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• Islam and Civilisational Renewal (ICR) is an international peer-reviewed journal published by Pluto Journals on behalf of the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS). It carries articles, book reviews and viewpoints on civilisational renewal.
• ICR seeks to advance critical research and original scholarship on theoretical, empirical, historical, inter-disciplinary and comparative studies, with a focus on policy research.
• ICR aims at stimulating creative and original contributions within contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship to further civilisational renewal.
• ICR promotes advanced research on the civilisational progress of Muslims and critical assessments of modernity, post-modernity and globalisation.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Notes to contributors and details of submission can be found at: ICR.plutojournals.org
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EDITORIAL

This issue of Islam and Civilisational Renewal contains six articles:

My own article “Classical and Contemporary Approaches to Education: An Islamic Perspective”, treats the underlying ethico-religious postulates and value structure on which it is founded. I explore institutional developments and emergence of learning centres in mosque and madrasah, maktab, and jāmiʿah and address the question whether education is a basic right of every individual Muslim, indeed of all citizens. Other themes addressed are methods of learning that characterise Islamic education, and the ʿulamāʾ expositions on classification of sciences. Modern developments, encounters with the West and between Islamic rationality and science, as well as some of the responses that have been given to these challenges are explored. The article ends with a review of the international conference of Makkah 1977 and three similar events that followed and their recommendations for an Islamic educational agenda.

“Education Toward Values” is by Sobhi Rayan, a Palestinian scholar who until recently was a Visiting Fellow at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University in the United States. His article deals with “different value systems from the perspective of their source, nature, and implementation, and with the link between education and values”. He argues that

- education toward values would be required, especially in our present globalised world, because communication and relationships among people have become all-encompassing;
- in this regard, the Islamic concept of morality could make valuable contributions toward the establishment of global ethics.

Salam Abdallah, Assistant Professor of Management Information Systems at Abu Dhabi University in the United Arab Emirates, is the author of “Thoughtful Learning: A Case Study Based on Islamic Traditions”. His contribution – based on a case study – focuses on the challenges faced by educational institutions in the Middle East, in particular those with adult students in tertiary education facilities. His study was inspired by reflection on the ‘Hadīth of Jibrīl’, a well-known Tradition of the Prophet, and presents six principles as a foundation to assist students in working more holistically. He makes a case for
• using modern communication technologies also in the classrooms of the Middle East,
• advocates to provide more meaningful and real-life-oriented learning approaches, and
• encourages autonomous lifelong learning as a style of life.

“Islam, Democracy, and the Question of Coexistence” is an article by Shah M. Nister Jahan Kabir, a young Bangladeshi scholar, who is currently doing his PhD at the University of Otago, New Zealand. He investigates Islamic norms and values in terms of current issues and the question whether Islam, democracy, and coexistence with other cultures can go along with each other. He comes to the conclusion that
• human rights and democracy are contested issues among Muslim and non-Muslim scholars;
• both issues, however, could be reconciled with each other, but the will is needed (in particular the will of the Muslims themselves), as all would just depend, in his view, on an appropriate interpretation of Islamic law (in line with the requirements of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, the ‘objectives of Islamic law’, I am tempted to add).

“Islam, Democracy, and the Road to Moderation: Testing the Political Commitment of Indonesian Muslim Activists” has been written by Jamhari Makruf, who is the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs, State Islamic University (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah) in Indonesia’s capital Jakarta. His work looks into the emergence of what has been termed ‘radical Islamist’ movements in Indonesia. Among his findings are that
• moderation has become a ‘must’ in the current activities of those political parties which claim Islam as their basis as otherwise they would be lacking the support of the wider Indonesian Muslim public;
• there might be some sort of revival of ‘Islamist’ groups in Indonesia in the future, but this will not happen unless those parties and movements moderate and adjust their ideological platforms to the facts on the ground and the realities of Indonesian society at large.

Finally, “Navigating a Fractal World: Ibn al-ʿArabī, Civilisational Renewal, and the New Sciences” is by IAIS Principal Research Fellow Eric Winkel. It is an attempt to activate a language that has been dormant in Muslim societies which will speak to and with the ‘new sciences’. Still lagging behind, Muslim societies are poorly prepared to participate in the emergence of those sciences. These ‘new sciences’ have not ‘found’ God. What they have found, however, is nonlinearity, strangeness, and interconnection. He summarises his ideas by stating that
truly understood ‘religion’ – Islam in particular – does give space to innovation, change, and progress, rather than being an obstacle to them;

what is required is a somewhat more universal approach to Islam, one that includes what is “both seen and unseen”, as Dr Winkel has it, an approach which is relevant to real needs of the Muslims, the grave concerns of globalisation, pluralism, and the environment, to name only a few issues that are at stake – in short an Islamic approach which is encompassing life holistically, an Islam which is based on civilisational renewal and the higher goals of the sharīʿah.

This time, our journal features five viewpoints:

“The ‘Common Good’ and Malaysia’s Education System” is by Zarina Nalla, who is a Consultant with IAIS Malaysia. She recommends that Malaysian policy-makers in close cooperation with civil society, parents, the private sector, and other stakeholders, find suitable compromises that address the ethnic divide by addressing deficiencies in the educational sector.

“Post-secular Piety: Interfaith Prospects and Promises” by IAIS Researcher Tengku Ahmad Hazri examines the prospects of interfaith engagement as a way of invigorating knowledge tradition to secure the middle-path in the context of post-secular religiosity.

“Balance, Moderation, and the ‘Middle Path’: Toward Trust between Muslims and Theravada Buddhists in Southern Thailand” is by IAIS Principal Research Fellow and Co-Chair of Publications Christoph Marcinkowski. His viewpoint is looking at strategies leading toward conflict-resolution in the troubled Muslim-dominated deep South of Thailand that would involve a meaningful dialogue between truly religious people on both sides of the fence.

IAIS Assistant Research Fellow Abdul Karim Abdullah (Leslie Terebessy) has contributed “Benefits of Risk-Sharing in the Structuring of Ṣukūk” which investigates ṣukūk, the Islamic equivalent of bonds. He recommends the utilisation of genuine risk-sharing vehicles such as mushārakah and muḍārabah whereby issuers may initially raise less money but at the same time raised funds will be used more efficiently.

My own viewpoint, “Islam’s Views on Sorcery and Black Magic”, tries to make the point that sorcery is linked to superstition and ignorance and that superstition
begins to take hold and fill the space of true religiosity when religion and science fail to respond to the people’s needs.

In addition, we carry this time seven book reviews, one rejoinder, and three event reports.

In closing, I would like to thank all of our contributors, and in particular the IAIS Malaysia editorial committee and publications department, for meeting demanding deadlines.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali
Editor-in-Chief
ARTICLES
CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO EDUCATION: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Mohammad Hashim Kamali*

Abstract: The gap between the classical and contemporary approaches to education in Islam is a theme which has not yet met with adequate response and solution. To fully comprehend the nature of classical education demands no less than a thorough understanding of its characteristic features as distinct from the modern methods of education, yet appreciating how later developments brought about its eclipse. This article charts the historical trajectories of education in Islam, surveying the scriptural, philosophical, and institutional foundations and examines how they have been affected by reforms following the advent of modernity and its attendant philosophies. The discourse begins with an enquiry into the ethico-religious basis of learning in the Qur’ān, Sunnah and juristic doctrine, as well as the spirit that guides them, such as academic freedom, classifications of knowledge, and teaching methodologies. The discussion proceeds to consider contemporary challenges to Islamic approaches to learning especially those coming from scientific modernity, rationality and science, which need to be negotiated, confronted if necessary, and integrated when deemed beneficial.

Introduction

This article offers insights into an Islamic perspective on classical and contemporary approaches to education. The epistemology and attitude to learning envisioned in the revealed sources were reflected institutionally, in the emergence of the mosque as a learning centre, madrasah, and jāmiʿah (university), and legally, in the body of rules incorporated in scholastic jurisprudence and fiqh. These developments explain how Islamic educational philosophy was understood in classical times through the reading

* Mohammad Hashim Kamali is the Founding Chairman and CEO of IAIS Malaysia. He would like to acknowledge and thank Tengku Ahmad Hazri, an IAIS researcher, for his help to extract this article from a larger text written for a forthcoming book. Ahmad Hazri’s thoughtful input and additions to some parts of the article are also appreciated.
of scripture and underlying postulates of institutions and practices. The modern era ushered in a new episode of Islamic education unleashing novel challenges from emanating modernity with its attendant secularist and positivist overtones, as well as the more pragmatic demands of pluralism and the market economy.

Our discussion begins with a review of the main sources of Islam, the Qurʾān and Sunnah to show Islam’s foundational guidelines on knowledge. From this one can see how these sources seek to establish education as a right for every Muslim and then the ensuing responsibility of certain parties to observe that right. We then look at the classical approaches to education and its holistic view of knowledge, ending with reviewing the responses to challenges brought by modernity and how Muslims have managed to deal with them.

**Qurʾān and Sunnah: Foundations of the Islamic Educational Agenda**

The Qurʾān and Sunnah contain guidelines that are understood and manifested in different ways. First, they extol the virtue of knowledge and provide inspiration and moral encouragement toward learning. Second, they secure this as a matter of right with juridical implications as well as laying down the institutional support for education through the delineation of rights and responsibilities. Third, they formulate epistemological principles that map out the cognitive terrains through which the Muslim scholar may traverse.

The singular leitmotif pervading the Islamic educational agenda is that of tawḥīd, the Oneness and Unity of God. This permeates the whole of Islamic epistemology which posits God as the ultimate source and goal of knowledge. Man’s knowledge is possible only because God has given him the necessary faculties of knowing and his intellect is illuminated by the Divine Intellect. All knowledge thus originates in God – a principle that also finds ample support in the Sunnah.

The very first message of the Qurʾān that marked the beginning of its revelation to Prophet Muhammad pertains to knowledge. Man is summoned to “read in the name of your Lord and Cherisher!” (96:1), “He who taught the use of the Pen, taught mankind that which he knew not” (96:3–4). God here refers to Himself as the first teacher. It was knowledge too that held aloft Adam, the archetypal man, to a higher rank than the angels, for he was “taught the names of all things” (2:30–5), the knowledge of which the angels did not possess. As a mark of respect for this gift, the angels were thus commanded to prostrate before Adam. Such veneration of knowledge is a reflection of the broader vision of Islam and the Qurʾānic attitude to learning. The sacred character of knowledge is readily attested to by the fact that there are numerous references to it and cognate concepts in the Qurʾān. God even takes instruments of learning as objects of solemn oath. There is a chapter, bearing the title al-Qalam (The Pen), which begins with the phrase, “Nūn, by the Pen, and
by the record which [men] write” (68:1). In yet another chapter, attention is focused on the “written book” as the chapter opens with the words, “By the Mount [of Revelation], and by a Book Inscribed” (52:1–2). Knowledge is compared to light that delivers from darkness, the “light of all lights” being God Himself.

This being the conception of knowledge in Islam, Muslims are enjoined to pursue knowledge and see life as a journey in the perfection of knowledge. The Qur’ān makes numerous references to those who devote themselves to pursuit of knowledge, to “people who think”, “to those who reflect”, “to those who know”, and to “those who possess intellect and the ability to comprehend”, etc. Consequently, learning is enjoined, not only with reference to religious knowledge, but all other beneficial knowledge, for the Qur’ān states that the “signs of God” are also to be found “in the horizons and within themselves” (41:53), “in the heavens and the earth” (10:101), in the earth and in various other resources (29:20). In effect the Qur’ān thoroughly sacralised the whole world as a matrix of ‘signs’ (āyāt) of God that encourage enquiry and knowledge-based investigation.

The ḥadīth literature evinces a similar ethos. The high position accorded to knowledge and the people of learning is seen in how scholars are described as ‘heirs to the Prophets’. Indeed, the Prophet said of them that “those who possess knowledge are lights of the earth and successors of the prophets”.1

Education as Right

Given such veneration for knowledge, it is only natural that Islam makes the pursuit of knowledge an obligation. The Prophet, pbuh, thus declared that “the pursuit of knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim”. A variant report of this ḥadīth also adds at its very end the phrase “man and woman”. The question remains whether this means that the individual has a right to education. Some commentators have noted that the Islamic polity is under an obligation to provide free universal education to the extent of its capability for all citizens. When there is a duty, there is a corresponding right of every citizen vis-à-vis the state to be provided with basic education. It should be noted further, as I later elaborate, that learning in Islam is not confined to schools or educational institutions. This is because dissemination of knowledge is also a responsibility of the society and state. Reports indicate that the Prophet employed women teachers to teach basic literacy to his wives and also to Muslim children. It is most likely that he did so in his Prophetic capacity which would confirm that education is both a right and an obligation of every Muslim, but if some of what he did was in his capacity as head of state, then that would further support the conclusion that education is one of the basic functions of the state in Islam.

Since it is a right, obligation is thus imposed upon all, namely, the community, the state (as representative of society), the family (particularly the parents), relatives,
neighbours and also the learned. If we accept that the individual has a right to education, then the next question is who has the responsibility for its implementation? Assuredly, each individual must himself take the initiative, but certain parties should be entrusted with the obligation to secure its possibility. After all, if there are hardly any opportunities to learn, the individual himself can’t be blamed for not learning. This is why the scholars are emphatic on this point. Based on the hadith and exemplary conduct of the Prophet, it is clear that he himself undertook personal responsibility for the education of his people.

The scholarly tradition points to the fact that the society as a whole is entrusted with the task of providing education. This is especially so regarding the collective obligation (fard al-kifāyah), which, according to the jurist Ibn ʿĀbidīn (d. 1836) comprises every branch of knowledge which is necessary for the maintenance of worldly affairs because maintenance of religion depends on good management of worldly affairs. As the representative (wakil) of the community, the state is also entrusted to shoulder this responsibility. For the modern jurist Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī (d. 1977) this means that the state is obliged to provide every individual with free education at the primary and secondary levels of schooling. ‘Essential education’ in his vocabulary means the learning of disciplines that secure the basic interests of the people (al-maṣāliḥ al-asāsiyyah) and safeguard them against prejudice and harm.

Yet this does not preclude others from assuming responsibility, for the obligation conveyed in the hadith also addresses the parents, spouses and relatives, even neighbours, to play a direct or indirect role in the education of their dependants and other children they might be in a position to help.

More importantly, the learned are also obliged to disseminate their knowledge. When the Prophet came to know that there were illiterates among the neighbours of a learned group (called the Ashʿariyyūn), he criticised them and gave them a period of a year to teach their neighbours basic literacy. According to the caliph ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661), “on the Day of Judgment, the ignorant will not be asked as to their failure to acquire knowledge until the learned have been faced with the question as to why did they not make it available in the first place”.

To facilitate this task, the jurists have produced legal rulings that serve as ‘incentives’ to the pursuit of knowledge. Such is the case with Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), who maintained that the adult son is not required to seek permission from his parents in pursuit of learning, nor is the woman in need of her husband’s permission when it comes to learning obligatory knowledge. Books are deemed to be so precious to the individual that even in the event of bankruptcy one still has a right to retain them. They are exempted from zakāh (alms tax) and the one who wishes to perform the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca need not sell his books to do so. The learned man who owns books uses them in due fulfilment of a collective duty
and hence is exonerated from the said liabilities. Ibn ʿĀbidīn added that scholarly works owned by a learned man even count as his basic necessities.

In its exhortation to learning, Islam makes no gender distinction between genders. The oft-quoted ḥadīth, “the pursuit of knowledge is obligatory upon all Muslims” applies equally to women. Indeed, women were taught literacy even in pre-Islamic Arabia – a practice that was continued even with Prophet Muḥammad. His wife Ḥafṣah (d. between 661 and 665) was one of the beneficiaries under this earlier arrangement, being taught by the then renowned Shifāʾ al-ʿAdawiyyah. It was Ḥafṣah who also became the keeper of the original text of the Qurʾān, which was solicited by the caliph for making authoritative copies of the Holy Book. All this points to the fact that women during the Prophet’s time did not suffer the fate that was to attend them thanks to later cultural accretions in the Muslim world. Indeed, the Prophet even assigned a special day for teaching women when the latter complained to him. Shyness and modesty, virtues extolled in most domains of life, are not encouraged with respect to learning, as confirmed by the remark of ʿĀʾishah (d. 678), “How excellent the women of the Ḥanfīs (‘Helpers’) are: they do not feel shy while learning religious knowledge.” It may be said that women have equal rights with men to education. The later segregation and discrimination made against women are largely attributable to historical and patriarchal development of Muslim societies, which have no basis in the source evidence on the subject of knowledge.

Of course, the Islamic educational agenda lays down far more than the ethico-religious basis or reason for learning. The Qurʾān and Sunnah have been treated as the foundational texts for Muslim scholars throughout the centuries in their deliberations on fundamental epistemological questions. The scholarly corpus that emerged from these discourses crystallised as manifold schools of thought, each emphasising a certain aspect of this epistemology and developed it into well-articulated philosophies. As we will see below, these epistemological principles were not pure theoretical quibbles but rather the bedrock on which the contents and methods of education rest, both in the practice of education and in the form of educational institutions.

The Qurʾānic vision of knowledge may be characterised as knowledge that is founded in understanding (al-fahm) and insight (al-tafaqquh), which is knowledge espoused with insight that the Qurʾān visualised in its expression al-tafaqquh fī ʿl-dīn, that is, understanding of religion, privileging analytical knowledge rather than dogmatism. This can be seen in the verse, “if some individuals from every multitude would devote themselves to the study of religion (li-yatafaqqahū fī ʿl-dīn) and admonish their people […]” (9:122).
Academic Freedom in Islamic Education

Islam’s valorisation of the learned – the ‘heirs to the prophets’ as we have seen earlier – would not have been secured if there existed no intellectual freedom on the part of scholars. A pivotal aspect of the qur’ānic ethos of knowledge is its advocacy of intellectual freedom as a dimension of human dignity. To this end, Islam is committed to the dissemination of knowledge. The so-called restriction on academic freedom is only relevant to the extent that it does not halt the constructive course knowledge ought rightfully to pursue. This would include the propagation of heresy, misguidance, corrupt and misleading ideas inimical to the basic tenets and principles of Islam as enshrined, in the objectives of the sharīʿah (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah), including those that are prejudicial to human welfare. Academic freedom is thus qualified by the need to protect the moral fabric of society.

One of the instruments by which academic freedom and rational enquiry are promoted in Islam is through the process of ijtihād (personal reasoning), which is often associated solely with Islamic jurisprudence. A careful analysis of the concept does not indicate such restriction. Ijtihād may thus be applied even in scientific and other fields of enquiry. Applied in this context, the often legal strictures appended to it can be adjusted not only in order to encourage ijtihād but also in light of advancement in knowledge and science. This flexibility applies even jurisprudentially, for many so-called limitations on ijtihād may fall due for a review. The maxim, for example, that: no ijtihād may be exercised when there is a clear text, may now require rethinking. Yet in practice it may be said that the text has to be understood first and there is always room for a better understanding of the text such that no black and white restrictions need be imposed on ijtihād.

