

From Western to Islāmic Social Sciences: al-Fārūqī's View

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Abstract

The globalization of modern social sciences, rooted in Western paradigms, has raised questions about their relevance, universality, and ethical foundations. The Muslim world has adopted these sciences uncritically, leading to a disconnect between their methodologies and Islamic ethical and epistemological frameworks. Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī proposed a transformative alternative: to rethink Western social sciences – their division into disciplines, their fundamental principles, methodologies, objectives, problems, and impact on the world – from a universal Islamic perspective on the world and knowledge. He proposed “Islamic social sciences” or “Ummatic sciences,” based on the Tawhīdī paradigm. This study examines al-Fārūqī's conceptualization of these sciences, their epistemological foundations, and their potential to address the limitations of Western paradigms. Through a qualitative textual and thematic analysis of his main writings, this study highlights the distinctive characteristics of the “Ummatic sciences,” including their ethical orientation, universal applicability, and integration of revelation and reason. The conclusions emphasize the need for a paradigm shift in the social sciences in order to align them with Islamic principles and serve the common good of humanity.

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Introduction

The globalization of modern social sciences, deeply rooted in Western paradigms, has raised critical questions about their relevance, universality, ethical foundations, and applicability in diverse cultural and civilizational contexts.

The uncritical adoption of Western social sciences in the Muslim world has led to an epistemological and ethical disconnect, influenced by several key factors:

- Historical Colonialism: The legacy of Western hegemony imposed secular frameworks, marginalizing Islamic epistemological framework.
- Materialism, ethnocentrism and instrumental rationality in Western Science: Dominant paradigms often ignore non-Western perspectives, reducing their universality.
- Instrumental Rationality: Modern social sciences prioritize technical efficiency over ethical values, conflicting with Islam's holistic worldview.
- Globalization Pressures: The universalization of Western models has eroded global intellectual autonomy. There is therefore no comprehensive Islamic alternative to address contemporary global challenges.

Fārūqī (1981) addresses these gaps by proposing a Tawḥīd-based alternative (Al-Fārūqī & Naseef, 1981), i.e. an alternative based on *al-Tawḥīd* as first metaphysical and epistemological principle. From this perspective, he proposed a comprehensive reform of existing Western social sciences, with the aim of establishing what he calls “Islāmic social sciences” or “*Ummatic sciences*.” (Al-Fārūqī, 1981, p. 16).

However, his concept of “*Ummatic sciences*” has been underexplored in academic literature. Indeed, the review of literature in Arabic and English revealed that there are no publications (neither books nor articles) focusing on al-Fārūqī's idea of “*Ummatic sciences*”. Most of

publications on al-Fārūqī deal with: “Islāmic civilization and art” (Duaa Alashari and Abd. Hamzah, 2021); “Comparative study of religions” (Charles D. Fletcher, 2008); “*Da'wah*” (Sārī Hanān, 2018); “Islāmic Philosophy of education” and “Reform of Education system” (Fikri Ayed Al-Duwairi and Khawla Ahmed Jaradat, 2022); al-Fārūqī's impact on university and culture (Muhammad Shafiq, 1994); and “Islāmization of knowledge” (Leif Stenberg, 2000).

This study seeks to address gap, and aims to:

- Analyze al-Fārūqī's conceptualization of Islamic social sciences.
- Assess the Tawḥīdī paradigm as an alternative to Western paradigm of social sciences.
- Assess the potential of *Ummatic* sciences to address global challenges.

The guiding research questions are:

- How does al-Fārūqī's Tawḥīdī paradigm redefine the objectives, the scope and methodologies of social sciences?
- What are the distinctive features of *Ummatic* sciences, and how do they differ from Western paradigms?
- How can *Ummatic* sciences contribute to a more ethical and universal understanding of human society?

In this perspective, this study highlights the distinctive characteristics of the *Ummatic* sciences, including their ethical orientation, universal applicability, and commitment to the common good of humanity. It explores how the Tawḥīdī paradigm redefines the objectives, methodologies, and classifications of the social sciences, offering an alternative that links empirical research to Islamic normative values.

Throughout his work, Al-Fārūqī criticizes the limitations of modern Western social sciences, which he considers to be largely biased by materialism, ethnocentrism, instrumental rationality, and the separation between facts and values. In contrast, his vision of *Ummatic* sciences integrates revelation and reason, the study of human behavior and divine norms and ethical imperatives, the needs of Muslims, and the common good of humanity. At the heart of this framework is the concept of *Tawḥīd*, which serves as both a metaphysical foundation and a methodological guide,

emphasizing the unity of knowledge, the harmony of creation, and the moral responsibility of humanity as God's vicegerent (khalīfah).

