

CHAPTER IV

FURTHER HORIZONS: ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE RECONSIDERED

ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE RECONSIDERED

IT has been suggested that the Western Thought Project as it is at present conceived constitutes an integral element in the current Islamic intellectual revival. The implication of this proposition is that the intellectual revival is itself a vital measure for the recovery of the Muslim Ummah. We need to see in what way this recovery is contingent on a reformulation of the matrix of rationality of the modern Muslim mind and in what way this could impact on the reconstruction of the socio-cultural foundations of the Muslim civilization of the future.¹ While the substance of that reformulation and reconstruction will not be addressed here, the purpose at hand is to contour the junctures and interconnections of a vision and a process, as one possible reading and projection among others currently engaging efforts in the ummatic enterprise. The task is therefore to place the Western Thought Project within its Islamizing framework on the one hand and to reinterpret and relocate this framework within a more general optic of revival. The Islamization of knowledge addresses itself foremost to a reappropriation of the primary and indigenous sources of revival in the Islamic heritage – with the Qur’an and the Sunnah at the core – in such a way as to make that reformulation of the matrix of Muslim rationality possible. The Western heritage has invariably impinged on the Muslim past and today continues to impose itself even more onto the Muslim present. Part of the challenge therefore is to devise the terms for handling the

Western heritage as it conditions the Muslim setting. To do so, it will be necessary to assimilate the Western heritage as a whole, in its own terms at first, before abstracting the elements to be singled out for closer scrutiny. It would be well, however, to keep in mind the conditioning parameters of the Western Thought Project which place it within the more general perspective of the Islamic revival. Only by observing its place in this scheme can the work on the project hopefully contribute effectively to the revival.

A Glimpse at the Sources

As the original *Workplan* (figure 1) summing up the program and principles of the Islamization of knowledge provides one of the conspicuous landmarks in the intellectual revival of the seventies, it constitutes the natural access to relocating the Project. The sources for the revival lie deep within the Ummah, and in many ways the conception of the Western Thought Project is itself related to formative traits in both the revival and the Ummah. The Project is a reminder of how misleading it is to try to restrict the Ummah to any of its territorial – or ethnic – confines. It should come as no surprise therefore to see some of the authentic sources for the revival coming from the West.

Contrary to prevailing assumptions, the now celebrated *Workplan* was not the ingenious conception of any one individual. In every sense, it was the outcome of the intensive and consuming mental and spiritual gestations which took place within/among a group of Muslim graduates and scholars in the West during a decade which coincided with the turn of the new *hijrī* century. This group was instrumental in launching many of the grassroots institutions of the revival, which came to include the Muslim Student Association, the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (1392/1972) and, eventually, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (1401/1981). In the early seventies, Isma‘il al-Faruqi² came into contact with this group through AbdulHamid Abu-Sulayman³ and, together, they became part of the active spirits animating it. Its vanguard included engineers, doctors, and educationists as well as philosophers and social scientists. What this group shared in common was a belief in the need for reforming and renewing contemporary Muslim thought through reformulating and representing

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modern social thought from an Islamic perspective. What was novel about this plank was its option for the cultural imperative, rather than direct political action, as the most efficacious approach to galvanizing the Ummah out of its pervasive languor – the “malaise” – and consolidating its historical revival. The *Workplan*, which was subsequently developed and published as part of a manifesto of this movement, was the culmination and crystallization of this plank. In its original version, it was essentially a condensation and integration of the principal contributions submitted to the second international conference on the Islamization of knowledge which was held in Islamabad in (1402/1982) and which included original contributions by al-Faruqi, AbuSulayman, and others. Al-Faruqi was delegated by his colleagues to this maiden production.⁴

It is against this background that it becomes possible to understand the priorities and emphases as well as the strengths and the constraints which reflected on the *Workplan*. Its greatest merit lay precisely in the fact that it expressed the aspirations of a group, and this conception provided it with its pragmatic bent. The group may have lamented the situation of the Muslim Ummah; its intention however was not to bemoan its fate but to act to change it. It responded to a deep-seated Islamic conviction that Allah does not alter what befalls a people unless they take the initiative to do so themselves (Qur’an 13: 11). Neither by temperament nor by disposition was the group disposed to philosophize about this condition, and in its sense of urgency, the plan it conceived was designed for implementation. There was an implicit wariness of all philosophies and abstract theoretical forays. At the same time, the priority went to that dimension of modern knowledge which was wreaking havoc with the human and social resources of the Muslim community – a dimension hitherto ignored and neglected on the mistaken assumption that the Ummah’s backwardness was a matter to be resolved by modern technology and scientific education. It was evident that a corrective focus was needed on a hitherto neglected department of Western knowledge which had found ready access in the educational and cultural media of the Muslim world and was filling the void created by the recession in its traditional legacy. The “modern disciplines,” significantly the social sciences, were potential builders as