Despite the historical tendency to treat ijtihād as a juristic exercise, its applicability extends beyond the legal frontier to other disciplines such as humanities and the sciences. As the twentieth-century scholar Abdul Wahab Khalil noted, where the subject matter of ijtihād concerns temporal matters which are not of immediate concern to religion, “the individual enjoys total freedom of expression and may express an opinion as he pleases provided that it does not amount to slander, hostility or sedition”. This, no doubt, invites court criticisms. After all, scientific and academic research is guided by its own objectives that appear to preclude religious scrutiny. This is why we maintain the need for value-oriented ijtihād which is sustained by the maqāṣid al-sharīʿah rather than legal technicalities. In this respect, ijtihād functions as an enquiry and research that is informed by the relevant data of the Qur’an and Sunnah on a variety of themes and subjects not necessarily confined to any particular discipline The ijtihād-oriented enquiry should be guided by the spirit and value-orientation of the maqāṣid. The emphasis therefore shifts from an initial legal enquiry to one that is more relevant to educational practices, in particular to those that pertain to recourse to the Qur’an and ḥadīth, not to...
extract legal rulings, but as guidance in myriad fields of learning, such as science, economics, sociology, etc.

In this sense, every person capable of research and enquiry into the sources is entitled to conduct *ijtihād*. It is by this means that scholars, even those who were not strictly speaking ‘religious’ scholars, have been able to formulate creative and imaginative ideas drawing explicitly from the Qur’ān and Sunnah as their principal guides. This is why *ijtihād* is applicable even in this context. For example, regarding the limitation of *ijtihād*, the question becomes: does this apply to non-legal references in the Qur’ān? Thus, a scientific interpretation of the Qur’ānic verse, “Glory be to Him Who created everything in pairs” (36:36), has been given by some philosophers to refer to the cosmological principle of pairing, a sort of ‘yin and yang’ for Islam. Thus all that God creates has its complementary form (i.e. man–woman, night–day…). What is the significance of *ijtihād* in this respect? Moreover, *ijtihād* has also been confused with mere speculation, or *ẓann*. Yet *ijtihād* often consists of a strong probability that is more than just speculative exercise.

As stated above, the Qur’ān and Sunnah are the foundational texts, not only in ‘religious’ matters but also in the pursuit of knowledge more generally. Scholars of the intellectual sciences invariably turn to these sources for fundamental knowledge. Accordingly, *ijtihād* is needed when new problems arise. Much can be achieved in *ijtihād* through offering fresh but relevant interpretations of the Qur’ān in line with the existing methodology of *tafsīr*. There is also a significant aspect to Qur’ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) called *taʾwīl* or ‘allegorical interpretation’ that opens further scope for creativity. In fact this *taʾwīl* often gives rise to imaginative interpretations of Islamic principles. It appeals to the symbolic meaning of the Sacred Text on the basis that there is a distinction between the literal (*ḥaqīqī*) and metaphorical (*majāzī*) meanings. To this end, the qualified mujtahid deploys to his service a number of interpretive tools, such as *tafsīr*, *taʾwīl* and the *ḥaqīqī-majāzī* distinction. *Tafsīr* based on reason should be cautioned against abuse, but there exists some flexibility. Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), despite his stand on *tafsīr* based on tradition, had to acknowledge that *tafsīr* based on knowledge of the subject matter not contradicting textual evidence should be considered acceptable.13

Such Qur’ānic methodology has even been applied outside a Qur’ānic context by synchronising one’s approach to knowledge and reality that lends credence to the broader vision of *sharʿ* knowledge as propounded by the likes of al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388; see further discussion below). Thus in Islamic cosmology, Muslim philosophers have adopted the methodology of *tafsīr* and *taʾwīl* to understand the natural world, *tafsīr* being the interpretation of the ‘outward’ appearances of reality while *taʾwīl* seeks to give a symbolic meaning to these natural processes.14 This in fact is possible precisely because the Qur’ān itself establishes the world as a cosmos of *āyāt*, or ‘signs’ pointing to realities beyond themselves, ending ultimately in God.15
The spirit of intellectual freedom in Islam is further seen in the celebration of diversity (ikhtilāf) and plurality in interpretation and opinion. Disagreement over rational conclusions that are motivated by the spirit of sincere contribution partakes in meritorious work and Islam has nurtured a robust tradition of ikhtilāf.

Classical Approaches to Education

The Development of the Institutions of Learning

Why was learning institutionalised to start with? The Islamic exhortation to knowledge and learning ensured that the Muslim community is never bereft of any religious instruction, even during the nascent religious community of the Prophet. This general ethos soon crystallised and encouraged the development of formal educational establishments such as the maktab or kuttāb (elementary school), madrasah (college or school), jāmiʿah (higher education/university) and ḥalaqah or majlis (reading circles). An informal tradition of vocational training also developed through apprenticeship schemes in the craft guilds (futuwwāt) as well as hospitals, observatories and the Sufi hospices (zāwiyah). In most cases the training was offered for free subject to the applied rules of guilds and professional associations.

Nevertheless, even during the Prophet’s time, institutionalised learning was already beginning to emerge. The Prophet took personal responsibility for a group of homeless and poor people who became known in the Qur’ān and other literature as the ‘companions of the bench’ (aṣḥāb al-ṣuffah). What began as informal instruction on religion soon evolved into the classical equivalent of a modern residential school. The people of the bench devoted most of their time to worship, learning and other scholarly pursuits. It was during this period that the earliest vocabularies of the Islamic scientific tradition were formulated. Moreover, it has been observed that the suffah was not the only institution of learning at that time.16

It was the normal pattern for learning to take place in the mosque. Indeed, the mosque-based maktab and ḥalaqah remained the main institutions of learning until the eleventh century, when the madrasahs became fully established. These were circles centred on a person (called shaykh, ḥakīm or ustādh) and provided platform for preaching, disputation and solicitation of legal opinion. They continued even after the formation of colleges (madrasah) although in a peripheral manner.

The madrasah is akin to secondary school or undergraduate education. Although begun much earlier, it developed into a fully fledged college and university system by the tenth century. The madrasah mainly taught the religious sciences (‘ulūm al-naqliyyah or ‘transmitted sciences’) such as the Qurʾān, ḥadīth, shariʿah, theology (kalām) and jurisprudence (fiqh). The jāmiʿah is the highest form of formal education though in many cases its function was earlier subsumed by the
Mention must also be made of the zāwiyah, or Sufi hospice. It is to the credit of this institution that the intuitive faculty of the student is nourished.

Less formal instruction, especially in a particular art or craft, was received through craft guilds, but a word has to be said about the nature of such training. Although outwardly it may be concerned with craft production, the instruction also involved a spiritual component through which the apprentice may learn the fundamental metaphysical and cosmological principles associated with the art. Thus even a comb-maker may invoke the origin of his craft to a sacred personality, such as the prophet Seth. The significance of the futuwwāt or aṣnāf is especially relevant today in the light of the rise of ‘corporate’ universities and commercialised institutions of learning. Islamic intellectual history thus points to the fact that such a phenomenon is not new. It becomes especially critical to assess how the religious and spiritual outlook was still retained despite the practical or vocational orientation of that education. Cries of protest from both the academic and religious community on the value of disinterested scholarship ought not to be downplayed but appreciated.

Methods of Learning

What gives the Islamic education system its unique character? Unlike what we witness today, education was an intensely personal affair. The student then was given the freedom to choose his own teacher such that it was not uncommon for educational tracts to devote considerable discussion on advice in seeking a teacher. Once a teacher–student relationship is established, each is assigned specific roles and responsibilities. The veneration of teachers was axiomatic to the point that the teacher was almost sanctified. Al-Ghazālī elucidated purification of the self and displaying humility towards the teacher among the duties of the students. The teacher in turn should consider himself in the position of a parent and look after the affairs of the student, both for this world and the next.

These methods were not uniform throughout the Muslim lands. As late as the fourteenth century, the philosopher-historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), observed this in his travels across the continents and recorded, among others, the methods employed in North Africa and Andalusian Spain. The emphasis on the Qur’ān to the near total exclusion of the other sciences, has resulted in a tendency for students to be “incapable of mastering the linguistic habit”. After all, how could one acquire knowledge of writing skills by acquaintance with a work not produced by a human being? In North Africa and the Middle East the situation was different as Qur’ānic instruction was combined with training in other sciences.

As we have seen there is a consensus that education is both a right and an obligation in the writings of the jurists (fuqahā’). What is not clear, however, is whether or not there can be punishment for one who obstructed the pursuit of learning. The closest that came to giving an affirmative response to this is in the
work of Abū 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Qabīṣī (d. 1012) (apparently also the first to address this issue) who obligated the state, in cooperation with the parents, to provide education for children. At the same time, the parents’ freedom ought to be respected and neither the state nor the scholars (ʿulamā’) should coerce them towards the education of their children.\(^\text{22}\)

In relation to discipline and punishment in child education, various scholars such as al-Qabīṣī, Ibn Saḥnūn (d. 854), Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 1037), al-Ghazālī, Ibn Khaldūn and Shams al-Dīn al-Anbānī permit punishment though insisting on leniency and compassion. The Islamic attitude to punishment holds that it may often achieve reformation, excellence and beauty. Although punishment is in principle allowed, the prospect of its abuse is stifled by qualifications, rules and restrictions. Thus the punishment is to be disciplinary rather than punitive and executed only upon the failure of advice and admonition. Even when beating is carried out, it should not be more than three strokes. The only odd voice here is Ibn Sīnā, for whom the first punishment should be so painful to serve as deterrent against repetition.\(^\text{23}\)

Al-Ghazālī advised restraint from severity and anger and not to rebuke the children too frequently as this is likely to damage their ability to respond to gentle advice and normal communication.\(^\text{24}\) The approach to education is practical, and thus insists on elements of compassion and leniency. This is why graduality is stressed in classical Islamic education.

In summary, punishment is allowed as part of child discipline but conditions are laid down to restrict its use, e.g. it must only be resorted to on failure of advice and admonition, that it must not exceed three strokes, not to apply to very young children and not to be applied to the face and sensitive parts of the body. In this respect, child education in Islam is primarily concerned with building the child’s character towards perfection, in tandem with the view of the philosophers.

**Classification of Knowledge**

The spirit of *tawḥīd* underlined above is further reflected in the scheme of classification of the sciences. Classical Muslim scholars limit the pursuit of knowledge in a particular discipline by reference to the goals and objectives of each. Beyond this, they maintain that the basic unity and harmony among the sciences, in line with the spirit of *tawḥīd* is likely to be disturbed when pursued exclusively. There was, in short, a caveat against the type of over-specialisation so much in vogue in contemporary scholarship. We may add here that it is through this openness that early scholars were able to master many disciplines at the same time, a fairly common phenomenon then, which has become rather scarce today, given the inevitable tendency towards ‘specialisation’ and the sheer bulk of information in modern disciplines.

**ISLAM AND CIVILISATIONAL RENEWAL**
The versatility of classical scholars is a point of particular interest. It was quite possible that a single thinker combined within his range of expertise manifold disciplines of learning at the same time. This represents a striking blow to the system that our contemporaries are accustomed to, namely specialisation upon specialisation to the extent that the ‘bigger picture’ is increasingly overshadowed and obscured. Analytical knowledge should never be pursued to the extent of compromising synthetic knowledge. This means that the balance and unity of the sciences should always be maintained. As the prominent contemporary thinker Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933) observed,

The various branches of knowledge in Islam have […] come to be regarded as so many branches of a single tree, which grows and sends leaves and fruit in conformity with its natural capacity and endowment. Just as a branch does not continue to grow indefinitely, so also is science, none of whose branches may be extended and pursued beyond certain limits, for any disregard of such natural limitations is likely to disturb and destroy the harmony and proportion of things and ultimately prove to be a useless activity. A branch that continues to grow in disproportion to the tree itself is likely to destroy the harmony of the tree as a whole. The attempt to classify knowledge in certain inter-related categories was a means by which the scholars have sought to preserve the balance and unity of the sciences.25

Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) distinguished sharply between the religious and non-religious sciences. Ibn Ḥazm opined that the search for knowledge is either a personal obligation (for matters relating to personal religious duties such as prayer, fasting, alms tax, etc) or a collective duty (farḍ kifāyah). Matters which involve the performance of religious duties are considered as personal obligation while those that relate to the society’s welfare generally fall under collective duty. In this way, Ibn Ḥazm’s classification adheres to the conventional dichotomy of religious and secular sciences.26

Al-Shāṭibī presented a holistic and unified view of knowledge in his scheme. His central thesis is that the highest science is sharʿī knowledge, although his version of sharʿī is much broader than those of other thinkers. It is closer to the approach of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah. He gave a wider meaning to worship (taʿabbud). Al-Shāṭibī’s classification, insofar as it is brought closer to maqāṣid, bridges the gap between law and ethics, thus evading the so-called ‘conflict’ between the two that one sees in Western jurisprudence.27

The case with al-Ghazālī was somewhat more complex, for as a reformer and holistic thinker he was painfully aware of the balkanisation of the original unity of knowledge that plagued the scholars of his time. This is why his project to revive the religious sciences incorporated elements from a whole range of disciplines. In his time, the scholars of each discipline of kalām (scholastic theology), fiqh
(jurisprudence), *tafsīr* (qur'ānic exegesis), *ḥadīth* and *taṣawwuf* (mysticism) asserted the prominence of their respective fields over the rest.\(^28\)

Although al-Ghazālī affirmed a distinction between *shaḥā'ī* knowledge and the rational sciences, he accepted the unfeasibility of a clear-cut distinction between the two. Thus he divided the *shaḥā'ī* sciences into the praiseworthy and reprehensible. Even within this scheme, al-Ghazālī adopted two positions. As a theologian, he was concerned with the distinction between religious and intellectual sciences. But as a Sufi, however, he acknowledged the limit of such a dichotomy since from this perspective all knowledge was at once intellectual and religious, particularly what the Sufis term ‘knowledge by presence’ (*ʿilm al-ḥuḍūrī*).\(^29\) The extent to which this shares with al-Shāṭibī’s approach is another question that merits serious study.

How does the classification of the sciences into obligatory and optional, or religious and non-religious, or the four-tier classification of *shaḥā'ī* knowledge, or the three evaluative categories of high, average and low, able to secure the unity of the sciences? By ‘unity’ of the sciences we mean that individual sciences were never completely detached from one another, which rendered it possible for a scholar to traverse from one discipline to another quite smoothly. It enables the scholar to have a holistic view of knowledge that sees things not as mere concepts but as parts of a single composite reality. This further allows him to use the findings in one discipline to benefit another discipline, which further reinforces their mutual inter-dependency.

The unitary perspective of early Muslim scholars is partly attributable to the system of education that they received. In most cases, they were first taught knowledge of the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*, the twin sources of knowledge of the ultimate reality of things. These, as we have seen in our discussion on the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*, recurrently appear in every field of learning which the Muslim pursues, be it ‘religious’ or ‘non-religious’.

**Contemporary Islamic Education**

**The Encounter with the West**

When we come to the modern world we observe that Islam’s intellectual glory has succumbed to twilight. Its political might was all but spent. Western ascendancy pressed new claims upon Muslims presenting them with hard choices between reform or deform. Assuredly, Muslims chose the first and the consequences have been far-reaching. We may divide them into two broad themes, namely the institutional and the intellectual. The former is necessarily influenced by the latter insofar as institutions are but crystallisation of ideas. Today’s state school systems in many Muslim countries trace their origin to the introduction of western-style schools in the nineteenth century, though as early as the eighteenth century such reforms were already taking place even before western intrusion.\(^30\)
During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, several changes occurred that brought to an end the classical approaches to education in the Muslim world. The first was European colonialism. Political domination and colonialism wreaked severe damage. The introduction of western liberal education supplanted the traditional curriculum and assigned the *naqliyyah* sciences to only a limited role in public education, as well penetrating the *ʿaqliyyah* sciences with western interpretations. This anomaly made a holistic approach to education unfeasible, and the duality has persisted ever since. More than this, it has created considerable confusion in the minds of many people today, that ‘Islamic education’ is conflated with ‘religious education’.

The net result is that many are unable to understand that ‘Islamic education’ actually included what they would call ‘secular’ sciences. To give an illustration of how Muslims perceive western tradition, one may only consider the words of the literary scholar Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (d. 1973) who called for a wholesale adoption of European ways and thought, “the good and the bad; the sweet and the bitter; the attractive and the repulsive; the praiseworthy and the blameworthy alike”.

Others showed a similar attitude with respect to western science and technology and accepted uncritically the premises on which they were based. They went to great lengths to demonstrate and even revise Qur’ānic claims to suit the demands of ‘modernity’.

One component of European education that posed a considerable threat to traditional Islamic education was modern science which claimed supremacy of scientific rationality. In the early episodes of encounter, Muslim apologists generally maintained that there was no significant conflict between Islam and science. These include Karāmat ʿAlī Jawnpūrī (d. 1873), Sir Sayyid ʿAḥmad Khān (d. 1898), Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897), and Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905). Afghānī asserted that the loss of Muslims to the authority of the West was greater in no other area than that of science. Similarly, ʿAbduh sought to establish education on the basis of morality and religion but maintained that there is no conflict between religion and science.

Despite this, there were voices that insisted on the lack of rationality on the part of Muslims. It was asserted by a Western intellectual that “the oriental mind is quite different from ours. The oriental mind has no sense of critical rationalism, no sense of reality.” Even the Arab polymath, Ibn Khaldūn apparently did not possess any originality, for “this oriental had a sharp, critical mind. In other words, he had a western sense of history”.

**Institutional Changes**

Institutional changes served as the catalyst for alterations in the Islamic educational establishments passing as ‘reforms’. It is especially evident with regard to Al-Aẓhar University in Egypt which experienced a phase of massive educational reform under
the leadership of its modern reformers. It was first established as a mosque in CE 972 by the Fatimid caliph but evolved into a madrasah later. Al-Aẓhar’s history narrates the process of evolution. The end of the nineteenth century witnessed a period of transition to a modern educational system that was based on formal course structures, syllabi, semesters and degree programmes. In 1961, it was established as a modern university, incorporating many ‘secular’ faculties such as economics, medicine, engineering and agriculture. Under the Egyptian law (no. 103) of 1961, the university opened admission to female students and added various ‘secular’ faculties.

The first academic governing body at al-Aẓhar was established in 1908 as a result of a statutory law promulgated in that year. Under the chairmanship of the Shaykh al-Aẓhar, the High Council of al-Aẓhar included among its members the Grand Mufti of Egypt and representative ‘ulamā’ from each of the other three leading madhāhib, namely Mālikī, Ḥanbalī, and Ḥanāfi – aside from the dominant Shāfi‘ī law school. This was the beginning of a process where some of the decision-making functions of the professor were overtaken by a university body. Academic freedom which professors and students had hitherto enjoyed was wide-ranging and unencumbered by hierarchy and officialdom of the kind that has since become normal practice in al-Aẓhar.

