

## CHAPTER FIVE



# Discourse and its Audience

### FEATURES OF THE DISCOURSE AND TYPES OF AUDIENCE (SEE FIGURE 5.1)

The features of Islamic epistemological discourse vary according to the type of audience to which the discourse is addressed. Hence, given that there are many audiences, there must necessarily be many forms of discourse. Although the discourse concerned deals with a single theme, the type of discourse will vary according to the audience addressed and what they are prepared to do and the tasks for which they are responsible in the process of reforming Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge.

It would be difficult in such a brief study to do a comprehensive inventory of all types of audiences – which include all adult, fully accountable members of all human societies – or to identify the features and content of the discourse for each of these audiences. However, we will attempt to spell out these contents and features for a sample which we believe to represent the majority of the audiences of concern. Following is a survey and classification of most categories of audiences within the Islamic world:

- 1) Officials,
- 2) Secularists,
- 3) Members of Islamic movements,
- 4) Graduates of religious universities and schools,
- 5) Those who approach matters from a superficial perspective,
- 6) Proponents of compromise and eclecticism,
- 7) The general populace,
- 8) University students,
- 9) Academics (researchers and university professors).

### 1) OFFICIALS (SEE FIGURE 5.2)

Most officials in the Islamic world tend to be circumspect with regard to Islamic intellectual awareness and international cultural awareness. Such circumspection exists for numerous reasons which we need not explain at great length. However, one of these reasons may well be that the proposal of a cultural and epistemological alternative from an Islamic perspective runs counter to the policies which govern existing educational and cultural systems, which have grown accustomed to unilateralism and frown on competition to their own proposals.

This does not mean, however, that it is not possible to gain any foothold whatsoever within the ranks of officialdom. There are a number of academicians and knowledgeable individuals who would like to introduce that which is of use and benefit through the institutions which they head and the centers in which they work. Hence, some of them may be able to offer assistance in raising people's awareness of this issue and recruiting resources in its support. Thus there is no room for blanket judgments; rather, there must be observation and investigation in order to gain access to individuals with this type of positive attitude.

Our cause needs to be presented to such people in a manner which convinces them that the changes we are seeking to introduce will help in resolving many crises. In addition, these changes need to be linked to their own interests and concerns. If such a process is successful, these people may help us present our cause to others rather than standing in its way. It also bears noting that most regimes have begun to recognize many areas in which their educational systems are inadequate, and that some of them have begun searching in earnest for the appropriate means to reform these systems. Hence, we must develop expertise in these areas which can be offered to those who need it at the suitable time. The initial efforts made by the IIIT and the expertise which it offered to individuals and institutions seeking out its assistance in reforming and redirecting some aspects of the educational process, have had the effect of building mutual trust. Thus we need to increase our capabilities and expertise in order to ensure a role for ourselves in the reform of instruction and the educational process, and in the construction of a data base in this area – on both the theoretical and practical levels, and on the levels of individuals, ideas, institutions and programs – which can be of great benefit to the entire Ummah.

## 2) SECULARISTS (SEE FIGURE 5.3)

As for secularists, they must not be looked upon as blocs or parties whose members are all marked by the same mentality, or who all have identical visions of the universe and life. The Qur'an has taught us that each group to which this designation applies has a 'council of elders' as it were, or an elite, and that beyond this elite there is a general public. If we can get past the elite to the general public, we will be able to speak to them directly and communicate our message to them clearly. In this way, we can persuade them that we are elements of change whose aim is to rebuild the Ummah and restore its civilizational witness. From the general public, we may win over many individuals who belong to the silent majority, who have only supported the elite in the belief that it is capable of fulfilling the Ummah's aims and hopes. As for the elite itself, it will defend its positions and attitudes and exert every effort to resist and cast aspersions on our ideas. This, of course, is the nature of the tug-of-war which marks the world and its ways; however, the ultimate victory will belong to the God-fearing. Our cause has been mocked by many who belong to this category; however, some of them have begun to examine themselves and apologize for their ignorance of our cause and its aims and the haste with which they attacked it, basing their judgments on invalid comparisons with other causes or movements.

In addition, dealing with this group of people might be turned into an opportunity through efforts to create a counter-trend in secularist circles themselves. Such a counter-trend would have its own theses relating to the Islamization of knowledge which it could employ in the process of shaking the intellectual and epistemological convictions held by members of the elite. Its criticism of the epistemological foundations of Western civilization in a serious, scientific, coherent manner would serve – together with the process of encouraging this group to broaden the base of its criticism of Western theses overall – to win over some of its adherents in favor of 'Islamic knowledge.'<sup>1</sup>

Given the fact that secularists will be on the lookout for the slightest slip-up on our part and be quick to criticize any move we make and expose the faults and loopholes in our thought, we can make the best of their surveillance of us and our proposals and projects by seeking to correct some of our faults and to tie the loopholes in our arguments, then continue to build. This is still

another benefit of contact with this group.

On the other hand, and given the diverse nature of this group, there are bound to be varying responses on the part of its adherents. Some of them will see this intellectual proposal as a renewed attempt at reform which is intelligent and worthy of being discussed. Others will reject and attack it based on their belief that it is a step on the way toward excluding them from their positions of intellectual, cultural and epistemological influence and power. Still others, by contrast, will be accepting of it and understand the true nature of what is being proposed, thereby signaling their imminent transition from being secularists to being Islamists and adopting the latter's issues and views.

Given our success in attracting a number of thinkers who had previously been in the service of other currents of thought and action, we are delighted to have been able to engage and win over a group of well-informed and intelligent intellectuals who have played a pivotal role in enriching contemporary Islamic thought and helped augment the expertise of Muslim leaders. In doing so they succeeded in restoring confidence to Muslims across the world. They also proved that it was wrong to rush to criticise and accuse them of disloyalty and apostasy simply because they had adopted worldly and practical approaches and projects which they strongly believed would be of benefit to Muslim societies and communities.