The Islamization of Knowledge: Principles and Workplan

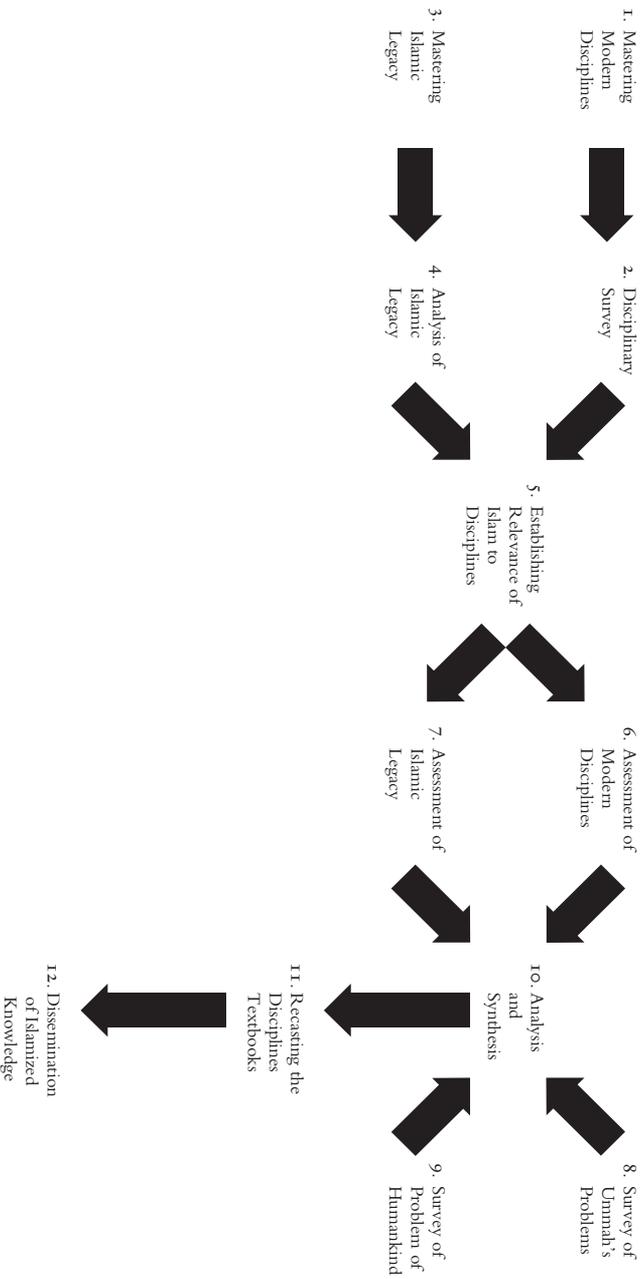


Figure 1

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well as destroyers of community; it was necessary to see how these could be reappropriated in a context which would serve the Ummah rather than subvert it, as was currently the case. These were among the formative considerations which lent the emergent *Workplan* its character, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. When the International Institute of Islamic Thought was founded, it was essentially conceived as the organizational framework which would coordinate the efforts for its implementation.

The above cursory overview indicating the origins of the Islamization of knowledge *Workplan* and setting right some prevailing misconceptions in its regard is perhaps a necessary background for locating the conception of the Western Thought Project itself. It was evident that once the design was put to the practical test, problems would begin to emerge, and ways and means for effective implementation would need to be identified through efforts engaged in the field itself. It was also evident that work in the field would bring together various currents in the Islamic revival to compare notes and pool resources and expertise in order to achieve a goal which was clearly the prerogative of each and every group within the Ummah that prepared itself for assuming the tasks called for. Consequently, the Western Thought Project, as it is designed within the framework of the original *Workplan*, represents one possibility and approach to the task. At the same time, its value and merit derive precisely from its being part of a more comprehensive approach and design to securing the intellectual revival.

Charting a Vision

A series of annotated diagrams will follow to illustrate the integrality of the Western Thought Project to the general conceptualization of the revival. In the *first instance*, the Project is relocated in its original framework – as part of the Islamization of Knowledge *Workplan*. This entails a fresh reading in retrospect of a more realistic, firsthand assessment of the nature of the task at hand. The challenge shifts from analyzing the constituents of a process and breaking it down into its sequences, to synthesizing the elements of what constitutes in effect an intrinsically

generated, self-propelling, and continuing process where the junctures and the parameters for its sustained progress are located.