Secularism in Arab countries and elsewhere in the Muslim world is also manifested in the replacement in modern schools of fuqahā’ largely by lawyers, and religious teachers by trained teachers, especially when the kuttāb/maktab or the Qur’ānic schools were transformed into modern schools on western models, although the process was gradual and uneven. The changes that took place were on a wider scale in other parts of the Middle East compared to Egypt, where for various reasons, al-Aẓhar kept its control over primary education with its system of madrasahs throughout Egypt. In the Maghreb French colonialism divided the education system into a modern sector closely modelled on the French system and another, older sector, based on the kuttāb. The transformation was extended with the replacement of the madāris, which had taught fiqh, the Qurʾān, the hadīth and elements of Arabic, by universities applying modern curricula. Drastically revised curricula were later somewhat reluctantly introduced by institutions like Cairo’s al-Aẓhar and al-Zaytūnah in Tunis, perhaps less drastically in the former. But al-Zaytūnah was transformed so much that its status was reduced from a university to what is now a part of a modern university known as the Faculty of Religious Studies. Changes in al-Aẓhar were not so radical as in the new faculties, and their revised curricula still remained under the umbrella of the original al-Aẓhar principles and traditions.

Turkey under Kemal Atatürk (d. 1938) had imported the western secular education without even attempting to reform the traditional system. Indonesia and Malaysia, although Muslim majority countries, considered it wise to accept secularism and remain non-committal to the idea of a reformed Islamic educational
system beyond retaining religious education as a subject in their school curricula. These changes led to a shift from a perception which saw public affairs, society and education through the prism of religion, to one that bore the imprint of modernity, or nahḍah (awakening), that implied openness to further modernisation. Changes were often accompanied by social upheavals that took place in Arab and Muslim societies for over a century which affected their education system and the judiciary more than most. The body of ‘ulamā’ was displaced from the leading places it had occupied in public life. Judges were now to be trained in British common law as the application of sharī‘ah became confined to private and personal law matters. The introduction of legal codes in many fields which were previously governed by the fiqh texts added to the marginalised status of the ‘ulamā’. Formal constitutions introduced on the eve of colonialism in many Muslim and Arab countries were yet other instruments of secularism which articulated the ideas and foundations of the western nation state in these countries. Colonialism transformed other Muslim countries as well.

These developments are ironic, particularly because much of the educational heritage of Islam had been previously taken over by the Europeans themselves. Modern educational practices such as the issuing of degree certificates, universities, chairs and personal tutorials may have their origin in classical Islam, and were introduced into Europe in the medieval period.

Science and Rationality
Rationality, a challenge raised at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was thought to be of immense importance. Yet the way in which Muslims have responded to it is problematic. Muslim philosophers, following the Greeks, understood man as a ‘rational or speaking animal’ (ḥayawān nāṭiq). Thus it is rationality that defines man. Yet this ought not to be confused with the rationalism developed in the West among post-Descartes thinkers. When Muslims use the word ‘ʿaql they mean by it the intelligence–reason synergy that was truncated when medieval European philosophers distinguished between intellectus (intellect) and ratio (reason). The Arabic word ‘ʿaql is so composite that it includes both intellect and reason, and much more, which is why some early philosophers speak of al-ʿaql al-juzʿi (individual intellect) to refer to ‘reason’ and al-ʿaql al-kullī (universal intellect) to refer to ‘intellect’. It has been even argued that the rationality that Muslims speak of refers to ‘deeper reason’.

Even on the level that is popularly deemed as ‘scientific’, Islamic epistemology does recognise elements that may have been described as ‘rational’ or ‘scientific’. This includes the Qur’ānic rejection of conjecture (al-ẓann) vis-à-vis certitude (al-yaqīn) (“…they follow but a guess, and a guess can never take the place of the truth” – 53:28; “follow not that of which you have no knowledge” – 17:36);
rejection of passion and untrammelled desire (hawā) (“O David! We made you a vicegerent in the earth so that you judge among people with truth, and follow not the passion that sways you away from the path of God – 38:26; “Have you seen the [predicament of] one who chooses for his god his own passion? Would you then be a guardian over him?” – 25:43); rejection of blind imitation (criticism of those who “follow the way of our ancestors, even if their ancestors did not know nor were they rightly guided” – 5:104); and rejection of dictatorship (“We obeyed our princes and great men and they misled us” – 33:66). Nevertheless, Islam does not accept the rational faculty alone as the exclusive source of knowledge. The means of knowledge are various, though its source is God the Most High. To this end, Islam accepts a plurality of sources and a broader concept of rationality, which embraces aspects of intuition as well. The Indian Muslim scholar Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1938), who argued that the Qur’ān marked the birth of the inductive intellect, still affirmed that intuition is organically related to thought. 38

Several scholars affirmed there is no incompatibility between Islam and science but embraced without question the entire scientific project without even considering its foundational assumptions. The real problem with this perspective is not the contention of the essential incompatibility between Islam and science, but the very formulation of the question itself. It should be noted that although the western historical experience records intense confrontation between the two, this has never been the case throughout Islamic history. Indeed, the very persons who cultivated science were also religious scholars. 39 This does not mean that such a challenge today is artificial. When the Muslim world ceased to cultivate science, the Europeans then took over where Muslims left off. Yet they effectuated a fundamental change in the scientific project. Whereas within the Muslim milieu the metaphysical basis was acquired from revealed sources, European science moved increasingly towards an anti-metaphysical direction. This constitutes one of the major, if not the major, dividing line between western and Islamic – or indeed, any religiously cultivated – science. Western science then posits itself as a ‘neutral’ and ‘disinterested’ project when it is in fact profoundly value-laden and value-loaded. 40

The disparity between the Islamic and modern outlook has prompted a flurry of critique from amongst Muslim intelligentsia, ranging from philosophical censure of modern science’s metaphysical foundations (or the lack thereof), of its moral and ethical neglect to the plethora of social and environmental consequences of its abuse. Islamic rationality is inextricably bound to its vision of reality as laid down in a metaphysic divinely revealed and deliberated by the scholars. Indeed, “there is a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context”. 41

Islam and Civilisational Renewal
In this Islamic perspective, the word ‘ʿaql, often translated by modernists and ‘rationalists’ as ‘reason’, embraces the faith dimension of knowledge informed by ethical values. We have seen earlier that the traditional Islamic education system does not focus exclusively on the development of the ‘intellectual’ skills of a person but also cultivates his or her moral and spiritual qualities. Such recognition is only possible within this metaphysical framework that posits reality as hierarchically graded. We have also alluded earlier to the creativity through ijtihād. All of this stems from the basic affirmation of manifold rationalities. The Qur’ānic sacralisation of the whole world as a matrix of ‘signs’ (āyāt) has far-reaching consequences for the intellectual-spiritual makeup of Muslims.

As we have asserted, the Islamic concept of rationality is broader than that understood in the West. Even in the West the enlightenment notion of rationality is already under siege. The scientific community has become more liberal in its reception of non-conventional methodologies. What gives the Islamic concept of rationality its distinct character is the acceptance of hierarchical levels of reality – a concept rooted ultimately in the Islamic revelation. Thus traditional Islamic thought accepts various levels of reality, corresponding to the different faculties in man adequate to grasp its knowledge. This is a far-cry from the rejection of metaphysics and realities beyond the sensible as articulated in contemporary western experience.

**World Conferences on Muslim Education**

The considerable gap between the traditional Islamic approach to education and the reality of contemporary education is acknowledged by many contemporary scholars. Their concerns were well-articulated in the deliberations at the World Conferences on Muslim Education held since 1977. These initiatives explored critical issues of actionable implications, from philosophical underpinnings that sustain Islamic education, classifications of knowledge, curriculum and textbook, to child education. The worldview within which the pursuit of knowledge operated in the Islamic intellectual milieu was given due recognition as early as the First Conference in 1977 in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Conference suggestion for classification of knowledge into ‘revealed’ and ‘acquired’ was reminiscent of the Ghazālian formula that we encountered earlier. Three other international conferences followed in close succession in Pakistan and Bangladesh that advanced a wide spectrum of issues of concern to a revised programme and agenda of Islamic education at various levels. The emergence of Islamic universities with English as their principal medium of instruction in several Muslim countries is a tangible result of those deliberations.

Several other challenges yet to be addressed include the problem of Islamic education in a plural society (note that ‘Islamic education’ here is broadly construed),
the commercialisation of academic institutions on a corporate model, as well as, integrating the traditional science and modern disciplines.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The advent of modernity represents a momentous episode in Islamic educational history as evidenced by the widespread ‘reforms’ in thought and institutions throughout the Muslim world. The boundaries between the classical and contemporary approaches to education in Islam are drawn from the experiences of encounter between the Islamic worldview which affirms a theocentric conception of knowledge and cognisance of both the physical and metaphysical dimensions of reality, and the modern outlook which posits a different epistemological model guided by the spirit of secularist modern science.

These developments demand an effective response to bridge the gap – and strike a balance – between traditional and modern education. A transition is needed from the predominantly intellectual focus of modern education to one that combines a balanced emphasis integrating both character and intellect. This may be achieved through the following ways:

- The curriculum content and syllabi of modern sciences – including social sciences – must incorporate the metaphysical principles and insights derived from the revealed sources of Islam and elaborated by scholars. These should be the starting point in defining the scope and purpose of Islamic education as well as defining its relations with other sciences.

- The holistic conception of education which embraces the development of the human person should be integrated into the school and university curricula in all areas of knowledge. This may include programmes that strengthen teacher–student relations and endorse continuity with the traditional roots of Islamic education.

- Balanced amalgamation of modern knowledge with traditional methods should be facilitated through encouragement of critical thinking, originality and creativity in learning. These may be achieved by capitalising on modern approaches to education and research methodologies that contemplate beneficial outcomes for society.

- The sheer pressure of numbers and frequent examinations in modern educational institutions have suppressed the traditional patterns of Islamic learning and student–teacher relationship. The Islamic institutions of learning should revive these, even if selectively, to the extent that may enhance and enrich their learning environment.
Notes

8. For a discussion on human dignity from the Islamic perspective, see Mohammad Hashim Kamali, The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2002).
10. Indeed, it is through the maqāṣid that the gulf between disciplines is bridged. See for example how the bifurcation of law and ethics that is characteristic of modern Western jurisprudence is bridged in Mohammad Hashim Kamali, “Law and Ethics in Islam: The Role of Maqāṣid”, in: Kari Vogt, Lena Larsen, and Christian Moe (eds), New Directions in Islamic Thought: Exploring Reform and Muslim Tradition (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).
12. See the discussion in Osman Bakar, Tawhid and Science: Islamic Perspectives on Religion and Science (Shah Alam [Malaysia]: Arah Publications, 2008). This ingenious intellectual device has been critical to the development and growth of many sciences which have an interior, mystical component, such as alchemy or astrology. See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Science and Civilisation in Islam (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1987).
13. On how to understand these signs, see Mohammad Hashim Kamali, “Reading the Signs: A Qur’anic Perspective on Thinking”, Islam and Science 4, no. 2 (Winter 2006), 181–205, also available online at http://www.iais.org.my (accessed on 15 December 2010). This topic is further discussed infra, in the section on “Science and Rationality”.
27. See above, n. 12.
31. For a brief description of this broader meaning of ‘Islamic education’ see Osman Bakar, “Interfaith Dialogue as a New Approach in Islamic Education”, Islam and Civilisational Renewal 1, no. 4 (July 2010), 700–4. See also the entry on “Religious Education” in Esposito et al. (eds), The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World for the distinction between Islamic education and religious education. Islamic education subsumes religious education, but not reducible to it.
34. Ibid.
39. This is in part due to the Islamic worldview within which the sciences were cultivated; see Açikgenç, Islamic Science.
41. Kamali, “Reading the Signs”.
42. Ibid. See also Crow, “Islam and Reason”, where Crow maintains that there is an “inherent interdependence of human rationality with moral imperatives and transcendent values within the organic
intellectual unity of Islam’s worldview”. This way, to be ‘good’ does not partake of a moral worth alone but also harnesses one’s intelligence.

43. See, for example, Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1982).

44. Corresponding to the distinction between religious and intellectual sciences by al-Ghazālī.
EDUCATION TOWARD VALUES

*Sobhi Rayan*

**Abstract:** This article deals with different value systems from the perspective of their source, nature, and implementation, and with the link between education and values. The achievement of values is considered to be of the highest importance in human life. Ethical doctrines vary about the source of values – whether they are derived from human beings or received from external authority. This dispute about the nature of values creates different views concerning the education of values, about the role of the educational system in the acquisition of values, and about the impact of values on pupils, both theoretical and practical.

**Introduction**

Our interest in ethics stems from the impact that it has on human life, especially on its strong relationship to the material aspects of life, such as politics, economics, and social relations.

Ethical discourse can be divided into three levels: ethical judgments, which are made in the normal course of language; normative ethics, which attempts to introduce a methodical and comprehensive form for laws, rules and principles to justify first-level ethical judgments; and meta-ethics. Values rationalise good and evil, and deal with the rules of human behaviour, deciding what it ought to be. They are a fundamental issue in the domains of theoretical ethics and meta-ethics. They can be both constructive and deconstructive at the same time, negating what exists (deconstructive) for what ought to be (constructive), a continual denial of reality in progression toward absolute good.

Values are thus the object of theoretical ethics; they try to sustain the rules of human conduct in accordance with ethical judgments of good and evil, which depend upon cultural contexts, whereas meta-ethics describes and discusses various philosophical theories of ethics. In spite of differences in philosophical doctrines regarding the definition of values, most commonly agree on the existence of values and how they can be achieved. Also in spite of their differences, most ethical systems

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appear to have a common concern about ‘humanising’ life, about bringing human conduct into conformity with human ideals as much as possible.

Most philosophers consider values as absolute principles in themselves, but which at the same time are engaged with human behaviour, in order to provide human life with ethical guidance and goals. Education, therefore, plays a significant role in linking values and behaviour.

This article aims to explore and analyse the issue of values by comparing different ethical doctrines. Some philosophical perspectives argue that value has an *a priori* existence in the human mind, while others claim that value is a human phenomenon that can be investigated by scientific methods. The Islamic theory argues that values exist innately within human beings, and the function of religion is to remind human beings about what qualities they innately possess. Controversial opinions reflect different views regarding the achievement of values in human life, as well as the relationship between human behaviour and values. Can values be achieved in reality? How do values influence behaviour? Does the obligation to preserve values limit human freedom and creativity?

**Theories about Values**

Scheler (1874–1928) claims that the ultimate independence of values with regard to things, goods, and states of affairs appears clearly in a number of facts. “We know of a stage in the grasping of values wherein the value of an object is already very clearly and evidentially given, apart from the givenness of the bearer of the value. This applies equally to physical and psychical realities. Clearly, neither the experience of values nor the degree of the adequation and the evidence depends in any way on the experience of the bearer of the values. A value precedes its object; it is the first ‘messenger’ of its particular nature. An object may be vague and unclear while its value is already distinct and clear.”

According to Intuitionism the fundamental facts in ethics are known by intuition, that is, they are understood implicitly, without an intermediary, evidence, or argument. Moore argues: “If you ask me what is good? My answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if you ask me How is good to be defined? My answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it.”

However, the emotionalism argument is that ethical discourse must be described according to its goal terms. The basic use of ethical judgment is not to indicate facts; it is informative, but it aims to influence and change the listener’s attitude, and then his or her behaviour. Ethical words carry emotional meaning and, therefore, perform a dual role: Expression conveys the attitude of the speaker and has an impact on the attitudes of the recipient. Here, we deduce that ethical discourse is neither rational, nor argumentative, nor manipulative, but is a form of psychosocial pressure.
Hare claims that the essential function of ethical discourse is not to influence, but to prescribe. “[…]ommands, however much they may differ from statements, are like them in this, that they consist in telling someone something, not in seeking to influence him”. He adds, “I may be merely prescribing for this particular occasion without any thought of there being a general principle for all occasions of this kind.”

Ethics is considered the essence of Islam. That means there is no religion without ethics, and no ethics without religion. Religion is the source of ethics; therefore, values in Islamic thought are articulated in a speculative and practical manner. This stems from thinking that moral conduct leads to theoretical ethics; therefore, Islam emphasises the mutual relationship between theory and practice, or saying and doing.

The form of ethical question that al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) seems to consider in this context may be presented as follows: We want to bring each act and attitude under a general rule, a judgment of normative value for a type of act or attitude, so that we may have for our guidance a steady system of such rules to cover all occasions. The sources of knowledge are independent reason and revelation.

Islamic values are totalities and meanings that are distinctively embodied within man, but they are not absolute like numbers, for instance, because every man feels these meanings without the need for mental absoluteness. They are lamps that light the road of human behaviour. The sensing and recognition of these meanings, which a person deals with daily in connection with the laws of the time and the place, represent their actual and concrete existence.

The Qur’ān presents life issues as values, but the Muslim human being is responsible for implementation of these values in his life. It means that implementation is not uniform and constant for every place and time. It depends on the ability of Muslims for progress and creativity. For example in political issues, the Qur’ān mentions two verses that describe the type of regime in general: “who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation” (42:38); “It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah’s) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in Allah” (3:159).

The two verses present the regime issue in general as values, but process and details as well as instruments and aims are dependent on Muslims’ ability to accomplish the values of consultation in the reality.

So, we should not expect that life issues in Islam are constant but rather changing from one Muslim intellectual to another one, because it depends on the experience and point of view of the intellectual, and his ability to create the theoretical and practical epistemology, as well as to develop instruments through the light of values.
Therefore, the role of Muslims in this world is to apply the ideal values in reality. But these values are infinite and absolute; these values stand in opposition to limited reality. That means there is no constant form for Islamic education or philosophy. It must be in dynamic action in hope to arrive to values which requires query and creativity.

Sources of Values

Values vary according to differences among cultures and societies. When we ask what the origin of values is, we find different opinions: Some argue that human beings create values, while others believe that the origin of values is not human, but external, authority.

Most philosophers argue that humans produce values. Kant (1724–1804) argues that the Mind determines and dictates the moral code based on free will, which will remain free or independent as long as it obeys these dictates, and refuses the natural tendencies to happiness and pleasure: “[I]t is clear that all moral conceptions have their seat and origin completely a priori in the reason, and that, moreover, in the commonest reason just as truly as in that which is in the highest degree speculative.”

“If the principles are completely a priori, free from everything empirical, and found exclusively in pure rational concepts and not at all in any other place, they should undertake this investigation as separate inquiry as practical philosophy or as pure metaphysics of morals.”

According to Kant, reason is an independent and pure faculty in the human being; it is not influenced by any environmental agent. The question that arises here is, “Can we separate the mind from experience of totality?” Kant insists upon that separation and emphasises that the source of ethics is pure reason. “But [it is] also of the utmost practical importance to derive the concepts and laws of morals from pure reason and to present them pure and unmixed [...] moral laws should hold for every rational being as such, the principles must be derived from the universal concept of a rational being generally.”

It is clear that the mind about which Kant speaks is a stable mind that exists in all humanity, but if we consider the mind as a quality and activity that changes according to human experience, how can we in this case accept the idea of a collective Mind that is common to all humanity as a source for moral values?