The IIIT has endured reproach, criticism and at times, even out-and-out accusations from certain 'moribund worshipers of the past.' However, it has stayed its course. And those who attended the "Bias" seminar in Cairo and listened to the dialogues among its participants will realize that by God's grace, the Institute has taken a huge step toward constructing the "Islamic civilizational project" which can no longer be adopted by any particular group within the Ummah in isolation from all others. The Institute can thus demonstrate that the 'epistemological entry point' is the most successful means by which to marshal the resources of the entire Ummah and to place them on a level from which, working in concert and calling upon their varied expertise and starting points and the 'unified Qur'anic epistemological methodology', they can, God willing, implement the Ummah's civilizational enterprise. As for 'moribund worship of the past,' it is headed for extinction no matter how intensely it flashes and thunders in the meantime.

### 3) MEMBERS OF ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS (SEE FIGURE 5.4)

The Islamic movements are currently dominated by the trend which is referred to, and which refers to itself, as 'Salafite'. This trend attempts to lend a doctrinal, or at best, juristic focus to its dialogue about anything and everything. Hence, as a result of complex conditions and circumstances, including those of persecution, pursuit, displacement of people from their homes and homelands, unrest and uprisings, intellectual leadership positions in these movements have shifted to individuals who, as a result of these same circumstances and conditions, have been so confined to the arena of conflict that they were unable to gain the experience and expertise needed in order to engage in intellectual or political action, or to realize the importance of the intellectual dimension and of a civilizational approach to the issues they face.

In addition, the attenuated role now played by Egypt and the Levant in particular, together with the emerging influence of the Iraqi and Gulf Islamic school as an intellectual, doctrinal and juristic leader in the Islamic sphere following the well-known economic transformations that have occurred over the past century, have led to a diminution in the role of thought in the directions taken by these movements and in their cultural structure. Consequently, most of them view the intellectual issue, the intellectual crisis and what we have termed the epistemological entry point as a kind of intellectual luxury. Alternatively, they view them as an error in diagnosing the crisis being faced by the Ummah, as a threat to their organizational methods and movement-related systems, as a rationalist attempt or conspiracy to propose an alternative to what they themselves offer, or as a consciousness-raising enterprise which will alter the map of loyalty or undermine the public's confidence in their leadership and reveal its bankruptcy and vulnerability. Some of these trends believe that their strength lies in their ability to perpetuate their various audiences' trust in their leadership. This trust, however, has become an easy substitute for self-awareness, awareness of the prevailing situation, of others, and awareness of the mission itself.

In fact, it is not in the nature of an intellectual or cultural enterprise in its beginning stages to try to attract audiences or to form organizational bases. Moreover, the current represented by the Islamization of knowledge does not present itself as a substitute for any of the Islamic movements now active in countries. Rather, it views its function as that of filling the gap which exists

in the area of thought, knowledge and culture. For indeed, it is a gap which has long been neglected or, at the very least, has not been given the attention which it merits. The affirmation that we have simply stationed ourselves on the frontier of intellectual, epistemological, cultural and civilizational issues ought to provide sufficient reassurance, to those in need of such reassurance, that this trend is not a threat but, rather, a source of protection which purifies and vouches for the means being employed by the Ummah. As such, it offers genuine assistance, helping those who are laboring sincerely to rescue the Ummah rather than competing with them or seeking to crowd them out of the positions they occupy on their own frontiers.

Moreover, in accordance with its intellectual theses and principles, the Islamization of knowledge trend goes beyond the doctrinal focus which is bound to slip into the slough of *takfir* (labeling others as nonbelievers), be they the society as a whole, individuals or particular schools of thought, and which tends in the direction of violence and conflict with all other groups and organizations. By contrast, the Islamization of knowledge trend stresses its intellectual approach as a unanimous base which unites rather than divides. It seeks to the greatest extent possible to avoid sliding down the slippery slope of *takfir*, including judgments on groups or individuals. The intellectual approach naturally moves us to analyze positions and ascertain their backgrounds, intellectual features, and underlying motives, a process which requires careful reflection and a comprehensive, thought-based solution. Such reflection and solutions rest on a foundation of doctrinal principles which serve not as a basis for declaring others as nonbelievers but, rather, as an intellectual foundation which draws inspiration from the true essence of Islamic law, its spirit and intents. Hence, it does not oversimplify issues or sum them up neatly in the form of a legal decree against this person or a verdict against that. Rather, it is aware of each issue as a question; it serves such a question by seeking to deal with and answer it; and it studies it as a phenomenon.

The cause needs to be presented to these movements' youth and intellectuals in a coherent, suitable manner, then many of them may adopt it or benefit from many of its aspects. In such cases, they may include it in their projects and programs or present it anew as part of their own theses and ways of dealing with issues. For many of these movements have, in fact, adopted the intellectual proposals presented by advocates of reform and renewal, such as Shaykh Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab, Imam al-Shawkani, Shah Wali

Allah al-Dahlawi, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad ‘Abduh, and others who either preceded or followed them. Moreover, the evolution which is taking place in some countries and in some of these movements is bound to place them in the position to adopt this cause, in full or in part. Hence, with regard to these movements, it is a matter of perseverance, proper presentation, a varied approach to presenting the cause, wisdom in building relationships, expressing gratitude toward those who have shown us kindness, and enduring patiently those who have offended or treated us badly. Indeed, the leaders of some of these movements have begun to grasp some of the ideas being presented by the IIIT school. Some paraphrase them in their own styles, then disseminate them among their followers without any reference to the Institute or its writers. We are delighted that these movements are using IIIT’s work; after all what matters is that sound intellectual sustenance reaches the Ummah, not how it reaches them, under whose name, or accompanied by which slogans. The youth of these movements may criticize the IIIT for not joining their group, which is presenting the same ideas (!), forgetting – or pretending to forget – the danger that partisan thinking poses to the concept of ‘Ummah’ in cases of intellectual backwardness.

