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## **Sociology in Algeria: The problem of method and theory in social research**

**Dr. Loulou Nadia**

Laboratory of Contemporary Algerian Society, Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2  
University

[n.loulou@univ-setif2.dz](mailto:n.loulou@univ-setif2.dz)

### **Abstract:**

This article aims to shed light on the trajectory of sociology in Algeria by indicating the circumstances of its emergence as an independent science in Algeria, which do not differ from the conditions of its emergence in North African countries. It discusses the methodological crisis related to its areas of interest on one hand and the scientific inevitability of sociology associated with the situational approach on the other hand. Additionally, it addresses the crisis of Western social theory imported from the West, where enthusiasts of this science believe that Western sciences and theories have absolute credibility in their ability to analyze the Arab reality. This belief has affected university organization in terms of modules and content, shifting from classical to modern systems. However, this reality has not prevented successful attempts by Islamic thinkers to diagnose the reality of Islamic societies independently from Western theories, guided by the components of Islamic civilization such as the Quran and the Prophet's Sunnah. Nevertheless, these attempts remain isolated in terms of consultation in academic research and inclusion within various disciplines' standards, making the voice of theorization with Western theories predominant, as the general educational orientation adopts this approach.

**Keywords:** Quran, Method, Theory, Sociology, Reality, Sociology in Algeria.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sociology in Western countries represents a qualitative leap in their societies concerning their interest in various institutions according to their material references and in service of civilization and modernity. Consequently, universities, research centers, and academics within these societies and their colonies have dedicated themselves to this endeavor. This new science has thus become integrated into their various developmental schemes within and outside their societies. Considering Algeria's subjugation to Western colonial imperialism, it has received a share of this science, within the limits of its acceptance of subjugation to it and within the boundaries of its long-term objectives. The introduction of sociology into Algeria was predominantly instructional, relying on the enthusiasm of pioneers to catch up with scientific

advancements. The colonial language played a significant role in effectively conveying it, as they absorbed its curricula and theories meticulously, adopting and defending them zealously. Consequently, successive generations embraced it as a sacred heritage, resorting to it in studying the Algerian and Arab realities. Despite methodological and theoretical debates arising in scientific meetings regarding theories and methodologies, they still remain the basis of students' learning standards. Despite debates about the efficacy of Western theories in understanding the Arab social reality, many studies still adhere to them due to official academic recognition, even if they fail to fully dissect the reality. Sociology in Algeria and Arab countries has been dominated by a Western perspective on method and theory in a stereotypical manner because of its failure to formulate a theory divergent from dominant theories prevailing in theoretical and social research. Crises emerged at the level of method and theory, followed by a crisis in understanding reality.

The intellectual dependency, which is one of the most dangerous forms of domination and colonization, has obscured from the eyes of researchers and scholars the stable sources for understanding, interpreting, and analyzing our reality. This has perpetuated deficiencies in understanding societal issues.

To address the issue of the problem of sociology in Algeria, it was presented through the following points:

- 1- The relationship between theory, reality, and method.
- 2- The emergence of sociology in Algeria.
- 3- The problem of method in sociology.
- 4- The problem of theory in Arab research.
- 5- The reasons for the sustainability of the crisis of method and theory in sociology and ways to resolve it.

### **1. The relationship between theory, reality, and method.**

The reality constitutes the field of human and social interactions, representing the stage for social phenomena that researchers are eager to understand and interpret. This reality can only be understood through analytical tools that fall within concepts derived from the social theory adopted by the researcher. The researcher's approach in studying phenomena manifests in following the appropriate scientific method, transitioning from theoretical concepts to delineating indicators, principles, and questions. Concepts serve as the bridge between theory and reality and are one of the methodological steps.

The theory refers to those reciprocal relationships between facts, or it is the tool that organizes these facts, making them meaningful and significant. Scientific theories cannot be absolute; the scientific researcher is always ready to abandon theories if facts contradict the issues and generalizations that constitute the structure of the theory. This is the distinctive periodic nature of the scientific method." (Abdul Basit Abdul Muti, 1987, p.70). Thus, reality is the test for theories, and reality is connected to theory through the researcher's adoption of concepts that form the keys to interpreting reality.

"In the interaction between theory and reality, the researcher follows the scientific path through coherent and sequential steps that complement each other to understand and interpret phenomena. The method represents the pathway to this end, as it signifies the contemporary scientific thought and the path leading to uncovering truth in sciences through a set of general rules that dominate the course of reasoning and define its operations until reaching a known result." (Ammar Bouhouche, 2007, p.102). It is a set of methodical operations based on the judgments of reason and linked to tangible material reality, which leads to understanding the essence of the studied issues, adding through an integrated scientific system to the human heritage a new accumulation of knowledge." (Al-Akhras, 2002, p.5).

"The statistical reality cannot be interpreted comprehensively without referring to and relying on a theoretical framework. The theoretical statements determine the study method and guide the researcher to the areas that must be pursued in order to understand the social reality. They also specify the type of data that the researcher should choose from society to substantiate his initial hypotheses." (Al-Akhras, 1403 AH, p.210). Reality and theory are the poles of interaction during social research, and the scientific method is a relatively correct way to understand the social phenomenon by formulating relationships between variables and attempting to abstract the social reality into relative laws. These laws always remain subject to field testing within temporal, human, and spatial limits.