In the *second instance*, the *Workplan* is placed in its broader context, where a renovationist optic underlies the momentum of the intellectual revival and merges it into the historical horizon of reconstructing the foundations of a *future* Islamic civilization. In the *third instance*, the Western Thought Project is brought back into focus to highlight some of the issues as they fall within its immediate precincts. To sum up the sequence of diagrams as they occur in the following pages, the first signifies a moment of *consolidation*, the second moment directs us to the *architectonics of community-building*, and the third moment returns us to a more focused stance on *topographical propaedeutics*. The idea is to capture these instances visually. The commentary itself will be secondary and will assume a truncated format of varying length and consistency.

A.

CONSOLIDATION

Islamization “2”: The Sequence and Process Reviewed

The conception of *Islamization “2”* is a development and elaboration of the original *Workplan and Principles* and as such it cannot be properly understood without it. The latter had the merit of dissecting the process and identifying its constituents. It incorporated these into a lucid, programmatic format and thereby set the precedent for translating ideals into action. It also drew attention to the centrality of education to an enduring systemic reformation. The merits of the original *Workplan*, however, were also a source of weakness. Its analytic power undercut its synthetic potential, its programmatic bent betrayed a pragmatism that underrated the intellectual challenges at stake, its lucidity and clarity conveyed a deceptive simplicity, and its emphasis on education constricted and distorted the essential challenge of an Islamic intellectual reformation and revival. It also suggested some fundamental ambiguities as to whether the Islamization of knowledge was really simply a matter of more effectively adapting and legitimating an existing stock of knowledge or the search for a more radical alternative. These were some of the problems associated with the *Workplan* that needed to be addressed.

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In *Islamization* “2”, the reassuring simplicity and lucidity are lost to the extent that the complexity and dynamism of an ongoing and integrated process are approximated. It is realized that this process has to begin somewhere if the “mastery of the modern disciplines” and the reassessment of the Islamic heritage are to lead anywhere, and that contrary to the initial confidence, there is no clear-cut end in view. Above all, while it is important to identify the constituents of a complicated process, the challenge is in working them together, not in isolation but integrally. The challenge is rather in synthesizing a whole, not in assembling the parts in syncretist (*tafīqī*) fashion. While education is an undeniably significant vehicle and target in any process of socialization and acculturation, let alone in any radical transformation in conceptions and beliefs, it is a link in a chain and not the chain itself. Above all, the modern disciplines and the traditional legacy are not in themselves the objects of adapting or reforming, nor do they constitute the boundaries and the ceiling for the Islamization of knowledge. These are some of the concerns which have prompted the effort to review the basic principles and directives in the original *Workplan*, and they are duly reflected in the categories and the drift of the conception projected in its review.

The objectives of the illustration (figure 2) may therefore be briefly summed up in the following points:

- To demonstrate the complexity and dynamic of the Islamization of knowledge as a continuing and integrated process.
- To rule out the mechanical and programmatic bias implicit in the original *Workplan*.
- To underline the intellectual nature at stake in what is ultimately an integral process that is best conceived in terms of an integrated circuit.
- To convey the essence and tempo of an *ijtihādī* dynamic which is the real issue at stake in the current intellectual revival.

So much for the general observations on the operational integration of the Western Thought Project within the original *Workplan* which

Islamization ‘2’’: The Sequence and Process Reviewed: With Inbuilt Regenerative Momentum