The issue of establishing and clarifying the movement’s roots and origins, and the confirmation that it is a link in the long chain of attempts at intellectual and cultural reform is another fundamental issue which must not be neglected. It may have begun with the attempt to preserve the Qur’an by writing it, followed by the preservation of the Sunnah by compiling and recording it. These two steps were then followed towards the end of the 2nd Century AH by the preparation, compilation and recording of method, and subsequent attempts at intellectual and cultural revival and renewal by imams of the first Islamic centuries and the great imams who came after them. These include Ibn Surayj, al-Juwaynī, Abū Yūsūf, [Abū] Muḥammad, al-Ghazālī, and the scholars who prepared the way for the era of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, and Ibn Khaldūn. These thinkers were followed by the leaders of modern reform whose movements were distinguished by the manner in which they dealt with the issue of *ijtihād* vs. *taqlīd*, or independent reasoning vs. imitation. Representatives of this latter movement include Shah Wali Allah al-Dahlawi, Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, al-Shawkani, al-Afghani, al-Na’ini, Muhammad ‘Abduh, Rashid Rida, and leaders of the modern Islamic reform movement such as al-

Mawdudi, Ibn Bādīs, Shari‘ati, al-Banna, Mutahhiri, Qutb, and others.

Linking this cause with the overall Islamic reform movement may serve to reassure some of the leaders of these movements, thereby enabling them to understand it more readily and to be more receptive to it. In keeping with the human need for continuity, God commanded the Prophet saying, “Say: ‘I am not the first of God’s apostles.’”<sup>2</sup>

A third matter to which attention needs to be drawn is that there are certain key words which, if they appear in a discourse, cause members of this group to respond to the message in a reserved manner, and to associate it with certain trends which are unacceptable to their overall membership. Similarly, there are certain words and names which have the opposite effect, such that their very presence in a discourse inspires confidence and peace of mind. An awareness of this phenomenon needs to be reflected in our literature and style of communication. It is likewise important to steer clear of partisan tendencies, points of disagreement and the polarization they engender in order to prevent our cause from becoming a source of conflict and cause it to become, instead, the authoritative intellectual point of reference for all of them when the time is right.

In addition to the points already mentioned, we must take care to establish friendly relations with thinkers and intellectuals, engage as much as possible in dialogue with educated youth and share their cultural concerns. Then we can build common ground and help to allay fears. In addition, this increases the possibility of transforming this trend into an opportunity rather than its continuing to be a hindrance. We hope to return later to this theme, since the most important factors which have thwarted attempts at renewal during the past two centuries lie in the conflicts that have arisen among differing reform movements and their preoccupation one with another.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4) GRADUATES OF RELIGIOUS UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOOLS

(SEE FIGURE 5.5)

This group, many of whose subgroups and members are keen on being the official spokespersons for Islam, has received a traditional, historical education in the areas of jurisprudence and its fundamentals, hadith, language, and the like. They have grown accustomed to the notion that due to their expert-

ise they have the right to determine the legitimacy of discussing Islam, particularly in the area of knowledge (both *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifah*). Hence, they staunchly resist the proposal of anything which would dislodge them from this position or marginalize their role in this respect.

The issue of thought and the Islamization of knowledge is one which diagnoses the ills and problems which afflict the Ummah, and which prescribes as their treatment both independent reasoning and contemporary thought. Independent reasoning is something which some of them advocate; however, they do not practice it themselves, either because they lack courage, or because they lack the necessary tools. Imitation offers ease and equanimity, whereas independent reasoning brings responsibility, strain, and potential hardship and risk.

The Islamization of knowledge attempts to go beyond the ancient methods of presenting Islam adopted by scholastic theology. It also attempts to go beyond an approach which is strictly juristic and particularistic in its perspective. For dealing with issues from the perspective of scholastic theology without applying the principles relevant thereto is destructive, while dealing with them from a juristic perspective without applying the relevant conditions is divisive. By contrast, our approach is one which insists on taking into account human, temporal and spatial dimensions, as well as universals, intents, ultimate aims and governing values. In doing so, it puts each of these in its place and within its proper framework. Most factions belonging to this group see historical Islamic jurisprudence in its existing form as sufficient for the Ummah's needs. At the same time, they view the requirements of our mission as entailing additional burdens and costs which they cannot bear, or which they are not qualified to deal with. In fact, the tasks involved in what we are calling for would be a source of embarrassment to them, since they would expose their impotence or their failure if they did not move quickly to master the needed tools, which is not a trifling thing. Such groups have grown accustomed to placing responsibility on others' shoulders and dealing with Islamic issues and questions simply by handing out advice, exhortations, directions or legal decisions which others are expected to understand and act on. They communicate the message that it is others, not themselves, who are responsible for deviation, error, negligence and backwardness. As for the question of how people are to implement their directives or translate them into reality, what tools and methods this calls for, and how to educate coming

generations in such a way that they understand, digest and commit themselves to them, this is other people's responsibility.

This group are suspicious of ways of thinking that distribute responsibility and define roles, making all individuals and groups aware of their responsibilities and demanding that they faithfully carry them out. Consequently, such an approach simply galvanizes resistance on their part, entrenching them all the more firmly in the ranks of the opponents to the cause. However, it is possible to deal with this group in a manner which helps to turn this obstacle into an opportunity, and the members of this group into supporters for the cause rather than opponents. Most people who belong to this category are pure-hearted and sincere, and they rejoice to see Islam being served well so long as the way in which this is done does not clash with the aforementioned conceptions on their part.

The issues we face call for many technical studies in such people's areas of specialization, and it may be possible to recruit many talents which exist among them by means of research projects, individual and group studies, the process of making the Islamic literary heritage available, and invitations to take part in conferences and dialogues. Some might be called to offer counsel and advice based on their expertise in their fields, while we might also offer suitable suggestions to them. Eventually they will begin to realize that our cause gives them an important role along with all other groups with expertise to offer within the Ummah. This role can create in them greater awareness and rescue them from the marginal role to which they have been relegated since the fall of the Ottoman Empire – bearing in mind that it was this marginalization of their roles which made them vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by certain rulers. We need to make clear to them that they have a significant role to play and then many of them will become part of the cause's potential, and sources of assistance and support. At the same time, growing awareness of the cause and its aims among members of the Ummah will be a catalyst to win them over.