## **2. The emergence of sociology in Algeria**

Algeria experienced stages in adopting sociology, accompanying its historical, social, and political transformations as follows:

### **The First Stage: Colonial Sociology: 1930 to 1962**

Anthropological and social studies during this period were purely colonialist, aimed at understanding the social, religious, and cultural structures of Algerian society to exploit its weaknesses and facilitate control over it. Military academics were recruited for this purpose. This underscores the importance of cultural occupation preceding military occupation, as efforts were made to erase Arab-Islamic identity, considering it a component of Algerian identity. Mosques and religious schools, which constituted important institutions for instilling identity values, were attacked. Efforts were made to send missionaries and establish churches in attempts to proselytize.

Academic work in sociology emerged during this period through the writings of Jacques Berque, who authored 34 books and 200 articles analyzing Algerian society and the nature of Algerians. In addition to the extensive encyclopedia written by Michel Foucault in the Tifinagh Tamazight language, studies during this period focused on Islam and women. Sociology was formally introduced in Algeria in 1952 within the Institute of Philosophy. The status and value of sociology in Algeria are discussed further by Mohamed Belkheir in his work (Belkheir, 2021, pp. 132-133).

The imperialist tendency of the French colonial and its aggressive desire to control Algeria's resources and suppress resistance made it demonize Islam and undermine all its principles and symbols by considering it a religion of superstition, backwardness, and a hindrance to development that aligns with the West. Thus, its officers, agents, and researchers were mobilized for this purpose. René Monnier acknowledges that French colonization propelled sociological studies and that missionaries like Lévy-Bruhl and Charlevoix were essentially the pioneers of social research in America, as well as establishing it in Africa through their armies and orientalist campaigns (Jamel Moutaouk, 2005, p. 68).

The colonial power spared no effort in undermining the unity of Algerian society and controlling it, betting on breaking any form of harmony and reconciliation between Arabs and Berbers. It attempted to classify Kabyles, describing them as thieves, deceivers, superficial, arrogant, and rigid due to their lack of civilization, with a tendency towards violence. This is how Colonel Laban described them (Jamel Moutaouk, 2005, p. 70).

Some attempted to integrate the Kabyles by promoting the idea that the inhabitants of the Kabyles' regions were Christians in the past, which supposedly made their integration easier compared to the Arabs, i.e., Muslims (Jamel Moutaouk, 2005, p. 73).

This was the policy of the French colonialism in Algeria and North Africa, where Professor Abdel Samad Dialmi, a sociology professor at the University of Fez in the West, affirmed that sociology in Morocco served French colonialism and its intelligence services. It aimed to restructure Moroccan society, deepen ethnic conflicts between Arabs and Berbers, perpetuate divisions, and depict Islam as a colonial force that oppressed them, stripping them of their possessions and identities in particular. This paved the way for their conversion, emphasizing the avoidance of Islamization and Arabization, and working towards their development towards European culture (Ahmed Khedr, p. 38).

**The second stage:** spanning from 1962 to 1970, came after the restoration of freedom and the attempt to build and develop Algeria through education. Sociology was introduced into the Faculty of Arts with the first generation of professors including Dr. Abdelghani Maghraoui, Mahfoud Samati, and Farouk Attia. This stage was characterized by the subordination of the educational system and the Algerian university to the French school in terms of subject matter, curriculum, language, and strategies. Administrative management of the university was in the hands of foreigners such as Emile Sicard. Among the professors who taught general sociology was Brilland, method was taught by Elie, and Deviller who specialized in Epistemology.

The teaching content was particularly directed towards pioneers of sociology such as Comte, Durkheim, Max Weber, Zuckerkandl, and Max." (Jamel Moutaouk, p. 74). Among the Algerian professors of sociology during that period who were at the forefront of the sociology department were Farouk Ben Atia, Prof. Mahfoud Samati, Prof. Abdelrahman Bouzida, Prof.

Abdelmajid Meziane, Prof. Ben Salman, and Prof. Jamal Msabbah ([Jamel Moutaouk, 2005, p. 77](#)).

This stage was associated with the establishment of Western sociology at Algerian universities through administration and content that relied on strict indoctrination in sociology until its ideas and approaches became entrenched, furthering Western intellectual dominance over the analytical perspective of our societies by confining the boundaries of sociology to Western theories.

**The third stage:** from 1971 to 1984, during the socialist regime, saw Algeria politically, socially, and economically influenced, including in higher education and scientific research. This period was characterized by:

- Attempting to break away from tradition and emphasizing scientific research.
- Recruiting sociologists to defend socialist ideology, thus politicizing sociology.
- Defending socialist ideology representing the prevailing regime.
- The emergence of socialists representing revolutionaries and bourgeois capitalists.
- Students being influenced by the socialist system academically and in scientific research, with doctoral and magister's topics reflecting this influence.

At this stage, sociology has shifted from an academic science to an ideological one, implementing the policy of the ruling regime. The content of sociology lessons has become ideological discourse aimed at glorifying socialism, disparaging capitalism and Islamic orientation. Furthermore, all specializations in sociology practiced during that period did not happen by chance or for purely scientific purposes, but came to align with the socialist project adopted by the Algerian state. ([Derdiche Ahmed, p. 85](#)).

**The fourth stage:** between 1984 and 1998, witnessed the following:

- The decline in oil prices and the deterioration of the Algerian economy and industry, leading to the cancellation of the 1988 elections.
- There was a decline in the appreciation for sociology, with a shift in focus towards natural sciences and technology.
- The fear and anxiety experienced by the people led to the imposition of a state of emergency.

The most notable aspects of sociology in this stage were:

- Contraction of sociological research and declining interest in studying the social reality of the country.

