OBJECTIVITY ISSUES IN ISLAMIC THOUGHT: A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

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Abstract

Objectivity is a key standard to assess any intellectual work in Islamic Thought. This standard helps differentiate between methodological work that is characterized by objectivity, and doctrinal or ideological work where subjectivity predominates. However, there are major obstacles that stand in the way of applying this objective assessment; namely the problem of defining the boundaries between al-Manhajiyah (methodology) and al-Madhhabiyah (doctrinal thinking or ideology) in Islamic Thought. Defining those boundaries encounters, and is influenced by, a series of problems, most notably the conceptual confusion caused by the lack of precision in the definition of the words: al-Manhaj (method) and al-Madhhab (doctrine). This study aims at solving these problems by determining the points of convergence and divergence between what is purely objective and methodological and what is purely subjective and based on doctrinal affiliation. In order to achieve this goal, this paper used a conceptual approach to study the concepts of al-Manhaj (method) and al-Madhhab (doctrine) based on their maturity, and the agreement upon their meaning. The paper also demonstrated the impact of each criterion on objectivity in Islamic Thought. The methods of research used in this study are thematic and qualitative analysis.

Keywords: *Islamic Thought; Objectivity; Subjectivity; al-Manhaj; al-Madhhab*

Abstrak

Objektivitas adalah standar kunci untuk menilai setiap karya intelektual dalam Pemikiran Islam. Standar ini membantu membedakan antara karya metodologis yang dicirikan oleh objektivitas, dan karya doktrinal atau ideologis yang didominasi subjektivitas. Namun, ada hambatan besar yang menghalangi penerapan penilaian objektif ini; yaitu masalah penentuan batas antara al-Manhajiyah (metodologi) dan al-Madhhabiyah (pemikiran doktrinal atau ideologi) dalam Pemikiran Islam. Mendefinisikan batas-batas itu menghadapi dan dipengaruhi oleh serangkaian masalah, terutama kebingungan konseptual yang disebabkan oleh kurangnya ketepatan dalam definisi kata-kata: al-Manhaj (metode) dan al-Madhhab (doktrin). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memecahkan masalah-masalah tersebut dengan menentukan titik-titik konvergensi dan perbedaan antara apa yang murni objektif dan metodologis, serta apa yang murni subjektif dan berdasarkan afiliasi doktrinal. Untuk mencapai tujuan tersebut, tulisan ini menggunakan pendekatan konseptual untuk mengkaji konsep al-Manhaj (metode) dan al-Madhhab (doktrin) berdasarkan kematangannya, dan kesepakatan maknanya. Artikel ini juga menunjukkan dampak dari setiap kriteria pada objektivitas dalam Pemikiran Islam. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis tematik dan kualitatif.

Kata kunci: *Pemikiran Islam; objektivitas; Subyektivitas; al-Manhaj; al-Madhhab*

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مستخلص

إن الحكم المعياري على إنتاجات الفكر الإسلامي لابد أن يمر عبر محك التقييم الموضوعي؛ فبفضله يمكن التفريق بين العمل المنهجي الذي يتسم بالموضوعية وبين العمل المذهبي الذي تطغى عليه الذاتية. وتقف في طريق هذا التقييم الموضوعي إشكالات جوهرية على رأسها إشكال الفصل والوصل بين المنهجية والمذهبية في الفكر الإسلامي. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى حل إشكال الموضوعية في الفكر الإسلامي من خلال محاولة تعيين حدود الوصل والفصل بين المنهجية والمذهبية، وذلك باستخدام المدخل المفهومي الذي يدرس مفهومي المنهج والمذهب بناء على حظهما من معياري الاتفاق والنضج المحددين لمستوى الاصطلاح، ومدى تأثير ذلك في قضايا الموضوعية في الفكر الإسلامي. وقد استخدمت الدراسة أدوات منهجية متنوعة جمعت بين الاستقراء والوصف والتحليل والنقد؛ حيث استقرأت بعض تعريفات المنهج والمذهب واستعمالاتهما، ووصفت الحالة المفهومية والمستوى الاصطلاحي للفظين. وقد استخدمت المنهج النقدي لنقد مستوى دقة استعمال اللفظين وفقا لدلالتهما المفهومية والاصطلاحية. كما استعملت المنهج التحليلي لتحليل دلالة المنهج والمذهب وبيان أثرها في الفصل والوصل بينهما، ومن ثم في حل إشكال الموضوعية في الفكر الإسلامي.

