

BOOK REVIEWS

Jasser Auda, *Re-Envisioning Islamic Scholarship: Maqasid Methodology as a New Approach*

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Professor Jasser Auda's *Re-envisioning Islamic Scholarship: Maqasid Methodology as a New Approach* is a serious attempt to outline an Islamic intellectual framework from a transformative 'Quranic Worldview'. The book consists of six chapters along with a preface and concluding remarks. In the preface, the author clearly states that the primary goal of his entire work is to "revive the original concepts of Islamic approach/ framework/ worldview in today's context" (p.19). To accomplish this, the author attempts to construct a framework with webs of meaning by positioning the Qur'an as the ultimate source of knowledge.

In chapter one, Auda broadly defines his *Maqasid* methodology as a systematic approach in which connectivity, wholism and emergence are focal points. The Qur'anic revelation's methodological analysis proves the fundamentality and depth of connectivity (*silah*, '*alaqah*'), resulting in a web pattern (*nasaq*, *nazm*, *shabaqi*) in between everything. Subsequently, the reader generates complex (*murakkab*) and wholistic (*kulli*) meanings (p.23). To reach this, the reader must have the ability to connect the meanings of words through internal deduction (p.26).

In the second chapter, Auda identifies five limitations in contemporary approaches to Islamic scholarship: imitation (*taqlid*), partialism (*tajzi*), apologism (*tabrir*), contradiction (*tanaqud*), and deconstructionism (*tafkik*). In other words, contemporary Islamic thought has a deep-rooted methodological crisis as follows: imitation of historical opinions versus referring to revelation as a primary source of knowledge, partialism versus the wholism expressed by revelation, apologism versus introspection commanded by

revelation, contradiction versus the consistency encouraged by revelation, and deconstructionism versus the important distinction between revelation and cultural products. While Auda elaborates on these limitations, he boldly criticises contemporary *maqasid* studies pertaining to the five domains mentioned above. For instance, during the discussion on imitation he claims that most students “adopt descriptive or documentary approaches. The absence of direct reference to the Qur’an and Sunna as the standard and basis of critique is common” (p.50).

In chapter three, Auda attempts to re-orient the Islamic worldview by highlighting three major components: knowledge (*‘ilm*), reality (*waqi’*), and scholarship (*ijtihad*). He reiterates that the dimensions related to knowledge in the Islamic worldview are source, logic and conceptualisation. The dimensions of reality awareness include evaluating the past and present as well as planning for the future. Scholarship, the role of transforming knowledge into action, includes as its dimensions scope, scholars, and desired outcomes. According to Auda, epistemologically, revelation is the indisputable source of higher knowledge, and the *maqasid* methodology, which is based on the interconnectivity of the Qur’anic verses, gains centrality in the logic of revelation. Furthermore, authoritative names (*asma’ dhat sultan*) and webs of meaning play an important role in this conceptualising process.

In addition to reading revelation, Auda believes that a deep awareness of reality in the light of revelation is one of the requirements for achieving fruitful outcomes. According to Auda’s interpretation of Qur’anic objectives and current reality, “even a cursory consideration of current affairs -wars, white supremacy movements, natural disasters...- demonstrate how far humanity has deviated from divine objectives” (p.90). In his futuristic perspective, the author advocates a reform in the scope and outcomes of Islamic scholarship. To this end, he reconstructs the term *fuqaha’* so that it no longer refers to a class of Muslim jurists, but to scholars in all fields of knowledge who are engaged in scholarship (*ijtihad*). As a result, the scope is broader than current understandings, encompassing all contemporary disciplines, such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, biology, architecture, and so on. Therefore, *mujtahid*, in Auda’s perspective, includes all seekers of knowledge, both male and female, from all fields of knowledge. In contrast to the dominant view of “knowledge sharing between Scholars of text and Scholars of context,” Auda emphasises that *mujtahid* are all who seek to make theoretical and practical contributions to any subject matter based on “dedication to the Revelation as the driver of their thoughts and approaches.” Simply put, Auda’s proposed *maqasid* methodology seeks to cultivate multi-/trans-disciplinary and encyclopaedic scholars (p.95). The result is not a *fatwa*, but rather judgements of benefit (*masalih*) and

harm (*mafasid*) in the form of decisions, policies, plans, designs, laws, artistic expressions, strategies, and so forth.