- The extension of the impact of the bloody crisis to the university campus, turning it into a battleground for settling scores among some members of the academic community. This affected sociologists, as some were killed, others imprisoned, and some migrated abroad.
- Purging researchers in sociology and the migration of others. (Belkhire Mohamed, 2021, p. 135)

This confirms the connection between sciences and scientific production with the stability of the social, economic, and political environment of society. It creates a conducive atmosphere for scientific activity and sound thinking, allowing the voices of scientists and researchers the freedom for intellectual creativity and contribution to the wheel of social and economic development. Thus, the terrorizing of pens and voices would potentially cripple the wheel of sustainable developmental movement.

**The fifth stage:** from 1999 to the present time, can be characterized as follows:

- It began with the Reconciliation Law, an attempt by Algeria to recover from the "black decade" during which the country lost many sociologists and scholars who were deeply engaged in sociological research. Algeria aimed to expand its higher education institutions, establishing 106 university institutions, including 50 universities, 13 university centers, 11 higher teacher schools, and 10 higher schools, along with two annex universities. This stage was distinguished by the expansion of the number of universities and the proliferation of sociology departments and graduates.
- The adoption of the (LMD) system as an alternative to the classical system without proper planning.
- Decline in student levels and interest.
- Lack of connection between research and development projects in the field of social sciences. (Belkhire Mohamed, 2021, p. 136)

What characterized the LMD system stage was the lack of prior preparation, especially by teaching bodies. While there was a semblance of openness to discussion, it was emphasized that such discussions were futile because the decision had been made at a higher level to adopt the system in order to keep up with Western (specifically French) universities. These universities had focused on compressing study years from four in the classical system to only three, which significantly altered the content and volume of study hours, affecting the serious education of students. This was exacerbated by students' reluctance to exert effort, a lack of desire among the majority of them, and an ease of achieving success, especially with the decline of many regulatory instructions associated with the classical system, whether concerning absences, evaluation methods, or success criteria.

One notable observation regarding the opening of sociology specializations was the absence of standardization of criteria among universities. This led to situations where the name and certificate were the same, but the criteria varied from one university to another. For example, sociology organization and work could result in the same degree at the University of M'sila, Algiers, or Tamanrasset, but the modules taught differed among them. This created significant challenges in transferring students between universities or equating years of study. Currently, there is a move towards standardizing specializations and course curricula. On the other hand, this freedom was supposed to align with the requirements of the local market. However, the reality has shown a gap between the university and its social and economic environment. ([Mohamed Belkhire, 2020, p. 138](#)).

The specialization in sociology begins at the Master's level, replacing the traditional Magister's degree with a dissertation instead of a thesis. The purpose behind this is to accelerate students' progress, conclude this stage swiftly, and facilitate the university's ongoing transformation ([Mohamed Belkhire, 2020, p. 139](#)). After completing the Master's, students are eligible to participate in a competition for the doctoral degree. If successful, they undergo two years of theoretical study followed by two years of preparing their thesis.

### **3. The problem of method in sociology.**

There has been much debate about the suitability of sociology in studying social phenomena using the positivist approach to prove its existence. Many assumptions have emerged that have made it subject to criticism for its method and results, considering it still in a stage of scientific formation and not yet mature compared to the natural sciences. Auguste Comte emphasized that the scientific method for studying social phenomena must follow the rules of positivism, while Durkheim argued that social phenomena must be studied as independent entities, detached from subjectivity, to achieve objectivity. However, while the intention behind these arguments aimed to separate the researcher from the phenomenon studied, it is not entirely accurate. The specificity of human beings is different from the characteristics of matter. Matter is constant and subject to absolute experimentation, while social phenomena, which result from the interaction of different individuals with varying mental capacities, inclinations, and qualities, are difficult for the researcher to control. If the natural sciences aim to uncover the laws that govern matter, the social sciences must first understand social phenomena to determine why they appear. Therefore, the approach of natural sciences differs from that of humanities, as the former seeks to establish fixed relationships between phenomena, i.e., to interpret them, while the latter is concerned with the crystallization of collective human projects and derives its main feature from its position on the axis of time, striving to understand it. In the humanities, the problem cannot be solved within the network of causes that produce it. ([André Akoun et al., 1994, p. 103](#)).

Ali Al-Kanz argues for the ability of sociology to utilize scientific analysis, stating, "Many sociologists in the Arab world still waste a lot of effort and time in debates about the scientific

nature of sociology, unaware that if they understand science as a general approach encompassing sub-approaches and sciences differ in precision and accuracy, the debate would cease. It is true that the characteristics of objectivity, determinism, empiricism, and others, which are considered features of modern science, do not appear in social sciences to the extent they do in natural and vital sciences. However, it is not true that social phenomena do not naturally lend themselves to scientific analysis and are not amenable to it, as some thinkers claim." (Mohamed Ezzat Hegazy, 1989, p. 24).

And advocates of the anti-positivist perspective agree in rejecting the idea that the best way to study society is by adopting the research methods used in the natural sciences. They argue that the natural world and the social world cannot coincide or align. Advocates of the anti-positivist perspective explain this by stating that research in the natural world implicitly involves studying non-living things that lack consciousness and are generally influenced by external events and phenomena. Hence, it is possible to predict the natural world by introducing minor changes to it and studying their effects on things or materials and chemicals... This cause-and-effect relationship can be proven by repeating these experiments under the same conditions and using the same research methods." (Miles T. Chilton and Ann Browne, 2012, p. 723).

This confirms the materiality of the subject studied and its potential for observation, experimentation, measurement, and repetition under the same conditions, ensuring the stability of results in the field of natural sciences. This allows for the formulation of formulas deduced from the fixed relationships between causes and equivalent effects. Additionally, the approach of studying the natural sciences enriches the researcher with precise knowledge of the accuracy of the methods used, which themselves are subject to increasing technological development. Therefore, the nature of the subject studied and the methods used to measure phenomena are strengths of the positivist approach in the natural sciences.