الكلمات الرئيسيّة: الفكر الإسلامي؛ الموضوعية؛ الذاتية؛ المنهج، المذهب

A. INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent difficulties that face the objective assessment of any intellectual work in Islamic Thought, is the difficulty of differentiating between methodological and doctrinal/ideological work. The absence of strict criteria that distinguish methodology from doctrinal/ideological affiliation only exacerbates the problem. This is mainly due to the following reasons:

- Sometimes, methodology and doctrinal thinking overlap. Especially that, in Islamic sciences, methods and doctrines have accompanied each other since their inception.

- The meanings of *al-Manhajiyah* (methodology) and *al-Madhhabiyah* (doctrinal thinking or ideology) vary depending on the multiplicity of meanings of the terms *Manhaj* (Method) and *Madhhab* (Doctrine). The meanings also range from neutrality to positive and negative connotations.

The answer to the question of objectivity in Islamic Thought depends on addressing the problems of methodology and doctrine/ideology, from conceptual, theoretical, and practical perspectives. The conceptual approach is the area of this study. It can be tackled from different angles depending on the reasons responsible for the multiple definitions of the terms (al-*Manhaj*) and (al-*Madhhab*). Some of these reasons are: the translation of the terms,

their location in a conceptual network, and their terminological level according to their maturity and the agreement upon their meaning. This study is going to focus on the terminological level based on the agreement on the meanings of (al-*Manhaj*) and (al-*Madhhab*) and their maturity.

B. DISCUSSION

1. The agreement criterion and its impact on objectivity in Islamic Thought:

Al-Manhaj and al-Madhhab's share of the agreement criterion:

Terminological studies measure the strength of words by their maturity and agreement on their meaning. If a word is fully mature and agreed on its significance, it becomes a (*Mustalaḥ*) term. If it is less mature and its significance is not agreed upon, it becomes a (*Mafhūm*) concept.

Based on some definitions of the words *Manhaj* and *Madhhab*, it is obvious that they are inequal on a terminological level. This is due to the disparity in their share of the agreement criterion. While this criterion is not fully present in the word *Manhaj*, it is partially present in the word *Madhhab* at times and fully present in it at others, depending on the field that the word is used in. Therefore, the word *Manhaj* is a concept, whereas the word *Madhhab* is used in some fields as a concept and in others as a term.

Al-Madhhab (Doctrine) is used as a term in the fields of Jurisprudence and theology. In the first field, it means "A specific method of deriving legal rulings from their detailed evidence"[1]. In the second field, it means "Making an argument for what is required according to the method of theologists."[2] The two definitions are similar in that doctrine means in jurisprudence a specific method of deduction, and in theology it means a specific method of inference.

Al-Madhhab (Doctrine) and *al-Manhaj* (Method) are also used as concepts referring to multiple meanings. Their definitions are not precise and don't determine the content accurately. This is evident by analyzing some definitions of the two concepts.

Definitions of al-Manhaj:

There are multiple definitions of *al-Manhaj*; some of which are:

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[1] Muḥammad Rawwās Qalʻah'jī, *Muʻjam Lughat al-Fuqahāʾ*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dar An-Nafa'es, 2010), 389.

[2] Muḥammad Ali al-Tahanawi, *Mawsūʻat Kashāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn wa al-'Ulūm*, 1st ed, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Librairie Du Liban Publishers, 1996), 1504.

- "An orderly plan of several mental or sensory processes in order to detect or demonstrate the truth."[3]

- "The way to uncover the truth in science, through a range of general rules, that dominate the functioning of the mind and determine its processes until it reaches a known conclusion."[4]

- "A technique that works in a field of human knowledge, to reveal a truth or approach it by analysis and synthesis."[5]

- "Research methods and procedures in a field of knowledge."[6]

- "Items, tools, means, rules, steps and procedures that are components of methodology."[7]

    Based on the definitions above, we can notice the following differences:

- The first three definitions are more accurate because they combine two elements; the means and purposes. However, the fourth and fifth definitions mentioned the means only.

- The fifth definition goes beyond the statement of means and locates *al-Manhaj* within a larger system, which is the methodology.

- The means of *al-Manhaj* vary from being (rules, techniques, procedures, tools, means, and steps). These converging terms define the general framework of *al-Manhaj* without setting its exact terminological limits. The means also range from relying solely on the mind or using it with senses. This instability negatively affects the determination of the scope of *al-Manhaj*.

- The purpose of *al-Manhaj* ranges from revealing the truth, approaching it, proving and inferring it. Revealing the truth is an ambitious goal that makes *al-Manhaj* reliable. Approaching the truth is a realistic goal that gives *al-Manhaj* a relative aspect. Whereas proving and inferring is a complementary goal that supports the previous two goals and defends their results. By attaining this last goal, *Al-Manhaj* gains its objectivity. Another difference in the purposes of *al-Manhaj* regards the field of truth being researched. While the second definition restricts it to the field of science, other definitions expend it to include all aspects of life.