Some of these individuals might view the theses associated with the cause as a new source of authority with which they can impose their control over the remaining cultural arenas (the arenas of the social sciences and the humanities). However this trend must be brought to a halt, and, through academic production, the roles of all concerned must be defined and clarified. In this way, such confusion and ambiguity can be eliminated, the purity of the cause

can be preserved, and the role of each type of knowledge, as well as each type of expert, can be specified in a systematic way.

##### 5) THOSE WHO APPROACH MATTERS FROM A SUPERFICIAL PERSPECTIVE (SEE FIGURE 5.6)

The Qur'an presents itself to people as an exemplar of simplicity and ease, and at the same time, as miraculous. Its ease and simplicity are mentioned explicitly in the verse, "Indeed, We made this Qur'an easy to bear in mind: who, then, is willing to take it to heart?"<sup>4</sup> At the same time, God challenges people on the basis of the Qur'an and makes clear its miraculous nature in a number of verses which end with His declaration, "Say: 'If all mankind and all invisible beings would come together with a view to producing the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce its like even though they were to exert all their strength in aiding one another!'"<sup>5</sup>

Our cause is, first and foremost, a Qur'anic cause. It aims to make the Divine Revelation – the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which is both an explication of the Revelation and founded thereon – the starting point for thought and a source of culture, knowledge, development, and civilizational witness. Therefore, it must be a cause characterized by ease and simplicity which does not address the elite alone while bypassing the general populace, or deal solely with the select few while overlooking the masses, since its purpose is to reach the entire Ummah. There are numerous means of achieving this aim which we need to be aware of and to make use of. Both the Qur'an and the Sunnah contain innumerable examples which serve to define these means. The process of *taysīr*, or facilitation, is one which takes an issue that could have been presented in the most complex manner and makes it easy, accessible, and comprehensible. Due to the simplicity with which it has been presented and discussed and the examples which have been cited to clarify its meaning, an individual who knows nothing about it, no matter what his culture or educational background, will be able to conceptualize it and perceive all of its dimensions.

As for *tasfīh*, the superficial approach to matters, it is an epistemological process which aims to define the manifestations of something, or its outward surface. The superficial presentation of a topic does not give a full picture of its

varied dimensions; rather, it portrays its exterior only. Some of the means employed in *tasfīh* resemble those employed in *taysīr*. Therefore it is necessary to point out the difference between the two processes. For example, facilitation may be accomplished through abridgment or summarization; however, if not done properly, such abridgment or summarization may then lead in its turn to *tasfīh*. *Tasfīh* may result from preoccupation with form over content, from the desire to win others over and to muster rapid support, from haste to see the fruits of one's efforts and to maximize such fruits, as well as from other factors.

As for those who are most liable to turn our cause into a superficial issue, they belong to two groups. The first of these groups are those who reject and oppose our cause. Such individuals attempt to present it in a superficial manner in order to mock the aspirations of its proponents and demonstrate its non-viability, thereby dissuading people from adopting and supporting it. Examples of such efforts include the article by Zaki Najib Mahmud in *Al-Ahram* newspaper entitled, "Laki Allah Yā 'Ulūm al-Insān!" ("You Have God, O Humanities!"), and an article which appeared in *al-Yamamah* magazine published in Riyadh and in which the cause is presented by a number of secularist professors, as well as writings on the topic by Sayyid Yasin, Mahmud Amin al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Alam, al-Tibi, Diya' al-Din Sardar, and others.

However, such efforts are bound to be thwarted by our persistent determination in presenting our cause to the Ummah in all its varied dimensions, by our linking of it to the solutions to many crises, and by citing examples and models which help to deepen the sense of need for it and demonstrate the necessity of establishing the origins of the Ummah's ideas by means of thorough scientific investigation. We have published studies which draw links between the crisis of thought and culture in the Islamic world and problems associated with development, unity, democracy, human rights, etc. Their attempts will likewise be frustrated by our criticism of what they present in a varied and objective fashion through the writings of diverse authors and by the use of varied means and methods, all of which help greatly to increase confidence in our cause and create awareness of its importance and depth.

As for the second group that 'superficializes' our cause, it includes people who have understood Islam in a superficial way and assume that, in order to 'Islamize' something, all that is required is for the person who presents it to be a Muslim and to place it within an outwardly Islamic framework. Someone

might be impressed by an article on the subject of epistemology or civilization by a secularist, whether Western or Eastern. This same person might also believe that in order to Islamize this article, all he needs to do is to remove the word 'secularist', 'Western', or whatever other appellation it happens to contain, and replace it with the word 'Islamic.' He thus reduces the process of Islamization to abstract words and transmutes it into nothing but a framework, a form, or a slogan. In doing so, he has failed to take account of the philosophical, methodological, intellectual and epistemological differences which exist between one way of treating an issue and another. In other words, he has paid no attention to the influence of one's rational, human perspective and its intellectual and cultural components on the manner in which intellectual and cultural issues are dealt with, and has failed to comprehend the nature of concepts and the ways in which they are comprehended and applied. As a consequence, such a person does harm to the cause even though he believes himself to be serving it.

This problem results from both a cancerous attachment to imitation and an intellectual vacuum. Driven by a variety of motives, those who suffer these two maladies rush to pick up on any thesis that happens to be put forward. Then they package it up neatly in this or that form, mold or phrase and present it on behalf of its original proponents as though it were the entire issue or cause. Careful examination yields numerous clear examples of this phenomenon.

It would be useful to observe and track this type of 'superficialization.' It would then be possible to contact those whom it is reasonable to believe are acting out of pure motives, then attempt to recruit some of them connected with the media, if possible, and correct their conceptions by explaining the most important requirements of the Islamization of knowledge. In this way, adherents of this way of thinking may be persuaded to modify their ideas in such a way that they set foot on the path that leads to working in service to the cause. As for those who engage in the process of *tasfīh* with destructive motives, in order to lay siege to the cause and isolate it, the ideas they present in this connection need to be exposed and discredited, since they are on the order of counterfeiters, who offer something fake in order to oust what is genuine.