While the social sciences study social phenomena and human behavior, which constitute a complex interplay of mental capacities, psychological inclinations, thoughts, beliefs, and varying, non-constant circumstances for each individual, it is difficult to access all that an individual carries in terms of intentions, thoughts, attitudes, inclinations, and more. Therefore, it becomes challenging to accurately predict the forms of phenomena and behaviors with precision.

Moreover, subjecting individuals to experiments can raise ethical issues as it may violate the ethical code issued by the British Sociological Association (BSA). Advocates of the anti-positivist perspective argue that studying human behavior should not be done in isolation from the context in which it usually occurs because human behavior does not exist in a vacuum but is rather the result of interactions between individuals and social groups. Understanding social life relies on the meaning attributed to social actions. Sociologists do not accept the individual's personal interpretation but apply their knowledge and personal



views in interpreting events. They resort to using diaries, personal memos, speeches, narratives, and observation to interpret events. ([Miles T. Chilton and Ann Browne, 2012, p. 725](#)).

The scientific nature of sociology does not require validation from the natural sciences to justify its identity. The difference in method is attributed to the difference in the nature of the subject matter studied by this discipline. Here, we do not deny the precision of the natural sciences, where the subject matter is entirely independent of the researcher's personality, compared to the social sciences.

Among the factors contributing to the crisis of method in the Arab world:

- Choosing limited methodological approaches and using flawed research methods and data collection tools in an improper manner, leading to numerous mistakes in conducting research and neglecting the theoretical function of the science. This is compounded by misunderstandings and confusion.
- Many sociologists in the Arab region opt for extreme empiricism, believing it leads to objectivity, accuracy, and valuable results.
- Acceptance of empiricism by sociologists in the Arab region because it requires only limited familiarity with sociological theory and method. It does not demand imagination, creativity, or significant effort.
- Addressing research topics and studies in isolation from the social context and historical circumstances in which they emerge, develop, and operate. This approach overlooks questions such as how different social events, phenomena, and institutions are influenced by the existing system and to what extent they bear its imprint, as well as the nature of their impact. ([Mohamed Ezzat Hegazy, 1989, pp. 25-26](#))
- This is affirmed by Tayeb Tizini that "sociology, which entered the Arab world after World War II, focused on the simplistic empirical imperialistic stance in observing scattered phenomena, disregarding the comprehensive theoretical framework that encompasses them, leading, according to him, to the obstruction of the historical horizon in Arab sociological research" ([Abdelbasset Abdelmati, 1998, p. 189](#)).
- Relying on field studies tends to collect data on some topics that may not necessarily require it when published or available documents allow answering the questions posed.
- Concerning data collection tools such as observation, questionnaires, and some attitude measures and tests, there is a risk in their misuse or relying on them alone. There are tools that may suit social research better, such as content analysis and comparative historical analysis.

- The implicit acknowledgment that both parties in the data collection process are mere humans without consciousness, desires, frustrations, or biases affects the research outcome.
- Absence of theorizing, even interpretation in many cases due to its deficiency or inadequacy in most situations where it exists. (Mohammed Ezzat Hegazy, 1989, pp. 27-28)

The problem associated with the method is manifested through the failure in selecting appropriate tools for data collection according to the nature of the subject, and the issue of the weakness in theorizing and interpretation, attributed to the excessive dominance of empirical studies, which is related to the adoption of the positivist approach.

#### **4. The problem of theory in Arab research.**

In an attempt by Arab researchers to produce knowledge specific to this field based on their own reality, alongside a rush to skip stages by extensively adopting Western heritage in the field of sociology through translating and teaching Western theories and ideas, they presented successful experiences of theories and frameworks in analyzing Western societies as tools, methodologies, and theories for studying Arab societies, assuming they were the most effective scientifically. Therefore, the following factors constituted obstacles in understanding Arab social phenomena and the emergence of theory in Arab sociology, including:

- Colonialism and theoretical intellectual subjugation: This factor constituted a restriction on the thinking of sociologists in the Arab world within the dominant theoretical frameworks in this field of science, considering that it emerged and matured in the West, a West that we believe anything coming from has attained perfection and is immune to criticism. Therefore, social researchers sought to adapt it to the goal of understanding the Arab reality in order to elevate it to a better reality that mirrors the Western reality, resulting in a false understanding of the Arab reality and the Arab individual.

Ahmed Khedr argues that Western theories have portrayed social sciences as universal disciplines based on objectivity, relying on a strong foundation of information about all human societies. However, this perception or claim is not accurate because they rely solely on the experience of Western societies. We accepted Western theories in our countries on the basis that they are a science, based on induction and observation rather than intuition, metaphysics, and proverbial sayings. Western theory, as Jalal Amin puts it, was presented to us as transcending the boundaries of time and place. In reality, it was transferring to us, under the guise of science, the values and ideas of the Western world, not for the sake of science but for the benefit of Western countries. (Ahmed Khedr, 2000, pp. 19-20).

- "The extreme reliance on empiricism has led to the absence and poverty of theorizing where it exists, and the mistaken perception resulting from extreme empiricism of the function of social research as nothing more than an objective description of reality." (Mohammed Ezzat, 1989, p. 28).

This implies a lax approach to addressing reality and a departure from the passion to uncover the truths and mysteries of reality, which could enable an understanding of reality through the social phenomena it produces and an understanding of the social self-produced in its interaction with different environments. These behavioral patterns imprint the general Arab personality and specifically the Algerian personality.

- The confinement of democracy and intellectual freedom and the marginalization by the official system of this science: Sociology is the science that is supposed to reveal the flaws of society, understand them, and interpret them at all levels. It is the microscope of reality according to an objective scientific method that does not favor one party over another.