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[3] Academy of the Arabic Language, *Al-Muʿjam al-Falsafī* (Cairo: Alamiria Presses, 1983), 195.

[4] Abdur Rahman Badawī, *Manāhij al-Baḥth al-ʿilmī* (Cairo: Dar Al-Nahdah Al-ʿArabia, 1963), 3.

[5] ʿImad al-Dīn Khalil, "al-Manhaj al-ʿilmī wa al-Ruḥ al-ʿilmiya ʿinda Ibn Khaldun," in *Qadāyā al-Manhajiyah fī al-ʿlūm al-Islāmiyah wa al-Ijtimāʿiyah*, ed. Naṣr Muḥammad ʿĀrif (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1996), 265.

[6] Fatḥī Ḥassan Malkāwī, "Al-Tafkīr al-Manhajī wa Darūratuh," *Islāmiyat al-Maʿrifah Journal* 7, no. 28 (2002): 19.

[7] Sayf al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, "Ḥawla al-Manhajiyah al-Islāmiaha: Muqadimāt wa Taṭbīqāt," *al-Muslim al-Muʿāṣir Journal* 25, no. 100 (2001): 55.

Definitions of al-Madhhab:

Like *al-Manhaj*, *al-Madhhab* has also multiple definitions. Some of which are:

- "The way you go, and belief you hold."[8]
- "A set of principles and opinions that are relevant and coordinated held by a thinker or a school of thought."[9]
- "A set of scientific theories or opinions, in a field of thought or life, that are often interconnected and consistent with each other, and have representatives who believe in them, and spread and defend them."[10]

Based on the definitions above, we can notice the following differences:

- The second and third definitions consist of three elements, while the first definition contains only one.
- The first element is not agreed upon. It varies from being a belief, a set of principles and opinions, or a set of scientific theories and opinions. The scope of *al-Madhhab* is a subject of debate too. While some researchers free it from any restrictions, others limit it to specific fields of thought or life.
- The second element describes the nature of the first one. The second definition requires that the components of the first element be connected and coordinated. The third definition stipulates that the components of the first element be coherent and consistent. Coordination suggests external interference, while consistency suggests internal harmony.
- The third element determines the holder of the first element. However, the three definitions don't agree on its characteristics. Regarding the abundance of holders, the third definition emphasizes its importance by using the explicit plural (representatives). Whereas the second definition is not concerned with abundance. It uses the singular word (thinker) along with (school) that suggests plurality.

The identity of holders is also debatable. While it is vague in the third definition (representatives), it is more detailed and specific in the second one (thinker or school). Moreover, the definitions differ in determining the activities of holders. The second definition does not attribute any activity to them, whilst the third one mentions their activity in detail: (believing in a set of scientific theories or opinions, and spreading and defending them).

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[8] Jamīl Ṣalībā, *al-Mu'jam al-Falsafī*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1982), 361.
[9] Academy of the Arabic Language, *Al-Mu'jam al-Falsafī*, 174.
[10] 'Azmī Taha al-Sayid Ahmad, "Thaqafat al-Taqrīb bayna al-Madhāhib," *Risālat al-Taqrīb Journal*, no. 48 (2005): 18.

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The impact of disagreement over the meanings of al-Manhaj and al-Madhhab on objectivity in Islamic Thought:

The disagreement over the meanings of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* prevents the clarity of the relationship between them. The relationship between the term (*al-Madhhab*) and the concept (*al-Manhaj*) is unclear because it links a disciplined term to a concept whose significance has not been precisely defined. The same can be said about the concepts (*al-Manhaj*) and (*al-Madhhab*). Their relationship is unclear because it links two concepts whose significance has not been precisely defined.

The most appropriate solution to determine the relationship of *al-Manhaj* to *al-Madhhab* is to agree on the significance of the two concepts and elevate them to the status of precise terms. Such level of agreement can be achieved when it is a team, belonging to an accredited institution, who conducts the research and reaches conclusive results. However, this study is an individual work, and therefore does not qualify to have such binding results.

Since this study is an individual work, it is going to explore the boundaries between *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* based on the previous definitions only, using the following indicators:

The means indicator:

The means of *al-Manhaj* take the form of plans, rules, techniques, procedures, tools or steps. Looking at this indicator, away from other indicators, suggests that *al-Manhaj* is devoid of biases and subjectivity. The above-mentioned means seem to be merely means to reach a goal; their task is to ensure the transition from the starting point of a systematic research to its end.

The means of *al-Madhhab* take the form of deduction, inference, belief, set of principles and opinions, or a set of scientific theories and opinions. The means of *al-Madhhab* - with the exception of deduction and inference - are usually subjective; they reflect their owners' attitudes and philosophical backgrounds.