Nietzsche (1844–1900) distinguishes between the agent, the act and those who benefit from the act. The core of The Genealogy of Morals contains the famous distinction between master and slave moralities. The master morality belongs to a dominant, warlike horde or race. It represents first and foremost their self-affirmation and joy in life. The good is whatever they believe belongs to them and to their conquering instincts.
In the slave morality, by contrast, the negative is of fundamental importance. The overpowered slave who rebels ideologically against his condition does so by inventing a series of distinctions by which to condemn his master as ‘evil’ and to affirm himself, not directly and spontaneously, but indirectly and ‘reactively’, as the one who does not engage in the evil the conquerors perpetrate.12

Unlike thinkers who imbue moral theories with an anthropological characteristic and connect it with other doctrines, Jean Pierre Chanjeau adopts an analysis whose basis is scientific knowledge and which relies objectively on scientific, neurological data, and which constitutes a basis for a more suitable discussion of metaphysical sources.13 Ross responds to this argument, saying: “Scientism, which claims to give solutions to all philosophical and human questions through science, actually constitutes a decisive obstacle by not establishing values for daily living, which are relevant for making moral conclusions regarding the basis for all data. When Scientism refers every significant item of knowledge to knowledge that stems from sciences, it camouflages the human quality or the nuclear value of the problems.”14

The control necessitated by scientific research methodology in investigations of values causes it to lose sight of the attribute of the infinite, which is the significant attribute for values, because scientific methodology does not possess the tools to research absolute issues. It deals with empirical issues; absolute issues fall outside its research domain.

While Durkheim (1858–1917) believed that society is the source of values, he saw a social fact as any way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right, independent of its individual manifestations. Durkheim’s view is clear: If a mode of behaviour whose existence is external to the individual consciousness becomes general, this can only be brought about by its being imposed upon individuals. Therefore, it is probably not inaccurate to conclude that Durkheim tended to see all social facts as moral facts.15

Obviously, Durkheim holds to a social perspective that neglects metaphysical aspects and their role in the acquisition of values; he indicates the influence of society on the individual behaviour, as a compelling authority. “By authority, we must understand that influence which imposes upon us any moral power that we acknowledge as superior to us. Because of this influence, we act in prescribed ways, not because the required conduct is attractive to us, nor because it is innate or acquired, but because there is something compelling in the authority dictating it.”16

The consideration that “values are the learned products of environment”17 does not explain the existence of values common to different societies. Moreover, this approach neglects the metaphysical dimension of values as superior ideals and their capability to change reality.
The External Origin of Values

In general, religions hold that God is the origin of values; He defines what is good and evil. In Islam, the Sunnites and the Ash’arites in general say of this doctrine, “The good and bad are from God and not mental.” Some Christian theologians have even claimed that the sincere human mind cannot distinguish between good and evil.

Against this absolute view, the Mu’tazilites argue that good and bad are rational, and that God has decided what is evil and what is good, except for subjective reasons relating to acts and things in themselves. We find the same attitude in the rational Christians, especially in St Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and Duns Scotus (1265–1308). This means that values have an objective presence; good is good in itself, because it has the characteristics of good by nature, and the role of the mind is to search for those qualities.18

Also, modern Muslim intellectuals believe that values come from God, not from mind, nor society; they are innate. This perspective shares the doctrine of rationalism by arguing for the prior existence of values, but sees the origin and existence of values in the divine rather than in the empirical.

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1919–1979) emphasises that moral origins are stable, spontaneous and common to all people at all times, and that these human values cannot have meaning, understanding or reality unless they are spontaneous and have roots and origins in man’s spontaneity. They are in themselves facts that man moves towards automatically, motivated by his spontaneity. His movement towards concrete ‘good’ is motivated by his concrete reality. In this case, we have the right to consider these values as facts that Man moves towards, pushed by his mental reality.19

Muḥammad Jawād Mughniyyah (1904–1979) opposes the consideration of the mind as the sole source of moral values, because Mind does not apprehend everything scientifically; he believes that the sources of moral obligation are revelation, inspiration and pure spontaneity. Religion and revelation provide power and support to this Mind. There is no doubt that this support makes the rules of the Mind stronger and more lasting.20

Fazlur Rahman (1919–1988) says that values are meanings and superior ideals; human beings cannot establish this world by themselves, and Mind cannot conceive of it. The ideal world is of a different type, and since human nature is part of a material reality, it can create only in and of the real world.21 Therefore, according to Fazlur Rahman, humans must acquire these ideals, not by inquiry and rational study, but through transmitted religious knowledge, because the basic principle within religious knowledge is the definition of duty, unlike non-religious knowledge, whose principles are based on reality.22
The Islamic vision is not satisfied with the knowledge of phenomena in the world, but tries to understand the different dimensions beyond these phenomena, and religious explanations of these phenomena must address the connections between them and their ethical dimensions.

**The Qualities of Values**

In his dialogue with Protagoras, Socrates argues that virtues can be learned as constant epistemological content, because the essence of an object lies within it, so that the judgment of things is derived from their essential, objective qualities. Conversely, Protagoras claims that man is the measure of everything. Humans judge the existence of things, and society decides what virtue is; therefore, virtue is relative and changeable, which means that education is a priority for transmitting values.

These differing perspectives about the learning of virtues reflect dissimilarity in logical thinking, Socrates’ philosophy is based on the idea of pure mind, which means that value is objective and arrived at through knowledge, whereas Protagoras’ thinking is based on the senses, so values are subjective and depend on consensus within a society.

The plurality of values is not contradicted by their transcendental quality, because this plurality takes, in reality, different forms across nations. These values can be relative and plural through acts of human freedom that connect them with the absolute. Also, the achievement of values in reality means a transition in their status from absolute to relative, and what we see, in reality, is various types of human behaviour, not the values themselves.

Consequently, the human experience of values can be described as one of relativity. Because human beings have different abilities and attain values to varying degrees, the controversy about their transcendence and relativity is just an expression of the *a priori* quality of values and their appearance after experience. Ricoeur’s view is that moral meaning is located neither in a disembodied ego nor in broad social and historical conditions beyond the ego, but in an interpreting self that mediates these two.  

According to the Islamic view, values inhere within human beings; they are innate, and accommodate to religious values. Values stand opposite to reality; they are ideal and see the world as it ought to be, but is not in reality, so that, in order to develop values, humans must liberate themselves from reality by returning to themselves. By this process, human beings progress toward values.

Therefore, values are absolute and relative, objective and subjective, idealistic and realistic. They are absolute in themselves as supreme ideals, but relative in their accomplishment in reality. Thus, values are not a part of reality nor its production, but are in contact with daily reality in order to change it.
The Achievement of Values

Researchers differ on how to achieve values in human reality. What is the standard that defines values? There are those who claim that values are determined through empirical knowledge; others argue that value in itself is infinite, that scientific methods are not fitting for metaphysical research.

Naturalism holds that an ethical statement is a factual statement. The meaning of ethical terms like ‘good’ and ‘right’ can therefore be determined by using the methods of science, by resorting to empirical investigation; Dewey (1859–1952) also believed in the capacity of science to determine values: “One of Dewey’s most adamant claims is that the methods of science have a role in the formation of morals and values.”

According to this argument, values are a production of human experience, and their existence does not depend on metaphysical dimensions. That means they are relative and differ from one society to another; thus, they are a human phenomenon that is engaged through scientific methods.

Others argue that value is beyond all reality. For instance, Louis Lavelle claims that values represent a kind of reference to human effectiveness, which urges us to make them increasingly durable and prevent them from surrendering to any form or presence that might compromise or undermine them. This means that values are introduced into the human mind prior to subjectivity and material phenomena, causing humans to create themselves. That quality of value prompts human beings to confront the bounds of objective reality and overcome them, to deny the limits and proceed to what is beyond.

Crossing beyond boundaries through unlimited value means denying reality and aspiring to change it. This crossing is not defined or limited, but beyond every possible limit. So reality becomes dynamic and constantly changeable. This makes human behaviour a continuing evolution towards values. However, the absence of values from behaviour does not mean values do not exist; values represent our aspiration to change reality. Thus, we cannot understand concrete reality without the quest for utopia that is in human nature. However, dreaming by oneself is not enough. The dream must be shared, and more and more people have to believe that it is a possible dream. Only then will it begin to come true. We finally reach hope.

We hope because we act ethically because we hope to develop a perfect society.

The plurality of the values in reality creates a multiplicity and relativity of values, methods, meanings and facts which contribute to creative human life and extend the limits of freedom. The diversity of human values encourages people to communicate and to know each other in order to convey their values and carry a humanitarian message – scientific or moral – to other cultures.
Duty is the most important value in Islamic education, because duty contributes to the commutation between individual and society. Also it empowers social solidarity, and social justice in the society. The Prophet says: “You find the Muslims in their mutual love and compassion, like one body, should any organ of it fall ill, the rest of the body will share in the fever and sleeplessness that ensues.” Doing one’s duty is produced from the ethical values inborn in the human being. So duty is not restricting the freedom of man, because it is coming from within the man, and is not imposed from abroad. Therefore, doing one’s duty arises from inner motivation, that is reconciled with religious guidance.

Education and Values

Education, the link between behaviour and values, is designed to refine behaviour and guide it toward values. Behaviour, in this sense, is a set of practical activities that humans carry out in daily life on both sensory and mental levels.

Morality is something that exists in embryonic form within every child – rather like intelligence – and education’s purpose is to encourage it to unfold to its fullest potential. Morality, in this view, is something that happens to one, so education then becomes a process of liberating human possibilities in an approved way.28

The difference between a moral and a non-moral education corresponds to the distinction between the complete good on one hand and having goods on the other. What the proponents of the non-moral view of education in effect are proposing, although they doubtless do not realise it fully, is that colleges and universities offer their students a one-sided education designed only to enable them to acquire goods of various sorts. In this one-sided view of education, colleges and universities have no duty to provide students with an education designed to help them become good persons.29

The task of education is to teach students how to set goals, as well as how to yearn for their achievement. Each goal must correlate to a certain value; that is, it must link each act of behaviour to a value, so that morality produces constant improvement. Science as well must be governed by morality, because the separation between science and ethics could bring destruction to all mankind. Any behaviour, action or reaction, is intended for a certain purpose; this means that the achievement of value must be linked to intention, behaviour and goals. It is not enough to associate values with goals; they must be associated with intention and means as well.

The most complex task for education is developing the ability to acquire values. Valuation involves learning to judge, according to some consistent criteria, the worth of ideas, activities, and other behaviours. Learning to value in a manner that bestows a sense of personal worth involves knowledge, the ability to comprehend, apply, analyse, and synthesise these into some personal schema or model of self.30
Students ought to think and act ethically; ethics provides students with an extension possibility toward infinite values, so that students strive in a constant process of development. Therefore, education is toward values, not on values.

Morality is directly concerned with a certain range of actions: not only manifest behaviour, but the thoughts, attitudes, motives, feelings, and dispositions of the agent. As with any other human practice, concepts form a crucial part of morality.31

Education toward values promotes a critical spirit and creativity in students. In addition to the effort invested in realising values, innate values promote the spirit of initiative and creativity in students, construct the student’s personality to engage in exchanges of mutual dependence with others, and create an innovative human life, providing tools to foster intellectual openness to the other, and to integrate into, and adapt to, a diverse world. The student with values rejects intolerance and cruelty based in religion, colour, or sex and is not shocked by the apparent contradiction between local and global citizenship and participation in humanity, the relative and absolute. Thus, the school is the place that qualifies the student to be a human being, one who believes in free exchange and is independent in his or her thinking and critical reading, and is creative and innovative.

Nietzsche’s ‘ought to be’ blocks creation and innovation. And the highest man, as lawgiver of the future, should be free from ‘ought to be’ to be able to create new values. A man as he ought to be: this sounds to me just to be in bad taste. One can escape it, first, by selecting only those states in which one is free from emotion, and second, by grasping the insolence and stupidity of the attitude of mind: for to desire that something should be otherwise than it is means to desire that everything should be different – it involves a damaging criticism of the whole.32

Duty is a discourse for the future and a denial of the present. If values are absolute, and what ‘ought to be’ is derived from them, this opens the door to liberate the person from the borders of the real world towards the infinite, and this in itself is an expansion of freedom, not a restraint upon it. There is no doubt that freedom is a necessary condition for creativity. ‘I want’ speaks from the present to the future, which means that the future derives from the present, and as the present is limited, this means that freedom is constrained by the limits of reality. It may also be that non-commitment has a negative impact on human life. Irving notes, “It is unwise to give people rights without at the same time imposing obligations – that rights without obligations lead to irresponsibility, just as obligations without rights lead to servility.”33

Kant recognises the impact of commitment to human freedom; it may limit human freedom and reduce the area of choice, and sometimes abolish it completely. But the sense of commitment issued by the free will legitimises itself. “This subjective element is the maxim that I ought to follow such a law even if it thwarts all my
Because this duty, like duty in general, is prior to all experience, it lies in the idea of a reason which determines the will on a priori grounds. Fazlur Rahman believes that values are natural to humans, and commitment to them gives humans the energy to exceed a limited reality. Human beings seek to achieve different purposes in their lives and strive to correlate each goal with a certain value. Value cannot issue from the same Instinct, as the source of realistic goals, then, cannot be a source of ideal values, and if this is so, it must originate from a source beyond instinct. Because ideal values contradict reality, then only innate ‘human nature, with which humans are created’, can be the source of values. Innate values are a set of optimal meanings deposited in the human spirit that envision a horizon that exceeds the capacity of reality, and makes humans aspire to achieve them in order to benefit from them – that is to say, innate values are practical values with a spiritual origin, while instinct is a behavioural fact with a material origin.

According to Fazlur Rahman, creativity results from the achievement of values based on duty, because duty, not rights, is the origin of noble qualities, and a nation is not concerned only with being polite to other nations, but politeness is the mystery of its existence, and the nation is a moral community.

Values, in the Islamic perspective, are linked with practical behaviour, because doing leads to ethics. Islam emphasises the importance of values and does not separate them from doing. We obviously can observe the correlation between doing and values in Islamic instruction. For example, the belief in values is usually mentioned in conjunction with good deeds in the Qur’an (103:3): “Those who believe and do good deeds.” That means that each saying must be translated into practice, because in general human actions must have a beneficial purpose.

Islamic education represents the Islamic spirit in general, it aspires to construct the human being toward achievement of human values; the role of education to link between reality and values, it means reconciliation between theory and practice, saying or word and doing.

Islamic education aims for a balance between three levels: sense, mind and ethics, and promoting them by various educational methods. The ego’s progress is a continuous dynamic movement which assimilates the different aspects and stages, without negating any, the perceptive and the intellectual, thought and emotions, ideas and deeds are all integrated into the final aim of the ego.

At present, we are witnessing the emergence of a moral trend that calls for global ethics: “There is no civilisational obstacle against the possibility of global ethics. While these approaches (religions) also have merit in demonstrating a wider conception of global ethics in the narrow liberal model, they ignore the difficulty of cultural difference and naively suppose that one religious value system is translatable into another without self-problematisation.” It is very important in an open world to create a shared human ethics, in order to guide the different relationships of
economic and political cultures and others that cut across the limits of regions and states. Counter to individual and community ethics, common values among people are possible in the era of globalisation, because people have shared, inborn values. Hans Küng (b. 1928) argues that “the idea of a ‘Universal civilisation’ means in a positive way a universality in the technological, economical, political and, as we hope, also in the ethical dimension. In this time of globalisation of markets, technologies and medias we need also the globalisation of ethics.”

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

In spite of differences among ethical doctrines, most philosophers believe in the importance of values for human life. The disputes involve identifying the source of values and how to achieve them in reality.

Most philosophers argue that the source of values is in the human being (*a priori* in the mind or society). The Islamic perspective holds that values have an innate existence, in addition to a religious origin, and being inborn, these values are humanistic. This controversy concerns our understanding of the relationship between human values and human behaviour.

The philosophical view claims that value is an absolute in itself, but is a relativistic achievement in reality. That means values have both metaphysical and empirical dimensions. Empirical (Dewey) and social (Durkheim) doctrines accept the relativity of values, but deny the metaphysical dimension.

On the other hand, absolutism in the Islamic view is intended to the infinite attribute of God. Humans have to strive toward ideal values by constantly upgrading their behaviour; the implementation of values depends on the ability of each individual or nation – in that sense, values are relative.

The logic of Islamic ethical reasoning is based on communication and on the integration of the mind, sense and values. This moral reasoning not only views causes and effects to understand phenomena, but looks beyond phenomena to develop values and signs related to them. This thinking produces a moral space, encompassing purpose, word, deed, means, goals and values within the unity of a dynamic actor, who strives for perfection through constant improvement and denies the limits of reality.

Philosophical logic is based on a rational explanation of reality, because mind and sense are restricted by the borders of the reality. Empirical research deals with sensory phenomena, and rationalism attempts to understand these phenomena using mental instruments, so that both doctrines deal with the real world.

- The role of education in the different doctrines is to give guidance. Through the application of logic, theory and practice, school is the best place for
education toward values, taught not as independent content, but as a matter of general practice — in thinking, in the curriculum and in the community of the school.

• Generally, moral education can overcome the apparent contradiction between the different poles, and expand the border toward broader horizons, by dismantling structures and existing rules, and creating what should be.

• Education toward values is necessary in a global era more than at any previous time, because communication and relationships among people cross borders and encompass politics, economy, culture and the arts, so that people need acceptable values which constitute a common ground for their relationships. These values could be more suitable than the values of citizenship that act as restrictions in certain nations. This means extending the borders of education from citizenship to human values.

• We can say that the Islamic concept of morality can contribute to the establishment of global ethics, because it has the theoretical side through the Qur’ân and the Prophet’s Sunnah, as well as the practical experience throughout certain periods of Islamic history.

In closing, moral beings, according to the Islamic view, consider themselves part of human society. They seek to extend values to all, not restrict values to themselves. They strive to deliver values to benefit others and to be enjoyed by everyone. They believe in the importance of communication, mutual understanding and exchanges with others, based on dialogue and respect, not with the aim of imposing values by force and violence. They believe in the importance of the other and the ability of the other to produce values, and in the possibility of exchange between value systems.

Notes

10. Ibid., 26.
11. Ibid., 28.
16. Ibid., 50.
22. Ibid., 228.
35. Ibid., 24.
THOUGHTFUL LEARNING: A CASE STUDY USING A SET OF PRINCIPLES INSPIRED FROM THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Salam Abdallah*

Abstract: Educational institutions in the Middle East are facing the challenges for providing meaningful learning approaches for students in order for them to meet the challenges of everyday life. The current trend in education is to move away from traditional methods of covering contents and to concentrate on processes that lead to learning and discovering of knowledge. This study proposes a set of principles that were inspired by reflecting on one of the greatest Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, known as the 'Hadith of Jabrā'īl' (Gabriel). The learning model used within a blended teaching environment consists of face-to-face and online learning activities. The model was used for assisting adult students to attain a systemic thinking for understanding two subjects in information systems. This article is based on a qualitative research method to portray a personal reflection and experience on the teaching philosophy which has a positive impact on the lives of the students.

Introduction

There are a number of efforts across the Middle East to revive teaching and learning practices. This revival is being called for to deal with technological advancements and the emergence of globalisation. One of the approaches which is being widely expressed in these arenas is the ‘Systemic Approach’ (SA) to teaching and learning. The term ‘systemic’ means approaching matters holistically, and its way of thinking is called ‘systems thinking’.

‘Systems thinking’ is a discipline for understanding wholes or systems and the interrelationships between their parts. To understand a particular system one needs to see how this system fits into another larger system.

In an educational setting, ‘systems thinking’ requires those who are involved in either teaching or learning to zoom out in order to see the whole (subject) and the connectedness between its parts (topics). Studying topics independently will not provide in-depth understanding of the subject as a whole and it will preclude the...