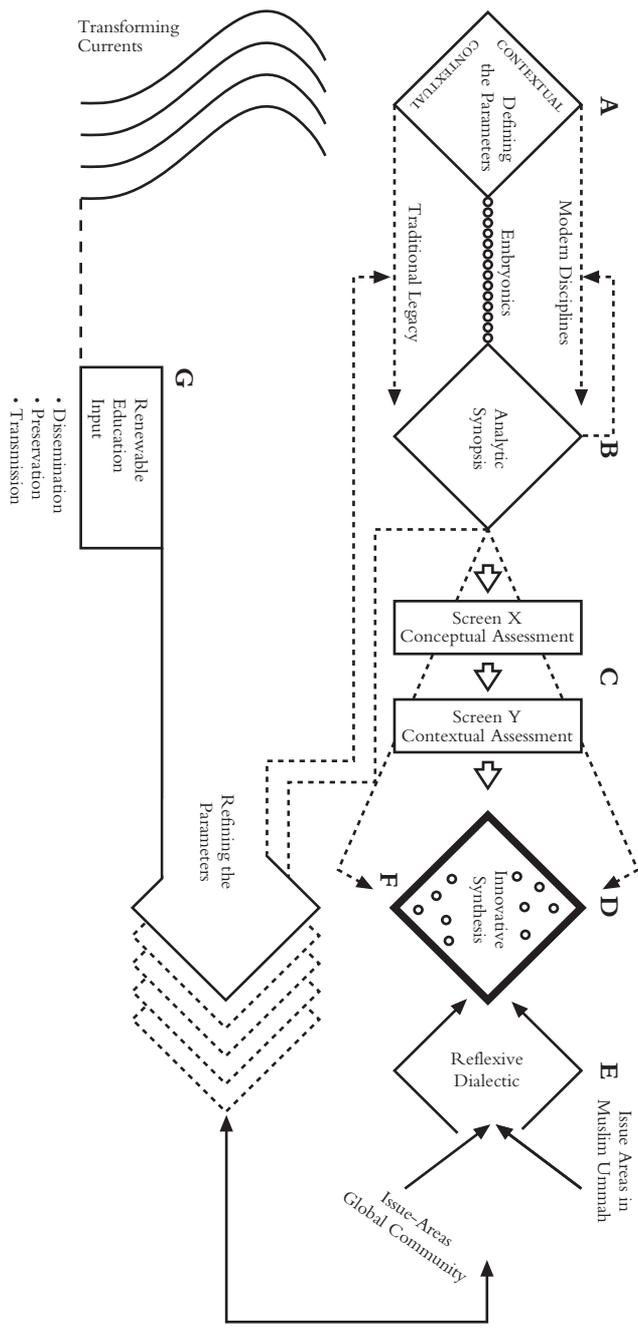


Figure 2

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addressed the initial planning requisites of the intellectual revival. The themes of this reconceptualization will not be developed, since they relate to the *Workplan* as a whole. Our purpose here is simply to demonstrate that the real challenge to implementation lies in the ability to handle what is in essence an intricately involved and highly complex process which cannot be broken down to its constituent elements or “stages” without impinging on the integrality of the process itself. The Western Thought Project cannot be reduced to a phase or a stage in the intellectual revival any more than dealing with the Muslim heritage can, nor indeed is it feasible to break down the process of the revival into the stage of regurgitation from that of take-off and creativity. One may indicate thresholds and priorities for each segment of the operation, in the different pursuits individually perhaps, but the dimensions of a critical and creative venture will have to be present from the outset, notwithstanding their degree of crystallization. This underlines the importance of keeping the Western Thought Project in the general framework of the revival on the one hand and, on the other hand, maintaining an awareness of its more specific objectives which are open to periodic review and progressive refinement. The next two visuals will illustrate this. In the first (figure 3), the regeneration of the Ummah is related to its intellectual revival in ways suggested by the commentary which follows and which begins by highlighting themes of an architectonics of community-building.

B.

RENOVATION

The Islamization of Knowledge and Ummah-Building

The intellectual revival is a dimension of a comprehensive moral, spiritual, and sociocultural revival. The fact that this intellectual dimension is conceived within the parameters of Islam as a globalizing faith, community, and cultural system makes it partake of and incorporate the other dimensions. Selecting the intellectual for emphasis is a function of the diagnosis of the malaise of the Ummah and a response to the challenge of the modern historical context. In passing, it may be noted