The comparison between the means of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* shows that *al-Manhaj* is totally neutral even if it doesn't sometimes seem to be, as in the case of Humanities. What seems to be subjective is due to the pre-*Manhaj* and post-*Manhaj*, i.e. to the perceptions and convictions of the researcher.

As for the means of *al-Madhhab*, it is obvious that deduction and inference are methodological. Therefore, *al-Madhhab* needs *al-Manhaj* since each doctrine uses methodological steps to complete its tasks. However, *al-Madhhab* doesn't imply absolute

deduction and inference like *al-Manhaj* does. It is a selective way of deducing and inferring, hence the source of its subjectivity.

The other means of *al-Madhhab* (belief, opinions, principles or theories) confirm its subjectivity and to what extent its nature differs from *al-Manhaj*. However, this doesn't negate the existence of contact between the two concepts. On this level, *al-Madhhab* refers to pre-*Manhaj*, that is to say the attitudes and assumptions from which the researcher proceeds before using *al-Manhaj*. They work as a theoretical framework that guides the research in its use of *al-Manhaj*. *Al-Madhhab* can also refer to post-*Manhaj*, which means the subjective results the researcher reaches after using *al-Manhaj* to give them credibility.

The purpose indicator:

Both *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* have objectives they seek to achieve. However, the comparison between them on that level indicates that their goals are different. The aim of *al-Manhaj* is to reveal, approach or prove the truth, while *al-Madhhab* seeks to spread and defend theories and opinions. From this perspective, we can safely say that *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* have different paths; One that aims to determine and demonstrate facts to others, and another that aims at justifying positions and gaining more followers.

Al-Manhaj and *al-Madhhab* are also different in the value of their purposes. The goals of *al-Manhaj* are more objective and have a higher scientific value than those of *al-Madhhab*. This entails that *al-Manhaj* (Method) and *al-Manhajiyah* (Methodology) have a higher level of objectivity than *al-Madhhab* (Doctrine) and *al-Madhhabiya* (Ideology).

However, the difference between the purposes of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* doesn't eliminate the possible connection between them, the most prominent of which is that they are an act of *Ijtihad* that may be right or wrong. In both of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* the researcher exhausts his efforts in studying an issue thoroughly and seeking a solution for it.

There is another similarity between the purposes of *al-Manhaj* as a concept and *al-Madhhab* as a term and concept:

- *Al-Manhaj* aims at detecting and demonstrating the truth.
- The objective of the term (*al-Madhhab*) in jurisprudence is to derive legal rulings from their detailed evidence.
- In theology, the term (*al-Madhhab*) sets as a goal making arguments according to the method of theologists.
- The aim of *al-Madhhab* as a concept is to spread and defend a set of scientific theories or opinions that its representatives believe in.

Based on these purposes it is obvious that *al-Madhhab*, as a term and concept, aims at reaching and demonstrating the truth, or what is believed to be the truth, in the field of jurisprudence and theology, or in a field of thought or life.

The system indicator:

The system indicator guarantees the consistency and regularity of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab*, especially that they cannot exist independently of a system. However, the share of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* of the system indicator is uneven, as the components of *al-Madhhab* constitute a system and the components of *al-Manhaj* form a system within a system.

The components of *al-Madhhab* are described in the definitions used in this study as being coordinated, interconnected and consistent with each other; Which means that these components can be organized in an internal system and don't need to belong to an external one.

On the other hand, *al-Manhaj* is linked to two systems; an internal within which it organizes its components, and an external within which it is organized and to which it belongs. The internal system is derived from the definition of *al-Manhaj* as (an orderly plan of several mental or sensory processes).

The external system is *al-Manhajiyah* (Methodology) to which *al-Manhaj* belongs. *Al-Manhajiyah* means in this context "the science of studying methods, their formation, construction, activation and operation. It is the method of methods in this regard. As for *al-Manhaj*, it is a set of Items, tools, means, rules, steps and procedures that are components of methodology".[11]

However, the similarity between *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* in having an internal system does not necessarily mean that this system is identical. Here are some differences between the two internal systems:

- *Al-Manhaj* has an internal system, and acquires characteristics from the means and purpose indicators, which ensures its objectivity, especially that it belongs to a larger system that constantly corrects its course.
- The internal system of *al-Madhhab* doesn't guarantee its objectivity. *Al-Madhhab* always needs *al-Manhaj* in order to ensure the correctness of its results or at least make them convincing. Therefore, *al-Madhhab* needs to be always linked to the internal and external systems of *al-Manhaj*. Otherwise, it will be purely subjective and ideological.

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[11] Sayf al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, "Al-Manhajiyah wa Adawātuhā min Manẓūrin Islamī," in *Al-Manhajiyah al-Islāmiyah*, ed. Ahmad Fouad Bāshā, Vol. 2 (Egypt: Dar al-Salam, 2010), 643.