This article highlights the potential of al-Fārūqī's conceptual framework to address contemporary global challenges by promoting a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of human society. It also calls for continued dialogue between Islāmic and other intellectual traditions, with the aim of enriching the social sciences through diverse epistemological perspectives, and above all with the goal of better understanding the world and making it a better place for all.

This study adopts a qualitative methodology, focusing on textual analysis of al-Fārūqī's key works:

- Thematic Analysis: Identifying recurring themes such as Tawḥīd as epistemological principle, Ummatism, Ummatic sciences and critiques of Western science.
- Comparative Analysis: Contrasting Western social sciences with Ummatic sciences.

The primary sources include four major books regarding the idea of “Ummatic sciences”: *Social and Natural Sciences: The Islamic Perspective* (Al-Fārūqī & Naseef, 1981), *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (Al-Fārūqī, 1982), *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Al-Fārūqī, 1981), and *Al-Tawḥīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Al-Fārūqī, 1982).

Why do we need to go beyond modern social sciences?

In the collective book *Social and Natural Sciences: The Islamic Perspective*, Al-Fārūqī answers the question of why Muslims should not simply consume the knowledge produced by the West without critically evaluating it (Al-Fārūqī & Naseef, 1981). He argues that studying the sunan (universal laws and patterns) of God in the universe is to do “natural science,” while studying God’s sunan in history and society is to do “social science”. And studying God's will is studying revelation (Al-Fārūqī & Naseef, 1981). But then, is it enough to go to universities to study the natural and human sciences, to reach the truth? No, he says, because :

- The history of the natural and social sciences and the humanities, and in particular the history of the division of intellectual labor into disciplines, is a history specific to the West;

- Modern Western science has imposed a particular form of rationality: instrumental rationality. It produces knowledge to increase Western man's power over nature and humanity, without imposing any ethical regulation on itself;
- Modern Western science has led to extraordinary advances in every field, while at the same time has created a crisis on a planetary scale, as it is unable to grasp the complexity of the world;
- Modern Western science doesn't just produce universal knowledge. It is also ethnocentric and biased in its aims, the subject-object relationship, the separation of facts and values, its methods, its definition of “data” and in its results, and its socio-economic and political use. This is why we should speak of “Western social sciences” rather than merely “social sciences” (Al-Fārūqī, 1982);
- Modern Western science responds first and foremost to its own problems and priorities, before those of others. This is evident in all areas, for example in health, food, safety or education...;
- Different civilizations have produced different sciences. For example, the Islāmic civilization produced “social sciences” where human facts and behaviors are understood through divine knowledge on human nature, values and norms of “ought to be”;
- Throughout history, Islāmic science has had its own universal way of approaching God, life, human society and knowledge.

Indeed, the history of modern Western sciences, of their classifications and divisions, notably the division between “social sciences” and “the humanities”; and of their materialist and reductionist methodology, is a history particular to the West, linked to a particular vision of the world and of knowledge. For this reason, al-Fārūqī invites us to move away from intellectual conformism - which consists in reproducing modern knowledge without critical hindsight, modification or improvement - which is contrary to the spirit of science and the spirit of Islām. Al-Fārūqī (1981) further states:

“Islām does not recognise the polarity of individual and society as legitimate. Accordingly, it does not acknowledge any need to divide

knowledge into humanities and social sciences. All the disciplines which study man are one in their method and ultimate purpose. Their method is rational, scientific and critical without having to limit the data to what is sensory. Their ultimate purpose is to enlighten man about himself, to show him what of the divine pattern applies to him in a given situation, how its actualization may be brought about and accomplished."

These are the great reasons which, according to al-Fārūqī, necessitate the development of an "Islāmic" science and more particularly, of "Islāmic" social sciences (Al-Fārūqī, 1982).

Al-Tawḥīd, the essence of Islāmic civilization

Al-Fārūqī's thought emphasizes the concept of *Tawḥīd*, although he was not the first to address it. His original contribution lies in his conception of *Tawḥīd* as a worldview with concrete implications for thought and way of life. Indeed, in his pivotal work "*Al-Tawḥīd. Its implications for Thought and Life*," he develops the idea that the *Tawḥīd* shapes our understanding of God, nature, man, knowledge and applies to all areas of life (Al-Fārūqī, 1982, 1986).