Sociology disturbs the ruling authority, which deludes society into believing that the social system is the best reality because it represents stability, and any attempt at change is seen as overthrowing the system and causing chaos. It is in the interest of the ruling authority to maintain this status quo, and any problems can be solved at the level of small groups and institutions without changing the social system. Therefore, this system mocks sociologists who encourage this system through their academic analyses and social and political justifications, using psychological influences to create a false consciousness among the class resistant to change. They become a class that operates at the behest of the social system.

As for the group holding genuine academic thought, enriched by immersion in lived reality and carrying the concerns of the exhausted segments of society, they are pressured, marginalized, and threatened under the pretext that they threaten the nation. This is to restrain the tide of change brought about by knowledge of the truths about the backwardness of society and its social and economic decline because they attempt to dissect their reality without reservation or bias towards decision-makers. Therefore, even if their presence within academic institutions and research centers is absent, their work remains serious attempts in the field of sociology.

##### **5. Causes for the sustainability of the crisis of method and theory in sociology and ways to solve it.**

The persistence of the problem in sociology at the theoretical and methodological levels is linked to the adherence to Western theories that blinded Arab and Muslim scholars and researchers from recognizing one of the most important sources of theorizing, which is Islamic religion, including the Quran and the noble Sunnah. What prevents Muslim researchers from studying the teachings of their religion in a rigorous manner within their

social fields? Why did we pay attention to Max Weber when he acknowledged the existence of values in Protestantism that played a role in shaping rational behavior?

The sociologists in the Arab world, including Algeria, are in need of a serious and conscious reevaluation of the foundations and goals of sociology. These should take into consideration the components of their society, with Islam being the source of theorizing, as it comprehensively organizes individual, communal, and societal life. Some argue that Islam does not keep pace with the times, but this is a misconception and submission to Western thought, which previously acknowledged the importance of separating scientific thought from religion, based on its own experiences regarding the relationship between society and religion, represented by the church. They suggested the importance of freeing scientific thought from religion, thus initiating a conflict between religion and science is a conflict that originated from the specificity of Western religion, which has no conflict with reason and science, unlike Islam. However, sociologists in our countries only know the name of Islam and have not studied it. Their knowledge of Western theories far exceeds their knowledge of Islam. They studied these theories without scrutiny, without verification, without reflection, and without depth. Consequently, they introduced the conflict between religion and science into our countries, especially as these theories they imported to us, imitating the Western stance, were influenced and tainted by the Christian mentality, not the mentality of seekers of truth. The result was not just the transmission of this conflict but also the transmission of every word spoken by a Western scholar against religion or Christianity, which they attributed to Islam. Bella's ignorance, and the ignorance of his followers among our sociologists, is that Islam is not a priestly or theological concept, but rather a unique model of life. It is characterized by a set of life concepts that govern human life not only in relation to God or oneself but also in relation to others and the universe. It is a system that emerges from addressing all human problems. (Ahmed Khedr, 2000, p. 192).

If religion in the West is seen as an obstacle to the development of Western societies, Islamic religion does not contradict science at all. Islamic scholars have been able to prove many facts about humans and the universe in the field of natural sciences, many of which were mentioned in the Quran.

Regarding the stages of human creation, the Quran mentions these stages in Surah Al-Mu'minun. In the following verses, Allah says:

*"And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging. Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh], and We made [from] the lump, bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators. Then indeed, after that, you are to die. Then indeed you, on the Day of Resurrection, will be resurrected."* (Quran, Surah Al-Mu'minun, 23:12-16).

*"O mankind, if you are in doubt about the resurrection, then indeed, We created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, and then from a lump of flesh, formed and unformed - that We may show you. And We settle in the wombs whom We will for a specified term, then We bring you out as a child, and then [We develop you] that you may reach your [time of] maturity. And among you is he who is taken in [early] death, and among you is he who is returned to the most decrepit [old] age so that he knows, after [once having] knowledge, nothing. And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows [something] of every beautiful kind." (Quran, Surah Al-Hajj, 22:5).*

Sayed Fathi Abdel Shafi and Saad Mansoub Muhammad El-Sheikh say that if we gather verses from Surah Al-Mu'minun with verses from Surah Al-Hajj, Surah As-Sajda, and Surah Ghafir, we can extract from these verses ten stages of human creation as follows:

- 1- Stage of clay.
- 2- Stage of the sperm.
- 3- Stage of the clinging clot 'Alaqa'.
- 4- Stage of the chewed lump (Al-Mudgha).
- 5,6- Stage of bones and flesh.
- 7- Stage of the final creation.
- 8- Stage of childhood.
- 9- Stage of maturity.
- 10- Stage of old age. (Abdel Shafi and El-Sheikh, 2008, p. 37)

The stage of clay: *Allah's saying, "And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay."*

*"He it is who created you from clay." (Quran, Surah Al-Mu'minun, 23:12)*

*"And of His signs is that He created you from dust; then, suddenly you were human beings dispersing [throughout the earth]." (Quran, Surah Ar-Rum, 30:20)*

In the interpretation of the first verse, scientists have two opinions:

- The intended "human" is Adam, peace be upon him. It is said that he is from the descendants because he was taken from all over the earth.
- The intended "human" in the verse refers to the children of Adam, meaning all humans and the descendants. The sperm was taken from the clay, and the clay refers to Adam, peace be upon him.
- There is a third opinion that the meaning of "descendants from clay" refers to the sperm of the man and the egg of the woman, as they are both nourishment, and nourishment is from clay (Abdul Shafi and Al-Sheikh, 2008, p. 38).