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integration and transfer of knowledge to other subjects or to the workplace of the learner. Senge argues that:

From an early age, we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the work. That apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price. We can no longer see the consequences of our actions: we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole. Systems thinking requires also knowledge and tools to make or uncover patterns to make the whole observable.3

Making the whole observable has become an important concept for teaching adult students. The teaching of adults requires the adoption of open-ended systems as opposed to closed-systems or mechanistic thinking. The learning environment of adults is seen as non-linear and/or organic thinking.4 Adults are usually armed with prior declarative and procedural knowledge and they continue to adapt and add to their knowledge-base as they interact with their educational institution, society and the workplace. Therefore, the teaching approaches for adults in a formal environment need to be nourished in a different way.5 Learning needs to be active in order to motivate adult learners. Adults need to see their learning as meaningful and benefiting them.6 Bork7 argues that “the usual threats of the classroom, mostly centring on tests and grades, are no longer reasonable, and probably never were. The units must be designed to keep students working at difficult learning tasks.” Adult students need to be actively engaged in skills that build their capacity to solve problems and to look for connections and patterns in order to construct a shared worldview of the discipline of their specialisation. Students need to reflect on real life issues and raise critical thinking questions which help students to see how they fit into this world. Capra8 argues that students need to make several shifts to enable them to see the whole. This kind of understanding and thinking requires frameworks, tools and principles to assist educators to innovate methods and techniques in a way to allow students to transform their way of thinking.

In summary, there is a need to shift our curriculum development efforts from the content to the process: a teaching process which integrates ‘systemic thinking’ into the curriculum. Students need to adapt new ways of thinking and become reflective students and go beyond memorisation of unrelated facts. This process of change requires innovative methods and techniques to transform students from being passive observers to active learners.

Motivation

What has motivated me to write this article is the observation made in changing the mode of instructions from passive to active. This mode has resulted in positive students’ change of behaviour and action. Students became motivated and started to
enjoy learning by thinking. My adopted model of learning was greatly influenced by my reflection on one of the greatest traditions of Prophet Muḥammad, known as the ‘Ḥadīth of Jabrā’il’, narrated by Ṭabarzīd. This learning model has dictated my way of thinking and has been used within a blended teaching environment consisting of face-to-face and online learning activities.

The following sections are a reflection of teaching approaches used on a group of postgraduate students at a university in Jordan. Students used these approaches to harness systems thinking to learning. The objective of this article is to encourage faculty members to deviate from the traditional rigidity of teaching and to adopt a more creative teaching approach. The emphasis of this article is on the process that led to change of attitude of students towards learning and not the actual methods used.

First, I will discuss the research method used followed by a discussion on a set of principles which influenced the adopted teaching environment. The implication of these principles will be discussed and supported by statements by the students before finally ending with a conclusion.

**Research Method**

As previously mentioned, this research is based on a ‘qualitative case study’ approach to understand the effects of various teaching approaches on supporting the thinking and learning of students. I wanted to examine if thinking helps students in understanding concepts and their relationships. In addition, I sought to see if thinking helps motivate self-learning and critical thinking; i.e. thinking that goes beyond what textbooks say. The case study method belongs to qualitative research methods, aiming at gaining insights rather than gathering statistically significant evidence. ‘Qualitative research method’ refers to the strategy for data collection and analysis. Theories developed using qualitative approaches are often more representative of the real world because they generate ‘rich’ data collected from the words, actions, and symbols (explicit and tacit knowledge) of people. Rich or qualitative data are the results of meaning allocated by people to events and objects. Throughout this article, I will support some of the arguments using the exact words taken from students who have expressed their feelings and opinions on the teaching process.

**Case Description**

The course participants were enrolled in master’s degree courses at one of the Jordanian universities. Eighty adult students were attending either Management Information Systems or Electronic Commerce subjects. The students were
postgraduates who were mostly working adults and mostly accustomed to teaching methods where the teacher is in the centre of the learning environment and totally in control. The instructions mode was in English, but students were allowed to express themselves in either Arabic or English. As mentioned earlier, the teaching approach was based on various, blended face-to-face, and online activities.

**Data Collection**

Data was collected at several stages over a period of two semesters. The method used for data collection was through asking online open-ended questions, which gave the students the opportunity to express their thoughts freely with no threats. I did not ask students about any specific part of the course. I asked students to list things that they liked about the course and also things that they disliked or would like to improve. I did not want to direct or influence the thinking of the students and I wanted their thoughts to come out freely. I have collected over one hundred statements that address various aspects of the student experience on learning through this blended environment. In addition, data was also collected through my observations of the students’ behaviours and action and through informal class discussions immediately after carrying out exercises to see the effect of the learning approach. The data collected was in both Arabic and English. I also followed up on twenty students after three months of completing a course with me. I wanted to see if they had gained and applied thinking skills to their working life and in studying other subjects.

**Principles for Thoughtful Learning Foundation**

The epistemology for my teaching principles used in this case as mentioned previously was greatly influenced by reflecting on the ‘Hadīth of Jabrā’īl’ which was narrated on the authority of ʿUmar,13 who said:

One day while we were sitting with the messenger of Allah there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black; no signs of journeying were to be seen on him and none of us knew him. He walked up and sat down by the Prophet. Resting his knees against his and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said: “O Muhammed, tell me about Islam.” The messenger of Allah said: “Islam is to testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammed is the messenger of Allah, to perform the prayers, to pay the zakat [zakāh], to fast in Ramadhan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so.” He said: “You have spoken rightly,” and we were amazed at him asking him and saying that he had spoken rightly. He said: “Then tell me about eman [īmān].” He said: “It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books,
His messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both the good and the evil thereof.” He said: “You have spoken rightly.” He said: “Then tell me about ehsan [ihṣān].” He said: “It is to worship Allah as though you are seeing Him, and while you see Him not yet truly He sees you.” He said: “Then tell me about the Hour.” He said: “The one questioned about it knows no better than the questioner.” He said: “Then tell me about its signs.” He said: “That the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress and that you will see the barefooted, naked, destitute herdsman competing in constructing lofty buildings.” Then he took himself off and I stayed for a time. Then he said: “O Omar, do you know who the questioner was?” I said: “Allah and His messenger know best.” He said: “He was Jebreel [Jabrā’īl, Gabriel], who came to you to teach you your religion.”

Many Islamic scholars have declared this narration as one of the most authentic and important hadīth, because it covers all the fundamentals and concepts of the religion of Islam, which was indicated at the end of the hadīth in the phrase “came to you to teach you your religion”. The event of this narration occurred towards the end of the life of Muḥammad, and the Companions (al-ṣaḥābah) learned the content of this narration in fragments over many years.

The hadīth has provided a systemic approach to Islam and its various related segments. It has identified what makes up a complete discipline, i.e. foundational concepts, beliefs, way of conduct (iḥṣān), there are unknown matters, and the world is dynamic with indicators to mark its end. The hadīth highlights the value of having a holistic understanding. The narration did not only provide a conceptual view of what is Islam but also provided some fundamental ways of teaching it, as mentioned at the end of the hadīth, “came to teach”. This statement implies that certain teaching methods are embedded in the narration, which is used to impart the knowledge of this important lesson.

Six principles were seen as fundamental in this narration for creating a thinking and thoughtful learning environment (see Table 1). What follows is an explanation of these principles in relation to the ‘Hadīth of Jabrā’īl’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Creating conversation through questions, answers and feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Awareness of things, building relations and recognising problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualisation</td>
<td>Putting the parts into context or into a larger context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualisation</td>
<td>Recognise and develop concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Act right and truly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
<td>Learning as a way of life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1** A Set of Principles for Thoughtful Learning
Principle of Dialogue

One of the greatest lessons was conveyed to the Companions through a dialogue between Jabrā’īl and Muḥammad, especially a dialogue that is accompanied by questions and answers. Raising the right sequence of questions generated the ‘whole’ concept of Islam. Scholars have said that asking the correct question is half of the knowledge.14 Thinking is an act ‘not’ driven by answers but by good critical questions. A good dialogue is a dialogue that also provides feedback to enforce quality learning. Reflecting back on the hadīth, Jabrā’īl said several times of the Prophet’s answers: “You have spoken rightly”.

Principle of Observation

Good observation requires the use of senses and experience to observe before making judgment and to look for meanings. The first stage for observation is an awareness of facts such as the statement made by the companion describing the strange man “whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black”. The second stage includes making connections and setting up relationships between disparate facts based on existing knowledge. This stage was demonstrated in the hadīth when the companion said “none of us knew him” so as if he was from out of town but at the same time “no signs of journeying were to be seen on him”. Capra15 argues that “the world is a world of relations, and within these relationships we draw circles around a certain pattern”, and we say “well, this is what I call an object”. We need to teach students the process of how things interrelate.

The term ‘thinking’, which translates as tafakkur in Arabic, has a combined meaning of think and reflect. On many occasions the Qurʾān calls upon man to think and reflect on systems in order to see relationships between the various parts, such as sky and earth, day and night, man and woman.16 Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) argued that thinking is a natural gift from Allah and a desired state to rise to a higher order of living.17

A higher stage of observation is reflection, and this occurred in the dialogue when Jabrā’īl replied “You have spoken rightly” to Muḥammad after answering several questions. The companions “were amazed at him asking him and saying that he had spoken rightly”. This higher stage of reflection requires a person to determine problematic issues, which can only be recognised through experience. Problems at this stage require further information or research to be resolved. In the case of the hadīth, the problem was resolved when Muhammad provided more information to the companion, by saying “He was Jabrā’īl [Gabriel], who came to you to teach you your religion.”
Principle of Conceptualisation

Conceptualisation is an abstract and simplified representation of certain knowledge. Muḥammad in this ḥadīth did not provide details of islām, īmān, and iḥsān; he only provided their concepts and their pertaining principles. The relationship between these concepts leads to holistic understanding of the Religion of Islam. I have learned from this ḥadīth the importance of conceptualisation as a way of conveying knowledge in order to see the whole.

Conceptualisation is a mental model that we have ‘in our heads’ constructed from knowledge and experience. If we want to help students become critical thinkers, we must help them to recognise good concepts and build their skills to create their own concepts that explain their own knowledge and experiences. We should encourage concepts and not memorisation of facts. They must be able to build connections and relations between the various concepts in order to see the whole. People act upon their mental models that they have constructed over many years. Providing students with distorted concepts can affect their understanding and their useful contribution to society. Therefore, critical questioning of concepts needs to be encouraged in order to understand their implications on other concepts and in different environments.

Principle of Contextualisation

Capra argues that in order to understand something, you don’t take it apart; you put it into a larger context. In order to understand the purpose of this ḥadīth, it requires from the reader to have critical reflection on the social and historical background of the setting. For example we need to know who is Muḥammad, Jabrā’īl, and the Companions, and what are their characteristics. When was it narrated? Therefore putting the narration in its historical context provides more sense to the reader. It will provide depth and breadth to its meaning as opposed to abstract interpretations. Van Oers adds that in order to arrive at a coherent meaning “essentially depends on some sort of surroundings”. Hirsch acknowledges that understanding the context “narrows the meaning probabilities for the particular word sequence; otherwise, interpretation would be hopeless”. Students have to learn how to put concepts in different contexts in order for them to have detailed understanding of the concept itself.

Principle of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is a process that can take place in different contexts formally and informally. We know from the Islamic history that the Prophet taught his companions formally (in mosques) and informally while interacting with the companions in their daily activities and other events. As I have mentioned earlier, the ḥadīth was one of the important lessons given to the companions. The lesson was given in
an informal setting, as stated by the hadith: “One day while we were sitting with the messenger”. Another observation from the hadith is that the companions were adults who were still learning.

Lifelong learning occurs mostly during informal practice. Much of what we learn, both in and out of the workplace, occurs during informal practice. Conlon cites a survey by Marsick and Volpe, claiming that only 20 per cent of employees learn through formalised education. The study also found that employees developed their own personal strategies for asking questions, listening, observing, reading, and reflecting on their work environment. Therefore, it makes sense to simulate the informal environment to prepare students for lifelong learning: an environment that encourages active learning, participative approaches and which allows the student to be at the centre of learning and not the teacher. Probably the most important skill students should develop is the ability to take responsibility for their own learning and to sustain intellectual curiosity.

**Principle of Authenticity**

This principle is a quality characteristic of the teacher in being authentic, trustworthy and genuine. This principle is foundational to the other principles. The authentic teacher is the person who can make learning more effective by providing a comfortable environment for students to open up, become active, reflective and expressive. Critical thinking cannot occur in an oppressed environment and without the principle of authenticity. Demetrious, citing Brookfield, proposes that “being an authentic teacher includes making sure our behaviours are congruent with our words, admitting we do not have all the answers and can make mistakes, building trust with students through revealing personal aspects of ourselves and our experiences, and respecting students as people”. This principle is needed to build trust between the teacher and students. Cranton and Carusetta defined authenticity as having four parts: being genuine, showing consistency between values and actions, relating to others so as to encourage their authenticity, and living a critical life.

Authenticity was demonstrated in the hadith by the physical and vocal engagement between Muhammad and Jabrā’il: “He walked up and sat down by the Prophet. Resting his knees against his and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said: ‘O Muhammad’.” The physical touching and calling of the name are ways of making intimacy, respect, and personalisation.

Students and teachers should also be allowed to say “I do not know” when a question is difficult to answer. When Muhammad was asked when is the Day of Judgment he replied “I do not know.” The idea of not knowing everything does relieve teachers and students from the stress of having to know everything.

Students also learn a great deal from the ethical conduct of teachers, their ways of thinking and the tacit knowledge they exhibit. Teachers are role models.
therefore should exhibit excellence in their behaviour and action. Islamic scholars described the word *iḥsān* in the *ḥadīth* (act right and truly) as the highest level of self application in Islam. The opposite of *iḥsān* is abuse. *Iḥsān* also includes sincerity, self-accountability, perfecting actions and behaviour. One can best learn the meaning of authenticity through close examination of the conduct of Muḥammad, who was sent for the purpose of “the perfection of moral goods” and who spent more than twenty years teaching.

These six principles helped me to assist students to learn thoughtfully through observation, proper dialogue, seeing concepts in their context and all this occurring in a respectful and informal environment. These principles were interwoven into a blended learning environment incorporating a variety of activities.

**A Blended Thoughtful Learning Environment**

To optimise the thinking capacities of students I have used a blended mix of learning environments between face-to-face and online learning environment: An environment that will encourage learning by doing (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  Blended Thoughtful Learning Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face-to-Face</th>
<th>Online Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mini lectures</td>
<td>Discussion board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini cases</td>
<td>WebBlog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student presentation</td>
<td>Wiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written assignments</td>
<td>Glossary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic impact</td>
<td>Internal mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising critical thinking questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The blended environment of face-to-face and online learning has created a thoughtful platform for students. Thoughtful because it made them think through a variety of activities. Kraak argues that thinking is “an important, perhaps the most important of all present time’s educational tasks”. Bruning states that critical thinking is essential for adult students since they value democratic tradition where people have a participatory role in making decisions based on the outcome of critical thinking and where alternative solutions are examined from their various dimensions. Therefore, critical thinking is a process with a purpose. Adults have the capability to research circumstance and challenge their assumptions. They use their prior knowledge to make critical judgments on practical applications. Students need activities that will stimulate their cognitive process to reflect and give them a higher order of learning. Such a process is highly stimulated when it is exercised through...
a higher order of interaction through collaboration in communities. The process of creating of knowledge is the focus and not the content. It involves discovering how to analyse, synthesise, make judgments, and create and apply new knowledge to real-world situations. Students who are equipped with these skills will be provided with lifelong learning capabilities.

**Face-to-Face Learning Activities**

In this learning environment, I have combined several approaches to assist students with a rich environment for learning in order to see the whole picture.

*Mini lectures:* Lectures do not exceed 45 minutes. They are divided into segments, and the remaining hour and a half is spent with discussions and other activities. Lectures are conducted using PowerPoint and ‘data’ show. Discussions are encouraged in between segments. I usually project key statements on the screen for students to reflect on and to express their understandings and opinion.

*Mini case studies:* The use of cases which are mostly related to the local and regional markets. Cases were retrieved from Arabic news websites. Additional cases were taken from foreign contexts to demonstrate successful and creative solutions.

*Student presentations:* To develop student communication skills, they were asked to carry out presentations. Students had the choice to either critically analyse an academic paper, to discuss a successful case, to evaluate websites according to set guidelines, to bring in their own experience to the class or to select any topic of their interest. Presentations were usually followed by questions and answers.

*Written assignments:* Students were required to submit written assignments on their presentation in two or three pages with references. This assignment was used to build structuring and writing of good reports.

*Topic impact:* At the end of each session, the students were required to state one topic which they felt is important, and they also had to state ‘why’ they thought it is important. I was particularly interested in the ‘why’.

*Raising critical-thinking questions:* The students were required to raise a critical-thinking question which was related to a certain topic. The critical question usually initiated student-to-student discussion.

**Online Learning Activities**

For the online learning environment, I have used Moodle, a Learning Management System (LMS), to further unleash the thinking process of the students. Moodle was installed on a website to specifically serve my teaching courses. The use of LMS has become an accepted practice in Western universities to deliver e-learning or
support blended-learning activities (online and face-to-face learning). LMS can link class and home education through computer technology in meaningful ways.

Moodle is Free and Open Source (FOS) and downloadable from the internet. The learning philosophy of Moodle is based on the concept of “social constructionist pedagogy”. This concept is based on the belief that students’ learning is strengthened by applying prior knowledge and principles to a new environment resulting in construction of new knowledge. This philosophy is also based on the belief that if students construct knowledge for others to read, it will result in a more effective way of remembering knowledge. Students become teachers and learners at the same time. Therefore, students need to connect to other students and become a community of practice to facilitate knowledge sharing. Through this community, students will be motivated to learn and collaborate on knowledge building and exchanging. The tools provided by Moodle give students an opportunity to reflect on knowledge outside the formal class. The teacher’s role in this type of pedagogy is that of a facilitator, directing students to sources of knowledge and moderating the online activities. Moodle is also used as a course portal to distribute lecture notes, notify students of coming events, describe assignments, submit assignments, take tests, and other constructivist tools, such as:

*Discussion board:* Student postings of questions and opinions, allowing students to respond. I have used the discussion board for students to post their critical-thinking questions and allow other students to respond in their own opinions and words in their own time. This allowed students to research their answers before responding.

*WebBlog:* Individual writing and reading environment, providing the ability for other students to comment on the content of the written text. I have used this only on one occasion. One of the students had to go overseas for a business trip to install and implement a software application and was unable to take the mid-term assessment. He was given the assignment to write a daily journal for a week and to reflect on his work activities and on the theories and issues which were discussed in class. The objective was to relate practice to theory.

*Wiki:* Collaborative writing environments which have a shared goal. Students collaborate on writing a single document with multiple pages. A ‘wiki’ provides individual revision of history and to view recent changes. A teacher can track the contribution of each student. The content of a wiki document is editable by all students. The students used the ‘wiki’ to write up teaching notes in Arabic related to the subject being taught. The objective of the ‘wiki’ document was for it to be posted publicly online to be used by anyone who is studying similar subjects as a contribution to their community.