## 6) PROPONENTS OF COMPROMISE AND ECLECTICISM

(SEE FIGURE 5.7)

The orientation represented by the process of intellectual and epistemological compromise and eclecticism approaches the epistemological issue from a superficial perspective. However, attention needs to be drawn to three levels of this process:

### *a) Level One*

Eclecticism within the Western authoritative framework does not stop to examine the basic foundations, principles and universals which should govern the process of compromise when it is an absolute necessity. There is a vast difference between eclecticism and compromise. On this level, the individual chooses from Islam, its legacy and its civilization that which supports preconceived ideas (an ideology) on his part, or joins such ideas to Islam by force.

The dangerous nature of this process appears in attempts at Westernization which are couched in language which claims to have read and understood the Islamic legacy with an awareness of its historical context, and to be applying modern Western methods to Islam and its sources. Such an approach may appear to be highly systematic and serious. In reality, however, it possesses nothing but the appearance and form of methodology, while lacking its essence and basic principles. In addition, it passes over a number of fundamental contradictions between the 'authoritative Islamic framework' and the 'authoritative Western framework.' Thus, such an approach makes no attempt to investigate what might be termed 'methodological fitness.' Instead, it imposes methods on Islamic studies which are not suited to them, while at the same time, it ignores methodological principles which have become mainstays of the Islamic intellectual tradition, such as the fundamentals of jurisprudence and the principles underlying the code of conduct that governs research and debate.

*b) Level Two*

This level is preceded by processes in which elements are put together in an eclectic fashion within an 'authoritative traditional framework.' Such processes fail to take cognizance of an understanding of reality and the most important of its evolving dimensions, and demonstrate no concern for the importance of distinctions. In addition, such a perspective is based on an attitude which views the entire Islamic legacy as sacred, assuming it to be characterized by infallibility or absolute superiority. Consequently, it maintains that rather than simply emulating the approaches adopted by scholars of old in dealing with the various circumstances and cases which they faced, it is possible to apply traditional Islamic models to today's world completely. The superficial nature of this process may be seen in its failure to provide solutions to real problems, contenting itself instead with a kind of intellectual cud-chewing of the Islamic legacy without the slightest awareness of either history and tradition, or the present and future.

*c) Level Three*

As for the third level, it involves piecing together the idea of the Islamization of knowledge out of a desire to offer solutions as quickly as possible, particularly given the fact that the Islamization of knowledge is still in its early stages and, as such, still in the process of establishing and clarifying its roots. In fact, not all of its aspects, whether in the realm of thought, knowledge or method, have been clearly established or defined yet. Consequently, what it has offered thus far is still in the form of a set of ideas, principles and plans, many of which have not been chosen in a precise manner within an academic or activist framework, although steps in this direction have begun. In keeping with this fact, it is necessary to continue with efforts to establish the cause's roots and principles in order to complete the foundations of the primary idea and to provide a precise explanation of its elements through ongoing, creative additions in this connection. Those involved in the cause likewise need to recruit the efforts of those who can write about the cause in a forceful, cogent manner. These individuals need to have expended notable efforts in the intellectual realm and have the ability to undertake such writing. In addition, they

need to have an awareness of the true nature of the 'intellectual map' of the Islamic world and of the fundamental idea upon which the cause is based, including its form, its spirit, its outward appearance and its essence.

It goes without saying that the materials currently available on issues of thought and the Islamization of knowledge cannot be considered sufficient or final. Some of those who have adopted the cause are content simply to explain or summarize the idea, or to create a kind of concoction consisting of an admixture of their ideas relating to the cause and their initial, tentative research efforts. This may be viewed as part of the hazardous process of 'superficialization.' As we have noted, members of this group have engaged in this process with good intentions, out of the desire to disseminate the idea rapidly and to publish a quantity of research relating to the cause. However, those who have adopted the cause of the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge seek to maintain a delicate balance between quantity and quality in research and intellectual production. This concern is confirmed by their efforts to produce distinguished, high-quality research, particularly given the existence of groups which attempt to piece things together in a haphazard fashion, be they advocates of Islamic tradition or of Westernization.

Therefore, it is imperative that there be ongoing efforts to find competent individuals capable of making intellectual and cultural contributions in these areas, crystallizing the cause's ideas and plans, and strengthening its foundations. Such individuals need to be aware of the methodological orientation of the Islamization of knowledge and the nature of its early production, that is, the fact of its being experimental, tentative, and subject to further clarification, the removal or addition of this or that, as well as a great deal of deliberate, painstaking review based on stringent methodological criteria inspired by the fundamentals and principles of Islamic law and its governing intents. At the same time, it gives proper consideration to reality and its most important givens, yet without succumbing unduly to their pressures.

Given this awareness of the importance of the quality of its intellectual production, as well as the experimental nature of this production in its early stages, the cause of thought and the Islamization of knowledge can, with intensified efforts, make notable strides in the cultural, epistemological, intellectual and civilizational realms. Moreover, by keeping abreast of all trends which attempt to superficialize the cause, whether from without or from

within, it will be able to construct its edifice on firm foundations characterized by genuine awareness, ongoing contributions suited to existing circumstances and needs, methodological commitment, and epistemological vision.

### 7) THE GENERAL POPULACE (SEE FIGURE 5.8)

Educated members of the Ummah have grown accustomed to viewing uneducated individuals as incompetent and, therefore, not qualified to be addressed by means of discourse with an intellectual or cultural content or focus. In this view, ordinary members of the populace only understand particular types of discourse at which thinkers and the intelligentsia are not adept. As a consequence, these people have been bypassed by the modern intellectual and cultural discourse of various groups, some of whom seek to communicate with these people through little more than mere slogans. However, this type of approach has exacerbated the intellectual and cultural decline of the general populace in virtually all Muslim countries, where the prevailing condition is one of illiteracy combined with a smattering of knowledge. At the same time, Muslim societies have witnessed the spread of charlatanism, superstition and magic. These are some of the effects of the temptation to imitate, the abandonment of independent reasoning, and the freezing of minds. Moreover, if, after succumbing to the temptation to imitate and eliminate all independent reasoning, the Ummah's scholars and people of wisdom and discernment embrace the mentality of the general populace, then what will be embraced next by the general populace itself?