**The stage of sperm:** The scientific research has precisely confirmed the process of sperm production in the male reproductive system and egg production in the female reproductive system, the union between the male and female, the fusion of chromosomes into a unified cell, and the determination of the fetus's gender, whether male or female. It also defines the cell and the first week of fertilization.

**The stage of the clinging clot (Alaqa):** Research indicates that the 'Alaqa,' which is the third stage in human creation according to the Quran, corresponds to the second week in modern embryology. When the fertilized egg, with its divided cells, reaches the uterus, it undergoes complex changes. One of the most significant is its attempt to attach to the uterine wall by breaking down its cells to create a small cavity for attachment. (Abdul Shafi and Al-Sheikh, 2008, p. 43).

**The stage of the chewed lump (Al-Mudgha):** This term describes the state of the fetus as a mass of cells or a cluster of flesh gathered in a primitive form of its organs.

**The stage of bones and flesh:** According to the book "Al-Muntakhab fi Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim," it has been proven on fetuses that centers of bone formation appear in the middle layer of the chewed lump cells in a stage preceding the differentiation of muscle cells. Additionally, muscles cover the bones, which are the first to appear, giving the fetus its structure (Abdul Shafi and Al-Sheikh, 2008, pp. 47-48).

**The stage of final creation:** In this stage, changes occur in the manifestation of human characteristics in the fetus, whether male or female, a process observed by experimental science. Additionally, this stage marks the infusion of the soul, which is the final culmination of all the physical preparations undergone by the fetus to emerge with a body and spirit distinct from any other being (Abdul Shafi and Al-Sheikh, 2008, p. 50).

Fetal science has contributed to the advancement of another branch of modern medicine, namely the anatomy of the human body. This has led to the discovery of many of its secrets by Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina, Ibn al-Nafis, Ibn al-Baytar, and Abu Bakr al-Razi. The books of Muslim scholars in medicine continued to be studied in European universities until the early modern era, upon which modern medical theories were built. (Al-Nadawi, 2016, p. 141).

**The stage of childhood:** In this stage, *Allah says, "Then We brought you out as a child"* (Quran, Surah Al-Hajj, verse 5). Scientifically, at this stage, after nine months, the fetus undergoes various developmental processes in its body, preparing it for birth. Organs that were dormant inside the womb become ready. The lungs are filled with fluid, and the intestines are covered with a greenish layer resembling dough, which is the remnants of cells, muscles, and amniotic fluid. In the final period, traces of the fetus's urine are found, indicating the placenta's role in this process. The fetus is then expelled from the womb, marking the beginning of its independent existence (Abdul Shafi and Al-Sheikh, 2008, p. 51). At this

point, some of its organs, such as the digestive, urinary, and respiratory systems, begin functioning. The child's dependence shifts from the umbilical cord in the womb to its own organs for meeting its physiological needs. The lungs and liver start functioning at this stage.

From childhood to adulthood: *Allah says, "Then We brought you out as a child, then [We developed you] that you might reach your [time of] maturity" (Quran, Surah Al-Hajj, verse 5).* Scientific research indicates that during this stage, the child enters the world weak and helpless, and this dependency persists for a long period, during which they require care and attention. Human childhood is the most dependent among all creatures, as it shares similarities in how offspring are carried and delivered. (Abdul Shafi and Al-Sheikh, 2008, p. 53).

The stage of old age: *Allah says, "Then We brought you out as a child, then [We developed you] that you might reach your [time of] maturity, then [further] that you might become elders" (Quran, Surah Ghafir, verse 67).* Scientifically, the stage of adulthood continues until the age of forty, after which physiological changes begin to occur. Signs of aging appear, such as the weakening of certain glands like the pituitary gland, which secretes the pigment hormone, resulting in gray hair. Oil glands become less active, leading to wrinkles. Diseases become more prevalent, the body's resistance declines, and there is a decrease in height, weight, movement, and activity. Thus, the journey of decline and regression begins (Abdul Shafi and Al-Sheikh, 2008, p. 54). *Allah says, "And whom We grant long life, We reverse in creation. So will they not understand?" (Quran, Surah Ya-Sin, verse 68).*

Indeed, Allah has detailed and precise stages of fetal development, which experimental science has confirmed within the boundaries of the reproductive system for both sexes. It encompasses the mechanism of conception, all aspects related to the physiology of the uterus, placenta, fetus, its organs, and the conditions necessary for pregnancy. All of these confirm that there is no contradiction between the Quran and science, and that Allah has created everything in a balanced manner. As for the matter of the soul, *Allah says, "And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about the soul. Say, "The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little." (Quran, Surah Al-Isra, verse 85).*

The Quran's elucidation of human and cosmic creation serves as evidence for the rational and the learned that this Quran contains keys to understanding human psychology, communities, social systems, social institutions, and various social phenomena, both positive and negative. What we mean to say here is that if the justification for adopting the empirical method in the social sciences is attributed to its success in the natural sciences, then it is more appropriate to adhere to what is stated in the teachings of Islamic religion from its sources, the Quran and the Sunnah (Prophetic traditions), in understanding our reality as Arabs and Muslims. This is because we possess a solid source that dispels controversies in understanding, analyzing, and addressing issues.

The fluctuation and lack of seriousness in the results of social research may be attributed to a lack of precise understanding of terms and concepts on one hand, or to the absence of linking

concepts and analytical units to the value criterion with Quranic sources that stand on the truth of social phenomena. This is a problem associated with the vagueness and deficiency in the vision of the Muslim social researcher, who consciously or unconsciously ignores the origin and roots of societal issues, whether they pertain to the field of work, education, culture, crime, and so forth.