*Islam and Civilisational Renewal*
Glossary: The students collaborate to build an Arabic glossary related to the topics being studied.

Internal mail: Private internal email was used by the students to communicate.

Moodle gave me a ‘closed loop’ for students to have privacy and I had full control of its customisation and administration. The next section will argue on the value of some of these activities and the proposed six principles supported by students’ statements.

Discussions

One of my students has mentioned that “You know where you are taking us.” Teaching and learning is like taking a journey; it can be eventful, enjoyable and memorable. One student said, “Many years later, I will remember all about this subject.” If the journey is enjoyable, you want to do it again. Another student, after completion of the course, said, “I hope all the subjects I’ll take in the university are like the MIS course”, and many others have expressed the journey (learning) was enjoyable. For example:

The class was interesting and useful [...]. I enjoy it. [...] Your lecture deserves that I wake up at 7 o’clock in the morning each Saturday.

Students who miss class do not miss out on the content of topics because they can get it from text books, but they will miss out on the shared experience. The sharing of experience is the journey that they had enjoyed, one that was guided through the application of six principles: dialogue, observation, contextualisation, conceptualisation, authenticity, and preparing for lifelong learning.

The application of the principle of dialogue was the ice breaker prompting students to ask questions. Dialogue is not a one-way channel; it is multi-channel – teacher-to-student, student-to-teacher, and student-to-student. Statements like these highlight how much students valued dialoguing:

The way you are running the course: encourage students participation, open to suggestions [...] realised the importance of participation [...]. Discussions in class is good and served to make the dry topics more palatable [...]. I like the open communication.

The blended learning environment has provided an ideal situation for students and me to connect, to dialogue and to raise our awareness, and to think critically about the various teaching topics. The raising of critical-thinking questions in class has created a climate for fruitful dialogue. It allowed students to reflect and to freely express themselves. The use of the online discussion board to post the students’ critical questions had a similar effect. Using online activities had a benefit of giving
students more time to think, research, and reflect before posting their questions and answers. The use of the discussion board has allowed students to dialogue, converse and brainstorm on ideas, as expressed by one student: “This website is very useful for me, and the types of participation are very enjoyable, especially that I can share the opinions with others.”

Online discussion is considered a useful way to generate learning dialogue between students,\textsuperscript{36} and it provides a useful strategy for critical thinking development, the encouragement of creativity, and reflective thinking, and it can lead to self-directed learning.\textsuperscript{37} Here are some of the statements from students on using the course website:

> It allows us to interact with the instructor and colleagues in a better way… I like the new style (using web site) direct communication… the forum and using the moodle is a great idea [...]. I do like the idea of having a web site for the student opinion and forums [...]. I think the website is a good idea to improve our obligation according (to) the course which we are studying, also it support us with interactive method.

> Students who are able to generate good questions go through a process of thinking and learning. In preparation for the mid-term assessment, I have asked students to generate three questions along with their own answers. I have also asked them to post their questions on the online discussion board so that students can think about other students’ questions and learn from each other’s style of thinking, as well as to avoid repeated questions. Students had mentioned that they liked “the idea that the students participate in the exam” because it focuses on what is important as expressed by one student “emphasizing on foundations and primary themes” and another student liked the idea of raising their own exam question because in that way “we will be tested on what is important for us”. Through this exercise, students took part in a democratic choice which gave them a sense of responsibility for their own learning.

To assist students in understanding the principle of conceptualisation, I have used the questions that were generated by them for the mid-term assessment as an activity to draw concept maps. The activity was to take the questions which seemed to be at first impression unrelated and to build concepts and relationships between the concepts and finally to draw a concept map. The activity was carried out in teams of three or four students. The teams read each question, decided on its theme, and placed it on the concept map. Each group then presented their map to the class. I followed this activity with a class discussion on the value of this exercise. This was the first time students carried out such an exercise and they were astonished at how a set of large questions can be conceptualised and easily related to each other. They were also amazed at the amount of learning that they have gained without them realising it. The use of concept maps gave students an in-depth understanding of topics and their relations. Through conceptualisation, students have learned and
knowledge was ingrained using such an exercise. The students also appreciated the value of teamwork. Again, that is something that we do very little in our class rooms, where we often concentrate more on individualism rather than collectivism.

In this study, the feedback was provided collaboratively and continuously; I gave feedback to the students and the students gave me their feedback about the process and the content of the course. When there is an individual issue, feedback is usually relayed by email or during class sessions when it is a group issue.

The use of email was encouraged between students and myself. The idea of using communication by email took a long time to get rolling. But once students got a feel for its value and how quickly they could get a response to their questions, they became frequent users.

The different activities throughout this course helped students to create a dialogue to learn. As one student expressed it: “People are able to learn more and have the ability to communicant better.”

*The principle of observation* was accomplished in my teaching method through case studies and class presentation. The value of cases/stories cannot be underestimated; stories are one of the powerful teaching approaches used in the Qur’an. The cases were mostly taken from local and regional applications. Cases were usually distributed in class for students to read, observe and reflect on the words and the events given in each case. In-depth case discussion followed to allow students to communicate their reflections on the case and to make connections to the various topics that were covered in the current or previous classes.

Students were given larger cases to present in front of the class. The students also observe and reflect on what the presenter is trying to communicate and learn from his style. The value of the presentations was expressed in a statement from a student: “Giving every student a topic or two during the course to explain to colleagues has contributed to make students interact with the course and communicate information to colleagues in a summarised and clear form.” Another student had a similar feeling: “I liked the idea of having a case study then we discuss it in the class, it was very interesting and it helped us a lot in studying this course!”

Students need to understand the *principle of context* to allow them to critically evaluate issues, events, and actions. For example, when students examine a case taken from a western society they have to understand it in the context of its origin. This will help students to understand the case holistically; i.e. its content and its environment. Understanding cases in their context will also help students to realise the implications when transferring a solution to a different context.

One should not simply apply uncritically the theories of the West to Arab and Islamic culture. There are some major civilisational differences. Some Muslims are not making the effort to take knowledge given in Western textbooks and place it into a Middle Eastern context. With this limited approach we convey the (wrong)
message to students that we are imitators and not innovators, and this may prohibit creative thinking on our part (teachers and students). With the application of the context, students started to realise the limitations of culture and technology, but also became aware of global issues of which we have to be a part.

The principle of authenticity is also important. An oppressing environment discourages students from the will of free thinking. Authenticity is a personal conduct that I became aware of to ensure that my behaviour is professional and does not offend. I had to practise what I had preached. Such attitude encourages a nourishing learning environment. I have used a variety of ways to place students in a comfortable, non-threatening and informal surrounding. The statements that have been collected from the students can explain what authenticity actually is:

Cares about the students, and willing to help anyone at anytime; always available to students […] patience […] social and technical support […] manner to reach for all student by keeping them as friends not students […]. Flexibility of instructor […] asking if there is any question or comments […] friendly way […]. The flexibility in dealing with the instructor. I don’t feel that there is any embarrassment from the doctor especially through the participation inside the class […]. Good ethics (tayyib al-akhlāq) and style of treatment.

In one of my classes, I had about 28 students and one of them challenged me if I knew all their names. The students were amazed that I was able to mention every single name, although it took much effort to learn them all, but in doing so I have gained their respect and trust. During an informal conversation with one student, he mentioned to me that it is important for students to see the teachers putting effort into preparation.

Students had the option to also contact me freely by email and by mobile phone. The idea is that students need to feel that the teacher is always close when in need and it is part of building intimacy. Building intimacy between teachers and students is important, to allow students the comfort to think freely without prohibitions.

In the early stages of training students to speak their minds, one should not interrupt their contributions, even if they make no sense. While students are building their confidence in expressing themselves, the teacher may intervene and provide feedback in a gentle manner. A teacher needs to become aware of individual needs and to vary assignments according to the capabilities of the students. We should not view teaching as a production line for producing identical products.

The process of learning that a student takes with them after graduation is probably more important than the content itself. The application of lifelong learning principles is important to develop the thinking skills and motivate students to continue learning after graduation. Here are some statements by students which show that they have gained lifelong learning skills through the mentioned blended activities:
Motivation to learn: “God-willing, I will keep on reading your website to develop myself more and more [...]. I no longer rely on textbooks; I look for other sources [...]. The approach has influenced the way I study for other subjects; I have started to study on a regular basis.”

Thinking skills: “The key success factor in this course is how you taught me to think critically [...]. It increases the analytical thinking skills for the student and his ability of evaluating his mind power [...]. The information I got helped me in other subjects, like system analysis and design.”

Communication skills: “It supports the learning skills of the student in both Arabic and English – and especially in English.”

Personal development: “It increases the self-confidence which the student needs to support his personality in order to face the community and to socialise strongly with it”

Technology skills: “It enhances my capabilities of using the internet.”

It can be seen that a variety of skills were gained through the applications of simple but effective means of teaching. The above skills are transferable and can contribute to the lifelong learning of students. We should shift our focus from paying too much attention to teaching students to pass exams, to teaching students to become autonomous lifelong learners as a style of life.

Thinking holistically was the main purpose for the application of these principles. The purpose was to get students to think holistically and to see the interconnectedness between various topics and subjects. Part of this holistic view is the students themselves. It is important for students to discover their potential capabilities and to harness an environment of dialogue between themselves. The teaching approach used in this case was a balance between content and process in a comfortable learning environment. A variety of learning approaches was used to meet the diverse needs of students. The discussed approaches had assisted students to see the whole, its parts, and their relations. The following are some excerpts from the students’ statements that indicate that students can value the idea of the ‘whole’:

However, the main thing here is that I understood this course as a whole, which means Me as a manager – God-willing – will benefit implementing IT in my firm’s main departments… highlighting on many subjects completes somehow my knowledge about EC (electronic commerce) [...]. Linking issues together built a clear idea [...]. First, I found EC as one of my subjects and that I have to pass in order to finish my master’s degree. But maybe now and with the end of the first period, I start looking at its content as the connecter between my other subjects. Especially MIS […] made me look for matters as a one picture – a kind
of bird view – which helps a lot to solve complicated problems [...]. Linking issues together built a clear idea. I try to relate what I have learned to what I do at work.

I will end this journey with another statement from one of my students, which may summarise poetically what I have been discussing:

Coming to lecture, from a far distance from Karak directly to the university is most of the time a picnic and a journey in eagerness to meet with loved ones and aiming for knowledge with a teacher and a mentor we respect.

This blended approach had a few drawbacks for some students, as expressed in their feedback. Attending a lecture in English was quite an issue for some students. Access to the internet was not always available to students from their homes and it also had cost implications. Most of the students were working adults and had limited time for carrying out the activities effectively.

**Conclusion**

I have presented *six principles* as a foundation for systems thinking to assist students to see the whole and its related parts. Principles to assist in initiating dialogue, reflective observation, seeing things within their context, building concepts, lifelong learning skills, and all these principles were re-enforced by authenticity. These principles were applied through a *blended learning environment*, consisting of face-to-face and online activities, using the learning management system.

Maybe this study did not bring anything new to some of us as educators, but it was new for students. What this article is calling for is nothing new, but something that was once part of our Islamic heritage. What is new, however, are the technologies that can offer us greater opportunities to exploit them in new ways for unravelling the minds of our students to face the wave of modern world challenges. I am not claiming that these are the only principles nor the only activities for seeing the whole, but I am claiming that in order to see the whole, one needs to take a different path. I think it would be nice one day for teachers in the Middle Eastern region to enter a classroom with students asking, “How are we going to learn?”, instead of “What is going be in the exam?”

**Notes**

3. Ibid.

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7. Ibid., 199.
8. Capra, “From the Parts”. 
13. [al-Nawawī], “Forty Hadiths”, narrated by Muslim.
16. Qur’ān: 3:190–1; 30:21
20. B. Van Oers, “From Context to Contextualizing”, *Learning and Instructions* 8, no. 6 (1998), 481.
23. Ibid.
33. For further information see http://moodle.org/ (accessed on 20 November 2010).

35. For further information see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki (accessed on 20 November 2010).


ISLAM, DEMOCRACY, AND THE QUESTION OF COEXISTENCE

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Abstract: Islam and Islamic culture are the subjects of discussions and debates around the world. Often these discussions have been connected to immigration in general and the policies of assimilation and integration and, by extension, to the co-existence of different religious and ethnic groups and the practice of racism and racial segregation in particular. Thus, these issues have now become prominent in the fields of cultural, religious, and migration studies and in studies on race relations and socio-economic inequalities. For instance, people inside and outside of academia are questioning Islamic politics, the place of democracy and human rights in Islam, and crucially whether Islam can coexist with other (i.e., Western) cultures. Against this background, it is important to understand the Islamic cultural system, Islamic society, and politics, including democracy, in Islam, the Muslims’ views on migration, and some other phenomena associated with Islam. This article will discuss Islamic norms and values regarding current questions and search for the place of political Islam, democracy in Islam and whether Islam can coexist with other cultures.

Introduction

The current debate about Islam or Muslims, throughout the world, and especially in Europe, has a high profile. The debate is concerned with cultural conflicts, state relations with some predominantly Muslim countries, Islamic values and symbols, and Muslim migration to the West. Military action by the United States and some other Western nations, in the name of the “war on terror” in Iraq and in efforts to capture Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, has sharpened the perception that there is a clash between the West and Islam.1 Samuel Huntington2 suggests that “relations between societies in the coming decades are more likely to reflect their cultural commitments” and holds that the West is culturally different from the Orient and that there is a clash between these two. In parallel, worldwide discussion, including academic work and dialogue, has increasingly focused on supposedly Islamic or

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Muslim issues. Therefore, issues relating to Islam and the West have become intermingled in discussions inside and outside of academia. Therefore, it is important to understand the Islamic cultural system, Islamic society and politics, including democracy in Islam, Muslims’ views on migration, jihād as a norm, and some other phenomena associated with current global issues and symbolised as being Islamic.

To approach the discussion, this article poses some questions: (a) is Islam compatible with democracy? (b) what is the place of politics in Islam? To clarify the discussion of these questions and the answers to them some other issues will be addressed.

Discussion

Islam and Islamic culture are the subjects of discussions around the world. To the West, Islam is entangled with fanaticism, fundamentalism, militancy and terrorism. Consequently, people in the West now use ‘fundamentalism’ to mean Islam or Muslim activists, where they once used it to identify conservative Christianity. The term ‘Islamophobia’ is used to refer to attitudes to Islamic culture, in the context of Muslim militancy, terrorism, etc. Because of this, interpretations of Islam and Muslim culture have shifted to focus on Islamist activists and Islamic fundamentalists. Therefore, people inside and outside of academia are questioning Islamic politics and maintain that “religion is a cohesive and unitary force and that it independently shapes politics, and it has been fuelled by the consequent efforts to specify the (implicitly unique) political role of Islam”. Others propose that Islam can accommodate democracy, and political Islam and the Islamic faith need to be understood at a deeper level. This debate was born outside academia and social research, and has occupied public attention towards politics, media and certain religious issues. It has now gained prominent attention in the fields of cultural, religious and migration studies and in relation to socio-economic and race relations approaches. Also, currently Islam is an instrument of politics in Muslim countries and in the West (for example, politicians in predominantly Muslim countries make arguments against the West, and Western politicians promote xenophobic fears) where it has become a factor in goal attaining techniques. In addition, Islam has been used in the pursuit of political power, by dictators and democrats alike, and is often used to maintain power that is strikingly un-Islamic in character.

In this connection, multiculturalism is another term which has deep roots in approaches to addressing prejudice and is also frequently used in discussions concerning Islam or Muslims. Discussing the theoretical roots of this term, scholars suggest that it is ill-defined, controversial and contested. However, the idea of multiculturalism helps to give minority groups a platform on which to build
recognition of their own cultural tradition and identity among a nation’s mainstream cultural groups. For a soundly conceptualised multicultural global public sphere, however, a society needs to be dialectical in its thinking and should aim to bring all groups in a society into confluence. This scientific co-existing social environment can be built up through cultural interchanges between different civilisational traditions and “by interrogating and respecting a range of different cultural notions of the public, citizenship, representation, human rights and democracy”. However, these issues are far from being settled and debate is ongoing in what has become a smouldering standoff.

Recognising the current debate in the world concerning Muslim identity, Stauth holds that after the fall of socialism Islam appeared on the stage of world history again and reoccupied its strong and important position in global politics. In this process, relations between the West and Islam appeared to be as those between hostile entities: Islam as religious and traditional; the West as secular, modern and rational. However, “the variety of religious symbolizations and practices that has emerged with great differences from place to place and from generation to generation shows the openness with which Muslims have again and again searched for an adequate answer to their specific social situation and time”. On the other hand, Stauth notes that a sociologically conceptualised Islam is yet to be studied within the framework of cultural self-assertiveness, and therefore Islamic reformation and Arab culturalism remain hidden in the dark. This is a cause of misunderstanding about Islam.

**Democracy and Islam**

As addressed, some scholars debate whether Islam is compatible with democracy and human rights, a perception mainly enrooted in political Islam, Islamic law (sharīʿah), women’s position in Islam, etc. The question of political Islam and Islam as a religion, its position with regard to the securing of human rights – the position of women in an Islamic society and within Islamic law and the question of minorities in an Islamic nation – has attracted the attention of academia for decades, if not centuries, and the debate is ongoing. Some argue that “Muslims today are involved in a serious argument about political ethics” and that “the politicizing of religious thought is often considered to be a characteristic inherent in Islam”. Others recognise that “this politicization has only emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century as a deliberate policy of the post-colonial nations”. It is also argued that Islam cannot be reconciled with democracy and human rights and that the position of women and non-Muslims is inherently unequal in Islam. Some argue that the idea of a democratic religious government is preposterous and perceive Islamic society as one that incorporates inequality, theocracy, the
absolute authority of the jurisconsults (muftīs), and use of the death penalty, etc.24
In contrast, others argue that some rights (for example, civil or political), embodied
in modern democracy, do not guarantee socio-economic-cultural wellbeing and the
economic freedom of the market place can be a threat to human rights, just as is
political repression,25 and Islamic revivalism is a response to the failure of secular
leaders in their own countries,26 which is the main current focus of political Islam.