The Islamization of Knowledge and Ummah-Building

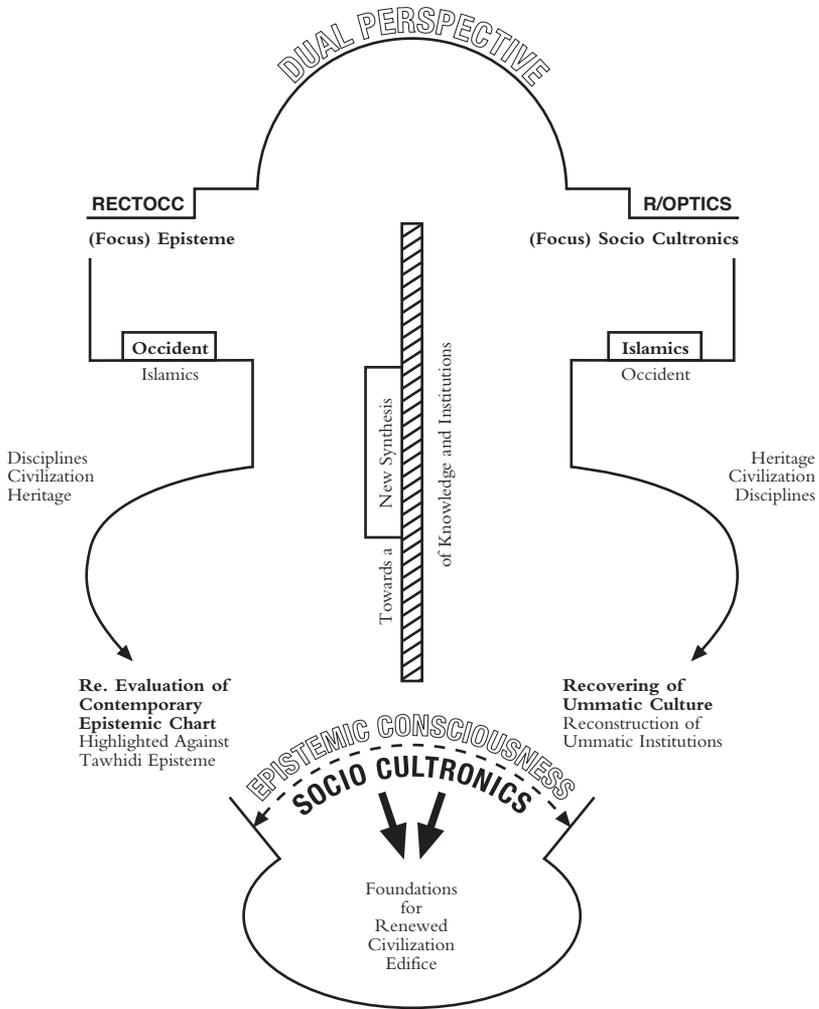


Figure 3

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that the scientific age lays a premium on reason and rationality. Of all revealed religions, Islam is historically uniquely fitted for providing reason in modern times with the bearings it has lost. The *regeneration of the Ummah* is a historical process that is projected on its socio-cultural condition at any given moment. The Islamic parameters make an inner and outer regeneration not only coterminous, but they render the latter contingent on the former. The reformation of the perceptions and conceptions of the Ummah are necessarily reflected in the reformation of its social and cultural institutions, and are bound to affect its power-political foundations. Here, the relationship between the conceptual and the institutional constitutes the primary focus as illustrated in figure 3.

The Islamization of knowledge as a means to sociocultural renewal in the Ummah is the premise for reactivating its historical role as a witness among nations. The *ummaḥ wasaʿ* (median/or middle-most community) as the *ummat al-shahādah* (community bearing witness) is essential to conceptualizing the self-perception of the Muslim community⁵ (cf. Qur'an 2: 143 and 22:77-78). The recovery of the sense of historical agency in the Ummah is intellectually comprised in and contingent on activating a *renovationist optic*. This renovationist optic, *manẓūr al-tajaddud al-ḥaqāri*,⁶ is intrinsic to the Islamic parameters of the intellectual revival. Historically, Islam brought forth a nation and molded a civilization in its image (*al-ṭaṣawwūr al-Islāmī*).⁷ Today, the sources and the elements of the Islamic worldview remain as integral and whole and as accessible as ever before. It is part of the religious imperative to activate this view. This is contingent on an orientation and a commitment to *tajaddud*: the ideal of renovation. The Islamization of knowledge assumes this orientation and commitment in its program of intellectual revival.

Intellectual revival is part of a historical process and takes place in a historical context. While the sources of this revival are clearly drawn from an authentic Islamic heritage, its activation is neither independent of nor indifferent to the historical context. Within this heritage, the Qur'an and the Sunnah are taken as its primary note and the rest of the Muslim legacy is circumferential, to be gauged and processed as secondary sources in the light of the primary sources. This is where the relevance of the Western Thought Project emerges. The contempo-

rary epistemic chart which impinges on the modern mind and has acquired a universality of sorts is of Western provenance. Reactivating the Muslim mind calls for interacting dynamically, critically, and creatively with this epistemic chart in a situation where being passive can only mean being submerged. Effective intellectual reactivation in the present historical context is pivoted on a *dual axis*: a vertical axis drawing on the Islamic heritage and a horizontal axis comprising contextual variables which include the presently dominant Western intellectual heritage in its various cultural formations. The dual perspective on the requisites of intellectual revival (or reformation and reconstruction) and ummatic regeneration calls for developing an *epistemic consciousness* and a *sociocultural sensibility*. These two aspects are the premise for developing the *new synthesis* which structures and informs the foundations for a renewed civilizational impetus.

