

Part I:

Islamic Thought

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# Some Remarks on the Islamic and the Secular Paradigms of Knowledge

## INTRODUCTION

By the time secularist thought had succeeded, at an intellectual level, in challenging the authority of the Catholic church, its roots had already taken firm hold in western soil. Later, when western political and economic systems began to prevail throughout the world, it was only natural that secularism, as the driving force behind these systems, should gain ascendancy worldwide. In time, and with varying degrees of success, the paradigm of positivism gradually displaced traditional and religious modes of thinking, with the result that generations of Third World thinkers grew up convinced that the only way to make “progress” and reform their societies was to follow the way of the secular West. Moreover, since the West had begun to progress politically, economically, and intellectually only after the Catholic church’s influence had been marginalized, people in the colonies believed that they would have to marginalize the influence of their particular religions in order to achieve a similar degree of progress.

Under the terms of the new paradigm, turning to religion for solutions to contemporary issues is an absurdity, for religion is viewed as something left over from humanity’s formative years, from a “dark” age of superstition and myth whose time has now passed. As such, religion has no relevance to the present, and all attempts to revive it are doomed to failure and are a waste of time.

Many people have supposed that it is possible to accept the western model of a secular paradigm while maintaining their religious practices and beliefs. They reason that such an acceptance has no negative

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impact upon their daily lives, so long as it does not destroy their places of worship or curtail their right to religious freedom. Thus, almost every contemporary community has fallen under the sway of this paradigm. Moreover, this paradigm has had the greatest influence on how different peoples perceive life, the universe, and the role of humanity. In addition, it can provide them with an alternative set of beliefs (if needed) and suggest answers to the ultimate questions.

Throughout this twentieth century and most of the last, Muslims have taken it upon themselves to reconcile the western vision of life, humanity, and the universe with their own, or to reconcile the Islamic vision of the same with the precepts of the western vision. As a result, many practicing Muslims have inclined toward rationalizing whatever appears to challenge their constructs or contradict their concepts of the universal nature of positivism and the secular paradigm. For example, we have seen some Muslims equating jinns with microbes, angels with electrons, or prophets with geniuses! To such apologists, Islam touches only the “spiritual” life of its followers and thus may be considered another link in the rusty chain of “religions.” For such “thinkers,” the concepts of *shūrā* (consultation) and *khilāfah* (vicegerency, stewardship) correspond with western ideals of democracy and republicanism, while socialism and social justice are represented by zakah!

In short, the crisis of the Muslim mind and the absence of intellectual creativity or an *ijtihād* (deduction)-based mentality have stymied the development of a contemporary Islamic paradigm of knowledge. In fact, the entire matter has been ignored, with the result that the distinguishing features of such a paradigm have yet to be identified. Moreover, in the Muslim world there are two streams of education. The first stream, which produces the Muslim world’s technical experts, scientists, social scientists, intellectuals, and public opinion makers, is based on and functions completely within the secular positivist paradigm. The second stream, perhaps more akin to a backwater, is the religious education stream. However, the sources of this stream owe more to tradition than to any understanding of the parameters of a truly Islamic paradigm of knowledge. For centuries, this stream of education has been able to do no more than repeat itself, by offering the same commentary on the same texts in the same disciplines of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *uṣūl* (the sources of Islamic jurisprudence), Hadith (the Prophet’s (SAAS)<sup>1</sup> actions and sayings), and *tafsīr* (Qur’anic commentary).

The Islamization of Knowledge undertaking seeks to develop an Islamic paradigm of knowledge that will serve as an alternative to the secular positivist paradigm that presently dominates the arts and sciences. Such an alter-

native combines Islamic and universalistic perspectives; addresses the intellectual and conceptual problems of all humanity, not just of Muslims; and includes a *tawhīd*-based<sup>2</sup> reconstruction of the concepts of life, humanity, and the universe. What, then, is this Islamic paradigm of knowledge, and what are its basic components?

### TAWHĪD

The Islamic view of knowledge takes as its starting point the concept of *tawhīd* (unicity, unity) in God's (SWT)<sup>3</sup> divinity and attributes. In fact, the entire edifice of the Islamic paradigm of knowledge stands on the foundation of *tawhīd*. The epistemological aspects of *tawhīd* are manifested via God's attribute of absolute knowledge and His teaching humanity that which it did not know. Moreover, God created within humanity the capacity to learn, teaching Adam "the names" of things, endowing human beings with the aptitude to read and write, and instilling within them a natural sense of curiosity about themselves and their surroundings. He also sent messengers to present His revelation and explain, by means of scripture, all matters connected to the Unseen. In other words, He made it possible for human beings to expend their energies on making sense of the physical world, harnessing its power for the common good, uncovering its laws and mysteries, and developing methodologies for dealing with revelation.

### REVELATION

Both the Qur'an and the Sunnah represent sources of revealed knowledge that complement the natural universe. In addition, revelation may be taken as a creative source of belief, thought, worldview, and conceptualization. Revelation also gives the necessary order to establish human concepts; clarifies the relationships between God, humanity, and the universe; and then regulates these in such a way as to develop an integrated *tawhīd*-based society. The Sunnah clarifies and elaborates on the Qur'anic epistemic methodology by linking the Prophet's example and the Qur'an's values so that these may be applied to the actuality of changing circumstances. By means of this methodology, humanity may transcend the dilemma of the relative and the absolute, and of the real and the ideal.

In addition to revelation, there are other sources and means of knowledge, such as reason, the senses, intelligence, intuition, and experience (including experimentation and observation). The Islamic paradigm of knowledge augments its sources with several principles and fundamentals that

are essential to its comprehensive and encompassing nature. Among these are *khilāfah* and *amānah* (responsibility for society) as the guiding factors in determining the meaning of life for humanity, a worldview that regards this world and the next as a single continuum, and a belief that intellectual activity is a religious and social responsibility for which the individual may be rewarded or punished. A very close relationship exists between knowledge and values, which lends the attribute of purposefulness to knowledge and, in turn, makes individuals responsible for distinguishing between useful and useless knowledge. At the same time, the Islamic paradigm of knowledge lends itself to academic activity at various levels. The Prophet, for example, once said: “Be a scholar or a student, but beware of the third category [ignorance], for that leads to destruction.” In this way, the spread of knowledge was assured, because no individual or class could claim a monopoly over it.

The Islamic paradigm enjoys a harmonious relationship with human nature (*fiṭrah*), which enables human beings to erect certain intellectual standards. It is with this context in mind that we can understand the saying: “Question your own heart [and rely on what it tells you], even if the so-called authorities tell you something else.” This paradigm also includes many fundamental characteristics that can help bring about a truly global and universalistic human outlook. Among these are humanity, utility, harmony, positivity, stability, globality, universality, methodology, intermediacy, comprehensiveness, guidance, spirituality, expansiveness, and openness.

Owing to the linkage that exists in the fine relationship between God and humanity, between this world and the next, and between the religious and the worldly life, this paradigm is not subject to closure. This explains how the Islamic paradigm can be simultaneously selective and comprehensive, and how it can adapt itself to whatever is positive and avoid whatever is negative in knowledge. Ultimately, all of this will result in the establishment of an intellectual criteria that will link knowledge with values, higher purposes, and universal principles.

The positivistic secular paradigm boasts of its analytical proficiency, which is quite impressive. However, analysis and deconstruction are not to be undertaken merely for their own sake, but rather in order to comprehend what has been analyzed and to correct what has gone wrong. Although the secular paradigm has made its analysis and deconstructed its subjects, it has proven to be extremely limited in its utility, because it has not produced a program of successful reconstruction. While it has been effective in explaining situations, the explanation is only as good as the intellectual goals that it

serves. Thus, when the goals are limited or restricted to certain parameters of inquiry, the resulting benefits must necessarily be limited as well.

The oneness of humanity enables the Islamic paradigm of knowledge to effect constructs. God states in the Qur'an: "O people! Verily, We have created you from a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in God's sight is the one who is most heedful among you" (49:13); "He has created you out of a single soul, and from it He fashioned its mate" (39:6); and "Nor have We sent you (O Prophet) save as [an evidence of Our] grace toward all the worlds" (21:107). Moreover, the Islamic perspective on the essential oneness of the universe further enables its paradigm to develop constructs.

#### PURIFYING METHODOLOGY FROM NEGATIVE ELEMENTS

The Islamic paradigm of knowledge protects methodology from speculation and whim. As a result, the Islamic creed can serve as a protection from all such elements, for it leaves no scope for accepting anything that originates outside the ecclesiastically established sources. This is important, for even up until our own time humanity has been unable to rid itself or move beyond speculation, whim, caprice, and the like.

According to the Islamic paradigm of knowledge, human knowledge is enriched by knowledge of the divine, so that people are always aware of God's assistance and never have the sense of being left entirely to their own devices. Therefore, the attitude so haughtily touted by the secular paradigm, that the Unseen has no epistemological value, is rejected by the Islamic paradigm. Instead, Muslims are fortified by the confidence coming from their reliance on the two most important sources of knowledge: revelation and the universe.

The Muslims' association with prophecy and its revelational legacy adds a dimension of universality, humanity, and ethics to their intellectual orientation. In addition, *tawhīd* and the acceptance of the divine as a source of knowledge prevent Muslims from placing undue dependence upon the self (with its vain and overweening tendencies) and from seeking to hide knowledge from others. A further benefit of *tawhīd* is that it purifies epistemological issues through the constant scrutiny and revision demanded by the dynamic of *ijtihād* and the *tawhīdī* rejection of any ultimate other than God. Thus, whatever is considered final by an individual or an entire generation of Muslims will not necessarily remain the final word for another

individual or a following generation; others will always have the right to open or reopen any issue for further consideration, refinement, or rejection.

*Tawhīd* also averts the misuse of knowledge as power, for the paradigm includes the concept of a participatory and sharing community of knowledge that, by its very nature, precludes any such monopolization and elitism. The fundamental sources of knowledge are available to everyone, as are the methodological steps necessary for dealing with them. Furthermore, the connection between knowledge and values precludes any notion of a need to adhere to established epistemological norms, and thus opens the door to continued examination and analysis. All of this, in turn, ensures that people will not live under the impression that they have found all of the answers, when, in fact, they possess knowledge of little more than the outward aspects of the life of this world.

The paradigm's religious aspect also ensures that knowledge is linked with every aspect of human life, be it past, present, future, or in the Hereafter, and that it can contemplate eternal truths and endow them with a greater, purer, and more comprehensive relevance. It is this aspect that ensures that knowledge remains elevated and never succumbs to the baser inclinations, artistic or otherwise. All of this springs from humanity's role as *khalīfah* (steward), and from its natural dignity, humanness, trust, and responsibility for improving society.

The above should be viewed as no more than brief preliminary remarks intended to explain the differences between the Islamic and the secular positivistic paradigms of knowledge. It should be possible, however, to base more intensive, comprehensive, and detailed studies on what has been outlined here.

## NOTES

1. *ŠAAS* (*Šallā Allāhu ‘alayhi wa Sallam*): May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. Said whenever the Prophet's name is mentioned.
2. *Tawhīd* (adj. *tawhīdī*): Attesting to Allah's unity and uniqueness, and affirming that Allah is the One, the absolute, transcendent Creator, the Lord and Master of all that is. Traditionally and simply expressed, *tawhīd* is the conviction and witnessing that "there is no god but Allah" – the essence of Islam that gives Islamic civilization its identity, binds its constituent parts together, and thus makes of them the integral, organic body that we call civilization.
3. *ŠWT* (*Šubhānahu wa Ta‘ālā*): May He be praised and may His transcendence be affirmed. Said when referring to Allah.

# Toward an Islamic Alternative in Thought and Knowledge

## INTRODUCTION

Current developments and the many acute problems facing the Muslim Ummah, especially at the intellectual level, present a serious challenge to Islam. Given this reality, an attempt to outline an intellectual Islamic alternative in thought and knowledge has never been so urgent and imperative. This undertaking will help formulate a clear and coordinated policy with regard to cultural transformation, one based on firm principles and a sound strategy. It is also hoped that this policy will lead to scientific findings.

By way of introduction, I will give a brief description of the state of knowledge and thought, as well as of the educational and cultural systems, in the contemporary Arab and Muslim worlds.

## THE PRESENT STATE OF THOUGHT

When examining the present state of thought among Muslims, three basic approaches can be identified:

- The “authentic” or “traditionalist” approach, which, by and large, considers the Ummah’s “traditional” thought to be self-sufficient and capable of being presented with very little or no alteration. This approach suggests that the Ummah’s contemporary intellectual life can be formed and organized, and that its civilization’s structure can be built on this basis.
- The “modernistic” approach, which considers contemporary western thought and its worldview (e.g., its concepts of existence, life, and humanity) to be universal and without which a modern culture and civ-

ilization cannot be built. This tendency maintains that western thought must be adopted *in toto*, and that any consequent negative aspects are the price that must be paid for establishing a modern culture and civilization.

- The “eclectic” approach, which contends that one must select from traditional thought that which is most sound and from modern contemporary thought that which one considers and proves to be correct. These two then must be welded together to form an intellectual structure that will provide a guaranteed basis for achieving what is required.

However, the traditional approach, in the manner it was presented and applied, did not prevent the Ummah from falling into a state of decline and failure, from which it is still suffering. Likewise, western thought, as it was presented and applied, cannot protect the Ummah from its inherent adverse, harmful, and even disastrous effects. The advocates of the eclectic (selective) approach have presented no details of this proposed blend; nor have they tried to put it into effect. All of this is conducive to a wide-ranging question: Is the Ummah going through a serious intellectual crisis, and, if so, how can it find its way out?