Among the general populace and the semi-educated there has spread a kind of contempt for thought and a tendency to mock and belittle culture. People view thought and culture as a kind of luxury which only the well-to-do and privileged are entitled to indulge in. As for the working class, it is not advisable or fitting for them to do so. If any of them desires to do so, he will find no discourse addressed to him or, if he does, it will not be comprehensible to him, since the orators have passed him by, having dropped him from consideration.

Such attitudes, however, reveal a serious disregard for the concept of man's vicegerency and its nature, as well as the essence of the Qur'anic discourse and its directives. The Qur'an is addressed to the heedless in order for

them to pay attention; to those in error in order for them to be guided; to those who deny the Truth in order for them to believe; to hypocrites in order for them to become sincere; to the lost in order for them to find the right path; and to believers, in order for them to grow in faith.

Hence, the ordinary person is simply one of those people addressed by the Qur'an, while his or her responsibility and the appropriateness of the Qur'anic discourse being addressed to him or her is not determined on the basis of cultural specifications, educational level or a university degree. Rather, the Qur'an is an inclusive message addressed to everyone responsible before God, which includes all adults in full possession of their mental faculties. Consequently, issues of culture, and in particular those relating to thought, do not exclude the ordinary individual, nor should they deprive him or her of the opportunity to drink from the spring of thought and culture.

Our mission is to place these epistemological issues in a framework which is comprehensible to all groups, and in the form of material which can be dealt with by all channels engaged in the communication of ideas. We believe that it is possible to present Muslims with the various aspects of the intellectual crisis and thought-related issues through a variety of approaches. Thought-related issues include, for example, misunderstandings of the concepts of predestination (*al-qadar*), compulsion (*al-jabr*), free choice and human action, human dignity and status, the relationship between causes and effects, and a number of other matters which Muslims have the responsibility to understand. The Qur'an, in which God challenges both man and *jinn* (invisible beings) to produce something comparable to it on the level of organization, style and eloquence, God has likewise made easy to understand and reflect on: "Of the bounties of thy Lord We bestow freely on all – These as well as those: The bounties of thy Lord are not closed (to anyone)."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the Qur'an's miraculous nature is the way in which it combines ease of understanding and exquisite style.

This being the case, we have no right to make excuses for ourselves or justify our having made our discourse overly complex, ambiguous or obscure by arguing that it is addressed to the elite. For many a herald has understood his message better than those to whom he has delivered it, "[and] God knows best on whom to bestow His message."<sup>7</sup> Hence, if people find our discourse difficult to comprehend, we have only ourselves to blame, not their minds or inability to understand. Moreover, we have the obligation to do our utmost

to modify the styles in which our discourse is presented and to review it time and time again until we have resolved the crisis of specialization caused by addressing no one but the educated elite.

Those who reject and oppose the cause will attempt to turn ordinary people against it, depicting it as part of an attempt to distract them from their urgent daily concerns and issues. There are many ways to link their interests and issues with the reform and renewal of Islamic thought and thereby to construct the Islamic epistemological paradigm. There are no lack of relevant examples which we can cite in order to persuade them. We have sufficient means by which to adopt and clarify public interests and concerns, then to propose relevant solutions from an Islamic cultural and intellectual point of reference. All such aims are easily within reach if intentions are pure, if minds are used diligently, if effort is ongoing, and if we can present our cause within the framework of a flexible, expansive exegetical model. Moreover, ordinary individuals are not expected to engage in intellectual production themselves in connection with these matters. Rather, it suffices for them to have an overall familiarity with such matters so that they can sympathize with them and interact with relevant issues and questions based on genuine concern and interest. In doing so, such people will come to have greater effectiveness and a more positive, active outlook on the Ummah's issues and problems. After all, effective, living ideas must be accessible to human perception on all of its diverse levels.

#### 8) UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (SEE FIGURE 5.9)

Muslim students generally begin their university studies at a time when the Islamic vision in their possession amounts to no more than a scant bit of knowledge about Islam which they acquired at home, in their primary and secondary educations, or both. It will be clear, of course, that this amount of knowledge about Islam does not constitute an Islamic vision or Islamic thought, nor will it enable such students to experience a genuine sense of Islamic identity sufficient to protect them from unsound influences or change.

Muslim students thus commence their university careers during a phase in which their thought is virtually devoid of a truly Islamic vision. As a conse-

quence, their minds are open to any influence. At the time when they begin their studies they might have certain Islamic sentiments or emotions. However, they lack Islamic thoughts. And sentiments, if they are present, will not endure in the face of ideas, facts, and judgments characterized by the so-called 'objectivity' being offered to them by the human and social sciences which they study within a purely Western frame of reference and based on the Western vision with all of its various components.

Lacking even the most modest store of vital Islamic doctrine, which is the starting point for the ideas of most relevance to the problems they may face, such students do not possess means of defense with which to confront this level of conceptualization. On the intellectual level, university students in the Islamic world are confronted with Western doctrines and philosophies which are presented to them together with a flimsy, miserable defense of Islam. There is not a single academic institution in the Islamic world in which Islamic thought is taught and in which the Islamic vision is given a deep-rooted foundation with the same force and persuasiveness with which Western ideas and the Western vision are taught to students in the West, that is to say, in a coherent, comprehensive manner accompanied by seriousness and commitment on the part of all.

The cause represented by the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge views the Muslim student as the recipient and protector of ideas. At the same time, the student is inseparable from the professor, the method, and the academic framework of the instructional process. In fact, seen from the perspective of intellectual reform and the Islamization of knowledge, the student is the cornerstone, whereas our efforts with professors and in relation to the curriculum are nothing but means of building up and reshaping the student. The Muslim student who is able to comprehend, digest and adopt the idea [of the reform of Islamic thought] and to spread awareness of it among others, is the true campaigner for the cause; indeed, he or she is the one who communicates and represents the idea in both the near and distant future.