The term *sociocultronics* is specifically coined to designate the architectonic dimension of the intellectual revival. It carries connotations of social engineering without overlooking the essentially spiritual and intellectual dimensions of the process. It also points to a pragmatic element or to an orientation to *praxis* in the Islamization of knowledge forum, as opposed to a philosophical or a purely theoretical intent. Again, if in current Western social thought *praxis* has its pejorative materialist overtones immortalized in the Feuerbachian Theses, the integrality of belief and action in a *tawhīdī* perspective vindicates and ennobles a knowledge conducive to belief and affirms a commitment to action rooted in both knowledge and belief. In operating the vertical and the horizontal axes of the intellectual inquiry, the dual perspective which assumes a sociocultural sensibility and an epistemic consciousness is operative throughout, whether we are dealing with the Islamic heritage in a renovationist optic or whether we are dealing with the modern heritage in reevaluating the cultural topography of the Occident. The emphasis on the episteme in the one (*RECTOCC*), and on the sociocultural in the other (*R/OPTICS*) is a function of the original impetus and objectives of the Islamic intellectual revival subsumed in the Islamization of knowledge movement. The reformation and reconstruction sought is primarily intended for the Ummah, an antidote to its current stultification and sequence of historical absences. We are

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not out to transform the world or to change the West, but to transform ourselves. Any change that may subsequently result in the prevailing sociocultural formations and trends in the West, or in the world, will be a welcome incidental benefit.

What, it Might be Asked, are the Implications of the Above Themes for Reading the Western Thought Project?

Foremost, it may be noted that the above analytical parameters call attention to the significance of context. The Project is not to be seen apart from its conceptual format in the Islamization of knowledge movement with its focus on intellectual reformation as a means of regenerating the Ummah and rehabilitating its historical institutions. Its range and scope are predicated on this referent. In its absence it loses its rationale. The breadth of range and scope also call for diversifying and multiplying perspectives. This is necessitated both by virtue of the objectives of the Islamization of knowledge as well as in view of the complexity of the West as a civilizational/cultural entity. The Muslim intellectual encounter with the West will have to take into consideration the West of classical antiquity, the West of medieval Christianity, and the modern West with all the intervening epochal thresholds that have carried it through to a postmodernity. There is a Christian West, there is a pagan West, and there is a secular West where each of those categories is more of a prism comprising its own diversities. It is essential to capture the essentials of this multifaceted entity and to locate its diverse junctures/junctions to the extent that they permeate and shape the dominant epistemic chart which is the object of our immediate interest. The challenge posed by this breadth and diversity impels a measure of intellectual sophistication on the part of the architects of the Project. Devising a strategy to ensure an economy of access will need to be reflected in the conceptual and the methodological premises of our venture. To avoid being submerged in the welter of pluralities, we will need to work at a paradigmatic level and allow for a shifting emphasis at this level.

In view of the fact that the Western Thought Project is part of the Islamic revivalist outlook, the aspects and issues selected for examination, the priorities given, and the emphases laid in treating aspects of

that heritage, past and present, will be a function of this outlook. For example, our interest will not be simply in the history of ideas, or in trends and movements, or in schools of thought and intellectual controversies; we will be just as interested in the historical setting, the implications, and the context of the interaction, transmission, or transformation of these ideas. Because the intellectual orientation in the Islamization of knowledge is related to more immediate sociocultural concerns, the epistemic focus on the Western tradition will be conceived in terms of the historical evolution and problems in this tradition.

It is the sociocultural perspective in the Islamization of knowledge that is also reflected in the priority given the social sciences (or the “modern disciplines”) in the original *Workplan* and in its subsequent development. An anthropology of modernity gives prominence to this domain in the contemporary epistemic chart as the domain most immediately implicated in the formation of values and beliefs. In the socialization and the acculturation of individuals in society, they also shape and “imprint” their sociopolitical institutions. How these disciplines emerged and developed, their role, their contribution, and their limitations will have to be taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the Project. When it is realized that these disciplines set the standards for imparting the cognitive and affective orientations throughout the educational institutions in the Muslim world, and that they assume their role as substitutes for and in contention with potential Islamic sources and disciplines, the purport of this emphasis becomes evident. The new synthesis of knowledge and institutions which a renovationist optic postulates will have to call into question the prevailing authorities in any task of reconstruction. These authorities are represented at an academic and professional level in the “disciplines.” Questioning the underlying structures and premises of these disciplines cannot be achieved without conceiving the totality from which they arise: namely the Western intellectual tradition and the enabling historical context which grounds and secures the dominant paradigm. Consequently, the disciplines cannot be taken too seriously in themselves. They are the manifestation of an episteme, a disciplined compartment for ordering knowledge in society at any given moment, and they thrive on a shore of affective and cognitive values and symbols

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in circulation which they feed and reinforce. Any archaeology of the human sciences will tell us as much.⁸ It is these values that need to be examined in their institutional and power context, and developing an original counterpoint from which to do so would no doubt precipitate their redress and eventual supersession.