#### THE PRESENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

To answer the above question, a brief look at the contemporary state of knowledge is necessary. At present, our students are taught two types of knowledge. First, there are the contemporary social, technical, and applied sciences that control the organization and functioning of all aspects of modern life. They comprise – regardless of the Muslim contributions to many of their bases – a body of knowledge whose principles, rules, objectives, and methods were formed by the western mentality through its religious and intellectual framework, philosophy, and background. Every aspect of this knowledge is closely bound to the western form of civilization.

Second, there is the knowledge that Muslims describe as *sharīʿ* (relating to the Shariʿah [Islamic Law]) or *aṣlī* (relating to the bases of Islam). This knowledge can be further subdivided into the knowledge of objectives and the knowledge of means. Experts on classification and cataloging include both under the heading of *al-ʿulūm al-naqliyyah* (transmitted knowledge).

Most of this knowledge was produced to deal with the issues that arose during the third Islamic century, a period when the Islamic sciences had been established, and in response to the Ummah’s historical reality at that

time. The books and reference works current among its students were prepared after the door of *ijtihād* had been closed and *taqlīd* (imitation of the works of previous scholars) had become widespread. The authors of these works used to prepare them with the utmost care, paying great attention to linguistic details and artistic style in order to display the depth of their knowledge to their students, colleagues, and rivals. They are more like monologues than teaching books.

The methods and contents of such material supported the concept of *taqlīd* and encouraged people to adhere to it. The intention was to prevent people from exercising any form of *ijtihād* other than that needed to understand the books themselves, and, in the process, to make people despise *ijtihād*. This type of knowledge could not equip anyone to face life's realities. Rather, it strenuously promoted blind following and imitation, and ended intellectual activity and creativity. People seeking knowledge were thus caught between following alien contemporary thought or sticking to old traditional ways of thinking. Neither type of knowledge enabled them to achieve an operative *ijtihād* that help them face current problems in a sound and appropriate way.

#### THE PRESENT STATE OF MUSLIM EDUCATION

Turning to the educational systems throughout the Muslim world, we notice the prevalence of a dual system. The first system, the traditional "Islamic system," offers students a program consisting of the Shari'ah sciences (*viz.*, those sciences pertaining to Islamic law). This system is confined to preparing and enabling graduates to deal with personal affairs, meet some educational needs, and lead the prayers in mosques. For the most part, this system remains a private affair that has limited access to public funds. The necessary funds come from the residue of charitable endowments, not the state's budget. Where public funds are made available, demands of secularization are imposed in the name of modernism.

The second, and by far the more widespread, is the secular system, which presents all kinds of contemporary knowledge and science during the student's educational career. It advocates un-Islamic orientations and has assumed tremendous proportions, elbowing out the Islamic system. Since the Islamic system's graduates are isolated from the reality of contemporary life and its challenges, they usually present no competition to the secular system's graduates. Consequently, the un-Islamic secular system produces the

Ummah's intellectual, political, and social leaders, as well as the managers of its services and means of production.

This dichotomy in educational systems soon became a means of dividing the Ummah and draining its energy. In reality, education should be a means of bringing Muslims together and providing them with a unified cultural perspective, of directing them toward progress and construction. It should create harmony and provide a common purpose, thus directing all efforts toward developing the righteous Muslim individual, whose mind and soul, culture and behavior, and powers of individual initiative and reasoning are strong and productive.

Much of the division and fragmentation – even the tragic conflict afflicting many parts of the Arab and Muslim worlds – bears traces of this dichotomy's negative aspects. In addition, the negative effects of other branches of education (e.g., military, private, and foreign) are reflected in the graduates' attitudes and cultural visions.

#### THE PRESENT CIVILIZATIONAL STATE OF THE UMMAH

Today, the Ummah's territory is the world's most strategically important and richest area. Its lands contain the most important raw materials for western industry, as well as tremendous human resources. The Muslim world also has a magnificent legacy and possess the best sources of guidance: the Divine Revelation (*wahy*), namely, the inimitable Qur'an (including its interpretation and application), and the Prophet's Sunnah. Despite this, however, the Muslim world is plagued by inner strife and division, turbulence and self-contradiction, war and threats to world peace, extravagant wealth and excessive poverty, and famine and epidemics.

The Ummah is divided against itself, torn up and fragmented into nearly fifty nation-states separated by artificial boundaries designed to create and ensure continued tension and confrontation, especially among neighboring states. None of these states has had the chance to attain the outright freedom and stability, or social integration, that would enable it to concentrate its energies on construction and development. Sectarianism, factionalism, and nationalism, all of which cause disharmony, have dominated affairs to such an extent that they have led to a continual state of instability, which foreign powers can easily manipulate at a time of their choosing. Such a situation only leads to more turmoil and anarchy. The lack of individual freedom prevents the people from pursuing their own intellectual and cultural growth, to

say nothing of their natural psychological development. Muslims continue to live under the shadow of poverty, oppression, and terror, either from those who were specifically prepared to impose western forms of thought and culture on the Ummah, or from military dictators who seize power and impose their own frivolous, arbitrary, and whimsical policies through force, torture, and intimidation. In such dictatorships, the role of political and administrative bodies and institutions is completely eclipsed, a disaster that destroys all of the people's qualities and cultural potential.

The overwhelming majority of the Ummah is illiterate. The people's needs far outweigh the goods, materials, and services that they can provide for themselves. Even in the important and vital necessities of life, almost no Muslim state is self-sufficient. This deficiency is usually made up by imports, which only increases dependency on foreign powers. What makes the situation even more intolerable is that raw materials are bought from Muslim states at the lowest prices, or even taken for nothing, and are returned to them as manufactured goods at the highest prices. Many of these states are living at the level of starvation, while the rest could be reduced almost immediately to such a level if the exporters and foreign powers so wished.

The few Muslim states that have followed the path of industrialization have not attained complete self-sufficiency, because they still depend on foreign sources for most of the equipment needed to develop their industries. As a result, these foreign sources can control the nascent industries and direct them according to their own political and economic interests.

In most cases, "Muslim industry" was not designed to meet the Muslim world's desperate, immediate, and vital needs, but to meet only its inhabitants' tangential and secondary needs and to satisfy and cater to the consumeristic desires and habits planted in the Muslims for the benefit of others.

Unfortunately, the Muslim world has developed the habit of consuming the products of a contemporary non-Islamic civilization and has adopted many of its outer aspects, such as "modern" roads, buildings, and places of entertainment in its capitals. It has also established some political and economic institutions based on the western model. But these measures have failed to bring about the desired transformation and have not even set the Ummah on the road to achieving that transformation. How can this situation be rectified?

#### TOWARD AN ISLAMIC ALTERNATIVE

In order to present the Islamic alternative to the Ummah, we must reform Muslim thought as a whole and reassess its methodologies. We must under-

stand the position of regional and nationalistic thought, as well as western thought, both Marxist and liberal. Furthermore, we must realize how influential western thought has become in the Muslim world. This will enable us to become aware of the enormous and stupendous challenge we are facing, and the pressure that history and the present are exerting on the Muslim mind.

Several important conditions must exist for such a reformation of thought: It should be comprehensive and free of all psychological pressures, whether historical or contemporary; and, it should be carried out for the purpose of correction and self-criticism, as a serious quest for scientific alternatives governed by theoretical and intellectual principles.

Such a revision should examine the controversial issues that have occupied the Muslim mind and prevented it from being positive, effective and influential: causality, the alleged conflict between revelation and reason, the blind imitation of previous scholars and its crippling effects, the dignity of humanity, and so on. It should reinterpret these issues in a sound and objective fashion, and seek to free the Muslim mind from the negative effects and shackles that these issues have had on its psychology, mentality, education, and way of life.

We must revise and correct the Ummah's inherited historical and cultural structure and rid it of the weakness, dichotomy, and lack of reality that hamper its efficiency and effectiveness. We must reexamine all of the prevalent concepts and work to achieve the correct perspectives on life, the universe, humanity, and all other related issues. In addition, we must agree on these perspectives' sources and design Islamic systems and institutions that can define a role for each of them. In this way, these systems and institutions may achieve Islam's goals, even if they do not exactly match its historical reality in form and structure. This design should lead to an Islamic concept of civilization that will enable Muslims to rebuild the Ummah and achieve its goals and objectives. We should seek to transform all of the above – according to a defined method – into a coordinated cultural system that will acculturate and educate the entire Ummah so that it may become a thriving operational system.

A sound intellectual basis, which is the starting point for building a civilizational system, must have three characteristics: 1) infallible sources that are free of error and destructive deviation, so that thinking will not degenerate into imagination and meandering meditation; 2) that are acceptable in both rational and logical terms, so that ideas presented to the Muslim mind will not be quickly discarded; and 3) that are realistic, so that Muslims will be able to interact with reality in order to change and influence it positively.

TOWARD A STRATEGY  
FOR KNOWLEDGE

Nowadays, scientific knowledge is defined according to the following maxim: "Every piece of knowledge is subject to tangible experiment." This definition, which has been around for centuries and has been adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is used to decide what type of knowledge is "scientific." Due to the adoption of and the widespread reliance on this concept, revelation was rejected as a source of knowledge, culture, and civilization. In addition, all knowledge based on it was excluded from scientific knowledge, regardless of whether it dealt with the tangible or the intangible world. All such knowledge was considered "fables" or "unscientific," and of no benefit.

As a result, only the empirical method was considered capable of producing scientific knowledge. Humanity was regarded as being no more than a mass of biological substances, and the social sciences and humanities were subjected to the laws of natural science. Experiments were carried out on animals in an attempt to identify those laws that could be applied to humanity and to human behavior, reaction, influence, obedience, refusal, and ways of meeting material and other needs.

Muslims also accepted this approach, with the result that the contemporary western social sciences and humanities, not to mention their underlying philosophy, became the basic sources of their education, mentality, and attitudes toward the values of truth and goodness. Likewise, the arts based on this philosophy formed their psychology and defined their tastes and attitudes toward aesthetic values. The teaching methods and curricula in universities, educational institutes, and schools were subjected to this concept, and thus the students' westernization and alienation from Islam deepened. Consequently, the matters dealt with by revelation were classified as fables. A strong link was established between the West's power, productivity, and ability on the one hand, and western thoughts, beliefs and concepts of God, the universe, humanity, religion, life, nature, time, history, matter, men and women, the soul, science, knowledge, and various other matters on the other.

In light of the above, the first step toward formulating an Islamic cultural strategy is to redefine knowledge in terms of an Islamic epistemology and in a way that will be acceptable to Muslims everywhere. In this context, we need to emphasize that all knowledge is derived from revelation, reason, perception, or experiment. The contemporary theory of knowledge affirms that

the sole source of scientific knowledge is the tangible universe. The Islamic theory of scientific knowledge, on the other hand, stresses that knowledge has two sources: revelation and the tangible universe. Revelation is the source of absolute facts and truth about which there is no doubt and no concept of relativity. Revelation is contained in the Qur'an, which Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad. Allah has challenged humanity to produce a surah (chapter) that can match even the shortest one of the Qur'an: "And if you are in doubt as to what We have revealed to Our Servant, then produce a surah like thereunto" (2:23).

Reciting the Qur'an is, in itself, a form of worship. The Qur'an opens with *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* and closes with *Sūrat al-Nās*. The second source of revelation is the legally binding elaborations upon the Qur'an that are contained in the Prophet's Sunnah. This consists of his reported actions and decisions (i.e., all that he said, did, approved of, or condemned, provided that the particular narration has been proven to be authentic).

The Islamic theory of knowledge considers the means of gaining knowledge to be reason, perception, and experiment. The Qur'an says: "And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs knowing nothing – but He has endowed you with hearing, sight, and minds so that you might have cause to be grateful [to Him]" (16:78).

According to Islam, no piece of knowledge can be considered as true or worthy of acceptance without corroborating evidence from revelation or the tangible universe. Knowledge of the tangible universe has to be derived by one of the three means mentioned above: reason, perception, or experiment. The Qur'an challenges people to "produce evidence for what you are claiming, if what you say is true" (2:111). As for those who affirm unsubstantiated beliefs, it asks: "Have you any [certain] knowledge that you could offer to us? You follow only conjectures and do nothing but guess" (6:148). And it categorically affirms: "Never can surmise take the place of truth" (53:28).

Humanity should have some knowledge and understanding of two fields: the "unseen world" (*‘ālam al-ghayb*) that is beyond the reach of a created being's perception, and the "seen world" (*‘ālam al-shahādah*) that can be witnessed by a created being's senses or mind. The primary source of knowledge about the unseen world is revelation, from which humanity derives evidence about it. The basic source of knowledge about the seen world is the tangible universe. Experiments and perception provide evidence about the seen world through a variety of means that may support one another. If we lay a firm foundation for the theory of Islamic knowl-

edge and present it as an alternative to the contemporary western theory of knowledge, we will have established the second basis of the proposed cultural strategy.

This strategy must be based on the realization that every nation has a main issue of concern, a belief, or a basic goal that provides it with a motivation, inspiration, and impetus in all of its activities related to knowledge and labor. Usually, each nation seeks to plant this belief or goal in the consciousness of its youths through all possible means, especially during childhood. The nation then continues to nurture and strengthen this belief throughout the individual's development.

The Muslim world's current system of education has failed to instill any such belief, sound vision, standards, or motives. As a result, the goal of education for Muslims is to obtain decent employment with a decent income. Materialism has become widespread among the educated classes, which have lost any sense of a clear purpose in life. Academic syllabi have failed to establish a sound purpose in the Muslim conscience. The only way to achieve this goal is to establish a strong Islamic belief (*'aqīdah*) and instill an Islamic vision in the hearts and minds of Muslim youths. We must use all available means and resources to nurture and develop this belief and vision in order to achieve a sense of belonging to the Muslim Ummah. We must make this belief the motivation and the inspiration for our thoughts and feelings.