Professor Auda's reformative educational project begins with five steps that every researcher or *mujtahid* should consider taking in his academic activities, as elaborated on in chapter four: purpose, cycles of reflection, composite framework, critical studies of literature and reality, and formative theories and principles. The 'purpose' of the work is not limited to 'research problems', as is commonly thought in Western academia. Auda clearly distinguishes between these two terms, stating "the *maqasid* methodology in conformance with revelation is purpose-, not problem-, oriented... And while a certain perception of problems could be redefined through purposes, purposes should not be redefined through a certain perception of problems" (p.111). During a cycle of reflection on revelation, the researcher employs connectivity and wholism, as mentioned in chapter one, to produce a composite framework for his topic. Taking revelation as the sole source of knowledge does not imply ignoring sunnah, rather "linking Hadith to the verses of the Qur'an requires special understanding of the basic theoretical premises and nuances that currently define the sciences of tafsir and hadith" (p.120). Another critical engagement with multiple domains is used to further develop the composite framework. *Maqasid* methodology encourages researchers to constructively, not destructively, criticise accumulated contemporary and historical scholarship, produced by Muslims and others people from diverse cultures in the pursuit of truth. Taking 'lived realities' into account is another step in this process. The goal of the preceding methodological steps is to develop theories and principles. Philosophically speaking, it can be stated that the "method of reasoning in *maqasid* approach is not induction but rather the Qur'anic expression of emergence as the concept of '*tawallud*' or '*nushu*'" (p.138).

Countless cycles of reflection on revelation outline a 'perceptualisation' (*tasawwur*) in the mind of researchers. As Auda illustrates in chapter five, seven elements conceptualise an Islamic composite framework or worldview: concepts (*mafahim*), objectives (*maqasid*), values (*qiyam*), commands (*awamir*), universal laws (*sunan*), groups (*fi'at*), and proofs (*hujaj*). The basic guideline for contemplating all these seven elements is that "they are to be understood through their textual expressions (*nass*) and through inference (*istinbat*) from their linguistic and webbed manifestations in the revelation" (p.152). Auda explicitly writes how each of these elements can be discovered from revelation.

Chapter six attempts to demonstrate how *maqasid* methodology can contribute to the process of re-constructing Islamic scholarship in all fields of knowledge. The implementation of Auda's reform project begins with the 'institutionalisation' of work, followed by the 're-classification of knowledge'.

Another innovative idea of the author is the new classification of studies as *usuli* studies, disciplinary studies, phenomenal studies, and strategic studies; in short, he believes in multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to his proposed *maqasid* project. Scholars who engage in *ijtihad* are expected to re-orient professional specialisations in accordance with the Qur'anic worldview, which is drawn through a composite framework of cycles of reflection on revelation. Eventually, theories and principles are formed. By establishing strategic studies, Auda aspires to construct future visions and plans, while introducing micro and mezzo work plans.

In the concluding remarks, Auda clearly states that the proposed methodology ultimately aims to improve humanity and the *ummah*. To reach this goal, three overlapping circles — research, education, and action — are compulsory. Maqasid Institute, presided over by the author, seeks to establish networks among the four disciplines mentioned above and promote group research or collective *ijtihad* within each network.

To summarise, Professor Jasser Auda contributes to contemporary Islamic scholarship by introducing a new version of an Islamic educational project that differs from other dominant institutions, such as IIIT, IIUM, and CILE. Discussing diverse and innovative ideas related to educational reform within the Muslim intelligentsia will undoubtedly enrich the academic community and encourage the younger generation to think more creatively.