural heritage of the nation and to be adequately prepared in all contemporary sciences and knowledge. This would empower them to interact positively and confidently with their societies and the world around them, rather than sanctifying human ijtihāds (Mustafa Sano, 2014, p p 96-99). This enables the idea of openness, rejecting stagnation, isolation, and closure.

Findings and Concluding Remarks:

The study reveals that the epistemic behavior of the Islamic sciences cannot be reduced to either absolute openness or total closure. Their formative period was marked by a dynamic system of reasoning that allowed dialogue, adaptation, and self-regulation within the boundaries of revelation. Over time, however, this openness was gradually constrained by institutional codification, repetition, and defensive attitudes toward external systems of thought.

By examining these shifts through the lens of Polysystem Theory, the paper demonstrates that the apparent rigidity of the Islamic sciences is not inherent to their sacred foundations but rather the outcome of contextual challenges that reshaped their systemic functions. The decline of internal mechanisms of renewal—such as critique, analogy, and ijtihād—led to a reduction of epistemic flexibility.

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Reconsidering these sciences as a living system invites a return to the principles of dynamism embedded in their early structure, not as a call for unbounded reform, but as a recovery of the balanced rationality that once governed their methodological vitality. Ultimately, the study suggests that openness is not a borrowed modern ideal but an indigenous feature of the Islamic intellectual tradition—one that can be reactivated through conscious engagement with its own epistemic heritage.

Moreover, the study underlines that the Islamic sciences were not merely receptive to external knowledge or limited to preserving earlier traditions. They also generated new conceptual frameworks and innovative methodologies that enriched global intellectual history. Their creative engagement with philosophy, linguistics, and hermeneutics demonstrates that openness was not passive imitation but an active production of meaning and method. This dimension of intellectual creativity completes the picture of a dynamic system capable of both assimilation and innovation within its sacred paradigm.

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Islamic Sciences and the Theory of Multiple Systems:
A Question of Openness

Methodological Note:
Some digital databases (such as al-Durar al-Saniyyah) and online references (like Wikipedia) were consulted to trace primary religious texts or to verify publication details when printed sources were unavailable. These resources were considered auxiliary digital tools rather than primary sources, thus maintaining methodological transparency.