Secondary schools in the West, despite its secularism, teach students about western heritage, cultural history, and traditions in an integrated and comprehensive manner. This gives the students a sense of belonging and instills in them their nation's basic goals and strategy. They grow up with this feeling and carry their nation's vision and concepts of life, the universe, humanity, other cultures, as well as other aspects of its worldview.

Our proposed cultural strategy must firmly establish Islam and its vision not through limited classes on "religion," but throughout the entire education system. Every syllabus and program must seek to form and establish this belief. We must rid every syllabus of anything that contradicts or opposes belief by reorganizing the education system in all Muslim countries and by discarding the negative influences of the division between religious, secular, civil, and military education. This division has created, and continues to perpetuate, divisions among our people, with the result that graduates of religious schools and universities have ideas, opinions, and concepts that differ sharply from those who graduate from secular or military schools and universities. We do not want to abolish variety and specialization; what we want to end division.

This could be achieved by integrating existing systems and creating a single system based on Islam's teachings, spirit, and vision. The new education system, its syllabi and methods, and those responsible for it, should all be infused with Islam's principles and goals. It should abandon the tradition and the educational programs, content, and methods of other nations that were adopted without considering our Ummah's particular needs and aspirations. It should generate a sense of mission, whereby professional achievement and material success may be regarded as bonuses, not as the purpose and objective of education. The proposed education system must unify ideas, concepts, and feelings on all major issues. If, at this stage, there is some diversification into various specializations, students and scholars would feel no sense of isolation or alienation.

If this unification is carried out properly, it will help to provide all educated members of the Ummah with a good share of Islamic knowledge that deals with Islamic beliefs, values and goals, and morals and behavior. In addition, this unification will help familiarize the Muslims with Islamic legislation, history, and civilization, as well as with what is necessary and essential to contemporary modern knowledge.

While developing an Islamic alternative in thought and knowledge, special attention must be paid to the study of Islamic civilization. Such a study, when undertaken according to a proper methodological syllabus (to which a number of selected Islamic thinkers, educationists, and psychologists have contributed), is considered one of the most important means of creating and crystallizing the individual's feeling of belonging to the Ummah, and enabling him or her to understand the spirit that motivated our ancestors to make their great achievements to art and science, as well as political, social, and economic thought. At the same time, individual Muslims will become aware of the pain and suffering of earlier generations, what they failed to achieve, and how and why they failed. Such insight will help them develop self-awareness and the ability to compare themselves with other peoples and civilizations. In addition, studying Islamic civilization will help create and develop an awareness of its legacy, the spirit that produced and animated it, and what distinguishes it from other civilizations; develop the ability to plan for and look forward to the future; and help protect Muslims from being swept away by the conflicting currents of civilization that are seeking to dominate them. Certainly, no one can escape unscathed from this conflict unless he or she belongs to one of the contending civilizations that can be a real alternative when the other civilizations decline and fail.

Our new educational strategy must include a course of study that explains the bases, values, sources, and goals of Islam as a source of thought, culture, and civilization. This four-year course should be studied in the first stages of university education by all students, regardless of their specialization. It would deal with Islam's history, the historical achievements of Islamic civilization, and the basic features of Islamic culture.

Following on from the above, we need to present the humanities, social sciences, and arts from an Islamic perspective. We must appreciate that the methods and theories of the modern humanities, social sciences, and arts were formed in a way that reflects western thought, as well as its beliefs, strategies, and goals in life. The issues they deal with stem from western theories of knowledge. But with regard to all of these sciences, people in the West have begun to sense their shortcomings and inability to meet even their own needs. These sciences are now encountering many serious problems in their methods, theories, and application, and their adherents in the West are trying to correct them.

The Muslims desperately need to have their own humanities, social sciences, and arts, ones based on their beliefs and the theory of knowledge derived from the sources of those beliefs. If this is achieved, it will not be only the Muslims who attain their goal by gaining knowledge of the Islamic humanities and social sciences that are connected to moral values. Such values will, indeed, contribute to humanity's general welfare.

This objective could be achieved through studying the directives of the Qur'an and the Sunnah on all social and human matters, and then classifying them according to the issues of these sciences so that they could provide guidelines and principles for our societies. This work should be carried out by groups of researchers composed of specialists in the humanities, social sciences, the Arabic language, and the sciences of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

In addition, the Islamic legacy must be studied and all available material must be classified according to the issues of these sciences. This classification should be precise, so that the knowledge contained in the Islamic legacy is readily available to researchers and specialists in a convenient and authentic form. Computers and information technology are invaluable tools for any such project. A critical study of contemporary thought must be undertaken in order to select its best elements according to strictly defined standards.

Finally, plans need to be drawn up to use and benefit from all of this material. Colleges, institutes, and school textbooks need to be rewritten so that they will reflect the Islamic vision of contemporary reality and needs.

Moreover, they need to be written and designed in a way that makes them attractive and convenient to use.

All Arab and Islamic universities must cooperate to realize these goals. The International Institute of Islamic Thought has detailed plans for all of these matters, and is willing and eager to share its expertise with the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), as well as with anyone who seriously wishes to cooperate in these matters.

In closing, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to ISESCO for bringing together Muslim scholars from all over the world to discuss and propose a concept for a cultural and civilizational Islamic system. Such a system is long overdue and is urgently needed. May Allah (SWT) grant us success and help us achieve that which will please Him.

# The Reconstruction of the Muslim Mind: The Islamization of Knowledge

The Islamization of Knowledge may be understood as a cultural and intellectual project aspiring to correct the processes of thinking within the Muslim mind so that it can produce Islamic, social, and humanistic knowledge based on the two sources Muslims accept as the established sources for knowing the truth: *wahy* (Divine revelation) and *wujūd* (existence). In this endeavor, we shall use reason and the senses to help us acquire such knowledge. Therefore, we reject any approach or source of knowledge that cannot be established on revelation and existence.

The Islamization of Knowledge is an effort, a process, to restructure the Muslim mind so that it can once again engage in *ijtihad* and return to its own unique track. Once there, it can operate in all of its historically recognizable genius in order to clarify to itself, and then to humanity, the purpose and the aims of the Shari'ah and revelation, and then ascertain how they may be projected forward and applied in current situations.

We do not regard this project as being relevant only to the Islamic Ummah. On the contrary, we view it as seeking the salvation of humanity – the way to show the world how to reestablish the relationship between knowledge and values. Indeed, ever since the moment the division between knowledge and values became pronounced, civilization has steadily declined.

The Islamization of Knowledge may also be understood as the attempt of Islamic culture and thought to open channels of meaningful communication and cultural exchange so that it can offer humanity the divine truths

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for which it has thirsted so long. In the words of Roger Garaudy, the French Muslim philosopher, it is a means and an approach in the dialogue of civilization.

We have called this project the “Islamization of Knowledge” in order to address the seeds of faith residing in Muslim hearts, to awaken within Muslim minds a real appreciation of the Muslim world’s contemporary situation as well as its total absence as an influencing factor in present-day civilization. The emergence of a consciously felt need for an Islamization of Knowledge can be viewed as the opening gambit of a culture that is struggling to break out of and transcend the limiting bonds of its historical experience so that it may reconcile itself with a dominant culture that is completely alien in terms of its constitution, philosophy, belief, and objectives.

The Islamization of Knowledge may also be seen as a conscious attempt to provide humanity with a way to discover and then act on rational, workable, and realistic solutions to resolve its ills. Indeed, many of today’s pressing social, political, economic, and behavioral problems lend themselves to Islamic solutions. These solutions, which reflect the divine nature of their origin, also serve a second purpose: to spread Islam among Muslims and non-Muslims by showing them that it has something relevant to say about current problems and can offer solutions that work. We must further the cause of *da‘wah* (propagation of Islam) by providing concrete examples of Islamic teachings in action, not just in the abstract. When such solutions succeed, their source will be respected, admired, and appreciated. In this manner, people will gradually embrace Islam.

I should now like to explain the challenge confronting the educated Muslims of today. Essentially, Muslims find themselves in a peculiar and contradictory situation. On the one hand, there are Islam’s eternal truths, truths considered to be the source of all that is good. On the other hand, Muslims live in a world that has little or no use for those truths, a world that seems to be based on the very opposites of those truths. Due to the inherent difficulties of functioning within such an unnatural situation, there is an apparent, but temporary, weakening of the Islamic consciousness among some Muslims when they are confronted with the realities of the world around them. At other times, their resolve will seem to grow, and their vision will become clear enough so that they attempt to reconcile their situation with the truth of Islam. To do this successfully, however, a study of the systemic causes underlying the reasons for the Muslim Ummah’s decline is essential.

Contemporary Muslim thought has produced some good results in political science, economics, the social sciences, and culture. Moreover, it has contributed to international discussions of such issues as war and peace, justice, human rights, the right of peoples to self-determination, relations between societies, ethics, and many others. But still the question remains: When will Muslims come forward with a plan for a global civilization bearing the distinct imprint of its Islamic origin and nature, one that draws from the wellspring of its Islamic way of life, and for the Ummah of Islam? Will Muslims ever again be the bearers of guidance and light to humanity?

Today's Muslims, after nearly two centuries of repeated but ultimately futile attempts to overcome their backwardness and reinject their original vitality into the Ummah, find this goal as far as ever from realization. In fact, they remain enmeshed in social, political, and economic upheaval; blind acceptance of alien thought and transplanted values that were opposed by individual and Ummah-wide efforts; and controlled by military cliques, or by cultural, ethnic, factional, or creedal elites.

As a result, Muslims are forced to adopt any means that seem to protect their identity, beliefs, and the fundamentals of the Islamic character. If, however, the means fail and Muslims cannot extract themselves from the resulting enveloping crisis, the usual reaction is to blame either one's self or others and then adopt another course of action. This is the background against which an explanation of the multiplicity and division seen throughout the Muslim world may come into clearer focus.

In our estimation, the Islamization of Knowledge, in its wider perspective, provides Muslims with the intellectual underpinnings for a complete civilizational transformation. Essentially, this may be effected by reforming thought and removing traditional and historical obstacles that hobble the Muslim mind, such as the question of the relationship between the imam and *shūrā*, the issue of human choice and accountability in the light of *qadā'* (a juridical decision or court ruling) and *qadr* (fate, destiny) the difference between theory and application, the question of a Muslim's relationship to worldly life and the individual's role within it, as well as issues of reason and revelation, *taqlīd* (imitation) and *ijtihād*, mutual understanding, and many others.

Regardless of whatever misgivings others may have about our attempt to restore the Muslim Ummah to its former position of global centrality and its status as a witness and exemplar for humanity (misgivings based on the perception that these could only be attained at the expense of others), the fact is

that this revival is in the interest of the entire world community. Recent international developments and the frightening destructive capabilities of the major technological powers should be enough to make this assertion apparent to all. Doubtless, dialogue between nations, as well as their exchange of ideas and appreciation for one another's cultures, promote the kind of understanding presently required. The Islamization of Knowledge will contribute positively to this dialogue.

The Islamization of Knowledge is a project for the entire Ummah. Unless all of the Ummah's resources are tapped, its success will remain in doubt. This project is not a *fard kifayah*, for it does not relieve the Ummah of its responsibility by allowing a small group to undertake it on its behalf. On the contrary, this project is a *fard 'ayn*, for each individual is responsible for doing his or her part. Thus, such organizations as the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), and the Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers (AMSE) need to play pioneering roles.

Certainly, such a project requires resources far greater than those at the disposal of any single organization. Each has its own part to play. In order for an organization to fulfill its responsibility in a befitting manner, two things are necessary:

- It must receive our individual and collective support, so that its course of action is well-planned and its programs are advocated and sustained.
- All studies and research undertaken by scholars must be directed toward this end. In the case of applied science and technology, efforts should be concentrated on redressing underdevelopment. This priority must guide professors, professional researchers, and even graduate students, so that no opportunity to harness the available human resources is lost. In the case of the social sciences, all efforts must be directed toward dealing with issues of Islamic thought, knowledge, culture, and civilization.

In the world today, many of the poorest, least-developed, and most disadvantaged nations belong to the Muslim Ummah, from Mali and Chad to Bangladesh. On the lists of such countries, we read the names of dozens of Muslim countries before coming to a single non-Muslim country. It is regrettable that nearly all Muslim countries suffer from poverty, ignorance, and disease. Thus, the challenge is clear. Answers must be found to such problems as the encroachment of deserts on arable land, drought, the lack of

modern agricultural expertise, the absence of heavy industry and modern management techniques, and so on.

Furthermore, we must solve the problems that stand in the way of allowing these countries to become self-sufficient in the production of indigenous Muslim scholars and experts so that they no longer need to rely on experts imposed from the outside, so that they no longer need to risk losing their best students by sending them abroad for higher education.

Certainly, our Muslim social scientists can direct their attention toward solving the problems of contemporary Muslim and Muslim-minority societies – problems such as sectarianism, the unequal distribution of wealth, drugs, the wasting of natural resources, and so on. Under such circumstances, responsible Muslim scholars should only undertake research that has immediate relevance for the Ummah.

Yet, by way of example and despite the efforts expended by Muslim scholars in economics, we are still unable to produce an integrated and methodologically sound textbook on the subject. Nor, for that matter, has any of our economics experts produced a coherent theory of Islamic economics. And, this is in spite of the impressive growth of literature on all aspects of economics! Quite simply, the reason for this inability is that such matters require not hundreds, but thousands of research efforts on the part of specialists in the field, each building on the work of both contemporaries and predecessors. This same situation is found in education, psychology, sociology, and so many other disciplines, with the result that we are faced with gaping lacunae in our Islamically oriented scholarship.