Consequently, we need to be aware of the potential and ability in areas of interest to us of both graduate students and post-doctoral researchers. In addition, we need to provide them with further training in their areas of specialization and interest by specialists involved in the IIIT's programs for the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge.

9) ACADEMICS (RESEARCHERS AND UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS)  
(SEE FIGURE 5.10)

In their current condition, universities, institutes and research centers in the Islamic world are a hindrance when they could be a help. Given their problems and issues, they are presently a conundrum which should have been a solution. Universities in the West, by contrast, are a major means of generating, preserving and correcting Western thought. In addition, they are tools in the construction and support of the Western cultural paradigm, laboratories for the study, analysis and resolution of social problems, factories of thought and culture, and channels by means of which to communicate such culture to the Ummah.

When universities first opened in the Islamic world, this was an act of imitation; as such, it served to confirm the already existing intellectual and cultural subordination to the West in both form and content. Moreover, despite the tremendous expansion which has taken place in this academic framework and the huge increase in the number of universities, as well as in the number of schools and institutes which supply them with students, the Islamic studies which take place in these institutions are in the worst possible condition. On the level of the Islamization of education and educational curricula, we find that the schools, colleges, and universities which were established on the Western model are adopting a theory of knowledge which excludes Divine Revelation from its authoritative frameworks and epistemological sources. In fact, they view Revelation and whatever knowledge emanates from it as superstition or, at best, as unscientific knowledge. This situation, moreover, has caused the vast majority of Muslim youth to turn away from the teachings of Islam.

As for institutions based on the teaching of the Islamic legal or textual sciences and their means and methods, they have restricted their resources to the legacies left by their ancestors. However, these legacies have not escaped attack by the descendents. Consequently, most of them have become the victims of neglect or suffered personal or official expropriation. This, in turn, has increased their inability to perform their intended role, while their graduates have been deprived of the advantages which might have encouraged those who came after them to pursue this type of education. Add to this the fact that the curricula which are taught in these universities and schools represent, for

the most part, a traditional culture on the order of that bequeathed by our ancestors and which only with great difficulty is capable of producing the independent-minded, capable, resourceful Muslim mentality which Islamic knowledge used to produce in the past and which it is still capable of producing if people will follow the straight path.

As for the rare, outstanding abilities possessed by graduates of either of these two types of institution, they only emerge by virtue of individual initiative and special effort. These frameworks with their two halves – one half Westernized and secular and the other traditional and bound to the texts of the Islamic legacy – have themselves become clear evidence of the Ummah's crisis of culture and knowledge, as well as a confirmation of the existing state of cultural absence. Graduate studies in particular have become a source of new crises for the Ummah, some of which are dangerous, such as the crisis caused by the split between various factions within the Ummah and the outbreak of new types of conflict between those educated in Western social sciences and those influenced by them, and those educated in the Islamic legal sciences. As a consequence, no single Muslim people is able any longer to stand 'as one man' in the face of any cause whatsoever given the fragmented state in which their elites find themselves. Hence, it may be that unemployment, both visible and masked, together with its resultant economic and social complications, may be one of the least serious of the crises presently faced by the Ummah.

The various academic frameworks have failed to perform any notable role in meeting the existing cultural need. Despite nearly two centuries of secular education on the Western model, Muslims have not been able to achieve progress or initiate a true revival. Thus far, they have not been able to establish an academic institution which enables Muslims to become rivals to their Western counterparts on the level of creativity, excellence, and the ability to deal competently and effectively with the issues and problems of their societies.

As for the problem of the low levels of academic performance and excellence within universities and institutes in the Islamic world, it is difficult to solve in the same ways in which nations usually solve similar problems. The reason for this is that as it exists in the Islamic world, this phenomenon is an inevitable result of the absence of an Islamic vision or model. There can be no genuine search for knowledge without a theory of knowledge which pro-

ceeds from the Ummah's creed or which, at the very least, is not in conflict with it. Such a theory, like an individual's spirit, cannot be transferred from a foreign body; nor can it be imitated or cultivated from seeds sown by others.

Education in the Islamic world in general, and within an academic framework in particular, lacks this vision. Educational leaders in Islamic countries do not possess the vision of the Western man. Aside from this they have voluntarily forfeited the Islamic vision due to ignorance, sloth, and the loss of a sense of aim and motivation. Lacking genuine knowledge and clear purpose, educational leadership in the Islamic world has succumbed instead to a spirit of materialism. The majority of teachers and professors who studied in the West, and particularly those who studied social sciences and the humanities, did not, for the most part, do their studies with an Islamic aim in mind. Rather, their motivations tend to have been material in nature. Such motivations are not sufficient to inspire a student to engage in serious struggle and independent reasoning in order to obtain the knowledge which the Ummah needs. Therefore, these graduates have not been able to offer what their Western counterparts have offered to their nations, they have not managed to digest and assimilate what they have learned, nor have they attempted to formulate the Islamization of knowledge as it grows out of the Islamic vision of knowledge, truth, humanity and existence.

Most graduates completed their university studies in the West simply in order to get a degree and return home, then make use of it to secure a social position and a suitable salary. As for the materials and curricula which are taught currently in universities of the Islamic world, they are undeveloped replicas of Western materials and concepts. They do not distinguish themselves in any way from their Western models, and if they do, they do so only by virtue of their having lost the vision which led to their success in the West ('success' as defined in Western terms), in addition to their loss of the Islamic vision itself. Consequently, they have been inadequate or even harmful teaching tools at times, particularly with respect to the humanities and social sciences, which generally tend to alienate Muslims from their roots and civilization. In doing so, the humanities and social sciences have robbed Muslim youth of their identity, yet without empowering the Ummah to penetrate the barrier of what some have termed 'underdevelopment' – a term which has been exploited as a justification for exporting Western educational institutions and their contents to the Islamic world. Yet the supreme catastrophe

which awaits this academic framework is, most certainly, most professors' lack of an Islamic vision, an Islamic perspective and an Islamic scientific sense.