As the foundation of Islāmic civilization, the *Tawḥīd* manifests itself through five fundamental principles: the oneness of God and His distinction from His creation; man's ability to access God through observation and reflection; the inherent finality of everything in the cosmos; man's vocation to serve God and understand His will; and man's freedom and responsibility for his actions, with the prospect of judgment in the next life. These five principles constitute the essence of *Tawḥīd*, *Islām* and *dīn al-ḥanīf*, or universal natural religion, transmitted to mankind. They represent the common, eternal message of God, taught by all the Prophets (PBUT), and form the basis of all Islāmic culture.

Al-Tawḥīd as a framework for analysis and work

Al-Fārūqī's distinctive contribution lies in his in-depth analysis of the implications of *Tawḥīd* on the theory of knowledge. He explores the implications of this concept on Islāmic epistemology and methodology. This approach has exerted a considerable influence on contemporary Islāmic thought (Khuza'I, 2019).

The *Tawḥīdī* vision of knowledge is a framework that consists of the six first principles of Islām, namely: the unity of Allāh, the unity of creation, the unity of truth and knowledge, the complementarity between reason and revelation, the unity of life and the unity of humanity (Al-Fārūqī, 1981, 1982).

Tawḥīd, as conceptualized by al-Fārūqī, redefines Islām not as a mere “religion”, but as a universal source of knowledge, relevant to all subjects and all sciences. From this perspective, every scientific endeavor, whether concerned with religion, nature or the human being, acquires an “Islāmic” dimension in that it operates within an analytical framework founded on “first principles” derived from the revealed Islāmic worldview. In other words, all knowledge is “Islāmic” insofar as it is structured and oriented according to the six first principles of the Islāmic worldview.

The first principle is the unity of Allāh (Al-Fārūqī, 1982). It implies that: God is Creator of all that exists in the cosmos; the Creator is distinct from the creature; He governs the universe through His laws in nature (*al-sunan*); He intervenes in human affairs through the moral law, as the source of universal truths, norms and values to be implemented (Al-Fārūqī, 1982). Recognizing the oneness of God, the unity and harmony of the universe, and the unity of truth and knowledge is a chain of inseparable logical propositions.

The second primary principle is the unity of creation, which implies three guiding ideas about the world: the cosmos functions according to a harmonious order; creation is a network of coherent purposes, all subject to the will of God and creation is at the disposal of (*al-taskhīr*) the human being (Al-Fārūqī, 1982).

The third primary principle is the unity of life, i.e. the coherence between the purpose of creation and the purpose of the human being; the coherence between the means and ends placed in creation, at the disposal of the human being. The unity of life implies three guiding ideas: *al-amānah* (the charge of freedom-responsibility that God has entrusted to human being); *al-khalīfah* (man is God's vicegerent on earth: his *raison d'être* is to worship and serve God's will); and the comprehensiveness of Islām, which applies to all areas of life (Qur'ān 2: 30-34; 67: 1-2).

The fourth primary principle is the unity of humanity. It implies that despite human diversity, despite the diversity of cultures, languages, physiologies and religions..., there is one and the same humanity, endowed by God with the same dignity, freedom and responsibility, the same capacity to exercise reason and act morally. As an epistemological

principle, it enables us to produce knowledge about the human being, without falling into a form of ethnocentrism or particularism (Al-Fārūqī, 1982).

The fifth primary principle is the unity of truth and knowledge (Al-Fārūqī, 1982). For the social sciences, this means studying man in relation to the universe and the Creator. God provides universal laws to make the universe work, as well as universal moral values to guide human life on earth. This is why, when we study reality, we must study the laws and universal values that structure it, as well as any deviations from these values (Al-Fārūqī, 1981). To illustrate, in the sociology of couples, for example, researchers should not simply observe individualism and moral and sexual relativism. They must link the behaviors observed to values and norms of good, marriage, and the extended family.

Finally, the sixth primary principle is the complementarity between reason and revelation to understand the world and lead a just life on earth (Al-Fārūqī, 1981). Indeed, reason needs revelation to provide it with the first principles, or metaphysical reference points, that will serve as a starting point and analytical framework for approaching reality (Al-Fārūqī, 1982). Similarly, revelation needs reason to distinguish it from error, so that it can be well understood and applied to life.