2. The maturity criterion and its impact on objectivity in Islamic Thought:

Al-Manhaj and al-Madhhab's share of maturity:

Maturity is an additional criterion for measuring the terminological level of words. If a word is not sufficiently mature, then it is a concept, and if it is fully mature, it becomes a term. However, maturity is not tangible, which requires the use of its manifestations and indicators to determine the differences between *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab*. These indicators are: semantic precision, semantic exclusivity, and semantic context.[12]

The semantic precision indicator:

A term (*Mustalah*) is semantically precise when it refers exactly to a specific meaning that the specialists in a specific domain intend for it to convey. The term reaches the highest terminological level when each element of its definition has a specific role in building its meaning. This firm binding between the term and its definition requires ultimate precision, in a way that any addition or omission to the definition represents a different term. Based on this indicator, maturity was present in the jurisprudential and theological uses and meanings of *al-Madhhab* and made it a term in both fields.

Maturity is less present in the formation of a concept (*Mafhūm*) than it is in the formation of a term (*Mustalah*). This is due to the fact that the meaning of a concept is usually evasive and cannot be fully grasped. A concept can refer to several meanings that are hard to formulate in specific words within a specific definition. As a result, a concept's definition is subject to addition, omission, and multiplicity. However, the multiple definitions of a particular concept converge at common points that are its general framework. All these characteristics apply to *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* when they are used as concepts.

These new data, learned from the semantic precision indicator, do not add new information to our knowledge of the relationship between *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* and its influence on objectivity in Islamic Thought. They are merely a confirmation of our findings in the discussion of the agreement criterion.

The semantic precision of the term (*al-Madhhab*), and the lack of maturity and precision in the definition of the concepts (*al-Manhaj*) and (*al-Madhhab*), lead to several disagreements. Namely, the disagreement over the meanings of the two concepts, the disagreement over the nature of their relationship, and the disagreement over their relationship

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[12] For more details on these indicators, see:
Souad Kourime, "Al-Dirāsah al-Mafhūmiyah: Muqārabah Taṣawuriyah wa Manhajiyah," *Islāmiyat al-Maʿrifah Journal* 15, no. 60 (2010): 49-52.

to the term (*al-Madhhab*). This is a natural outcome because what is not mature, precise and specific cannot be subject to agreement.

The semantic exclusivity indicator:

Semantic exclusivity is a result to semantic precision. The exactitude of a term's reference to a specific meaning paves the way to an exclusive relationship between the two. We mean by semantic exclusivity that the term is unique in its precise indication of its meaning. Consequently, there is a mutual exclusivity between the signifier/term and the signified/meaning where the term and its definition refer exclusively to each other in a specific field of research. These characteristics apply to *al-Madhhab* when used as a term, especially in its jurisprudential meaning.

Semantic exclusivity is also a component of concept construction. However, concepts are less exclusive in their meanings than terms. A concept refers to a general semantic field rather than being restricted to a specific meaning within that field. This doesn't deny that a concept is unique and refers precisely to its semantic field. Hence, concepts differentiate no matter how close they get. The more exclusive a concept is, the less synonymous or homonymous it is to other concepts.

Nonetheless, the lack of semantic exclusivity leaves room to the misuse of concepts and the assumption that they may have synonyms or homonyms. Therefore, it is possible to approach the concepts (*al-Manhaj*) and (*al-Madhhab*) from two perspectives. Firstly, in terms of what they are synonyms with and homonyms to. Secondly, in terms of the points of intersection between their two semantic fields.

We are not going to tackle the first perspective since its precise scope is not the semantic exclusivity indicator. It is rather related to another aspect of the conceptual approach, specifically the conceptual network of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* and its impact on objectivity. That aspect also focuses on the semantic fields of the concepts to measure their broadness and narrowness, and to what extent they can overlap.

The second perspective analyzes the relationship between *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* as concepts and their relation to *al-Madhhab* as a term. It sheds a light on how the misuse of the two concepts leads to the possibility of them having synonyms and homonyms, and leads to the intersection between their two semantic fields. Since the use and misuse of terms and concepts is context related, the second perspective will be thoroughly discussed in the semantic context indicator.

The semantic context indicator:

Based on this indicator, the meaning of a term influences the context but is not affected by it. This is mainly due to the stability of the term's meaning, the agreement over it, and the high level of its semantic precision and exclusivity. The last two indicators guarantee that the term is self-sufficient, has a single meaning prior to its use in a context, and affects both the structure and meaning of a text. Since *al-Madhhab* is used in jurisprudence and theology as a term, it carries in each field a precisely defined conception that ensures the stability of its meaning.