This is the academic framework which may be viewed as the initial experimental field for our Islamic cause as it pertains to the reform of thought and the Islamization of knowledge. This overall framework – including student, professor and method – is by no means conducive to such experimentation. Even so, changing and reforming this framework in a thorough manner is one of the most important aims of our cause. Therefore, an understanding of the true nature of this academic context and how to deal with it is the first necessary step toward properly orienting our cause. Hence, it is this understanding which constitutes our immediate challenge.

The cultural programs formulated by the various parties, movements, societies and other groups that have come into being in the Islamic world have attempted to fill the vacuum in formal education. However, they have not made any progress on the level of the Ummah because each of them has focused on the type of culture which helps to strengthen and support only those who are being educated in its particular cause and its particular partisan or movement-oriented perspective. However, this type of knowledge cannot fill the vacuum or meet the need.

Hence, in order for the Ummah to free itself from the false connection which is made by so many between this framework in its traditional Western form, and progress, renewal and renaissance, it is important that there be growing awareness of the Ummah's crisis within the educational sector. The academic framework overall is in need of correction and reform. We must fulfill our obligation on three levels – professor, curriculum and student – investing all available resources on all three of these levels in the wisest, most effective manner possible. Specifically, we may do the following:

*First: On the Level of the Professor*

- 1) Put together staff teams who can find ways to devote themselves, and help others devote themselves full-time to scientific pursuits. Such teams should be able to carry out scientific projects which serve the causes of thought and knowledge, determine and clarify these causes' roots, and strengthen bonds within this sector. They should reinforce interaction

and cooperation with the best elements therein, stimulate interest in our cause, and give them a part to play in bearing its burdens.

- 2) Form research teams to study topics relating to thought, culture and education, thereby helping to survey and evaluate the intellectual and cultural map of the Islamic world and achieving the awareness required to qualify them as followers of this cause.
- 3) Issue invitations to wide-ranging seminars in order to discuss issues of relevance to the Ummah and its intellectual and epistemological crisis. The purpose will be to create interest in what is being proposed through discussions of high-quality papers presented at these gatherings, which will contribute toward establishing the foundations of the desired Islamic cultural paradigm and effective ways of dealing with the intellectual crisis.

These steps can be expected to assist professors in presenting ideas which are helpful in dealing with the intellectual crisis and constructing the Islamic cultural paradigm, whether this takes place in lecture halls and classrooms, or in graduate study programs. Master's Degree and Ph.D. students with a variety of specializations, including thought-related issues, the social sciences and the humanities, can be encouraged to choose topics which will help toward making progress in this new epistemological field.

### *Second: On the Level of Curriculum*

The curriculum is of undoubted importance within the academic framework. Most Western curricula pose a hindrance to intellectual reform and epistemological and cultural change, and to the efforts based thereon to prepare the Muslim world and Muslim educated classes to resolve the Ummah's crisis, reform Islamic thought, construct Islamic social sciences (sciences of the Ummah), Islamize knowledge, and carry out basic research projects, be they aimed at studying Western thought and contemporary epistemological production, or the Islamic heritage. If these aims can be accomplished, they will help us construct curricula and to determine what is needed on the part of both students and professors, whether it be awareness of tradition and the past so that educated Muslims can establish links with their traditional roots, or awareness of modern culture and civilization so that they can take a critical

stance toward it in preparation for attaining intellectual and psychological autonomy.

There is a need for awareness of thought-related reality in the Islamic world so that it is easier for us to catalogue the existing intellectual trends and critique and correct their most important and fundamental orientations. The construction of basic entry points into the various human sciences represents an important immediate step toward ensuring the availability of introductions to, and governing principles for, the human and social sciences. This process offers a concrete model which can be tested out in academic institutions and which is capable of absorbing and embodying the idea of cultural change and the Islamization of knowledge. This process should also be accompanied by ongoing, cumulative production related to a number of basic focal points which make up the foundation for conscious thinking about our cause. These focal points are: thought, curriculum, knowledge (both *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifah*), culture and civilization, and tradition or legacy.

### *Third: On the Level of the Student*

Graduate students may be viewed as the basic building blocks in the plan for intellectual reform and the Islamization of knowledge, as well as potential staff in these areas. Hence, we need to identify and select distinguished university graduates from a variety of specializations relating to the humanities and social sciences in order for them to become capable, highly specialized members of staff who are known for their academic excellence and Islamic knowledge. We also need to work on guiding such students' academic theses in order for them to deal with the focal points of relevance to the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge. Such theses can help to clarify the concepts relating to these tasks and their contemporary scientific applications. This process must take place through a discourse which is serious, well integrated and purposeful and which is formulated in a variety of ways, including, for example:

- 1) Setting up student training courses which provide an introduction to our cause, its most important principles, its plan of action, and the need to be aware of it and to spread such awareness as widely as possible. It is also nec-

essary to prepare whatever is needed for the sake of offering specialized training courses for graduate students in a variety of branches of the humanities and social sciences. Such courses can be held either at the IIIT headquarters or in one of its branch offices depending on considerations of space and the ability to seek assistance from individuals with the expertise, abilities and competence needed to teach such courses from an Islamic perspective.

- 2) Offering grants to gifted students who otherwise could not afford to pursue their studies. Such aid could also include short-term grants for the collection of data pertaining to the most important topics of relevance to intellectual reform, the Islamization of knowledge and their related focal points.
- 3) Facilitating such students' periodic participation in the IIIT seminars. Such participation could take the form of presenting high-quality papers on the topic of the seminar, or involvement in its discussions. Such opportunities can give students high-quality training, broaden their horizons, and teach them how to participate effectively in discussion and dialogue in such a way as to clarify the ideas underlying our cause and its relevant focal points and to raise issues worthy of research and adoption.

Through such endeavors, we should be able to transform the academic realm into an effective means of serving our cause and translating its aims into reality.