These first principles of Islām are universally valid because they are logical, subject to critical reflection, and at the service of humanity (Al-Fārūqī, 1982).

Ummatic sciences

Towards “*Ummatic sciences*”: definition

For al-Fārūqī, the *Ummatic sciences* involve a change of definition. “Islāmic knowledge” is:

- the knowledge of God's will that it is given in revelation that instructs us about the reality of the world as it is and the world as it should be (wisdom and ethics);
- the knowledge of God, his actions and his laws throughout the universe and in revelation;
- the knowledge of man as he is, his history and his interactions with others, in connection with knowledge of man as he ought to be (Al-Fārūqī, 1981).

The development of *Ummatic* sciences, according to al-Fārūqī, requires a fundamental redefinition of the relationship between Islām and the study of man in his social and individual dimensions. From this perspective, Islām is not reduced to a mere “religion” or to just another object of study in the vast field of natural, human and social sciences. Al-Fārūqī emphasizes that the “Islāmic” qualification of knowledge is not limited to the superficial addition of Qur'ānic or prophetic references. Rather, it involves a profound epistemological overhaul that enables existing knowledge to be evaluated, confirmed, criticized, corrected or supplemented in the light of the Islāmic worldview.

This approach constitutes a genuine reformulation of the foundations of the sciences, their laws, theories and concepts. It proposes a framework structured according to the Islāmic worldview and its epistemological implications. This involves founding “*Ummatic* sciences”, i.e. sciences whose name, classification, object, aims and methodology are different from those of the Western social sciences and humanities.

The principle of “Ummatism”

The term “Ummatism” is constructed on the basis of the word “*Ummah*”, which al-Fārūqī uses in two different meanings: *Ummah* in the restricted sense of “Muslim community” and *Ummah* in the sense of human community or universal society. Al-Fārūqī defines the *Ummah* primarily as a universal society: “The *Ummah* is a universal society” (Al-Fārūqī, 1982, p. 104).

This universal society encompasses a great diversity of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, political and religious communities. It is not organized on the basis of a particularistic ethnic or religious identity. Its aim is the common good of all humanity: “The social order of Islām is universal: enveloping the whole of mankind without exception” (Al-Fārūqī, 1982, p. 105).

“Ummatism” is the concept that al-Fārūqī proposes to characterize, structure and orient the sciences that study society and the individual. Firstly, Ummatism is an epistemological principle which implies that reason must be applied to all fields, in order to know the world, i.e. also God's action and will in the world. This approach goes beyond merely gathering facts; it emphasizes that knowledge is a means to an end, serving as a precursor to action that benefits human society. To illustrate this

concept, al-Fārūqī references a philosophical tale from Islāmic civilization. This story highlights the idea that the pursuit of knowledge must be followed by practical application for the greater good of the community. Thus, Ummatism not only encourages the search for truth through reason but also advocates for the use of that knowledge in service of the common good:

“The story of Ḥay ibn Yaḡzan illustrates this fact of Islāmic consciousness dramatically. Ḥay discovered Islām by natural reason and having, by his own effort, reached cognizance of its worldview and ethical vision, Ḥay set forth on the open seas in search of the Ummah without which he could no longer exist.” (Al-Fārūqī & Naseef, 1981, p. 14).

Secondly, as an epistemological principle, Ummatism proposes a redefinition of what constitutes a scientific “fact.” According to this perspective, a fact does not gain scientific validity merely through a researcher's adherence to the principle of neutrality, nor by limiting analysis to observable, measurable, and quantifiable aspects. Instead, Ummatism contends that a fact becomes more scientifically robust when it incorporates into its analysis the study of ontology and axiology that underpin and structure the fact in question. This approach suggests a more complex view of scientific inquiry, one that acknowledges the importance of understanding the fundamental nature of being (ontology) and the study of values (axiology) in relation to the facts being examined. By doing so, Ummatism aims to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of scientific phenomena, going beyond the traditional positivist approach to scientific investigation.

Thirdly, Ummatism implies a dual approach to the study of facts. This principle suggests that we should examine facts not only as they currently exist but also in light of how they ought to be. In essence, this approach calls for a simultaneous consideration of both the actual and the ideal.