As for concepts, *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* included, the lack of agreement over them and their lack of semantic precision make them vulnerable to the influence of context. However, their semantic exclusivity mitigates that effect. The higher the level of semantic exclusivity of a concept, the more it refers to a specific semantic field. Nonetheless, semantic exclusivity does not help in linking the concept to a specific meaning within that field. Thus, the uses of the concept are multiple and affected by the context either in a beneficial or a harmful way.

The influence of the context on the concept is beneficial when it is exploited to help the concept refer to a specific semantic field, and respects the specific semantic limits imposed by the concept's nature. Whereas the context's effect on the concept is damaging when it is utilized as an excuse for transgression in use. This is mainly due to the fact that the concept refers to a semantic field and not to a specific meaning within that field.

Although the study of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* based on the influence of the context on each concept opens new horizons for solving some objectivity issues in Islamic Thought, this paper is not going to focus on the influence of context from this perspective. The exact scope where to treat this subject is another aspect of the conceptual approach which is the conceptual network of each concept.

There is another angle from which to tackle the impact of context on the concepts (*al-Manhaj*) and (*al-Madhhab*). It is the extent to which the two concepts respond to their contextual relationship with each other, and how it impacts their delimitation and intersection. The inequality of the concepts' share of agreement and maturity causes their contextual relationship to affect their meanings either by broadening or narrowing their semantic fields, and thus to affect the issue of objectivity in Islamic Thought.

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The impact of al-Manhaj and al-Madhhab's contextual meanings on objectivity in Islamic Thought:

One of the basic facts of linguistics is that the parts of a discourse that surround a word can clarify its meaning. Yet, the interaction with context varies depending on the nature of each word based on its terminological level. The terms and concepts' response to their contextual relationship is much deeper and more complex than the response of ordinary words to their relationship when they are put in a context.

The terminological level of words is an essential key to understanding the power of context over them. A term's interaction with the context is different than that of a concept. Consequently, the contextual relationship between the term (*al-Madhhab*) and the concept (*al-Manhaj*) is different from the one between the two words when used as concepts. Additionally, the two relationships add a new dimension to the meanings of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab*. They generate a relational meaning that is other than the basic meaning of the term or concept.

In order to grasp the relational meaning, we need to measure *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab*'s response to the context, while taking into consideration the difference between the impact of context on the relationship between a concept and a term, and its impact on the relationship between two terms.

When a concept has a contextual relationship with other concepts, it becomes part of a system that gives it an additional connotation and makes alterations to its basic meaning. These alterations shape the semantic field of the concept and give it a semantic load that makes its significance more accurate. Naturally, the alterations can take different forms based on the particularities of each concept that is part of the contextual relationship.

When a concept is linked to a term within a contextual relationship, the meaning of the term remains the same, whereas the concept acquires a new relational meaning that has a stronger impact than the one resulting from the relationship between two concepts. The strong impact of the relational meaning makes the concept more precise and causes its semantic field to be more specific.

It is clear from the above that concepts are equivalent in the sense that they belong to a terminological level lower than the level of terms and higher than the level of ordinary words. As for the relationship between concepts and terms, it is necessarily uneven because terms outweigh concepts on the scale of terminological exactitude.

In what follows, we will study some uses of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* in a context. This study will demonstrate that there are many possible relationships between the two words

that generate multiple relational meanings. These meanings enrich the possibilities of delimitation and intersection between *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab*, and are the reason behind many objectivity issues in Islamic Thought.

The relational meaning of the term (al-Madhhab) and the concept (al-Manhaj) and its impact on objectivity in Islamic Thought:

In addition to the basic meaning of *al-Madhhab* and *al-Manhaj*, there is a relational meaning that the term and concept acquire when they are put in the same context. Here are some examples to extract the relational meaning from:

- "*Al-Madhhab* requires to be formed from a scientific *Minhāj* (method) of a team of scholars and researchers in which they build distinct and clear foundations for their thinking. Then each *Minhāj* (method) has a sect or school that embraces these foundations, defends and strengthens them by continuous research and study. These *Manāhij* (methods) or these *Madhāhib* (doctrines) or sects were not formed from the first disagreement. Rather, the disagreement begins, afterwards the different ideas crystallize, each opinion is rooted, its followers are known, and then the sects are formed."[13]

- "we say: *al- Manhaj* of *al-Shafi'i* in the principles of jurisprudence, or *al-Manhaj* of *al-Mu'tazila* in theology, and we mean their *Madhhab*."[14]

In these two contexts, *al-Madhhab* was used as a term in the two fields of jurisprudence and theology, whereas *al-Manhaj* was used as a concept. Therefore, the relationship between *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* is uneven. *Al-Madhhab* outweighs *al-Manhaj* on the scale of terminological exactitude. It is obvious from the second text that the response of the concept (*al-Manhaj*) to the contextual influence of the term (*al-Madhhab*) was so strong till the point that the concept was dragged to express the same content of the term.