Thus, the challenges before contemporary Muslim scholars are legion. More than ever before, Muslim thinkers need to meet those challenges with all of the acumen at their command. These are the circumstances under which this organization, and organizations like IIIT and others, have raised the banner of Islamization aloft and proclaimed the beginning of a new direction. We await the results of both our efforts and yours. May Allah guide all of us to that which earns us His pleasure.

# The Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today

## INTRODUCTION

Within the Islamization of Knowledge approach, the idea of Islamizing knowledge has always been understood as an intellectual and methodological outlook rather than as an academic field, a specialization, an ideology, or a new sect. Thus, it has sought to view issues of knowledge and methodology from the perspectives of reform, inquiry, and self-discovery without any preconceptions, doctrinal or temporal constraints, or limitations on its intellectual horizons. Furthermore, it is keenly aware of the workings of time on ideas as they pass from stage to stage and mature and, therefore, is the first to say that this project is not to be understood as a set of axioms, a rigid ideology, or a religious movement. Rather, in order to comprehend the term's full meaning, it must be viewed as designating a methodology for dealing with knowledge and its sources, or as an intellectual outlook in its beginning stages.

An ongoing critique and the attempt to derive particulars from the general are essential to development. The initial articulation of this undertaking and the work plan was, therefore, produced in general terms. At that early stage, the focus was on criticizing both traditional Muslim and western methodologies and then introducing the Islamization of Knowledge and explaining its significance. The first edition of the Islamization of Knowledge pointed out those principles that are essential to fashioning an Islamic paradigm of knowledge based on the Islamic worldview and its unique constitutive concepts and factors. It also addressed, briefly, the project's intellectual

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aspect. The main focus, however, was on how to produce textbooks for teaching the social sciences, as this was considered the first priority at a time when the Muslim world was losing its best minds to the West and the western cultural and intellectual invasion. Accordingly, twelve steps were identified as the basis from which the preparation of introductory social science texts might proceed.

The work plan and the principles elaborated in the first edition of *The Islamization of Knowledge* were met with a great deal of enthusiasm, as these represented a novel intellectual endeavor. There was wide acceptance for the new ideas, and many scholars were quick to endorse them. The project's popularity and appeal were so great that several academic institutions immediately attempted to give practical form to its concepts. Some people, however, were unable to discern its essential methodological issues, perhaps due to the pragmatic manner in which Islamization was first articulated. As a result, they considered it little more than a naïve attempt to replace knowledge with knowledge that had somehow been Islamized. In addition to such critics, others sought to ridicule the effort and still others wanted to interpret everything they read in terms of their own preconceived notions. Some people went so far as to view the undertaking as an attempt by Islamic fundamentalists to somehow transform culture and the world of ideas into tools that would enable them to attain political power. Undoubtedly, this last view led some people to consider the Islamization of Knowledge as an ideological, as opposed to an epistemological or a methodological, discourse.

Likewise, those captivated by contemporary western knowledge and its supposed generation of scientifically objective and universally applicable products assumed that the Islamization of Knowledge was symptomatic of a state of conscious or unconscious denial of the "other." To them, this undertaking reflected an attitude of self-affirmation through the attempted characterization of everything of significance as Islamic. Some saw it as a manifestation of the Islamists' desire to control everything in the state and society, including secular knowledge or the social sciences and humanities in particular, by making scholarship and academics their exclusive domain. They also saw it as attempt to strip from the Marxists, leftists, and secularists in the Arab and the Islamic worlds their right to practice their scholarship or, at the very least, to speak with authority on anything having to do with Islam or Muslim society. In reality, however, such ideas never occurred to any of those involved in the beginning of this undertaking.<sup>1</sup> In fact, this approach's literature has never mentioned any of these matters.

The Islamization of Knowledge approach is not blind to the fact that it may take decades before the methodological and epistemological issues involved in this proposition are clarified in a definitive manner. Indeed, such matters cannot be outlined in a declaration of principles, a press release, or a party manifesto. Instead, they should be understood as landmarks on the road to the type of learning that will help reform the Muslim mind so that the Muslim world can address its own crisis of thought and actively participate in the attempt to deal with the crises of thought affecting the rest of the world.

Moreover, those involved in the Islamization of Knowledge realize that intellectual undertakings, especially at this level, represent the most difficult and complex activity of any society, and that their fruits may not be seen for decades or even generations. Even then, they rarely come to an end, for knowledge is limitless and Allah's creation is greater ... and for every learned person there is one who is more learned. As the essence of knowledge and its foundation is method, in the general sense of the term, the message of Islam is said to be a complete way of life rather than a specific set of guidelines, except for those very few fundamentals that are unchanging and unaffected by the differences of time and place.<sup>2</sup>

The scholars of the Islamization of Knowledge do not seek to provide a strictly inclusive and exclusive definition in the classical manner when they speak of this particular approach. Rather, this process is spoken of in general terms only and, in fact, should be understood as a loose designation calculated to convey the undertaking's general sense and priorities. Take, for example, the definition proposed by 'Imād al-Dīn Khalīl:

The Islamization of Knowledge means involvement in intellectual pursuits, by examination, summarization, correlation, and publication, from the perspective of an Islamic outlook on life, humanity, and the universe.<sup>3</sup>

Or that of Abū al-Qāsim Ḥajj Ḥammād:

The Islamization of Knowledge is the breaking of the connection between the scientific achievements of human civilization and the transmutations of postulative philosophy, so that science may be employed by means of a methodological order that is religious rather than speculative in nature.<sup>4</sup>

He defined the Islamization of Knowledge as

... the Islamization of applied science and of scientific principles as well. This may be accomplished through an understanding of the similarities

between the principles of the natural sciences and those of nature itself. This, in fact, is the foundation upon which all religious values are based. Therefore, the philosophical references in scientific theories may become “Islamized” when they negate the postulative aspect of those theories and recast them in terms of the natural or the universal, which carries with it the notion of a divine purpose to all existence and movement.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Abū al-Qāsim, like all of the other scholars involved in this undertaking, asserts that the Islamization of Knowledge is not a cosmetic addition of religious terminology and sentiment to studies in the social sciences and humanities or the grafting of relevant Qur’anic verses onto the sciences or disciplines intended for Islamization. On the contrary, the Islamization of Knowledge may be viewed as a methodological and epistemological rearrangement of the sciences and their principles. Moreover, it is not to be understood as a blanket extension of personal conviction to all of the disciplines in an attempt to lend a sort of religious legitimacy to the accomplishments of human civilization. Nor should it be understood as a negation of those achievements by the logic of empty semantics.

Rather, these definitions have been proposed to clarify the issue and describe its characteristics and distinguishing traits. These were never intended to be precise delineations in the classical mold. In fact, we prefer that the Islamization of Knowledge not be limited to the confines of a hard and fast definition. After all, it is the foundation of the *tawhīdī* episteme, which holds that the universe has a Creator who is One and Unique, the Originator of all things and their Provider, Observing yet Unobserved, Subtle and All-knowing, Unfathomable and beyond human comprehension. He has charged humanity with His stewardship and taught it what it knew not. He made revelation and the natural world the principle sources of knowledge, so studying them within a framework of pure *tawhīd* would produce proper, discerning, and purposeful knowledge.

Therefore, when we present our ideas and attempt to formulate principles, we do so by the logic that our proposals are no more than landmarks or indicators for the benefit of scholars interested in producing academic work from an Islamization of Knowledge perspective. These first steps are the result of a variety of experiences in dealing with the project’s practical and theoretical aspects. Undoubtedly, as researchers continue to work with these indicators, or with any of the six discourses explained later in this paper, they will clarify the issue further, postulate its principles, and test its intellectual and academic efficacy.

THE REALITY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE  
ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The Islamization of Knowledge represents the intellectual and epistemological side of Islam that began with the Patriarch, Abraham (Ibrāhīm), and was completed by the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad. Indeed, the final Revelation began with the words: “Read ...” and ended with the verse: “Today I have completed your religion for you ...” Islam’s epistemological aspect was first evinced in the following verses:

Read! In the name of your Lord who created, created humans from a clot.  
Read! For your Lord is Most Bountiful, He who taught by the pen, taught humans what they did not know. (96:1-5)

It was continued in the revelation of the opening verses of *Sūrat al-Qalam*: “*Nūn*. By the pen and what they write ...” (68:1-2), and in the opening verses of *Sūrat al-Rahmān*: “The All-Merciful [Who] taught the Qur’an, created humanity, and taught it expression ...” (55:1-3).

From the above verses, it may be deduced that humanity has been commanded to undertake two different kinds of readings and to understand its situation in the universe by understanding how the two readings complement one another. The first reading is the book of Allah’s Revelation (the Qur’an), in which all matters of religious significance are explained;<sup>6</sup> the second is the book of His creation (the natural universe), from which nothing has been omitted.<sup>7</sup> To undertake a reading of either without reference to the other will neither benefit humanity nor lead it to the sort of comprehensive knowledge necessary for building and maintaining a civilized society or to knowledge worthy of preservation and further development or exchange. In fact, such a one-sided reading will never enable humanity to fulfill its role as the steward of Allah (*istikhlāf*) or the keeper of His trust (*amānah*). If this destiny remains unfulfilled, humanity will never be united in faith or guided, and the divine purpose behind creation will never be realized. Earth will never be united in worshipping Allah, and the stars will never join the rest of creation in bowing to His will and praising Him: “There is not a thing but celebrates His praise: And yet you do not understand how they declare His glory” (17:44).

Any disruption in any aspect of human life indicates an imbalance in how the readings were undertaken. Perhaps only one reading was done, or the two were not done together, or there was a preponderance in the scales by which matters are measured. It could also be possible that the wrong

methods were used: “To each among you have We prescribed a law and a way” (5:48).

Under such circumstances, nothing will begin to go right unless and until equilibrium has been reestablished through a balanced and complementary reading of the two books. Clearly, each reading must be considered an epistemological fundament and a creative source that may not be ignored. A discerning and sound society cannot exist without joining these two readings and integrating them in a comprehensive manner, for a society that ignores the first reading in favor of the second will lose sight of its relationship to God and its responsibilities of stewardship, trust, and accountability to a higher authority. The result is a self-centered and overweening society that comes to believe that it is independent and free of the Unseen. Such a society inevitably spins for itself a web of speculative philosophy that, ultimately, blocks it from attaining true knowledge. On the contrary, such knowledge will lead its people, under the best of circumstances, to become like “those who know only the outer aspects of worldly life, but who, in regard to the afterlife, are very negligent” (30:8).

The philosophies produced by such societies cannot answer the ultimate questions and generally dismiss everything beyond their sensory perceptions as supernatural. Such philosophies are also prone to suggesting utterly baseless replies to these questions, leaving people to wander and stray. Even in regard to God, people nourished on such philosophies think of Him as just another element of the supernatural. If He actually created the universe, so their reading goes, He did so all at once and then forgot or ignored His creation and left it to act and react mechanically according to previously established natural laws. This type of reading, even if undertaken by people who consider themselves religious, cannot, on its own, lead to true and accurate knowledge of God. Rather, if such people believe at all, they believe in a deity who is the way they want it to be, often equating it with the powers of nature itself. Such faith, generally speaking, jumbles doctrines of incarnation with *shirk* (associating others with God) and idolatry, and often leads to theories that deny the existence of any creator (e.g., dialectical materialism) or to those that are unacceptable and inadequate alternatives to belief in God (e.g., natural selection and evolution).

Within the framework of such a one-sided reading of the natural universe, the world may assume the form of mutually opposed powers. Based on the resulting distorted reading, individuals may suppose themselves divine and answerable to no one but themselves. Supposing, with their limited knowledge and understanding, that they control their surroundings, they will

worship themselves, make their desires their guides, and attempt to derive their values from nature. For them, religion becomes no more than something to be used when the need arises, to fill a psychological gap, or to fulfill a subliminal desire: “Nay, but humanity transgresses all bounds when it looks upon itself as self-sufficient” (96:7).

When humanity becomes so presumptuous, it becomes so overbearing and tyrannical that it destroys the environment by polluting the land, sea, and air. When the natural order is disrupted, Earth is inundated with diseases of excess and perversion. Entire continents are enveloped by hunger, destitution, pestilence, and destruction, and the majority of people are forced to live in misery: “Those who turn from remembering Me shall live lives of misery” (20:124).

The second reading, that of the real-existential, may be ignored by those undertaking the first reading (the Revelation). When this happens, great imbalances result, such as developing an aversion to the world and worldly pursuits that will encourage people to become ascetics and shun participating in and contributing to society. As a result, individuals will fail to undertake their responsibilities as stewards and keepers of God’s trust. In other instances, such a loss of equilibrium will prevent people from engaging in independent and creative thought. When people begin to believe that human beings are not really capable of independent actions, they no longer value their own deeds and, ultimately, conclude that there is no meaning to their existence. Such ideas contradict the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah.

To neglect the reading of the natural universe or to fail to balance and complement it with the reading of revelation often leads to confusion over important issues of faith. Often, those who read only the book of Revelation suppose that eliminating anthropomorphic elements from the concept of deity requires negating the value of human actions, rejecting belief in free will, and formulating a mystical denial of God’s positive role for humanity. Anyone who reads the writings of such people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, finds that they are thoroughly confused about what constitutes human, as opposed to divine, deeds, the meanings of free will and predetermination, and issues of cause and effect, among others.