Furthermore, Ummatism proposes that this investigation should encompass two fundamental sources of knowledge: the Book of Creation (which can be understood as the natural world and its observable phenomena) and the Revealed Book (referring to divine revealed knowledge and wisdom). This comprehensive method of inquiry aims to integrate empirical observations with normative principles, fostering a

more complex understanding of reality that bridges the gap between what is and what should be. By encouraging this multifaceted approach, Ummatism seeks to create a more balanced and ethically informed framework for knowledge acquisition and use.

“Finally, Islāmization of the social sciences must endeavour to show the relation of the reality studied to that aspect or part of the divine pattern pertinent to it. Since the divine pattern is the norm reality ought to actualize, the analysis of what is should never lose sight of what ought to be. Moreover, the divine pattern is not only normative, enjoying a heavenly modality of existence removed from actuality. It is also real in the sense that Allāh has predisposed reality to embody it, a kind of fīṭrah existence which Allāh, in His mercy, implanted in human nature, in the human individual or group, in the Ummah as an ongoing stream of being, which moral action pulls out into actuality and history. Every scientific analysis would therefore endeavour, if it is Islāmic, to expose this immanent divine pattern in human affairs, to underline that part of it which is in actu, and that part of it which is in potentia; to expose the factors realizing or impeding the completion of the process of embodiment, to focus the light of understanding upon the relations of that process to all the other processes of Ummatic life.” (Ibid., p. 17).

Fourthly, Ummatism thus implies for the researcher to study human reality not simply as “a fact”, but always as a fact in relation to an ethical norm :

“Any investigation of a human ‘is’ must therefore include its standing as an ‘ought to be’ within the realm of possibility.” (Ibid., p. 14).

Fifthly, Ummatism implies that “no value, and therefore no imperative, is purely personal, peculiar to the individual” (Al-Fārūqī, 1981). To illustrate this point, the personal choices we make regarding morality, relationships, and sexuality are not just a private matter: they are also a public matter, because they directly impact the well-being of society through the spread of loneliness, single mothers raising children alone, children separated from their parents who are much more tempted than

others to turn to crime... Thus, the principle of Ummatism implies studying reality to realize a value at the service of human society:

“In the Islāmic view, the axiological and Ummatic are equivalent and convertible. Together, they constitute an intrinsic dimension, a sine qua non condition, of reality. There can be no knowledge of that reality without value, and there can be no religious or moral value except in the Ummah.” (Ibid., p. 14).

In essence, Ummatism states that knowledge should be “Ummatic,” meaning it must possess both ethical value and social utility. This social utility, however, transcends the narrow community or national interests, encompassing instead the broader common good of humanity. The concept of “Ummatic” sciences extends beyond the limited interpretation of serving only the Muslim community. Rather, it refers to knowledge that benefits the Ummah in its most expansive sense: the universal human society. This perspective emphasizes the global and inclusive nature of knowledge acquisition and application. Furthermore, Ummatism reiterates that knowledge should be practical in nature. Its primary aim should be to understand and creatively address the challenges faced by human society. This approach underscores the importance of Islām as an applied knowledge that can make tangible contributions to solving real-world problems (Al-Fārūqī, 1982). By proposing an ethical, socially beneficial, universally applicable, and practically oriented knowledge, Ummatism promotes a comprehensive and purposeful approach to learning and scientific inquiry.

The purpose of Ummatic sciences

Any science of man must study man's relationship with other men, as well as his relationship with God. It must therefore study man as he is and man as he should be; human facts and the values that enable us to evaluate these facts:

“Pre-eminently, the sciences which study man and his relations with other humans ought to recognize man as standing in a realm dominated by God metaphysically as well as axiologically. These sciences include human history - the realm in which the higher levels

of the divine pattern are to be realized.” (Al-Fārūqī, 1982, pp. 15-16).

If the social sciences are to change their object - by also studying the man-God, facts-norms relationship - then they must also change their purpose, their name and their classification. They must not study man as if he were thrown into an absurd, purposeless world. They must study man as a being whose life has meaning, in connection with the whole of creation; whose mission on earth is to be God's vicegerent, free and responsible to choose the ideas and values that guide his way of thinking, acting and living:

“Properly speaking, they ought to be concerned with the Khilāfah of God on earth, with man's vicegerency. And since man's vicegerency is necessarily social, the sciences that study it should properly be called Ummatic.” (Al-Fārūqī, 1981, p. 16).