With respect to political discourse, in Islam the nature of political thought is
a dangerous and contested issue, as Lahoud27 suggests. She supports the idea of
Muhammad Amara that “in the Islamic tradition, political rule has not been limited
to a determined set of criteria, nor for that matter have rulers conformed to a specific
and unified code of conduct said to be Islamic”.28 In contrast, Islamist ideology
suggests that Islam indeed has a political manifesto. Selected verses have been used
to indicate the orders of Allah. Others suggest that, “the meaning of the text is often
only as moral as its reader. If the reader is intolerant, hateful, or oppressive, so will be
the interpretation of the text”29 “but the text does not command such intolerance”.30
Besides this, soberness in the practice of religion is the utmost demand of a religious
society and such religiosity can establish and guarantee the hallmark of both the
religious and democratic character of a government.31 Inter- and extra-religious
domains need to be harmonised, along with liberty and willing participation in
democracy,32 which can introduce flexibility and tolerance. Soroush33 once again
recognises that with questions of democracy in Islam a stronger connection is forged
in some explanations, and he34 further suggests that three dark and dangerous errors
dim the horizon of such assessments. For example, democracy has been equated
with extreme liberalism, whereas the shari‘ah is considered entirely synonymous
with Islam.35 From its theoretical ground, democracy restricts the power of rulers in
rationalising their deliberation and policies. However, a society that lacks education,
is unfamiliar with its rights or is unable to attain them will be deprived of the
right to choose and consequently will fail to achieve democracy. Democracy is a
choosing process, which could be achieved through a long period of moderation,
discussion, offering various freedoms, elections, etc. From a religious point of
view, religion needs innumerable subsequent decisions, discussion and arduous
trial. In both cases (i.e. Western democracy and Islamic rule), successful efforts
depend on the leaders of a nation. Therefore, we see some nations suffering from
ill-practice although the citizens vote and elect their representatives. Likewise, we
see some autocrats and power-hunting rulers in the name of Islamic rule. Islamic
scholars invoke “democratic concepts and ethical constructs within the Islamic
tradition, including ijtihād (independent reasoning), shūrā (consultation), ijmā’
(consensus of the ‘ulama’, the religious scholars), and bay‘ah (oath of allegiance,
while at the same time holding the leaders to certain standards of accountability)”.36
In other words, religion needs constant examination through “difficult cycles of

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constriction, expansion, modification and equilibrium”, which indicates that the modern democracy already exists within Islam.

At its most conservative, Islam is the opposite of modern globalisation and some adherents flatly deny the universal validity of a global moral vision or global culture. The Islamic discourse, however, recognises the opportunity for Islamisation, and holds that Islamic civilisation can always be reconstructed, reinvented and renewed and this can be an alternative to the Western secular model, which excludes Islam, at a time when popular faith in a secularised idea of modern progress has widely collapsed. Beside this, the Islamic notion of community (umma) “acknowledges and respects diversity but emphasizes unity” and “the idea of umma is imagined and constantly renewed”. While some argue that as sharīʿah is a “historically conditioned human interpretation of the fundamental sources of Islam, alternative, modern interpretations are possible” which recognises that renegotiation regarding Islam and international human rights standards is also possible. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad and the fourth of the ‘Rightly Guided Caliphs’ Islam, suggests that “this is the Qur‘ān, written in straight lines, between two boards [of its binding]; it does not speak with a tongue; it needs interpreters and interpreters are people”. Therefore, it is recognised that interpretation and discussion are important in Islam. The suggestion is that people are not free from their circumstances, so the interpretation depends on the people involved, which is also a reality for any political system.

In this regard, with respect to the Islamists’ point of view regarding Islam and the West, Tibi holds that their arguments for “a place for Islam in the Western society”, while rejecting the call to embrace the “idea of Europe”, suggest that European multiculturalists fail to understand the arguments of the Muslims. Islamist groups are not fully against what constitutes modernism and “we hear many Islamists call for democracy”. In this connection, it is also worth considering the statement of Nobel Prize laureate Orhan Pamuk made to Nathan Gardels, editor of the New Perspective Quarterly, while discussing the political environment of the Muslim world with respect to the political situation in Turkey:

This idea of incompatibility of Islam with modernity is an argument that adopts the fundamentalist logic. Liberals, democrats or Western thinkers should stop making general, vulgar and essentialist observations on Islam every time they come up with some new problem, most of which is partly their making, too.

As to the question of other people’s religious rights, the foundation of liberty and freedom of worship has been guaranteed for non-Muslims living in an Islamic state, as the Qur‘ān says, “Lo! Those who believe, and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabaens – whoever believe in Allah and the Last Day, do the right
things, surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall be no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.”52 Another quote might be worth mentioning:

Say Ye: ‘We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac and Jacob and [his] children, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to [all other] Prophets from their Lord. We make no differences between any of them; and to him we submit ourselves.”53

Regardless of race, colour, sex, and social position, Islam establishes equal rights before the law. The zakāt (alms tax) system ensures the right of the poor of a society as the rich have the obligation to pay zakāt, which will be distributed to the poor. Therefore, “Islam encourages private property but limits it by strictly prohibiting usury”, and provides social and economic rights through the obligation of zakāt.54 Besides the multi-dimensional and ongoing debates regarding the fitting and proper interpretation of sharīʿah – the application of the sharīʿah in modern society – the main concern of the sharīʿah is the maintenance of proper and harmonious relationships in and across all levels, with the ultimate emphasis being on humanity.55 In addition, according to the sharīʿah, rulers are the brothers of their subjects.56 Therefore, the meaning of ummah could be recognised as a community under a shared normative framework – the product of understanding and communication.

Currently, women’s rights relating to marriage, divorce and child support (for example, Indonesia)57 and participation of women in politics (for example, in Kuwait) have advanced from the province of extreme conservatism and have improved because of the modernisation of Islamic law. Previously, the status of women in Arabia (and what we have seen in Europe) in the jāhiliyyah period, the pre-Islamic ‘Age of Ignorance’, had been drastically curtailed. Against what were fearful and ignorant customs and injustice, the Qurʾān stood out in defending women, their place and duties, rights and responsibilities. “In the Qurʾān, women are completely independent entities and fully responsible human beings. The Qurʾān addresses women directly and does not approach her through a third person nor through agents, or through the agency of Muslim males”58 and in the Qurʾān the noble status and rights of women are explicitly addressed and it is recognised that men and women are created to offer love and company to one another. The Prophet Muhammad repeatedly said: “Women are but the full-counterpart of men”,59 and a woman assumes full responsibility, capability and liability once she has attained maturity.60 Sometimes women are offered concessions not offered to men. For example, during her menstrual period, and the forty days after childbirth a woman is exempted from daily prayer and fasting, and this time might be longer (never less) depending on her condition. On the other hand, the “Qurʾān made it difficult for any Muslim rulers or ruled to deny the noble status of women and her rights, political or other. […] Denying such rights is a sign of social, political and moral

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dislocation and a deviation from the teaching of Islam.” Islamic scholars have stated that Islam offers and guarantees freedom of learning, expression, and the freedom to undertake scientific research in all fields of study and, therefore, the position of Islam is not to keep its adherents prisoners of ignorance. Besides this, it is recognised in the Qur’ān (30:30) that every human being is created “innocent, pure, true, and free, inclined to right and virtue and endued with true understanding about […] his [or her] true nature […]”.

Some suggest there is an Islamic renaissance, that Islamic practices, with respect to women and human rights, are being revamped and secularised. However, when the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was approved in the 1950s Muslim representations were ignored and Islamic traditions were not considered. This document come-up from a monolithic corner (i.e. the West) and all other corners were ignored. Since the 1980s, Muslim scholars have been exploring the relation between Islam and international human rights. Later, the Cairo Human Rights Declaration of August 1990, with representations by Muslim leaders and scholars, created a new bridge between secular notions of human rights and religious notions, and this declaration demonstrated wider cooperation in the area of general human rights. In the meantime, some Islamic states (Indonesia, for example) had recognised the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and had included it in their constitutions and Muslim nations contributed to the formulation of “public international law through their active participation in the United Nations”. Under this process some argue that, “Islam is compatible with democracy and civil society if Muslims want this” and those who think Islam and civil society are incompatible, and so make Islam questionable, are mistaken. This harms Islam, Muslims and our society as a whole.

In this connection, we need to recognise that democracy is neither simply the rule of the majority nor a mere procedure of voting: it is a political culture of pluralism. In addition, Islamic communities need a culture of democracy and democracy cannot be imposed from outside. The world, perhaps, already has evidence that democracy cannot be established by destroying a regime, or by placing it under extreme or external pressure. From a different angle, it can be said that Western approaches to political communication (i.e. political participation) cannot simply be adopted just anywhere as there is a need to understand social patterns and values. Otherwise, “to ask only about formal processes, about elections and public opinion, is to miss a range of informal politics […]”. Democracy, participation, communication and interaction all involve the practice and ethos of an entire people, and are maintained because they see it as priceless, which offers commentary on the health of political communication nationally and internationally.

Islamic communities also need better education (not really that sort of education which is explicitly imposed by the West), education that is not only grounded in
their culture, but also opens their eyes to the West. They need to be educated to understand their rights first, to be able to conceptualise and perceive the meaning of democracy and the place of religion in their society. Islam can be compatible with democracy, but it depends on the accountability and morality of the leaders, as in modern democracy, and “Islam can replace nationalism as a basis for legitimacy and allegiance if it is permitted to do so by individuals, groups and states, but it shows no sign of replacing the state.”

Societies both in the past and the present, however, have misinterpreted and misapplied Islamic law, or *sharīʿah*, in favour of repressing “patriarchal non-democratic regimes”, and this has also made Islam controversial in terms of democracy. In addition, the ‘theology’ of Osama bin Laden, ‘Talibanism’ and the current popular jihadist organisations is dangerous not only for democracy but also for human civilisation. An egocentric psyche, intolerance and sense of supremacy or ‘Puritanism’ have all hampered our civility and civilisation. Therefore, Islam should be considered compatible with democracy, but it depends on how Muslims interpret religious rules and on the morality and honesty of their own rulers.

‘Jihadism’ in Politics

The current ‘popular *jihād*’ of, for example, the Al-Qaeda brand, which has altered the concept of state relations and national policies and politics will be discussed here. However, to recognise the trajectory of this type of *jihād* some other issues will be addressed in an attempt to clear up any misunderstanding caused by the current focus on ‘popular *jihād*’. The Qur’anic terms *ḥarb* and *al-qitāl* are used to define ‘war’ *per se*. Qur’anic terms usually have their own connotations and the word *jihād* does not mean ‘holy war’, but struggle or effort, and “where *jihād* does refer to resistance to oppression, it is also not all of one kind, but embraces both armed and unarmed forms of struggle”. Some people, however, used the words for war interchangeably with the word *jihād*. Consequently, a great deal of misunderstanding regarding Islamic law arises from the confusion regarding the concept of *jihād*, and this issue has affected both Islamic and Western societies and has had a significant impact on world mass media and scholars. The West sees any movement promoted or propagated by Muslims as ‘*jihād*’ and translates the term in such a way as to mean terrorism, extremism or fundamentalism, which are not the meanings of classical *jihād* in Islam. *Jihād* actually means that a person should endeavour to lead a good Muslim life, follow the orders of Allah, be an attentive husband or wife, and be responsible to parents and family, to other human beings and to everything. It also means to fight or struggle in favour of the weak and to help them if possible. However, currently this idealistic meaning has been altered and a very negative perception has been
formed which has affected and replaced the exact meaning. In the colonial era, Arabs encountered the West in the same way as today, and opposed the West’s cultural modernity and colonial ideas. The purpose of this movement to resist colonisation was mainly to oppose European ideas. It was a *jihād* to Muslims against the West to indicate their dissatisfaction with Western hegemony and cultural modernity, together with a desire for national sovereignty. Besides this, in the context of the ‘war on terror’, which, supposedly, is being fought to combat ‘jihadism’, if Osama bin Laden were to be captured and the Al-Qaeda terrorist network disappears, ‘Islamic jihadism’ would remain present. Arguably, this popular ‘jihadism’ creates political disorder around the world in general and undermines the integration of Muslims in Europe in particular. This ‘jihadism’, however, is similar to the leftists’ activities that originated in Europe. If we look back on the current world order, for example, we will see that the call of Bin Laden’s ‘jihadism’, which has turned the West’s focus onto the whole Muslim community, is “borrowed directly from the extreme Left of the 1970s, in particular from the staging of the ‘trial’ of Aldo Moro by the Italian Red Brigades in 1978”.

From a classical point of view, “Muslims are enjoined to act, to struggle (*jihād*) to implement their belief, to lead a good life”. In some Western media, however, the meaning of *jihād* is misinterpreted and Islam is portrayed as a threat to the West, and the Western media presents Islam as associated with fundamentalism and terrorism, and this association has also become enrooted in the wider mind of the world. In this connection, the political jihadist groups’ demonstrations have violated the meaning of the classical *jihād* of Islam, to wit the declaration of a ‘*jihād* international’ by Al-Qaeda. They, however, declared *jihād* against governments in the Muslim world and attacked Western representatives and institutions in the region, but now the United States and the West are their primary targets in an unholy war of terrorism.

Some earlier world events might be remembered in this context, to clarify the jihadist formation. The failure of the Arabs in the Arab–Israel Six Day War of 1967, a similar result in the 1973 war between Egypt and Israel, and the oil embargo against the Arabs, are events that have been followed with mixed feelings by Arabs. The later Islamic revolution in Iran might have engendered more positive feelings, and a sense of pride in the Islamists’ mind, for “the discussion of recent socio-religious practices as Islamic fundamentalism started quite abruptly after the Iranian revolution in 1979”.

This sort of spirit continued when, in 1979, a group of militants, who called for the overthrow of the Saudi royal family, attacked the Grand Mosque in Mecca. They wanted to ‘purify’ Islam and return to ‘traditional’ Islam – a ‘pure’ Islamic state and society. Another event that may have fuelled their ambitions was the anti-communist attack in Afghanistan on 27 September 1996, which toppled the
Soviet-backed government of Najibullah (Muḥammad Najīb-Allāh), who was executed by the Taliban. It may be that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 “galvanized Afghanistan’s diverse tribal and religious leaders and movement in a popular jihad”,92 a jihād propagated by residents of a Muslim nation against their own government.

Besides this, from a quasi theological-cum-political point of view, different individuals have brought different approaches to explain the Islamic revelation. Some believe that all Islamic authority resides in the religious texts (the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth), some recognise that ‘development in doctrine is inherent in revelation itself’, and others have been driven by passion for primal authenticity.93 In this connection, Lahoud94 recognises a tri-dimensional current in Islamic thought and activity, comprising apologists, intellectuals and Islamists. She95 argues that the apologists are currently working on an advanced and alternative interpretation of Islam. They are recognised as liberal and are highly appreciated for their intellectual endeavour around the world. The second stream of Lahoud’s current, the intellectuals, Lahoud96 describes as those whose understanding of Islamic tradition is not exclusively through the lens of foundational religious texts, but rather whose explanation started from the landscape of contemporary concerns of the world, and “who designate themselves as intellectual (muthaqqafīn) by virtue of their exploration of these concerns”. They are also known as the contextual stream.

The third stream of Lahoud’s current is the Islamists. This current is well known and popular with the general public and is very active ideologically. They have a strong political ideology and operate actively from a political platform based on a particular Islamic tradition. ‘Jihād’ is a term that might be used as their extreme expression. They selectively use the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth as tools to justify their political ideology and emphasise their faithful adherence to the Islamic foundation texts.97 They are also called the ‘textual stream’. This group also uses religious norms, symbols and other religious phenomena as a tool of politics.98 Yet, the Prophet has assigned great importance to motive (what, why and how), which is neglected in most of the cases in the attempt of these popular jihadists to ignore Prophetic injunctions against killing innocent people, for example.99 These idealist meanings of Islamic spirit, nonetheless, have been violated through popular jihadism.

In addition, politics is a controversial issue among Islamic thinkers (mentioned earlier). In this connection, references, which have been recognised by Khatab and Bouma100 from the ideas of Abū ‘l-Aʿlā Mawdūdī, Sayyid Qūṭb and ‘Alīʿ Abd al-Rāziq, might be useful. ‘Abd al-Rāziq – proceeding from a secular viewpoint – was convinced that Allah does not impose upon Muslims a specific type or form of government, but that they are free to choose what is better for the welfare of their society at any time. Al-Rāziq argues that a caliphate is not essential to the Islamic community101 as it is not a religious institution and Prophet Muḥammad was not a
Besides this, some “ʿulamā’, including Ibn Taymiyyah, traditionally resisted all kinds of forces which might have potentially led to the kind of state powers which we have seen recently” and politics in Islam “is located predominantly in quite a different arena”. On the other hand, Quṭb and Mawdūdī both saw Islam, by its very nature, as a ‘political religion’. Quṭb was inspired by Mawdūdī and took a position in Egypt against the regime of Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir. He was hanged in 1966 after years of imprisonment and torture, but successfully communicated his thoughts, which have inspired a number of radical groups. However, these groups do not possess the exact ideology of Quṭb as Quṭb himself agreed that Islam was not against democratic constitutional rule.

Unquestionably, in some cases the misinterpretations and misunderstandings in the West about the meaning of ‘jihād’, have come about because of, and been propagated by, the activities of an Islamist current – Islamist jihadism. The current popular jihadism, lying at the hub of world politics, is no longer the same as classical jihād. However, Islam in general and political Islam in particular has been wrongly associated with an understanding of jihād as terrorism. Through the activities of terrorists, the positive meaning of jihād is currently misunderstood and distorted to mean killing, terrorism, and fundamentalism. Jihād has currently come to be associated with suicide bombing, the killing of innocent people and other negative issues, although there is a strong obligation in Islam not to kill innocent people and not to commit suicide. Therefore, fanatical Islamic jihadism is divorced from the meaning of classical jihād. As it is expressed in Islam, nonviolence is preferred over violence and forgiveness (ʿafw) over retribution. The Qur’ān declares, “the recompense of an injury is an injury the like thereof; but whoever forgives and thereby brings about a re-establishment of harmony, his reward is with Allah; and Allah loves not the wrongdoers”. Therefore, tolerance is another quality, which is highly appreciated in Islam. However, the meaning of classical jihād has been misquoted or effaced in the explanations (or ignorance) of the popular jihadists and in the West.

In current history, the attack of 11 September 2001 on the United States was a broad-based terrorist activity, which contributed strongly to a negative impression of the idealistic concept of ‘jihād’. However, in the words of Esposito:

Historic memories of the Crusades and European colonialism, the creation of Israel, the Cold War, and American neo-colonialism – all the actions of a Christian West – get superimposed upon current events: the second Palestinian intifada, the presence of American troops in the Gulf, the devastating impact of sanctions on Iraqi children, jihad of resistance and liberation in Kashmir and Chechnya. These memories feed resentment, ignite new anger, and deepen anti-Americanism, not just among terrorists but also in the broader Muslim world.
Also, Tibi\textsuperscript{110} notes that, “Islamists not only want to remake the world through jihad and thus Islamize it, they also engage in an Islamisation of knowledge” and they want to alter the hegemonic power in favour of Islam.\textsuperscript{111} Some argue that in some places active Islamist involvement in ‘development projects’ has filled a void in national social politics.\textsuperscript{112} Nevertheless, some negative ideas, which have been recognised as a part of Islamist activities by the West, do in fact also run counter to classical Islamic ideology. ‘Jihad’ has a profound place in Islamic culture, and both the Qur’ān and the hadīth urge every human being to be prepared for it. This idea of jihad, however, differs from that presented by Western media and contrasts with the ideas of ‘popular’ political jihadism. This popular jihadism is in no way reflective of the original idea of jihad in Islam. And popular jihadists use Qur’ānic edicts to motivate people only to perpetuate their political goal. The political jihadisms have a strong presence in the current world media and social debates across the world, but to recognise political jihadists in this way would mean that the philosophical role of Islamic jihad is misunderstood, which is why religious jihad in Islam is erroneously equated with political jihadism and both are given the same meaning in popular explanation.