In conclusion, the two readings must be combined, for if they are not allowed to complement one another, the result will be an unbalanced understanding of reality. This is why the Islamization of Knowledge is such an epistemological and civilizational necessity, not only for Muslims but for

humanity in general, and why it may be considered a solution to the global crisis of contemporary thought. After adopting rationalism as the basis for thought, western civilization found itself confronted with the problem of defining methodologies in ways based on its own scientific progress. For example, Marxism sought to fashion a western scientific methodology based on dialectical materialism. Clearly, however, neither Marxism nor any other liberal, positivistic, or secular western schools of thought have provided answers to the issues besetting western society and the rest of the world.

The crisis is especially vexatious for Muslims. By virtue of our submission to western intellectual, cultural, and institutional influences and the impact that these have had on our lives, we are now full partners in the worldwide crisis. Our relationship with the West is no longer marginal, as some continue to believe. We and the rest of the world have accepted its methodology, worldview, and perspectives on history, science, knowledge, culture, progress, and so on.

What, then, is this Islamization of Knowledge proposal? What solutions does it offer to the crises of thought that presently plague the world, and how can these solutions be realized?

As indicated earlier, the Islamization of Knowledge may be brought about through combined readings of the two books and, based upon their similarity and complementarity, the establishment of a methodology for research and discovery. The Qur'an, like the natural universe, bespeaks and directs toward the other: The Qur'an is a guide to the real-existential, and the real-existential is a guide to the Qur'an. Moreover, true knowledge is attained only through a complementary reading – a “combining” – of these two sources.

One reading is that of the Unseen, in which revelation is accompanied by interpretation and the attempt to discover its universals and how they manifest themselves in nature, while the other reading is an objective reading of the real-existential in light of the universals expounded in the verses of revelation. The reason for revelation, then, is to settle from the general to the particular and to link the absolute to the specific, to the extent that relative human rational abilities allow.

The other reading, that of the categorical real-existent, represents an ascent from the specific and the particular toward the general and the absolute, also to the extent that relative human rational abilities allow. In this way, the supposed differences between revelation's teachings and the natural universe's objective truths may be seen as nonexistent, as empha-

sized in *Sūrat al-‘Alaq*: “Read! In the name of your Lord who created, created humans from a clot. Read! For your Lord is Most Bountiful, He who taught by the pen, taught humans what they did not know” (96:1-5).

When these two readings are undertaken separately, the results may be perilous. Those who rely solely upon revelation, thereby ignoring knowledge of the real world, transform religion into something mystical that accords no value to humanity or nature, rejects cause and effect, and ignores the uses of society, history, psychology, and economics. Ultimately, thought becomes rigid and inflexible, and ignores the elements of time and history. Quite often, this approach is thought to be religious; in fact, it has nothing to do with religion.

Those who undertake only the second reading are actually rejecting – or ignoring – the unseen presence of the Creator and Manager of the natural universe. As a result, they gradually arrive at a positivistic understanding of knowledge that negatively influences the makeup of society, as we see in contemporary western civilization: All notions of anything being sacred have been stripped away, and everything has been deconstructed and reduced to its minimum. This is why western society, from its vantage point on the verge of extinction, often views existence itself as a worthless commodity. This further explains the West’s preoccupation with “ends”: the end of history, civilization, progress, modernity, or humanity itself.

Thus, humanity is divided between mysticism and positivism, even though the first verses of the Qur’an clearly refute the mystical, in the western sense of the term, as being a part of the Unseen. In fact, the first verses clarify the link between the Unseen and the second (objective) reading of the real-existential, which is recorded by means of the pen. These same verses, by linking the real-existential to revelation, reject the speculative ends that result from a one-sided reading of the real-existential. Thus, the balanced “reader” is the individual whose faith in, and understanding of, revelation on the one hand, and understanding of the real-existent and the principles that determine and govern categorical real-existents on the other, qualify him/her for the responsibilities of stewardship.

It is impossible to estimate, in terms of human suffering, the damage caused to modern society by the rift between science and religion seen in its educational institutions and curriculum. Yet, even so, humanity has shown little interest in producing students who are grounded in both. Obviously, this is because modern society has adopted the western attitude of separating the two, so that students of theology attend seminaries and stu-

dents of science attend colleges of engineering. In the Muslim world, where western influence is all-pervasive, the same rift exists between schools and colleges of Shari'ah studies and theology and colleges of practical and applied sciences, or social sciences and the humanities.

This attitude of separation is responsible for the rift between religious values and contemporary knowledge. For us, as Muslims, this attitude is perilous because it drives a wedge between the Shari'ah sciences and the social sciences, which have been developed largely in accordance with a one-sided reading of the real-existential. The Shari'ah sciences, for their part, have contented themselves with descriptive and lexical studies of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and have largely ignored the real-existents of societal phenomena and their spatial and temporal effects.

The dominant western cultural paradigm has cast the social sciences and humanities in a positivistic mold that excludes revelation's axiological verities. This narrow paradigm is responsible for humanity's debate over the conflicting dualities of mysticism and positivism, which inflates the self's place at the expense of religious and ethical values. This has led to the spread of individual liberalism and the ensuing social and communal turmoil.

The Islamization of Knowledge is primarily a methodological issue designed to identify and articulate the relationship between revelation and the real-existential. In its essence, that relationship is one of integration and permeation that clarifies the comprehensive manner in which the Qur'an deals with the real-existential and its governing and regulating natural laws (*sunan*) and principles. Indeed, knowledge of those *sunan* is invaluable to understanding the principles of Qur'anic methodology.

To summarize, then, the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking may be pursued only by those endowed with a vast knowledge of the Qur'an and a firm grounding in the social sciences and humanities.

#### THE SIX DISCOURSES

A brief description of each discourse forming the present focus of attention for the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking is given below.

*The First Discourse: Articulating the Islamic Paradigm of Knowledge.* This discourse, which is concerned with identifying and erecting a *tawhīd*-based system of knowledge (a *tawhīdī* episteme), is based on two fundamentals. The first one is the conceptual activation of the articles of faith and their transformation into a creative and dynamic intellectual power capable of pre-

senting adequate replies to what are known as ultimate questions. This may take place through a perceptive understanding of theology and the elements of its methodology. For example, what is the benefit, at an epistemological level, of faith in Allah; in His angels, books, and prophets; or in the Day of Judgment? What is the methodological significance of these articles of faith?

All ideas, not to mention all sciences and civilizations, are based on a particular worldview or understanding of its beginnings, ends, and principal elements, whether seen or unseen. Thus, rejecting a Creator, adopting a position of neutrality on whether or not a Creator exists, or rejecting any article of faith presupposes a worldview that is entirely different from that of the believer. The Muslim mind is generally content to view the articles of faith as matters of personal conviction that do not reflect on or influence anything related to methodological or intellectual issues. However, the Islamization of Knowledge outlook, in keeping with the higher purposes of the Shari‘ah and the character of Islamic teachings, is based on the idea that these represent the foundations of the societal and epistemological paradigm sought by Islam. At the same time, it should be clear that no society or reformation of society can take place without an epistemological and methodological basis. Indeed, whatever Islam has accomplished has been based on its unique vision of such elements as the Unseen, the universe, life, and the rest of the belief system located at the base of that worldview.

The second fundament of the Islamic (or *tawhīdī*) episteme is elaborating the paradigms of knowledge that guided historical Islam and its legal, philosophical, and other schools of thought. This must be done in order to link those with the intellectual output of the past and to evaluate the extent to which they contributed to the dynamism and comprehensiveness of that output. Such an elaboration will also help define the relationship between those paradigms and the various intellectual trends and crises faced by the Muslim world at different periods in its history. A further benefit is determining the extent to which those paradigms influenced the development or decline of thought in those periods. In addition, an effort must be made to discover and clarify how limited or partial epistemic systems drew from the comprehensive *tawhīdī* episteme mentioned above. This process will serve as an introduction to the feasibility of developing partial systems for the various social and applied sciences based on *tawhīd* and a complementary reading of the two books while, at the same time, borrowing from the paradigms that were prevalent in earlier stages of Islamic history and those developed by western and contemporary thought.

*The Second Discourse: Developing a Qur'anic Methodology.* The methodological shortcomings besetting the Muslim mind make its reconstruction via the development of a new methodology an absolute necessity. While a Qur'anic methodology may spring from the *tawhīdī* episteme and be based on its premises and principles, its prolonged disuse makes the effort required for its activation more akin to discovery than recovery. A Qur'anic methodology will enable the Muslim mind to deal effectively with its historical and contemporary problems, for it is a means to attain truth and to understand and analyze phenomena.

In addition to its link to methodology, a paradigm's base will include what Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir called the "premethodological." According to him, this involves such matters as culture, language, and psychological and intellectual disposition. This methodology also includes philosophy and tools. The philosophical element springs from the epistemic, theological, and cultural paradigms, and the same is true in regard to methodological tools. In spite of al-Suyūṭī's legal maxim – that which may not be forgiven if it were an end may be forgiven as a means – the means for dealing with phenomena or the tools used for research, which at first may not appear to be subject to cultural or religious considerations, in reality are never completely free of those considerations. Therefore, the advancement of Islamic methodology will proceed through its search to establish its own philosophical foundations and its discovery of appropriate methodological tools that accord with those foundations. Certainly, the landmarks of such a methodology will be derived from the *tawhīdī* episteme's religious and cultural premises.

The structure of Islamic methodology in general, or what may be termed the foundations of that methodology, must be grounded in authentic scholarship, rather than in the attempt to be different simply by opposing contemporary western methodology. The purpose behind developing an Islamic methodology should be to achieve harmony among the elements of the Islamic paradigm of knowledge, regardless of any notions of rapprochement, comparison, confrontation, imitation, or whatever. In addition, such an undertaking should strive to enable the Muslim mind, through an integrative methodology, to practice *ijtihād* and be intellectually creative. Constructing this methodology should be considered a major priority and an essential precondition to the four following discourses, just as the previous discourse should be considered an essential precondition to this discourse.

*The Third Discourse: A Methodology for Dealing with the Qur'an.* This element may be considered the Islamization of Knowledge's third pillar. Developing such a methodology may require a review and reorganization of the Qur'anic sciences, even to the extent of discarding some traditional areas of study that played a role in the past. The Arab individual of the past understood the Qur'an from within the special characteristics of his/her simple and limited social and intellectual natures. Clearly, these stand in stark contrast to the nature of contemporary civilization. When the revelational sciences (those that mainly revolved around the Qur'an and the Hadith) were first formalized, the dominant mentality among Muslim scholars was descriptive in nature. As a result, they concentrated on analyzing the texts primarily from lexical and rhetorical perspectives. Thus, at that period in Muslim intellectual history, the Qur'an was understood in terms of interpretive discourse (*tafsīr*).

At the present time, however, the dominant mentality is the methodological understanding of issues through disciplined research, employing criticism and analysis, into topics of significance for society and their various relationships. This requires Muslims to reconsider the disciplined means by which they are to interpret the texts of revelation and read the books of revelation and the real-existential. Furthermore, the Qur'an needs to be liberated from the sort of interpretation that neglects the dimensions of its absoluteness, as well as of its verification and safeguarding of previous revelations. Such interpretations have been susceptible to the relative, either in the form of *isrā'īlyyāt* (stories and narratives based in the Jewish or Talmudic tradition and then adapted to fit Qur'anic situations) or as *asbāb al-nuzūl* (narrations concerning the specific events occasioning the revelation of Qur'anic verses).

This link to the relative did not stop at qualifying general terms by means of specific occasions, but extended even to linking the Qur'anic revelation to a specific spatial and temporal framework. The end results were clearly contrary to Islam's universality, the finality of the Prophet's mission, and the Qur'an's sovereignty, all of which require the Qur'anic text to be absolute and unqualified in its appeal to the Muslim mind of every time and place. Indeed, the Qur'an will remain forever rich in content, its wonders will never cease, its recitation will remain fresh forever, and it will continue to exceed the ability of humanity, regardless of time and place, to comprehend it completely.

The Qur'an, as the explanation of all things and a guidance, mercy, and good tidings for the Muslims (16:89), is the only originating source in Islam,

whereas the Sunnah is an explanatory source that provides further elaboration on its meaning. God has pledged to preserve the Qur'anic revelation and to clarify its meanings: "Verily, We shall bring it together and recite it. Then, when We recite it, follow its recitation. Thereafter, shall We be responsible for its explanation" (75:17-19). No other source of knowledge, culture, or civilization is protected by God or surrounded by so many divine pledges. As the Qur'anic text is guaranteed against alteration and distortion, its authority is complete and its sovereignty is absolute: "Whatever matter you differ over, its ultimate disposition is with Allah" (5:49).

This is why reconstructing a methodology for dealing with the Qur'an as a methodological source of knowledge for the natural and social sciences will empower those sciences to contribute effectively to human life and the crises now confronting it. Such an undertaking is certain to return values to the balance of these sciences and link them to the higher purposes for which creation was intended by its Creator.

*The Fourth Discourse: A Methodology for Dealing with the Sunnah.* As the major source for clarifying and explaining the Qur'anic text, the Sunnah's nature and role must be thoroughly understood. Without the Sunnah, it would be impossible to elaborate on the methods or the lore required for making significant contributions to human society or to apply Qur'anic values to real-existent situations. The period of prophethood and the time of the Companions represented a time during which direct contact with the Messenger was possible. The Muslims of that time could know and emulate whatever he said or did. For example, he said: "Take the rites of hajj from me ..." and "Perform salah (prayer) as you see me perform it..."