Al-Fārūqī proposes a conceptual overhaul of the social sciences, suggesting that they be renamed “*Ummatic sciences*”. This new name reflects a more integral approach to the study of human beings. The *Ummatic sciences* not only observe man in his social interactions, in their observable, measurable and quantifiable dimension; but they examine these interactions through revealed universal values and norms.

Consequently, they must overcome the division between facts and values on the one hand, and between the “humanities” and the “social sciences” on the other:

“Muslim learning repudiates the bifurcation, humanities/social sciences. It calls for reclassification of the disciplines into natural sciences dealing with nature, and Ummatic sciences dealing with man and society. If, in the Association of Muslim Social Scientists we continue to call them social, we do so in defiance of the West which insists on separating them from the humanities.” (Al-Fārūqī, 1981, p. 16).

By combining the humanities and the social sciences, al-Fārūqī seeks to make the *Ummatic sciences* both more objective, more comprehensive through the study of the individual and social dimensions, facts and values that structure human behavior (Al-Fārūqī, 1981).

The *Ummatic sciences* recognize that reason is valid, and its field of application is vast. It must be applied to the realms of nature and man, as well as religion. In this way, religion is no longer confused with subjective,

arbitrary belief. The Book of the Universe, like the revealed Book, is a Book that can be known by all, thanks to the methodical work of reason:

“God is the Author of both; and both of His works are public, appealing to no authority other than that of reason and understanding.” (Al-Fārūqī, 1981, p. 18).

In the field of religion, there are only a few exceptional limits where reason can neither validate nor invalidate revealed knowledge: the rituals that God has prescribed for human beings (prayer, fasting...); the description of God; and revealed information about past or invisible realities. These are three subjects on which reason cannot have a valid opinion. It can only rely on a divine source that goes beyond it, but whose validity and divine character must be rationally checked:

“Apart from giving details of rituals, describing the transcendent, and reporting about the unknown past, which may not be subject to critical verification, Islām has given us nothing by way of naql or tradition, which is not as confirmed or confirmable by reason and understanding, as what we have received or continue to discover by way of 'aql, or reason.” (Al-Fārūqī, 1981, p. 16).

The role of the researcher and his relationship to the object

According to al-Fārūqī, the pursuit of scientific rigor in social sciences should not be equated with a pretense of neutrality. Instead, he argues that true scientific inquiry in these fields must acknowledge and embrace the inherent axiological nature of social facts. Al-Fārūqī emphasizes the complexity of the subject-object relationship in social sciences. He states that this relationship is not merely an empirical one that can be observed and measured, but also involves an ethical dimension. This ethical interaction serves as a conduit for values and norms, which may originate from the researcher (subject) or be embedded within the phenomenon being studied (object). By recognizing this multifaceted relationship, al-Fārūqī suggests that social sciences can achieve a more comprehensive and authentic scientific approach. This perspective encourages researchers to consciously engage with the value-laden aspects of their studies, rather than attempting to eliminate or ignore them. (Al-Fārūqī, 1981, pp. 16-17).

To enhance objectivity in the subject-object relationship, al-Fārūqī argues that researchers must abandon the theoretical pretense of neutrality. He warns against the common mistake of conflating a biased approach with an objective one, a reductive approach with a comprehensive one, or a specific social context with a universal truth.

Instead, researchers should explicitly acknowledge and highlight the ontological and axiological dimensions surrounding both the object of study and the researcher. This approach promotes transparency and a more nuanced understanding of the research process.

In the specific case of Muslim researchers, al-Fārūqī suggests they should openly acknowledge that their study of an object is informed by their commitment to thinking within and realizing the Islāmic worldview. He elaborates on this point with the following statement:

“The Islāmic social scientist is endowed with the cause of Islām. The divine pattern in human affairs is the object of his constant attention and care as well as of his hope and yearning. He is not only scientific in the sense of not leaving out the axiological aspects, but is pre-eminently critical of reality in light of the divine pattern.” (Al-Fārūqī, 1981, p. 17).

The Islāmic social scientist, according to this perspective, maintains a transparent commitment to Islāmic values. This philosophical framework presents a rational and critical approach to understanding truth. Importantly, this commitment encourages openness of the Islāmic social scientist to correction or criticism. Whether from Muslim or non-Muslim peers, such feedback is welcomed, as it aligns with the pursuit of truth. In this view, truth is not a fixed or dogmatic concept, but rather emerges from two primary sources:

- an intelligent understanding of nature, as revealed through scientific research and experimentation;
- a thoughtful understanding of God's revelation as presented in the Qur'ān (Al-Fārūqī, 1981, pp. 17-18).