The Project is taken here as a subcategory within the more variegated activities associated with the revival. In a similar summary format, the commentary will indicate the objectives, the assumptions, and the underlying themes. Given the essential unity of the suppositions which run through the Project, some repetition is inevitable. To ensure the integrity of each section and the possibility of referring to it independently of the other, I have made no effort to eliminate such repetitions where they might occur and have preferred to leave them as leitmotifs of the collection as a whole. This segment will be no exception to this rule. It illustrates how an Islamization of knowledge perspective vests the inquiry into the Western heritage and its cultural by-products with a distinctive focus and orientation. Its thrust is summed up by the denotation: *Reviewing, Reevaluating, and Reassessing the Cultural Topography of the Occident.*

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To spell out the assumptions of the above illustration (figure 4) constitutes a recap and a contouring of the rationale of a Project. *WTP* is part of a global Islamic revivalist outlook which takes the intellectual reformation of the Muslim mind for its starting point in resolving the cultural impasse in the Ummah. This starting point assumes a concrete and programmatic expression in the movement for the Islamization of knowledge. As the intellectual response in the current Islamic revival, Islamization seeks to operationalize Islamic norms, values, and cognitive modes in the modern historical context. In doing so, it will need to reconstruct an alternative epistemic chart drawing on its original sources. In order to do so effectively, it will need to take the measure of the prevailing/dominant epistemic chart which is patterned on the Western model. This calls for a conceptual and synthetic approach.

Modes and conceptions of knowledge are not to be confused with their constituents, or elements; the whole is not an aggregate or a sum of its parts. Conceptually, the whole can be articulated at the level of the paradigm which provides a compass for identifying and situating the parts and for analyzing them and relating them to one another. Reviewing the Cultural Topography of the Occident is a way of seeing what is involved in an intellectual encounter with the West. This is not to be confused either with the goals and objectives of the Western Thought Project, which are wider and more germane to the purposes of an Islamic intellectual revival. It might be possible to account for this distinction at a certain level by indicating that while Muslims and the reconstruction of Muslim thought remain the general goal of the *WTP*, it is the Western legacy which is the immediate object of developing the Project in the specific context addressed in the former *RECTOCC*. In another sense, understanding the elements of a Tradition, its history and its roots, and conceiving of an approach and a method is as much a function as a token of the Islamic intellectual revival. It suggests principles and proposes an initial framework for handling a complex task, principles, and a framework which is open, to further development and elaboration in the light of a maturing intellectual vision.

On the basis of the foregoing assumptions, we can locate some of the themes and general objectives of this conceptual and analytical framework. The prevailing epistemic chart postulates a secular paradigm

of knowledge and being, invariably acknowledged as the worldview of modernity (figure 4). The task is to identify the characteristics of this paradigm and to retrace its implications at a theoretical as well as a practical level. This epistemic chart provides an affective as well as a cognitive dimension. How it structures relations, conceptual and sociological, and the kind of issues it raises are a function of this dimension. The impasse qualifying modern civilization is the result and reflection of the limitations/excesses of the secular episteme. Locating the secular paradigm plunges us into the heart of the Western intellectual tradition. What are the influential strands within that tradition, and why do some strands prevail and others do not? What is the nature of its flux, how does it live on to be processed and reprocessed in every age? What are the different forums for expressing this tradition, as well as its sources, and mechanisms of renewal, supersession, or transformation? The secular paradigm also structures the modern disciplines. How these latter have emerged, converged, and diverged can only be appreciated against an understanding of the nature and the development of the Western intellectual tradition. The epistemic matrix in each discipline telescopes this tradition, or at least aspects of it, just as the metatheoretical debate in the social sciences epitomizes the dilemmas and controversies in that tradition.