The concept's drift towards the term suggests that *al-Manhaj* is a weak concept, and has no semantic specificity. In spite of that, *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* engage in a subtype relationship, within the uneven type, that flips this situation. In this subtype, *al-Madhhab* relies entirely on *al-Manhaj* regardless of its weakness. The power of the term over the concept in the terminological scale doesn't preclude the dependence of the term on the concept. To understand this new relationship fully, we will look thoroughly into two objectivity issues by discussing these two questions:

- How does *al-Manhaj* depend on *al-Madhhab* since the early stages of its formation?

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[13] Muhammad Abu Zahra, *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyah fī al-Siyāsah wa al-'Aqā'id wa Tārīkh al- Madhāhib al-Fiqhiyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī), 23.
[14] Malkāwī, "Al-Tafkīr al-Manhajī wa Darūratuh, 17.

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- To what extent does *al-Madhhab* depend on *al-Manhaj* regardless of the value judgments attributed to *al-Madhhab*?

The first objectivity issue states that *al-Madhhab* relies on *al-Manhaj* in all the stages of its formation. *Al-Manhaj* is very important to *al-Madhhab* in its foundation stage; it gives *al-Madhhab* its reason to be. The first text emphasized this importance by using verbs of action such as (require, form, build, embrace). these keywords hover around the same idea that no *Madhhab* can be born outside the crib of *al-Manhaj*.

Al-Manhaj is also crucial to *al-Madhhab* in the remainder of its stages. It helps *al-Madhhab* to function well and convince of its results. The first text stressed this value by pointing out that "each *Minhāj* (method) has a sect or school that embraces these foundations, defends and strengthens them by continuous research and study."[15] This means that defending *al-Madhhab* passes through defending *al-Manhaj* it is based on. Likewise, the strengthening of *al-Madhhab* goes through continuing research and study while using *al-Manhaj*. Therefore, *al-Madhhab* cannot survive without utilizing *al-Manhaj*, and the strength of *al-Madhhab* is determined by the strength of *al-Manhaj*'s foundations.

The second objectivity issue states that *al-Madhhab* leans on *al-Manhaj* regardless of the value judgments attributed to *al-Madhhab*. The reason behind this is that *al-Madhhab* depends entirely on the tools and procedures of *al-Manhaj* and its principles of thinking. *Al-Madhhab* can be rejected and based on *al-Manhaj* at the same time. The relationship between the concept and the term is not restricted to a stereotypical image in which reliance on *al-Manhaj* leads to the validity of *al-Madhhab* and acceptance of its results. *Al-Madhhab* that relies on *al-Manhaj* can be rejected for numerous reasons including: false premises, misuse of *al-Manhaj*, use of the wrong *Manhaj*.

The relational meaning of al-Madhhab and al-Manhaj as concepts and its impact on objectivity in Islamic Thought:

The concepts (*Al-Madhhab*) and (*al-Manhaj*) have a relational meaning they acquire when they are put in a context. Here are some examples of this relational meaning:

- "The methodological approach contains two integrated parts; the first one is ideological (*Madhhabī*). The second part is related to the practical and methodological procedures and steps that correspond to this approach. Each approach has methodological requirements that are consistent with its foundations and its own logic of visioning things."[16]

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[15] Abu Zahra, *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyah*, 23.

[16] Nūr al-Dīn Zimām, "Ishkāliyat al-Madkhal al-Manhajī al-Islāmī fī Ḥaql al-Sūsyūlūjiyā," *Majallat al-ʻUlūm al-Insāniyah of Mohamed Khider de Biskra University* 7, no. 12 (2007), 140.

- "If *al-Manhajiyah* (methodology) is related to the framework of civilization, then its links to *madhhabiyāt* (ideologies) of that civilization are closer and stronger. This leads to adapting the *Manhaj* (method) of thought to achieve the purposes that *al-Madhhabiyah* (doctrinal thinking or ideology) advocates and preaches. This is not limited to the theoretical aspects of *al-Manhaj*. It extends to the applied methodology and the results of science; which leads to subordinating these results to ideological interests. This subordination often collides with the agreed upon moral and humanitarian standards."[17]

The two texts highlight the equivalent relationship of the two concepts. In this context, *al-Manhaj* refers to a set of procedures and practical steps, whereas *al-Madhhab* stands for a particular perception and logic of visioning things. The first text puts emphasis on this equivalent relationship between the two concepts when it presents them as two integrated parts of one approach. This suggests that the concepts are equal on the scale of terminology. In spite of that, *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* engage in a subtype relationship, within the equivalent type, that flips this situation. In this subtype, *al-Manhaj* relies entirely on and is influenced by *al-Madhhab*.[18]

In order to understand this new relationship fully, we will look thoroughly into three objectivity issues by discussing the following questions:

- How does *al-Madhhab* influence *al-Manhaj* in all the stages of its formation?
- To what extent does *al-Manhaj* influence *al-Madhhab* regardless of the value judgments attributed to *al-Madhhab*?
- On what basis does *al-Madhhab* need *al-Manhaj* while the latter is influenced by the former?