The ability of the Muslim researcher in sociology to understand their reality stems from a genuine willingness to defend the issues of their society armed with a scientific approach infused with their active Islamic heritage to understand and address their community. This can only be achieved through possessing the courage of a true scholar in seeking and revealing the truth without bias or affectation. Thus, the familiarity of the social researcher with the teachings of their religion opens up a broad scope for them to delve into the causes and ailments of society. Their lack of this aspect renders them incapable of fulfilling their task and achieving their goal. Al-Fahdawi lamentably notes, "It is regrettable that most researchers in modern sociology are unaware of the clear meanings in Islam and the comprehensive explanations for regulating social and cultural movements together." ([Abdul Jalil Ibrahim Al-Fahdawi, 2006, p. 16](#)).

Dr. Mona believes that the Quran is the foundational source for our methodological principles in the social sciences. She specifies that while the noble Quran serves as an originating source for the methodology of social scientists in their thinking, research, and theorizing, it urges them greatly to equip themselves with as much Islamic culture as they can. This enables each of them to build a knowledge base that enriches their ideas, experiences, and intellectual capabilities, allowing them to engage with the Quran with a methodology that includes not only the Quran's reality, role, and characteristics but also the experiences and expertise of scholars who have left behind a legacy to aid them in diligence and creativity. ([Abu Al-Fadl and Lalwani, 2009, p. 12](#)).

It is possible to benefit from our heritage sources in constructing our modern social sciences in a way that makes them more expressive of the spirit of our civilization and more useful for addressing our contemporary needs. However, certain conditions must be met in dealing with this heritage:

- The researcher should delve into the heritage after specializing in their field in a manner that enables them to interact independently with the principles and concepts in their specialization from the standpoint of comprehension, not merely acceptance. This requires rationality and contemplation within their field of specialization, without succumbing to prevailing norms.
- The second condition involves the researcher's awareness of their cultural biases. The researcher engaging with heritage holds a certain perspective, and it is essential for them, when dealing with a specific heritage, to adopt the spirit of a confident adventurer ([Abu Al-Fadl and Lalwani, 2009, pp. 49-50](#)).



Therefore, it emphasizes the necessity for the researcher to master their field of specialization to the extent of engaging in self-critique of their ideas and the foundations of their knowledge field. Additionally, it underscores the importance of their cultural bias as a basis for envisioning science. The researcher must believe in their cultural belonging and defend their identity from their cultural standpoint, with all the elements it entails, from the perspective of controlling their field of knowledge.

Al-Awadi explains that scientific miracles in the social sciences manifest in the sense that this type of miracle does not entail stating that science has discovered something and proven to us that the Quran preceded it. Rather, the nature of this miracle lies in discovering the social system that science fails to provide. This social system can be in the field of education, politics, economics, or other areas addressed by the social sciences. ([Rifat Al-Sayed Al-Awadi, 2011, p. 1159](#)).

The family as a social organization with its structure and function has held an important position in Islam. In the Quran and the noble Prophetic Sunnah, there is an emphasis on protecting and organizing the family. This is evident through the protection of the marital bond, safeguarding the rights of both spouses, and organizing the relationship between parents and children, as mentioned in the following verse: *"And We took from you a solemn covenant."* ([Quran, Surah An-Nisa, 4:21](#)).

*"Among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He placed between you affection and mercy. Surely in this are signs for people who reflect."* ([Quran, Surah Ar-Rum, 30:21](#)).

*"And live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good."* ([Quran, Surah An-Nisa, 4:19](#)).

*"Your wives are a place of sowing of seed for you, so come to your place of cultivation however you wish and put forth [righteousness] for yourselves. And fear Allah and know that you will meet Him. And give good tidings to the believers."* ([Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:223](#))

*"And mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period]. Upon the father is the mothers' provision and their clothing according to what is acceptable."* ([Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 23](#)).

*"Lodge them [in a section] of where you dwell out of your means and do not harm them in order to oppress them. ".*([Quran, Surah At-Talaq, verse 6](#)).

These verses affirm Islam's care for the unity of building the community, organizing the relationship between spouses, and the relationship between children and parents. This organization of family ties emphasizes its importance in the stability of society and the individual.

Islam preserves women's rights in inheritance despite many voices claiming that women are unjustly treated in their inheritance rights in Islam and advocating for equality in inheritance. *Allah says: "Allah instructs you concerning your children: for the male, what is equal to the share of two females. But if there are [only] daughters, two or more, for them is two-thirds of one's estate. And if there is only one, for her is half. And for one's parents, to each one of them is a sixth of his estate if he left children. But if he had no children and the parents [alone] inherit from him, then for his mother is one-third. And if he had brothers [or sisters], for his mother is a sixth, after any bequest he [may have] made or debt. Your parents or your children - you know not which of them are nearest to you in benefit. [These shares are] an obligation [imposed] by Allah. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise. And for you is half of what your wives leave if they have no child. But if they have a child, for you is one-fourth of what they leave, after any bequest they [may have] made or debt. And for the wives is one-fourth if you leave no child. But if you leave a child, then for them is an eighth of what you leave, after any bequest you [may have] made or debt. And if a man or woman leaves neither ascendants nor descendants but has a brother or a sister, then for each one of them is a sixth. But if they are more than two, they share a third, after any bequest which was made or debt, as long as there is no detriment [caused]. [This is] an ordinance from Allah, and Allah is Knowing and Forbearing." (Surah An-Nisa 4:11-12).* The issue of inheritance is not merely about equal division between women and men in inheritance, but rather it is a wise study of women's situations in each case. The Quran delineates it in a way that ensures their rights. There are only four scenarios in which a woman inherits half of what a man inherits, while there are cases where a woman inherits more than a man, and cases where a woman inherits and a man does not inherit at all.