From this perspective, the Islāmic social scientist is uniquely positioned to offer a fresh critique of social science. The argument posits that Western social science, due to its focus on instrumental rationality and means-end relationships, has often devolved into “strategic studies.” These studies primarily concern themselves with strategies to achieve goals whose

fundamental validity is rarely subjected to critical examination. In contrast, the Islāmic social scientist, guided by a commitment to Islāmic principles, views humans as God's vicegerents on Earth. This perspective imbues human beings with a profound responsibility: to actualize values in the course of History. This approach has the potential to reinvigorate the ideal of *humanitas* (human dignity and worth) in social sciences.

This stands in stark contrast to the portrayal of humans in some strands of Western social science, which have been criticized for reducing individuals to mere puppets of blind forces beyond their control. The Islāmic approach, therefore, seeks to restore agency, purpose, and ethical responsibility to the human subject in social scientific inquiry.

By integrating spiritual and ethical dimensions with empirical study, *Ummatic* sciences aim to offer a more complex understanding of human society. This approach not only acknowledges the complexity of human nature but also emphasizes the potential for moral and spiritual growth, thereby offering a counterpoint to purely mechanistic or deterministic views of human behavior and social dynamics (Al-Fārūqī, 1981, p. 18).

Comparison between Western social sciences & Ummatic sciences

The following table provides an accurate comparison of the characteristics of Western science and those of Ummatic sciences:

Comparison criteria	Western social sciences	Ummatic sciences
The name of the discipline and its implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The name implies separating facts and values; the social sciences that study factual collective phenomenon, from the humanities that study the individual and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The name implies linking: the study of the individual and societal study of facts and values; empirical data and a priori (revealed) human sciences with the humanities; science with an ethical sense of responsibility and social utility
Relationship with the humanities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They differ from the humanities in that the latter are concerned with the individual and subjective values, while the former are concerned with the social and objective facts. They condemn the humanities to relativism and thus weaken the influence of values on society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They integrate the humanities because they deal with the same object (the individual and society), and because human phenomena also involve shared behaviors and values They require the humanities to apply the same rules of objectivity and verification of the validity of values
Relationship with the natural sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They seek to imitate the natural sciences (a positivist approach focused on the empirical, the observable, the measurable and the quantifiable), in relation to which they have an inferiority complex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are on an equal footing with the natural sciences. The difference is one of object (nature and human society) and less of methodology Truth - whether about nature or human society - corresponds to complex reality that cannot be reduced to matter and the empirical Both aim to discover and understand the divine model: one in physical objects, the other in human affairs. Although they use different techniques, they are subject to the same laws of verification
Object of study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They study the collective, i.e. man and his relationships with other men They study man as he is They study a world without God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They study man and his relations with other men, but also man creature linked to his Creator, whose vocation is to be God's Khalifah on earth. They study man as he is and man as he should be They study in which God intervenes by revealing a universal moral law that man is invited to put into practice.

From Western to Islāmic Social Sciences: al-Fārūqī's View

Comparison criteria	Western social sciences	Ummatic sciences
A sense of reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reality is matter without cause or purpose, observable, measurable and quantifiable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reality is one, just as God is One Reality is an illustration of divine will. It must therefore be studied from the angle of value realization or violation. As such, i.e. apart from this modality, reality is nothing at all
Purpose of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern social science is structured around two main goals: Developing science for science's sake Developing science to increase power over nature and mankind Each field of science sets its own goals and standards (autonomization of fields of knowledge) and operates according to an instrumental rationality that excludes ethical evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge has a purpose: to worship and serve God, and therefore to know God's laws in nature; to know and carry out God's will; to build an ummah or universal society based on goodness and justice
Knowledge sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reason and empirical social phenomena Western scientific heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reason is less a source than an instrument for studying the two great sources of reliable knowledge: the created Book (nature, man, society) and the revealed Book (the Qur'ān). The Qur'ān provides reason with the first principles of knowledge The authentic Sunnah is a second source, illustrating the Qur'ān through practice Islāmic scientific heritage and human heritage, insofar as they do not contradict the Created Book and the Revealed Book