The first objectivity issue is about the influence of *al-Madhhab* on *al-Manhaj* since the beginning of its formation. Since *al-Manhaj* refers to tools and procedures, it needs issues to operate on. Treating these issues is undertaken by a party that has its own opinion on the issue under study. This opinion refers to *al-Madhhab* when used as a concept. As a

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[17] Salāḥ ‘Abd al-Muta‘āl, "Al-Manhajiyah al-Islāmiyah wa al-Ma‘āyīr al-Akhlāqiyah li al-Baḥth," in *Al-Manhajiyah al-Islāmiyah wa al-‘Ulūm al-Sulūkiyah wa al-Tarbawiyah*, ed. Al-Ṭayeb Zin al- ‘Ābidīn (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995), 254.

[18] This subtype relationship is consistent with the results of discussing the relational meaning of the term (*al-Madhhab*) and the concept (*al-Manhaj*) and their subtype relationship. The two subtypes complete each other because they focus on sequential stages of the term's (*al-Madhhab*) and concepts' (*al-Madhhab* and *al-Manhaj*) formation. The lifespan of the two words starts with al-Madhhab as a concept. Then comes *al-Manhaj* to lay the foundations of *al-Madhhab* and supply it with tools and procedures. When these methodological foundations find a sect or school to embrace and defend them, they become a doctrine and refer to *al-Madhhab* as a term.

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consequence, the nature of the issue and the vision of the person/s who study it control the determinants of *al-Manhaj*.

The first and second text put emphasis on this new relational meaning by using keywords such as (consistent with, subordinating). The two texts also state that *al-Manhaj* is dependent on *al-Madhhab* in the remainder of its stages such as the theoretical foundations and the applied methodology that bend the results of science to ideological interests.

The second objectivity issue is related to the influence of *al-Madhhab* on *al-Manhaj* regardless of the value judgments attributed to *al-Madhhab*. The ideology and vision of the person/s who study the issue that *al-Manhaj* operates on, control the choice of *al-Manhaj*'s elements. This control is confirmed by the fact that *al-Manhaj* is basically neutral and objective. Otherwise, not all *Madhāhib* could rely on *al-Manāhij* and bend them to their service.

The first and second context confirm that *al-Madhhab* influences *al-Manhaj* in all its forms. In the first text, the two concepts are interrelated without specifying the value of *al-Madhhab*. The second text links *al-Manhaj* to the *madhhabiyāt* (ideologies) of civilization. These ideologies can be either objective or subjective, positive or negative; which means that *al-Manhaj* is related to *al-Madhhab* without taking its value into consideration.

The third objectivity issue states that *al-Madhhab* as a concept needs *al-Manhaj* just like the term (*al-Madhhab*) did. This means that the affected element (*al-Manhaj*) determines the fate of *al-Madhhab*. It is clear from the second text that *al-Madhhab* needs to lean on a *Manhaj* (method) of thinking to achieve the goals it preaches. Without this method, *al-Madhhab* remains an opinion held by a specific party without having the methodological qualifications to become a full *Madhhab*.

C. CONCLUSION

This study highlighted some of the most important research keys to solving the issues of objectivity in Islamic Thought through a conceptual approach. The final solution to the objectivity issues should be subject to the comprehensive study of all dimensions of the conceptual problematic and the subsequent theoretical and practical problematics that control the relationship between *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab*.

Some of the theoretical and practical issues that should be tackled in future studies are:

- Value judgments of *al-Manhaj* and *al-Madhhab* are sometimes relative, which leads to disagreement on their assessment due to differences in points of view.

- Some components of *al-Manhaj* and its procedural steps may not maintain their absolute normative nature. They may lose it during practice or due to scientific progress.

- Practically speaking, not every piece of work that uses *al-Manhaj* is methodological and void of all doubt and suspicion. Similarly, not every piece of work that defends *al-Madhhab* is an act of ideology.

- The human phenomenon is complex, and is a fertile ground for confusing subjectivity with objectivity. This problem worsens in the areas of Islamic Thought where the subject of research is the human phenomenon. In such areas the human being becomes the source and subject of the study at the same time.

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