Islam places significant emphasis on social regulation and social upbringing and their roles in determining righteous behavior. Al-Bustani argues that in Islam, social upbringing relies on "imbibing Islamic principles, which are achieved through the primary relationship between Allah and humans, where this relationship precedes the secondary relationship with others, and where his relationship with Allah is characterized by knowledge, appreciation, and a divine reward."... "The imbuing of Islamic personality with principles from Allah, when coupled with knowledge, appreciation, and a distinct pattern of reward, remains effective in regulation. Knowledge, appreciation, and earthly rewards, marked by a deficiency trait, fail to reach this effectiveness. This noticeable disparity is evident in the conflicting principles that lead to significant differences in perspectives, as reflected in social schools of thought that we encounter, both ancient and modern, with significant disparities in the viewpoints they produce." (Mahmoud Al-Bustani, 1994, p.108). This underscores the failure of human theorization that ignores Islamic principles in regulating human behavior and restraining deviation by relying on the premises of social schools of thought, the outcomes of which contradict each other, some of which go beyond the comprehensive vision of human behavior as a complex compound governed by its psychological specificity and interaction in various

environments. Meanwhile, Islam emphasizes the necessity of disciplining the soul and purifying it from the toxins of social and psychological maladies.

The intellectual trend based on contemplating the Quran and understanding the true essence of the Islamic religion has produced a few thinkers such as Abd al-Wahhab al-Masiri, Ali Izetbegovic, and Malik Bennabi, who managed to provide serious analyses and insights into understanding the issues of the Muslim Arab society. Malik Bennabi, for instance, is among those who reflected upon, studied, and criticized the history of the Arab and Islamic nation, along with its modern and contemporary conditions. They renewed its thought and philosophy, calling for a renewal of Islamic conception religiously, politically, socially, and economically. His name became associated with civilization, its problems, civilization theory, and the strategy of civilizational construction. He contributed to the philosophy of civilization, the philosophy of history, and all contemporary humanities, with his starting point being religion and religious thought. He was not distracted by the tempting intellectual and material products of contemporary European civilization from research and exertion. He authored "The Quranic Phenomenon", in which he presented his scientific interpretation of the Quran, affirming allegiance to Islam and dedication to knowledge in the face of secular trends and currents. (Jilali, 2010, p. 15).

Abd al-Wahhab Al-Masiri's transformation from doubt to faith solidified in him a conviction that turned religion into an interpretive model. Islamic religion became a part of his identity, as he realized when he wrote an article about Malcolm X, who adopted the name Malik al-Shabazz, where he discovered how Islam transformed him from an aware American into a new person. This led him to work towards what became known as "Islamizing knowledge". Humanities are not precise, universal, neutral sciences; they contain various human biases different from the exact sciences. Bias here, according to Al-Masiri, is a methodological mechanism and a cognitive starting point that allows us to understand ourselves and our civilization, enabling the creation of appropriate intellectual and methodological alternatives suitable for our Islamic environment (Boulefaha, 2022, p. 43). This confirms the idea that researchers possess the characteristic of cultural belonging and defend it with scientific competence in their field of specialization, as emphasized by Abu al-Fadl. In the field of Arab sociology, one does not resort to Western perspectives to address local issues, but relies on an intellectual foundation based on the Islamic environment grounded in the Quranic methodology, which is applicable to all times. "If the researcher accurately delineates his steps according to the Quranic methodology, despite the researcher's relativity, he will be more capable than all other positivist or common methodologies of granting the researcher the ability for cognitive integrity." (Abu al-Fadl and Al-Awani, p. 19).

On the level of the output of sociology in Arab countries, Ibrahim Al-Fayoumi Ghanem confirms that "sociology, in all its branches, seems to be without a function in terms of social, economic, and political progress. The first reason for this is the almost complete separation between what they call religious sciences and what they call social sciences, resulting from a

deep disconnect between Islamic religious values and the values of modern social and human sciences. Since their inception, these sciences have carried the separation from local values, thus losing the elements of their effectiveness in achieving social and civilizational progress. One manifestation of this separation is the near absence of inherited and authentic theories from the modern foundations of social and human sciences, such as the theory of public interest, the theory of benefit, and the theory of consensus, without which it is difficult to understand the issues of Islamic Arab societies. The effectiveness of these theories is evident in the maturity of theoretical and cognitive construction in sociology." (Ghanem, 2019, pp. 13-14). Therefore, it seems that the most appropriate path to ensure the localization of sociology is to return it to its established branches by utilizing the authentic Islamic heritage through the Quran and the noble Prophetic Sunnah to activate and stimulate the Muslim mind in revitalizing its communities by researching the components of the Muslim self and combating corrupted phenomena, and pushing forward the wheel of economic, social, military, and political revival within a civilizational project planned and executed by an integrated societal will, where selfishness and subjugation disappear, and normative goals emerge. Thus, every state project becomes an end that transcends individual interest for the sake of the benefit of the Muslim nation.

## CONCLUSION

The success of sociology in the Arab Islamic society is contingent upon its breakaway from Western intellectual trends - which may lead researchers into research frameworks that do not align with the social-cultural structure of our societies - and its loyalty to its Islamic heritage, bias towards its Islamic environment, according to the visions of those who possess sincere intentions and aspirations to uplift these societies, armed with knowledge on one hand and benefiting from critiquing the experiences of Western societies on the other hand. However, this direction must find empowerment at the field level by encouraging conscious Islamic thought that opens the door for students and researchers to delve into the aspects related to the Quranic sciences within various disciplines of social sciences. This allows for bridging the knowledge gaps in various fields, enriching the endeavors of researchers and students.

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