Emulation and compliance depend upon practical action, and when such action is present, no difficulties will arise in application. Thus, the Prophet's deeds and words narrowed the distance between the hidden wisdom of the Qur'anic way and the existential, although they did so in terms of the particular mental, linguistic, and intellectual abilities of the people he addressed. The hadith narrators, whose only concern was to preserve the Prophet's every word and deed, transmitted this information to the best of their ability, for it represented the methodology by which disputed issues could be solved via revelation. This explains the Sunnah's incredible magnitude, which allows us to follow the Prophet in his daily actions, whether at home or away, at war or at peace, as teacher or judge, and as leader or a simple human being. The Sunnah also enables us to witness and interpret how he dealt with and combined the Qur'an and the real-existent.

In addition, the Sunnah reveals the characteristics of the reality with which the Prophet had to deal. Obviously, that reality differs considerably from the reality confronting us today. This realization leads us to construct a methodology based on how he applied the teachings of revelation to real situations, rather than ones based on imitation springing from deference or *taqlīd*. In other words, the way of true emulation is quite distinct from the way of *taqlīd*.

The Sunnah represents the embodiment of a methodology for applying the Qur'an to the real-existential. It is difficult to comprehend many of the issues brought up by the Sunnah if one does not understand the prevailing circumstances at the time and place of the Prophet's mission. This is also true when one seeks to follow the Sunnah or emulate the Prophet's example, in terms of its particulars, without first constructing a methodology for emulation that can systematize the Sunnah in an objective manner by placing its particulars within a methodological framework.

For example, even though the Prophet prohibited sculpture and the graphic representation of the human form and characterized portrait artists as the most severely punished on the Day of Judgment, this should not be taken as the basis of a position toward the entire realm of aesthetics. Such a position would clash outright with the Qur'anic teachings about how prophet Sulayman (Solomon) understood the matter: The Qur'an records that he recruited the jinn to produce all manner of sculpture for him. Contemporary debates on the subject will never be resolved through recourse to historical particulars, nor will such recourse answer those who maintain that they feel no inclination to worship pictures and question why, then, there should be a prohibition on representing the human form. Certainly, particularized fatwas (legal responses) that permit one sort of picture and prohibit another will solve nothing. Rather, a methodology that considers such elements as the Prophet's saying, made several times: "Had your tribe not been only recently involved in idolatry, I might have done... [this or that]" is needed.<sup>9</sup> At that particular time, the Prophet was seeking to abolish idolatry among a people for whom it had become a way of life and to replace it with the simplest and purest form of *tawhīd*.

Clearly, a systematic methodology capable of regulating these issues and reading them in a disciplined manner is required. Using such a tool, Muslims will be able to deal with the Sunnah in a methodical manner and not merely as a collection of particularized responses to specific questions and circumstances that, all too often, are transformed by the litigious into conflicting statements, much as if they were legal opinions voiced by different imams.

During the period of Qur'anic revelation, the Arabs embraced the concept of emulation and took the Prophet as their exemplar and as the one who embodied for them a certain way, in accordance with their conditions and spatial and temporal circumstances. Within this particular framework, the concepts of *ma'thūr* (reported) and *manqūl* (transmitted) originated. Over time, the narration of hadiths continued without reference to the circumstances or situations that occasioned the events recounted or to other elements that would contribute to a comprehensive understanding of their true import. In general, hadiths were treated in the same way as the Qur'anic text was treated: Lexical considerations were given the greatest priority. In an attempt to diminish the effects of this approach and escape the confines of the strictly *ma'thūr*, some took recourse in esoteric or symbolic interpretations. These undertakings, however, only exacerbated and confused the situation further, for what was needed was the construction of a systematic methodology for dealing with the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Only such a methodology could consider the particulars of those texts from a comprehensive methodological perspective and in the light of Islam's higher aims and purposes.

The intellectual mentality constantly searches for a scientific ordering of issues and attempts to construct a methodology for dealing with all of their aspects. Within such a methodological framework, the processes of analysis, criticism, and interpretation assume a more comprehensive and penetrating role in dealing with universal and particularized phenomena. Such a methodology, while allowing for consideration of the Qur'an's higher purposes, will liberate research from the confines of *taqlīd*, esotericism, and attempts to graft historical applications onto present-day situations. Old solutions in new guises are still old solutions and will never engender the needed reform or serve the higher purposes of Islam's universal message.

*The Fifth Discourse: Reexamining the Islamic Intellectual Heritage.* Renewed attention must be given to the Islamic intellectual heritage. This treasure must be understood critically, analytically, and in a way that delivers us from the three spheres that usually influence our dealings with it: total rejection, total acceptance, and piecemeal grafting. These three spheres represent obstacles not only in the present, but for the future as well. A critical and methodologically sound reexamination of this heritage should overcome these three spheres and establish a system in which the Islamic paradigm and its methodology can deal effectively with issues that, although not the focus of study, may shed light on how the Muslim mind has dealt with

social and other phenomena in the past and, therefore, on how it may deal with contemporary phenomena.

As Islam's intellectual heritage is the product of the human mind, it is subject to the relative considerations of the "when, where, and who" of its origins. Even so, its links to revelation, itself above all relative considerations, make this intellectual heritage closer to the truth than those intellectual traditions that do not spring from revelation. Finally, however, it is necessary to understand our intellectual heritage as ideas, treatments, and interpretations of a historical reality that differs significantly from our own. In our reexamination, we must discern what objectives the heritage sought to serve and then evaluate the methods used, if not the solutions suggested, for their utility in our own time and place.

*The Sixth Discourse: Dealing with the Western Intellectual Heritage.* If the Muslim mind is to liberate itself from the dominant paradigm and how it deals with that paradigm, it must construct a methodology for dealing with western thought, both past and present. Outright rejection or wholesale acceptance, as well as the cosmetic grafting of elements without reference to a systematic methodology or to sociocultural differences, will not benefit the Muslims.

#### THE ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE UNDERTAKING

These are the steps or, more specifically, the six discourses from which the concept of the Islamization of Knowledge may proceed. At present, we find ourselves confronted by a ubiquitous positivism that, in the name of scientific research and progress, promotes the idea that science may be served by breaking the relationship between the created and the Creator. This is accomplished, in part, by proposing ideas about existence that seem to conflict with much of our Islamic thinking. In fact, these ideas may or may not actually be inconsistent with Islamic teachings or principles.

Here, the issue is not that we should search our religious teachings for matters that seem to agree with such ideas, solely for the purpose of being able to say "we already knew about that" or to reject summarily such ideas as unbelief (*kufi*). In principle, the project's position toward the natural sciences is anything but ecclesiastical or an attempt to follow the examples of others. In fact, their experience with knowledge and progress differs considerably from our own. Were the Qur'an to be considered theology and

no more, then only one reading – the first one – would be permitted. That this is not the case is made clear by the fact that God has commanded us to undertake two readings. This is why we are not interested in disputing science, for we realize that the revelational truths in the Qur'anic verses (*āyāt*) are the same truths found in the signs (*āyāt*) of God's creation. If misconceptions, supposedly based on scientific principles, should appear, our duty is to reexamine or exonerate those principles.

This task is, in fact, the basis of the concept of the two readings. When religion was challenged by purely rational and positivistic thought, it never sought to defend itself through the practical and applied sciences and the theoretical schools that supported them. Thus Muslims, as a nation charged with guiding humanity, must reexamine science in order to deliver it from the clutches and influences of mistaken theories so that science may be used and regulated by the logic of the two readings.

The undertaking that we, as Muslim social scientists, advocate is a noble undertaking, even if some believe that it falls within the specific geographical and religious framework of Islam. In today's world, we are a part of the reaction against the invasion of the experimental and applied sciences in much the same way as our predecessors of the last two centuries reacted against the cultural invasion of the West and its emphasis on pure reason. Today's confrontation, however, is with an experimental and positivistic mentality that has rearranged the natural and social sciences. Our options are therefore limited: We may either adopt feeble dogmatic positions or positions based on the Islamization of Knowledge, which seeks to orient and direct the natural sciences in accordance with a comprehensive Qur'anic outlook on the natural universe and, at the same time, to reconstruct the natural and social sciences in consonance with that outlook. In fact, most of the approaches found in the experimental sciences continue to be qualified by the particular rather than characterized by dimensions of the universal. The universal dimension, however, is one that is embodied by the Qur'anic revelation:

Verily, those who dispute over the signs of Allah without His vouchsafing them authority, those are the ones whose breasts are filled with naught but pride; and never will they attain what they wish. So seek refuge in Allah, the All-Hearing and All-Knowing. Verily, the creation of the heavens and Earth was greater than the creation of humanity. Yet, most of humanity does not know. (40:65)

The Islamization of Knowledge undertaking is both universal and Qur'anic. In the face of impetuous religiosity and the failure of modern

civilization, the Qur'an stands out as the sole source qualified to direct a comprehensive methodological and intellectual undertaking that can make a continued contribution to knowledge and society. The present battle of civilizations represents a trial for us in our understanding of the Qur'anic methodology and our ability to safeguard society by means of applying it to the social sciences. It is our position that, via the complementarity of the two readings, the element of balance may be restored to science, the social sciences, and society. At the present time, science has reached a stage in which phenomena may be reduced to infinitesimally minute or galactically expansive proportions. Phenomena may no longer be understood in the same way they were understood by our predecessors. Phenomena are commonly regarded as what used to be visible before the technological revolution opened up the worlds of microscopic and electronic sensing devices. Whereas earlier generations visualized the atomic level in terms of grains of sand, the atomic and subatomic levels of today are purely microscopic: "So I do call to witness what you see and what you see not" (69:38-39).

Furthermore, whereas our predecessors understood time as a progression, today we understand it in terms of qualitative and classifiable – not merely quantitative – change. This essential difference is at the core of the difference between objective and rational causation, as it was understood in the past, and the scientific causation of the present.

Therefore, the Islamization of Knowledge must not be understood as idle theorization, but as an undertaking that has come to restore balance to knowledge through the two readings and to liberate human thought from the enervating clutches of ecclesiasticism and mysticism on the one hand, and from the positivistic framework for scientific thought, which seeks to separate the created from the Creator on the other. Each extreme has had dreadful consequences for human life and society. The Islamization of Knowledge may be understood as a methodological and paradigmatic introduction to a worldwide societal alternative that seeks to deliver both Muslims and non-Muslims from their present crisis. Such an undertaking requires a great deal of outstanding study and research, beginning with studies of the Qur'an, and has to be carried out in the light of new understanding and perspectives. This responsibility falls to the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking and to the generations required to bring it to fruition.

Without a methodological understanding of the Qur'an (within the framework of its complete and integrative structure) to equal our methodological understanding of natural phenomena and their movement (within the framework of their particular structure), the Islamization of Knowledge

will remain an impossibility. Moreover, as we attempt to explain the issue to the world, we should expect to be beset by many difficulties, one of them being that the present-day intellectual mentality is ill-disposed toward writs claiming the status of “revelation.” In some instances, these may be tolerated by intellectuals, but only to a point. For the most part, however, the sacred and the transcendental have been relegated to the domain of personal conviction, which renders anything stemming from such literature scientifically unacceptable. Thus, contemporary knowledge considers the unseen beings referred to in these books, as well as their accounts of the past, as contrary to positivistic history and an objective scientific understanding of the world.

However, such an understanding is the result of an incomplete grasp of the two readings, which seek to comprehend natural and real-existent phenomena guided by revelation’s higher truths, and not through a reading of these phenomena on their own. Such a one-sided reading leaves us in the realm of positivism and its deconstructed and relativistic ideas about existence, and leads to fragmented and partial, as opposed to holistic, thinking. When the two readings are allowed to complement one another, a natural progression occurs from the part to the whole – from the qualified to the absolute. Thus every rejection of the “metaphysical” or the “transcendental” is, in fact, a rejection of the first reading (revelation), which considers the transcendental to be a fundamental element in its method, not only as a matter of faith but also as an indicator of a greater universal existence. This, in turn, is indicated by the second reading (the real-existent).

If the world is to emerge from its current crisis of thought and civilization, it needs to comprehend both the natural and the metaphysical dimensions of existence in their entirety. The Islamization of Knowledge undertaking is responsible for bringing about this awareness. Such an undertaking is as considerable as it is ambitious. Beginning with the two readings, its goal is no less than Islamizing human knowledge so that truth may prevail and guidance may become widespread. This, in summary, represents the Islamization of Knowledge’s *raison d’être*, and its overall goals may be summarized, as follows:

*The First Goal: Restoring the link between knowledge and values or, more precisely, returning knowledge to the realm of values, from which it was expelled by positivism.* It is now clear that separating knowledge and values was a serious mistake. Any observer of how contemporary knowledge developed will notice that the intellectual output of Europe and the United States has begun to show signs of concern, in nearly every discipline,

with topics related to knowledge and values. Indeed, certain postmodernist trends represent this concern, particularly in view of modernism's complete failure and uncompromising partition of knowledge and values. The Islamization of Knowledge undertaking seeks to make this issue one of universal concern by laying out its philosophical and strategic frameworks, providing the means necessary to achieve it, and establishing the guidelines required to connect scholars with truth rather than speculation. Therefore, efforts expended on theorizing will not be wasted on the attempt to separate knowledge from values or the self from the subject, but on distinguishing between truth and reality as well as between suspicion and supposition. This rule may be derived from the following Qur'anic verse: "And let not your dislike of a people lead you to be unjust. Be just. Surely, that is closer to heeding God" (5:2).

*The Second Goal: Bringing about an interplay and exchange between the reading of revelation and the reading of the real-existential.* This is to be done in such a way that the end result will be harmony between humanity and all other elements of creation, all of whom are governed by the same natural laws (*sunan*) and strive toward the same end, namely, to worship their Creator and recite His praise. This means that the social and natural sciences will be linked, but not in the way envisioned by the so-called logic of positivism, which holds that if the social sciences are to be considered true sciences, they must be based on the same methodology as the natural sciences.