The paradigmatic premise in *RECTOCC* further directs attention to the integrality of culture on the one hand, as well as to the relativity and historicity of its artifacts. This is an antidote to the tendency to reify the disciplines as rational and objective, or as “given” as opposed to constructed categories. How knowledge is classified at any moment, the boundaries assumed between its different compartments, the processes of integration and differentiation, and the ordering and the parameters of the episteme are all functions of a given culture as much as its conditioning matrix. To that extent, they are likely to be historically determined. It is equally plausible to assume that different histories may claim and exact their different covalences in the culture in question if it is taken in its essential meaning as a medium and mode for moral self-realization in a temporal setting. As one postulates the structural framework for addressing the topography of the modern West, one is

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simultaneously reflecting on elements of a disjuncture and conjuncture with a prospective sociocultural space that is Islamic. This is why contemplating the one paradigm calls on the presence of another to the benefit of the task of reconstruction.

If the secular paradigm is an enabling premise for grappling with the modern heritage and accessing the disciplines, a complementary paradigm setting the focus on the secular paradigm and highlighting its essentials and peculiarities is the necessary Archimedean point justifying the whole exercise. This is provided by a conception of the *tawhīdī* episteme (*TEPS*). Reviewing the cultural topography of the West can only become relevant to the Islamic intellectual revival if it is critically evaluated from within that episteme. Otherwise, there is little that is inherently novel about this survey and critique, in itself a periodic recurrence within the dynamics of the Western tradition. It is *TEPS* that assures the integrality and the purposefulness of the review of the culture and products of the Western tradition.

The nature of the *tawhīdī* episteme, its fundamental assumptions, and how these have a bearing for evaluating the modern heritage in general and the discrete disciplines in particular is the subject of another serialized chart under the rubric of “Contrasting Epistemics.”⁹ The main purpose in the present chart is to draw attention to the importance of a rudimentary conception of the alternative paradigm of knowledge to assure the Western Thought Project its originality – as well as its rationality and utility. Moreover, while the secular paradigm can provide a residual critical momentum, this is essentially conceived in a deconstructionist potential. The historicity and the relativity of the dominant paradigm are brought to light by deconstructing it to its bare elements, as critical and poststructuralist schools have lately shown us. Only a *tawhīdī* paradigm can afford that vantage point needed for breaking out of a self-imposed closure and for ensuring a critical and inclusive reconstructive momentum.

Finally, here too, one can assess the more *general implications* of the particular to the whole. Clearly, the Project calls for a sophistication in its materials as well as in its techniques. It is evident from the above cursory remarks on the need for an epistemic cartography as a delineating matrix for dealing with the congested products of an inflationary

culture, that implementation calls for the highest qualifications. The task goes beyond summing up the state of the art in any of the modern disciplines to relating these disciplines to their common “genealogies,” and identifying the lines that bind and wind, whether these are to be approached inductively or deductively. It is also evident that there is much that can be learned from the state of the art in the modern disciplines, as well as from the contemporary strains in Western thought, and which could be used to the benefit of reprocessing that heritage in terms of an evolving *tawhīdī* perspective on knowledge and learning. As suggested earlier, what may be distinctively unique about this reprocessing, as suggested at the outset, is that it could lead to a potentially original and new reading of the West. What may be distinctive or unique about this reading, however, remains ultimately contingent on its Islamizing referent. On the same note, there are facts that can hardly bear reminding frequently enough. For modern-day Muslims engaged in the intellectual and cultural reconstruction of the foundations of a historically revitalized Muslim community, this reading cannot be an end in itself; it is valued to the extent that it reflects on the excellence of that cardinal pursuit.

To sum up. At the outset of this chapter we referred to a change in the matrix of rationality in modern Muslim thought as a prerequisite and a measure of the desire of self-renewal in the Ummah. The above heuristic projections direct attention to an operational mode of dealing with abstract ideas and ideals which is suggestive of a modal change in perceptions and formulations as many familiar themes in the Muslim consciousness, long taken for granted or constituting elements in the “unthinkable,” now become an occasion and a milestone for critical reflection and calculated deliberation (*tadabbur*). Clearly, Muslim preoccupations with the West as it impinges on their contemporary and historical realities, and with the culture and complexities identified with modernity, do not exhaust their energies nor preclude other priorities. More central to these are the current efforts expended in redefining and reformulating perspectives on the Muslim heritage and on its substantial referents. These would ultimately reflect on the course of the various components of an overall program such as is projected

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in an Islamization of knowledge perspective and such as would, in particular, include the Western Thought Project. Indeed, *WTP* may be seen more as a catalyst in a process of intellectual and moral self-recovery and as a purposeful and enlightened reorientation – which is ultimately what the Islamic revival is all about.