Comparison criteria	Western social sciences	Ummatic sciences
The data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is material, observable, measurable and quantifiable Human data (social phenomena) are treated as "dead" natural data, with no interaction between the observer and the observed data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is material, observable, measurable and quantifiable, but also ethical, spiritual and revealed Human data are treated as "living" data, interacting with the observer. Biases must therefore be identified, and first principles made explicit.
The relationship between facts and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They study man as he is (factual, empirical approach) They exclude all value judgments in theory. But in reality, they project Western values and worldviews onto the object under study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facts are always structured by values, that is why they must be distinguished but cannot be separated They study man as he is, but also as he should be (factual, empirical and axiological approach) The principle of ummatism implies studying reality in order to realize a value at the service of human society
Subject-object relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In theory, the subject must cut himself off from the object in order to make the facts speak for themselves In reality, the subject projects his own biases onto the human phenomena under study The Western researcher systematically sees human phenomena according to Western biases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The subject is engaged with his object of study, in a process of reflexivity to clarify and reduce his own biases; in an ethical relationship; and in an empathic relationship The researcher seeks to make facts speak in the light of facts as they should be (values, norms) The researcher sees human phenomena in terms of facts-values and puts them into perspective with revelation to gain objectivity

Comparison criteria	Western social sciences	Ummatic sciences
Ex : Anthropology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anthropology studies the so-called "primitive" societies of the non-Western world, seeking to apply a principle of neutrality, considering the Other as a dead datum onto which it projects its biases and its Western-centric vision of the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anthropology studies human societies throughout the world, including the West, seeking to apply a principle of empathy or positive bias in favor of the Other; considering the Other as a living datum that it seeks to understand first according to its internal logic, then by comparing it to shared human nature and to man as he should be, thanks to revealed knowledge
Ex : History of religions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They consider that all religions are human constructs The history of each religion is seen as a separate story, a separate humanity The researcher must be neutral (in theory) in order to understand other religions, but in reality, he reasons according to a materialistic or Western Christian outlook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They consider that all religions have their source in the same divine revealed truth The last revelation, with the help of critical reason, enables each religious tradition to distinguish between the revealed and the human passions and historical deviances The history of each religion is seen in terms of the unity of God, the unity of human history, the unity of humanity and the unity of truth The researcher must be empathetic to enter the religious tradition of others
Ex : Study of sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research into sexuality is divorced from any idea of value or morality For example, it diverts attention from adultery and focuses on the risk of pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research on sexuality is linked to value and morality, marriage, family and society

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the epistemological foundations and distinctive features of the *Ummatic* sciences, as conceptualized by Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī. Our analysis revealed that these sciences rest on the principle of Tawḥīd (divine oneness) as their central epistemological foundation, promoting a more universal and ethical vision of knowledge. The results of this study highlight the distinctive features of Ummatic sciences:

- They imply that science is cumulative, which is why ummatic sciences integrate knowledge from both the Islamic and human heritage;
- They are based on the tawḥīdī vision of the world and knowledge;
- They imply structuring and orienting the work of reason and the production of knowledge on the basis of the first principles of the tawḥīdī vision of the world;

- This tawhīdī vision is totally distinct from “religious” discourse which, in the name of “faith,” would express arbitrary beliefs disconnected from reality and truth;
- They imply that Islamic science is not a “religious” subject separate or external to real and public life; that it is not merely an abstract metaphysical conception, but a methodology for understanding and solving problems that applies to all subjects of human society, to all cultural and historical contexts;
- They integrate the intellectual work of producing knowledge about society into an ethical project: doing good and building a just human civilization. These characteristics clearly distinguish Ummatic sciences from modern Western social sciences.

Our study also underlines the universal scope of the *Ummatic* sciences: to produce useful knowledge for the good of mankind. To achieve this, knowledge of reality as it is must be linked to knowledge of reality as it ought to be, based on the universal moral law that can be known through revelation and recognized by reason.

The *Ummatic* sciences, as we have analyzed them, offer a promising paradigm for dealing with global contemporary crisis and challenges. This research opens up perspectives for future studies, notably on the practical application of the six first principles of Islām to today's human problems and challenges, to give concrete expression to the topicality and universality of Islām. It would also be appropriate to explore further the potential for dialogue between the *Ummatic* sciences and other intellectual traditions, in order to better understand the complexity of the world and build together a more just human civilization.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare no competing interests such as financial or personal relationship, regarding the writing of this article.

Authors' contributions

Mohamed Oudihat designed the study and gathered the literature. and wrote the article. Professor, Dr Muhammad Mumtaz Ali supervised and reviewed the writing of the article.

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