Rather, the Islamization of Knowledge approach is to return both of these fields to a single philosophy, one that fuses and interacts with the reading of revelation while, at the same time, strives to discern the general principles regulating both sciences. This philosophy, moreover, engenders a sound understanding and respect for nature that, in turn, leads to good treatment and overall benefit, rather than to the environmental destruction and natural resource squandering caused by the beliefs that nature must be conquered and the wilderness tamed. On the contrary, the Islamization of Knowledge encourages humanity's interaction with nature, for the latter was created to serve the former and, in its role as a trust, is an important factor in humanity's stewardship.

*The Third Goal: Solving the problem of ends posited by the static philosophies in which contemporary western scholarship is mired.* These philosophies speak constantly of the end of history, liberalism, and the world.<sup>10</sup> This is done in order to avoid answering those questions that all human

philosophies, because of their refusal to consider revelation, have failed to answer, such as “What is the purpose of the universe?” and “Where will it end?”

Marxism sought to delimit an imaginary end that was to occur when true communism would spread over the world and each individual would work according to his/her abilities and be recompensed according to his/her needs. Liberal capitalism, however, views its own success as the end of history. The Islamization of Knowledge and its proposed systems and paradigms are not concerned with such theatrical ends or imaginary scenarios for the continued existence of humanity and its civilization. On the contrary, the undertaking completely negates the idea of ends as an intellectual problem, preferring instead to widen its horizons, as the problem of ends is wide open and limitless. The Prophet said: “When the Last Hour comes and one of you has a seed in his hand, then go ahead and plant it, if you can.”<sup>11</sup> Evidently, he meant to emphasize that no one, regardless of the signs and indications, should suppose that the end has come or seek to limit human life and society.

This is the Islamization of Knowledge as we understand it, in its present state of development. It is a call for a global Islamic cultural and intellectual mobilization to rethink the foundations of human society and then rebuild it. The end result of this process is the realization of felicity now and in the Hereafter, and the rescuing of humanity from a future in which destruction looms large.

## NOTES

1. The Islamization of Knowledge, as understood by the International Institute of Islamic Thought, is a systematic methodological concept that the institute, as well as its branches and representatives, are attempting to develop and realize in practical terms. However, it appears that the concept, in general, has appealed to several different quarters and that these, in turn, have produced various publications in its name (or in similar names they have chosen either with or without care). The institute does not consider itself responsible for the work or views of such groups. In fact, their work so far fails to express the issue in terms of the methodology and comprehensiveness that characterize the institute's concern with it, as evinced through its literature and publications.
2. These include such matters as the pillars of faith, the prescribed duties, the acts of worship, the prohibited acts and substances, or the things referred to by certain scholars as being “known to be an essential part of Islam.”
3. ‘Imād al-Dīn Khalīl, *Madkhal ilā Islāmīyat al-Ma‘rifāh* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1991).

4. Abū al-Qāsim Ḥajj Ḥammād, *Al-Ālamīyyah al-Islāmiyyah al-Insāniyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Masīrah, 1980).
5. Ibid.
6. See Qur'an 12:111.
7. See Qur'an 6:38.
8. This was related by Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in his *Musnad*, 3:218, on the authority of Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh.
9. This was related by al-Nasāʿī in his *Sunan*, “Book of Zakah,” hadith no. 900, on the authority of ʿĀʾishah.
10. Once such an “end” is seen to have reached its end, the terminology changes to “post-.” In either case, however, the emphasis remains the same. [Trans.]
11. Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal related this hadith in his *Musnad*, 3:184, on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik.

## The Islamization of the Methodology of the Behavioral Sciences

Many years ago, and after numerous conferences and exhaustive studies and consultations on our Ummah's present situation, as well as an extensive analysis of our past and future aspirations, an idea crystallized in the minds of a group of young committed Muslims: The Ummah's crisis, in both its essence and its reality, is an intellectual crisis, because everything else in the Ummah is sound, except for thought. The Ummah still possesses all of the fundamentals that had once made it "the best of peoples evolved for humanity" (3:110); all that is missing is the soundness of its thought and the ability to develop, utilize, and strengthen it. As far as the rest is concerned, if the Ummah is no better than it was, at least is no worse off. Therefore, the various phenomena of corruption in the Ummah are, in our opinion, only a reflection and embodiment of the crisis of its thought.

Thought is the fruit of all sources of knowledge, education, experience, ability, and social concepts and trends. For Muslims, it is formulated by revelation as well as humanity's inherent intellectual capacity, cultural developments and knowledge, and experience, in addition to one's *fitrah* (inherent nature) and potential, which Allah has bestowed upon every person. Thought is like a tree, for it needs healthy and strong roots to survive. Hence, if the roots and sources of knowledge are sound, the methodology correct, and the aims worthy, then both its situation and that of its supporters will improve. However, if there are mistakes or deliberate alterations and distortions in these sources, then thought will be corrupted and all aspects of life disrupted. Consequently, people will become short-sighted and narrow-minded, begin to neglect the basics and essentials because of their concentration on minor and irrelevant issues, ignore the long-term

aims and objectives, and focus on ritualistic details. In addition, they will either ignore the relationship between effects and their causes, or attribute effects to the wrong causes and thus fall victim to superstitions and fail to identify their priorities.

When a society reaches such a stage, its social equilibrium crumbles and collapses, and conflict among members of the group (or Ummah) will come to dominate all political, intellectual, and social aspects of life. Security will disappear, and distrust and corruption will prevail. Odd ideas and principles will predominate and create serious divisions and schisms. People will be hesitant and afraid to participate in or contribute to collective and public work, endeavors, and activities. Lacking both in trust and confidence, they will tend to isolate themselves from society. Positive, disciplined, and fair attitudes will disappear, only to be replaced with whimsical, frivolous, and erratic ones. Objective thinking will be lost, only to give way to Machiavellian and precautionary ideas and thought and to mixing up different issues and means. The members of the Ummah will have nothing in common. Killing, torturing, and the repressive silencing of all opposition will become the only way of communication between the rulers and the people. As a result, the Ummah will lose its ability to understand its own situation and fail to plan for the future; its efforts and activities will be limited to combating non-issues that are the product of selfishness and greed. All of these systems serve as clear indicators of nothing more or less than a crippling intellectual crisis.

If a nation's thought is distorted and suffers such a crisis, its situation cannot be rectified or improved, so that it may develop, without reforming its thought. Any attempted reform undertaken before resolving the crisis of thought is doomed to fail and lead to more confusion and corruption. Undoubtedly, all means of reform will become ineffective if they are influenced to any extent by corrupted and distorted thought. The positive results, if any, of such attempts will be short-lived and may even be used as a means of repression and destruction. Indeed, there are many striking examples of this in our own history.

Allah has ordered us to believe in *qadar* (i.e., His assignment of ends to all processes of life and existence on Earth). Belief in *qadar* is considered one of the most important pillars of *īmān* (i.e., the conviction that Allah is the One and only God and that Muhammad is His last Prophet). Anybody who does not believe in it cannot be considered a *mu'min* (a believer). Belief in *qadar* encourages Muslims to achieve great things,

releases people from all kinds of desires and fears, and frees them from all sorts of pressures and evil influences. It gives them self-respect and enables them, in accordance with the will of Allah, to explore the universe, utilize it for their own benefit, and study its natural laws and the interrelationships among them so that they can build civilizations and establish truth, goodness, and beauty.

When the Ummah's first generation, namely, that of the Ṣaḥābah (the Companions) and the Tābi'ūn (the following generation), combined this driving force with enlightened thought and were able to understand it within this framework, no obstacle could hamper them and no difficulty could prevent them from achieving their aims and goals. But when this pillar of *īmān* (belief) is combined with disturbed and distorted thought, it leads to laziness, indifference, and apathy.

If we study the relationship between causality and divine power, we find that the first generation of Muslims understood it in a comprehensive and clear manner. Each of them would use what they had and, if successful, would thank and praise Allah, Who had created and made available such means and brought about the desired result. However, if they failed, they would go back and carefully reexamine the means to find out where they had gone wrong in order to rectify the mistake. After this, they would do their best again, within the Allah-given *sunan* (laws), to achieve the desired results. At the same time, they believed that Allah has complete power to do whatever He wills and "has power over all things" (2:20).

The first generation of Muslims knew that complete divine power did not prevent them from using the available and appropriate means to bring about the required result. All believers, they rightly felt, must do everything possible in the most proficient, accurate, and sincere manner, and then leave it to Allah to bring about a result in accordance with His *sunan* and *qadar*. Allah has the right to test His servants, but they do not have the right to test Him by neglecting the necessary means and causes to see whether or not the same result would occur. The first generation always sought the appropriate means in any matter. None of them felt that this detracted from the sincerity of their *īmān* or the reality of *tawakkul* (reliance on Allah). The Prophet summed up this matter in a single sentence. When an upset and surprised Bedouin, who had left his camel untied outside the mosque and later on learned that it had run away, complained to the Prophet that he had relied on Allah to take care of his camel, the Prophet said: "Tie the camel up (*iqil*), then rely on Allah (*wa tawakkal*)."

However, the thought of the contemporary crisis-stricken generations has dramatically changed this simple, clear matter into an insoluble problem. The scholastic theologians (*kalāmīyūn*) have spoken and written a great deal on the reality and the nature of the cause and the relationship between causes and effects. They have raised such questions as: “Is the effect necessarily brought about by the cause?” and “When is it necessary, and when is it not, to mention and explain causes?” Such questions and consequent arguments confounded, bewildered, and confused the Muslim mind. Sometimes Muslims were told that resorting to means is a sign of weak *īmān* and *yaqīn* (apodictic certainty of the truth of Islam and its claim); other times they were told that adopting and resorting to means is a requirement of faith.

In all cases, this had a tremendous shattering effect on the Muslim mind and conscience. The Ummah now needs to make a great educational and intellectual effort to rid itself of these debilitating and paralyzing effects. The deviation of thought caused by the principle of causality is responsible, to a great extent, for the spread of superstition, indifference, lack of objectivity, and apathy. These negative effects have been exacerbated by the exponents of superlative *fiqh* and cryptic issues. An example would be those who seek to block the punishment of a woman who, pregnant through adultery, claimed that a jinn had impregnated her, thereby rendering her guilt “doubtful.”

For the first generation of Muslims, the relationship between the intellectual capacity of *‘aql* (reason) and *naql* (revelation, transmitted knowledge) was complementary. No narration indicates that any member of that generation felt that there was any dichotomy between the two. Whenever there was a revelation concerning *ghayb* (hidden, invisible, unseen, that which is beyond perception), they would submit to it, with no *i‘tirād* (objection), *jidāl* (argument), *ta‘tīl* (delay), *tashbīh* (doubt), or *ta‘wīl* (interpretation); with no argument or objections; and without trying to find an explanation. In other words, they had no need for such procedures because their intellect had already played its role in determining whether or not the Prophet was speaking the truth, and they had already pondered, argued, discussed, and asked for evidence (the miracle) before they had embraced Islam.

As long as they believed that the Prophet was the Messenger of Allah and was telling the truth, and that the Qur’an was the Book of Allah in which “no falsehood can approach from before or behind it” (41:42), they

could easily accept whatever the Prophet told them about such matters. They were genuinely convinced that some things can be known only through revelation, and that the Revelation had been proven correct and authentic by miracles. Therefore, there was no need to waste precious intellectual energy or time on these matters. Rather, it is far better to devote ourselves to the study of the tangible universe and to use it as creatively as possible.

The relationship between the intellectual capacity of reason and revelation was severely affected by this crisis, which damaged scholastic theology and philosophy. This led to a great deal of distortion, confusion, and sterile arguments about fate, free will, cause and effect, people's deeds, humanity's role, and the value and importance of life and its goal. All of this affected the Muslims' way of thinking, outlook, education, behavior, attitudes, and reactions. In fact, they transformed Muslims into weak-willed, short-sighted, negative, indifferent, and fatalistic beings who blindly imitate others and are totally occupied and exhausted by trivialities. Such Muslims are like worthless flotsam, for no harmony whatsoever exists between them and their surroundings.

If the wonderful harmony between intellectual capacity and revelation had continued, and if Muslims had continued to study the universe and its laws and find ways to harness it for the benefit of humanity in order to establish truth and justice, we would not find ourselves in this situation. It would not be possible for the reins of civilization to be in alien hands, nor for Muslims to be worthless flotsam. If Muslims had remained industrious, worshipping and meditating upon Allah with their mind and intellect, as well as with their actions and deeds, would this present intellectual lethargy, laziness, and inertia be arresting and paralyzing their intellectual capacity?

Moreover, if Islamic thought had continued to ascribe the appropriate importance to the *sunan* of cause and effect and establish the relationship between results and their causes, could superstition still dominate the Muslim mind? If it were not for the blind imitation of others, which has made Muslims behave like a lost herd, would we now find our Ummah being driven headlong into destruction and ruin as millions of Muslims are killed (most of them by other Muslims)? The situation is so chaotic that the killers do not know why they kill, and the dead do not know why they are dead. If it were not for the widespread confusion caused by this intellectual crisis, would it be possible for thousands of Muslims to die of diseases caused

by overeating and other features of imported alien cultures while millions of others die of starvation and a lack of shelter?

This Ummah has been in existence for fourteen centuries. Although it is difficult to determine exactly when its crisis actually began, the split between the political leadership and the '*ulamā*' and '*fuqahā*', which appeared after the era of the four rightly guided caliphs (632-61), can be considered a starting point. This split continued to grow and develop, leading eventually to the formulation of policies that, unlike those of the rightly guided caliphs, bore no relationship to the goals of Islam. These policies, which have had the worst effect on the Ummah and its thought, heralded the spread of those wrong ideas and concepts that brought about intellectual corruption.

Undoubtedly, the field of knowledge, along with its sources and methodologies, and the field of education, which is based on such knowledge, have been seriously affected and damaged by the current ongoing intellectual crisis. The human personality is formed from an intellect and a psyche, two features that distinguish people from animals by enabling them to think, analyze, and decide. The human intellect is formed by education and knowledge, plus the experiences and experiments of life. The psyche is formed by the arts, literature, and attitudes. So, any distortion in education is necessarily reflected in the intellect, and any disturbance or change in the arts and literature is reflected in the psyche.

The social sciences and humanities (e.g., psychology, sociology, education, economics, politics, and media) form the intellect of modern people (whatever their religion) in accordance with their orientation and educational influence. All of these subject areas are the product of the western mind, which formed them in accordance with its own philosophy and complicated outlook on the universe, life, and humanity, and then molded them to suit their own needs and without any regard for the needs of other peoples. The Soviets often describe the standards and methods of these sciences as being *capitalist*. I wonder what term Muslims will ascribe to them after their thought is reformed and their will is freed from their shackles and fetters.

The methodologies of these sciences, as well as their subject matter, results, aims, behavior, and outlook on life and the universe, are all in sharp conflict with our beliefs, concepts, and aims in life. They have succeeded in dividing educated Muslims into several groups, each adhering to one of its various philosophies and schools of thought. Some of them are described

as “logical and positivist,” others as “existentialist,” and still others as “materialist.”

Shortly after its formation, Israel established a committee for the social sciences and entrusted it with conducting research in those fields and calculating the extent of the threat they posed to Jewish and Zionist thought. The committee was required to devise a way to rid these fields of any negative effects to the Jewish mentality, because Israel’s leaders and thinkers were well aware of the negative and destructive effects that these sciences could have on life. The fact that many of the main exponents of these philosophies and schools of thought were Jews has not prevented Israel from seeking to neutralize their effect on the Jewish people, both inside and outside of Israel.

Tragically, however, Muslim youths are being greatly influenced and affected by all of these alien ideas and concepts. They accept and propagate the positive and negative elements without thinking; they become absorbed in daydreams. Their excuse for accepting such cultural and intellectual colonialism is that the West took the foundation of its culture and civilization from the Islamic legacy. In the whole Islamic world, there is no single center for the critical study of these sciences from an Islamic viewpoint, let alone centers that could provide an Islamic alternative.

The time has come for our universities to turn away from their role of producing clerks and officials and to begin producing educated scholars: not merely graduates with general knowledge, but educated Muslims who are aware of their duties, well-versed in their fields, and understand and are committed to the Islamic concepts of the universe, life, and humanity. This cannot be achieved unless educated Muslims resume their proper role in life: conveying the message of Islam and reformulating their own legacy, as well as humanity’s cultural and scientific heritage, by giving an Islamic character to its methodologies, principles, results, and aims. Thus, all fields and methods of knowledge, both in the arts and the sciences, will begin and end with Islamic concepts. However, this cannot be achieved without Islamizing knowledge.

#### THE SHARI‘AH SCIENCES

Our knowledge suffered a split very early in its existence. The origins of this split may be traced to the second to fourth Islamic centuries, the age of translation, classification, compilation, and recording. As a result, knowledge was divided into two separate areas: Shari‘ah knowledge and “other”

knowledge. This division still prevails. When the West colonized the Islamic world, it reinforced this division and gave it a new impetus. Western strategists took advantage of the dual system of education to completely isolate Islam from life and confine it to mere theoretical issues that served little practical purpose and had no great effect on everyday life. In each Islamic country they colonized, they established a secular system of education that enforced the westernization of the Muslim mind.

Consequently and tragically, Muslims began to believe in western values and adhere to western methodologies in all aspects of life and knowledge. The colonialists enabled this secular educational system to influence society and provided it with all the means to do so. In order to kill any serious opposition, they allowed some religious schools to remain. In most countries, these schools were attached to mosques; in others, they were kept independent. They taught the legacy of *fiqh*, *kalām*, and *uṣūl*, as well as Arabic sciences, using books written and ideas formulated after the gates of *ijtihād* had been closed.

This dual system of education caused the split of the Ummah's educated members into two groups: the westernized group that tries to establish all kinds of connections and rapport with the West, thinking that this will improve the Ummah's situation, and an opposing group that strongly resists this, not through sound thought but through the thought and mentality formulated during the period of decline, when the bases of such studies and education were formed. This conflict, which continues to waste the Ummah's energy and destroy its unity, is a major reason for its backwardness.

Given the above, we can clearly realize the urgent necessity for what we call the Islamization of Knowledge, which, in addition to the goals mentioned above, seeks to abolish this dual system of education in order to rid the Muslim mind of this dichotomy of knowledge. This goal, once achieved, would produce a united education system and a methodological syllabus capable of providing the Ummah with Muslim specialists in every practical area as well as in the social sciences and the humanities. These specialists would understand the general *aḥkām al-Sharī'ah* (rules of the Shari'ah) in addition to the rules of their field, so that they would know what to accept and what to reject. This would enable them to align their own activities with the general goals of Islam and its conception of the universe, life, and humanity.

Those studies known as "Shari'ah studies" need to be completely revised with regard to the books used, the tutors involved, the subject mat-

ter studied and researched, and the teaching methods followed. A great deal needs to be added, and the syllabus needs to be changed. Both the humanities and the social sciences, as well as the study of human nature and natural laws, should be added to the syllabus so that the *fuqahā'* can understand human nature and instinct, both individual and social, and life's various aspects. Equipped with such knowledge, they can interact effectively with these realities and, by becoming aware of its problems and values, play an active part in society.

This Ummah must establish academic institutions for research and study that deal with and specialize in the areas mentioned above in order to utilize its potential to hold meetings, invite scholars to research and write, adopt the most intelligent young people, and prepare them to devise the methodologies, programs, steps, plans, and conditions necessary for reforming its thought and Islamizing knowledge. Moreover, such institutions would strive to make this undertaking the main concern of educated Muslims, thereby establishing a trend that will lead the Ummah to a real, solid renaissance; carry the message of Islam from a comprehensive, civilized viewpoint and perspective; and put its basic issues into action. This will lead the Ummah toward a life of goodness in this world and a great reward in the Hereafter.

The First International Conference on the Islamization of Knowledge was held in Europe in July 1977. A decision was taken to establish an institute that would work toward reviving Islamic thought and its methodology. Thus, IIIT was established in Washington, DC, in 1981 by some Muslims who volunteered to shoulder this responsibility and duty and devote themselves to fulfilling the institute's objectives and securing its independence. The Second International Conference on Islamization was held in Islamabad, Pakistan, in 1982, as a joint effort between IIIT and the International Islamic University of Pakistan. As a result of the participants' research and discussions, a plan for Islamizing knowledge was crystallized and published as *The Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*.

One result of this conference was that the Islamic trend in Pakistan was not confined to knowledge. The Pakistani president himself participated in the conference and instructed his advisers and the nation's leading figures to take part in the research and discussions. Since then, Pakistan has taken wide-ranging steps toward Islamization in many fields. Civil and criminal laws have been reviewed and replaced with Islamic alternatives. A system of

zakah was announced and is being enacted. The study of Islamic civilization and Islamic thought has been included in the syllabi of all universities, and specialist research centers have been established in many branches of knowledge in the universities to study how to Islamize those subjects. Many Pakistanis see a direct connection between that conference and the Islamic changes that followed it.

The Third International Conference on the Islamization of Knowledge was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in cooperation with the International Islamic University of Malaysia. The prime minister, as well as other officials, party members, and many prominent Malaysian scientists and scholars, participated. This had far-reaching effects on the wide-ranging steps that Malaysia has taken toward Islamizing many fields. Useful alterations have been made to most syllabi, and an international Islamic university and an Islamic bank have been established in Kuala Lumpur. One is delighted to hear that Malaysia's non-Muslim minority has welcomed the call for Islamization and the various moves in that direction. This proves beyond any doubt that if Islam is presented to people in a correct and positive way, and as a solution to their problems, a cure for their ills, an answer to their questions, and a just and practical way of dealing with matters, then they will rush to embrace it. But if Islam is presented in a negative way, merely as empty words and slogans and strict actions, then it will be rejected and resisted.

Today, the institute is holding its Fourth International Conference in cooperation with the University of Khartoum. We hope that this conference will produce a comprehensive view of the Islamic methodology and a practical conception that will enable the Islamization of the behavioral sciences, which form the basis of the social sciences. These should be presented to the teachers of those sciences so that they can give examples and evidence of the Muslim mind's ability to structure and develop knowledge, and reintroduce these sciences to their students from an Islamic angle by adopting from the Qur'an and the Sunnah their ideas of the human soul and human nature, the rules of individual and social *fiṭrah*, the purpose of creation, and the divine laws governing the universe, humanity, and life.

At the same time, they should seek to use all of the sound means and methods of scientific research that Allah has bestowed upon His servants so that these sciences can help produce strong new Muslims that can fulfill their role as Allah's vicegerent on Earth. Therefore, humanity's *raison d'être*, which is to serve of Allah, involves building civilizations and utilizing all of

the energies and potentials – both apparent and hidden – that Allah has provided so that humanity can fulfill its role.

The institute hopes that Sudan will carry out this trust, especially since its government is led by an important Muslim thinker who has contributed a great deal to many Islamic causes and issues. We also hope that the prime minister will include this message in his suggestions to the Islamic Summit Conference and ask Muslim leaders to give due and appropriate attention to reforming the methodology and Islamizing knowledge.

As we pointed out earlier, three western behavioral sciences (viz., psychology, sociology, and anthropology) are considered the basis and the starting point for all western humanities and social sciences. Their assumptions, rules, and theories define the understanding of humanity and its nature, aims, motives, and reactions, as well as the significance of people's activities, relationships, and interactions with others. One could almost say that the other social sciences consist merely of applying the assumptions and rules of these sciences to education, politics, economics, administration, media, law, and so forth. However, the western thought found in these sciences has many negative features and serious shortcomings, the most important of which are listed below:

- *Limitation of the Sources of Knowledge:* As the West confines the sources of its knowledge to human intellect alone, it has deprived itself of the most important source of knowledge, namely, Divine revelation, which provides comprehensive and detailed knowledge.
- *Limitation of the Means of Examining the Knowledge Produced by the Human Intellect:* As the West limits these means to experiments alone, it has made this the only proof of soundness in any branch of knowledge. Hence, westerners think that experiments are the only means of verification and therefore are suitable for every field of knowledge. But this is not the case.
- *Application of Deduction Regardless of Wide Differences:* The West subjected the behavioral and social sciences to the rules and methodologies of the natural and applied sciences. The motive for doing so was its great achievements in the applied and natural sciences

At this point, I hope you will permit me to pause briefly in memory of two great martyrs of the institute: Professor Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī and his wife Lois Lamyā' al-Fārūqī (may mercy fall on them).

Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī was an exponent and a leader of this cause. He traveled throughout the world, advocating it in his books and lectures. Like his ancestor ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fārūq, al-Fārūqī distinguished between truth and falsehood. Like him, he also compensated as a committed and devoted Muslim for all of the time and energy he had wasted in earlier gatherings, meetings, and activities. The cause of reforming the methodology of thought and the Islamization of Knowledge ignited his *īmān*, which until then had lain dormant, shrouded in the fog of philosophy, both ancient and modern, western and eastern. This cause stirred up strong emotions that had been scattered among many causes. Suddenly, he became devoted to this one cause: the Islamization of Knowledge. It dominated his life and activities as he pondered, discussed, and planned with his fellow Muslims how to realize it and how to mobilize enough people and resources for it.

Al-Fārūqī always expressed himself sincerely and clearly, and presented his arguments in the best possible manner. He was aware of the faults of Christianity and Judaism, having studied and mastered both, in addition to being well-versed in the history of religions. As an expert in western philosophy, he had identified its limits and was cognizant of the Shari‘ah’s advantages. He enjoyed an international reputation, and there was hardly a conference in any field of the humanities and social sciences at which he was not one of the main speakers or did not captivate the minds of his audience.

Always by his side was his wife, the *shahīdah* (martyr) Lois Lamyā’ al-Fārūqī. She had been his partner in life since his arrival in the United States. A distinguished scholar in the field of arts and civilization, she combined her energies with his. For many years, she devoted her efforts to tracing the roots of and establishing a theory for “Islamic arts.” She took it upon herself to Islamize the arts and succeeded in doing, with the utmost humility and modesty, that which hundreds of Muslim women, raised in Muslim homes, have failed to do. The whole family was the enemy’s target, and so Lamyā’ was killed by the same Rambo knife as her husband. She died minutes before him. The killer tried to finish off their pregnant daughter, whom he repeatedly stabbed with his knife, stopping only when he thought she was dead.

This is the institute’s first conference since the martyrdom of the al-Fārūqīs. We want to ensure that the flag will be kept flying, that the institute will continue spreading its message, and that the brothers and sisters of

al-Fārūqīs will carry on their mission regardless of all challenges, obstacles, and hindrances.

In conclusion, we ask Allah to enable us to complete our task and achieve our aims; grant us all resolution and sincerity; bless this conference, from which we shall be able to take on that which will benefit our Ummah and help to spread progress; and make our efforts and those of all sincere Muslims successful. Indeed, He is the only One we can ask for success, and the only One who can grant it.