Conclusion

The issue of human rights and democracy is a contested issue amongst scholars within and outside of the Muslim world. However, both issues can be resolved if Muslims want to. Islam can accommodate democracy and preserve human rights, depending on the interpretation of Islamic rules, Qur’ānic verses and others. Also, it is important for leaders to be honest in the application of those rules. Consequently, all citizens will be granted their rights. In addition, Islam and the West need to be closer to each other to understand their concerns and communicate better than they have done in recent years. Belonging to a religion of peace and tolerance, Muslims need to give up the ideology of political (popular) jihadism for a dynamic and peaceful co-existence in any society. They need to conceptualise that Islam can be compatible with democracy if they want it to be. Besides this, Muslims need better education and a culture of political communication, which will allow them to understand their rights in society and in relation to others. They need to conceptualise the essence of Islam and need to leave the idea of political ‘jihadist’ Islam.

Thus, this discussion ends with the basic platform that what is essentially needed in the emerging world discourse regarding the West and Muslims is on both sides the recognition and understanding that Muslims and the West are compatible and share similar concerns and that mutual understanding will enable integration for mutual enrichment.

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Notes


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10. Andrew Vincent, “What is so Different about Difference?”, in Bruce Haddock and Peter Sutch (eds), Multiculturalism, Identity and Rights (London: Routledge, 2003), 43.


18. Kelsay, Arguing, 4


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30. Ibid.
31. Soroush, Reason, 133.
32. Ibid., 133.
33. Ibid., 217–18.
34. Ibid., 134.
35. Ibid., 133.
42. Cesari, When Islam and Democracy Meet, 92 and 179.
45. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 225.
52. Qur’an 2:62; see also Mohammadi, “The Culture”, 117.
53. Qur’an 2:136; see also Mohammadi, “The Culture”, 117.
54. Dalacoura, Islam, 47.
57. Monshipouri, “Islam”, 100.
61. Khatab and Bouma, Democracy, 128.

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64. Cesari, When Islam and Democracy Meet, 180.
70. Mayer, Islam, 12.
71. Tibi, Political Islam, 234.
72. Ibid., 234.
73. Ibid., xiii.
75. Ibid.
79. Ibid., 176.
81. Ibid.
82. Khatab and Bouma, Democracy, 176.
84. Tibi, Political Islam, 5.
85. Ibid., 9.
87. Esposito, Unholy War, 5.
89. Esposito, Unholy War, x.
92. Esposito, Unholy War, 9.
94. Lahoud, Political Thought.
95. Ibid., 13.
96. Ibid., 3.
97. Ibid., 13.
100. Khatab and Bouma, Democracy, 9.
106. Khatab and Bouma, *Democracy*, 76.
108. Qurʾān 42:40; see also Said, Funk and Kadayifci (eds), *Peace*, 8.

**Islam and Civilisational Renewal**
Abstract: The emergence of ‘radical Islamist’ movements has challenged the characteristics of Indonesian Islam, which is traditionally moderate and tolerant. According to the author, ‘Islamic radicalism’ is not a new force in Indonesian politics. However, never before have associations espousing such an ideology reached the current level of support. In light of this situation, this article tries to examine the political commitment of ‘Islamist’ political movements in the context of Indonesia’s current democratising process.

Introduction

Nearly a decade of political transition to democracy in Indonesia has led to striking phenomena for political movements organised on the basis of Islam.

On the one hand, the ‘Islamist’ political movements that transformed themselves into parties and participated in electoral politics are now moving toward pragmatic and moderate political orientations. Leaders in ‘Islamist’ political parties – political groups who hold a set of ideologies derived from the doctrine that Islam is not only a religion, but also a political system that governs the legal, economic and social imperatives of the state – moderated their agendas in order to exploit the democratic institutions for political competition. Recent trends in the ideological positions of Muslim-based political parties in the two national elections of 2004 and 2009 revealed that democratic institutions have disciplined the elite of the parties to abandon the agenda for the establishment of an Islamic state of Indonesia in favour of the strategic incentives of winning elections.

On the other hand, the ‘radical’ ‘Islamist’ social movements have eventually come to challenge the very foundation of the secular state of Indonesia. From the end of the 1990s to the mid-2000s, ‘radical’ ‘Islamist’ movements have demonstrated...
force in their struggle to apply Islamic *sharīʿah* law in Indonesia. In many cases, these movements use street-demonstrations, civic protests, social-economic services and public discourse – including religious *fatwās* – to express their religio-political interests.

**Islamic Moderation and the Indonesian Case**

This article seeks to explain the emergence of a moderate and pragmatic political orientation of Muslim political parties in democratising Indonesia. By political moderation of ‘Islamists’, I refer broadly to the stated positions of ‘Islamist’ leaders and groups concerning their commitment to national constitution, democracy and the equal rights of citizenry. Political moderation also includes changes in the stated views of political movements or civic associations relative to their ideological position in the past. I will argue that the force that seems to have driven these two different logics of ‘moderation’ and ‘radicalisation’ is the interaction between the institutional design of the nation-states and the considerable expansion of opportunities for change – in particular political crises. That is to say, the challenge of democratic regimes and of the nation-state were both abrupt and long in the making, and both sets of events spoke to the institutions of the regimes in power even as these regimes were in crisis. Elections, as one of the most important institutions guaranteeing the political legitimacy of ruling regimes in nation-states, serve as a window that may be used by the elite to uphold political mobilisation defined within the framework of the nation’s religious markers.

Scholars of political Islam have explored the moderation and ‘radicalisation’ of ‘Islamism’ by emphasising the role of culture. There are two camps of cultural analysis. The first are those scholars who challenge the thesis of moderate Islam. They posit that ‘Islamism’ is rooted in the Islamic scriptures and classics and shaped by Muslim political experiences and, accordingly, moderation in political Islam does not exist. Daniel Pipes, for example, argues that Islamic identities are deeply rooted effective ties that shape primary loyalties and affinities. While not assuming that all Islamic texts and traditions lead to a certain politicised action, certain scholars believe that Muslims possess a strong sense of religio-cultural identity that is the primary shaper of their actions and worldview.

The second camp is composed of scholars who argue the opposite. To John Esposito, Graham Fuller and Charles Kurzman, just to name a few, ‘Islamist’ political movements change over time. Some movements publicly endorsed democratic representation, pluralism, and human rights. These scholars also depict a character of political Islam which is neither essential, primordial, nor constant. In fact, many Islamic thinkers have offered interpretations qualifying or even rejecting the concept of the inseparability of the political and religious domains. The classical
Islamic texts and traditions also reveal that there are elements that could assist the development of democratic ideas and practices.4

My observations on political Islam in contemporary Indonesia offer a different analytical framework to explain how political movements that share similar political ideas and cultural worldviews pursue different logics of political contestation. ‘Islamist’ political movements that have decided to involve themselves in parliamentary politics moderate their agendas as a strategic adaptation to changes in their political environment. The instalment of democratic institutions after the collapse of the New Order in 1999 helped a number of ‘Islamist’ parties re-emerge. Yet, the ways in which these ‘Islamist’ parties uphold their mobilisation strategies differ significantly from the past. Two main features bear testimony to this difference. The first is the absence of Islamic state alternatives during political campaigns in the 1999 and the 2004 elections; and, the second is the relatively inclusive political platforms of Muslim political parties in qualifying their strategic behaviour in Indonesia’s political process today.

Almost all of political parties relying on Muslim voters claim that their political aspiration is inclusive and plural. The PKB (an NU-affiliated political party), for example, which controlled 57 seats (11%) in the 1999 election, recruited a broad range of political leaders including a number of nationalists – mostly from NGO activists and modernist Muslims. The PAN (a Muhammadiyah-affiliated party) built a coalition with two small Islamic parties, the PBB and PK, and together they controlled 49 seats (7%); PAN also proclaimed itself to be an inclusive Muslim party. The PPP, an Islamic party that frequently mobilised its constituency for the implementation of Islamic law, abandoned its long-standing platform supporting the Jakarta Charter during the parliamentary session for constitutional amendments in 1999 and 2000.

The same logic of electoral behaviour continued in the 2004 presidential elections. The PBB, a proto-‘Islamist’ political party descended from the vanguard ‘Islamist’ party after independence, Masyumi, forged a political coalition with a nationalist party, PD – later with PKS, PKB and PAN – to support Susilo Bambang Yudoyono in the presidential race. Meanwhile, PPP became a vote-getter for Muslim masses in the National Coalition led by PDI-P and Golkar (both secular-nationalist parties) and PDS (a Christian-oriented party), to support Megawati Sukarnoputri in the presidential election.

The two subsequent democratic elections in Indonesia illustrated how the democratic political system presented the ‘Islamists’ with a choice: commit themselves to an Islamic state agenda for the establishment of a moral community based on the sharīʿah, or to work through political institutions. Some ‘Islamist’ leaders, of course, decided to participate in elections because this democratic institution enabled them to pursue their Islamic state agenda in parliament (if
they won) and to legislate Islamic ideals for Indonesian society. A majority of ‘Islamist’ leaders, however, expected that by entering into democratic elections their constituents would be represented in the political decision-making process. Although Muslim political parties fared poorly in the elections of 1999, 2004 and 2009, their leaders were eventually able to gain new access to the process of political decision-making.

While elections offered the Indonesian ‘Islamists’ a new route to power, democratic institutions also subjected them to certain constraints. Participation in electoral games has made the leaders of Muslim parties realise that any attempt to replace the current national constitution with an Islamic alternative would provoke a far-reaching political crisis that would deprive them of popular support. Furthermore, by maintaining moderate positions in dealing with the issue of Islamic-constitutional amendment, the Muslim-based political parties undoubtedly secured the newly-created democratic institutions against a return to politics by the military (notwithstanding former army men who have participated as civilians, like the current president). Whatever their political commitments reveal, this move towards pragmatism by political Islam establishes a new principle for ‘Islamist’ parties in a democracy: there is no single ideological formulation embraced within ‘Islamist’ parliamentary politics. For Indonesian ‘Islamist’ political parties, thus, political moderation is taken in order to enhance their credibility with the Indonesian electorate or to secure cooperation and alignment with other political groups, especially from secular-nationalists.

Such a political moderation is not new. From a comparative standpoint, observing the phenomenon of social democracy in Western Europe, Adam Przeworski notes that the establishment of democratic political systems in Europe based on universal adult suffrage presented the left political movements with a dilemma: to pursue socialist revolution through direct confrontation in the workplace or to struggle for the establishment of socialist ideals through parliamentary politics. It eventually became clear that the decision to participate in elections brought with it the political consequence of moderating the revolutionary ideologies and agendas. Transition to state socialism has never been pursued through parliament, because any attempt to dismember the political-economic structure of capitalism would provoke a far-reaching economic crisis. Electoral pressure thus forced ‘radical’ leftist political movements to abandon their ultimate goal of democratic transition to socialism.

However, political moderation of ‘Islamist’ political parties is not automatically spread to other ‘Islamist’ movements, many of which continue to pursue an Islamic alternative through civic association networks. In other words, the enduring ‘radical’ ideological position of certain ‘Islamist’ movements demonstrates that participation does not inevitably induce political moderation. No single-issue structure is exhibited in their political goal and agenda. But the population was mobilised...
by such organisations around Islamic symbols, threats from secularism and other religions, and opposition to Western/American economic imperialism. Urban and educated communities were linked together and glorified as the main thrust of ‘Islamisation’ for the nation.

Observers of Indonesian politics have noted that the mobilisation capacity of the Islamic social movements, while perhaps still falling short of its peak in the 1950s, had, by the early 2000s, produced one of the most formidable political forces in Indonesia. A ‘radical’ group such as the Lasykar Jihad was estimated to have 2 to 3 million members within its cells – known in Indonesian as ‘brothers’ (ikhwan) – in Indonesian districts, urban mosques, campuses and the villages outside the island of Java. This particular ‘Islamist’ movement is the main actor in the struggle for an ‘Islamic state of Indonesia’, with its own Islamic-oriented guerrilla group sent to regions of conflict across the country. The circulation of Lasykar’s organ, Sabily (‘My Path’), reached between 500,000 and a million. The Front Pembela Islam (FPI, or ‘Islamic Defence Front’), operating in urban areas, commanded around 1 million members and the allegiance of one-fifth to one-third of the student body, allowing them to dominate student unions. Hizbut Tahrir (Liberation Party) organised 100,000 members centred on campuses and youth organisations.

The most prominent and long-standing ‘Islamist’ movement is Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah (DDI, or ‘Islamic Preaching Council’), a Jakarta-based national private organisation, founded in 1967. This organisation is associated with former Masyumi-politicians who favoured the establishment of an Islamic state through religious mobilisation in media, preaching activities and social networks. Although the organised strength of the ‘Islamist’ organisations concentrated on campuses and other urban centres, their appeal spilled over into the general populace of the city, rural towns and even villages, where leaders organised around mosques and religious schools. In some places the movement developed its own clinics, cooperatives, and small industries. DDI’s intellectuals and preachers have been engaged in continued debate about the relationship between religion and the state with secular-nationalist leaders, including moderate-modernist Muslim thinkers. Liddle regards this group as a scripturalist Islamic movement, as its main intellectual position within the debate was committed to the implementation of the sharīʿah. Interestingly, during Suharto’s political accommodation through ICMI, DDI became one of the main proponents of Suharto’s Islamic policies, claiming that there was no longer a significant group of Indonesian Muslims who favoured an Islamic state – as the term used in the 1950s – yet asserting that a new political Islam would be like the Christian democratic parties of Europe.

In contrast to ‘Islamist’ political parties, one important feature of these ‘Islamist’ social networks is that they are built on an educational background, which is generally linked to Middle Eastern learning centres, in particular Saudi Arabia,
Egypt, and Pakistan. Historically speaking, networks among Muslim traders and Sufis in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago were instrumental in the spread of Islam. During Dutch colonial times, ‘ulamā’ who returned from the Muslim learning centres of the Arabian Peninsula developed intellectual networks responsible for the rise of Islamic reformism and the establishment of Muslim learning institutions, oriented toward the purification and intellectualisation of Islam. It is just such an educational-religious network that dominates the features of ‘Islamist’ movements in current Indonesian politics: linked to graduates from Middle Eastern schools, oriented to shari‘ah-minded thinking in religious outlook, with a preferred agenda for the establishment of an Islamic state through the ‘Islamisation’ of society.

Testing the Political Commitment of Islamic Political Parties

Typical of a country with cultural and religious diversity, Indonesia has had a long debate about state ideology throughout its history. Indonesia finally reached a consensus – after a bitter debate – around one single ideology, the Pancasila, a state-ideology that comprises various factions, but also a blend of different ideological orientations. The first pillar reflects religious outlook, emphasising the belief in the oneness of God, the second pillar reflects on universal humanity, the third has faith in the unity of Indonesia, the fourth applies the democratic principle of people’s deliberation, and the last pillar observes socialism. Even if it was a compromise, challenges to its legitimacy have been recurring over time, in which the most well-known threats came from ‘Islamists’ and Communists. While the Communist scare has been virtually eliminated from this country following the abortive coup of 1965, opposition by ‘Islamists’ to Pancasila appears imminent. It was the ‘Islamists’ who confronted the secular faction in the early years of independence, and it was also this group that rebelled against the Old Order government.

The rise of the New Order military regime in the late 1960s succeeded in narrowing the opportunity for any group, including the ‘Islamists’, to oppose the state system and its concomitant ideology. The authoritarian regime of the New Order ended the vibrant yet anarchic political rivalries of the Old Order period. Nonetheless, the hardest opposition power this regime had to confront in the course of its power came from the ‘Islamists’. When the New Order attempted to unify the ideological basis of political and social organisations in the mid-1980s, several Muslim organisations strived to defend their Islamic ideology. Some Muslim factions even engaged in violent clashes with authority, which heightened the tension between the government and Muslim groups in general. Throughout the 32 years of its power, the New Order’s relationship with Muslim organisations was always uneasy, caught up in distrust and suspicion. The regime was relatively successful in suppressing the political aspirations of the ‘Islamists’, forcing them to shift
their religious orientations to more social and spiritual in character. Clandestine movements occurred sporadically, but the strength of the state networks limited such movement such that it could not grow into a national phenomenon.

Following the collapse of the repressive New Order in 1998, many new political parties were established. Several of these overtly proclaimed Islam as their ideological platform, undermining the long-established provision that the sole ideological basis of political and social organisations had to be *Pancasila*. This trend was not only shown by the newly created parties such as the PBB (‘Crescent and Moon Party’) and PKS (‘Justice and Prosperity Party’), but also by the old PPP (‘Unity and Development Party’). It appears that Suharto’s authoritarianism did not succeed in domesticating the ‘Islamist’ groups, but merely made them dormant. The political openness brought by democratisation following Suharto’s fall awakened the memories of some Muslim factions to revive the struggle for an Islamic state and society. However, people’s response to the emergence of ‘Islamist’ groups in national politics varied. Mostly, the people viewed these groups as an unavoidable consequence of democratisation. The secular groups did not express too much worry about the revival of ‘Islamist’ politics. Moreover, the two influential Muslim groups, the NU and *Muhammadiyah*, continued to maintain their political moderation. These organisations preferred to create nationalist rather than religious parties, opening the opportunity for even non-Muslim politicians to join. Although NU and *Muhammadiyah* did not officially stand behind the establishment of PKB and PAN, respectively, prominent members of these two organisations initiated the parties.

As widely predicted, secular parties dominated the first democratic general election in 1999, during which the ‘Islamist’ parties suffered serious defeats. Supporters of Islamic parties argued that the defeat of Islamic parties was because of the friction between these parties themselves. However, even if the number of voters of all Islamic parties were united into one party, the number would still be outnumbered by the secular nationalist parties’ returns. It seems that the defeat of Islamic political parties was because they sold an old agenda, the ‘Islamist’ agenda, which had already failed in the past. When PKS in 2004 disregarded the ‘Islamist’ agenda and promoted a more general agenda, especially opposition to corruption, the PKS gained more votes. This is a reason why Islamic political parties have to embrace moderation in their political agenda.

The dataset on the condition of Indonesian nationalism offers some empirical findings that can be used to explain the Islamic political parties. The information of this data is based on a national survey that was conducted in early 2007 by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society of the State Islamic University (PPIM-UIN). There was a serious question of whether democracy in Indonesia was only producing Islamic parties that would sooner or later facilitate the establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia. Of course, it is true that democracy in Indonesia will not work
without the support of Indonesian Muslims, as they are the majority. The PPIM survey was conducted to gauge the level of Muslims’ commitment to nationalism. The survey first questioned respondents about the most important aspect of their personal identity. About 44% answered that they are Indonesian (*orang Indonesia*), whereas 43% of them said they are Muslims (*orang Islam*). Only 11% said that they are part of local community (*orang daerah*). See Figure 1.

![Figure 1](image_url)

*Figure 1*  Self-identification in Indonesia (2004)

The results of this survey indicated that Islam and Indonesia are both very important aspects of identity for Indonesian Muslims, yet we cannot be certain that this proclivity would automatically corrode the spirit of nationalism. As a matter of fact, people’s identity is always multi-layered, and the relationship between each identity is not always contradictory. In direct contradiction to Huntington’s famous theory of the ‘Clash of Civilisations’, one may identify her/himself as Muslim while at the same time as Indonesian and Javanese. The order may differ, but each identity should not be understood as always incompatible with each other. Huntington’s rightly insists that religion and ethnicity are exclusionary identities, for which nobody could be Muslim and Christian or Javanese and Sumatrans at the same time. However, this does not mean that such an exclusionary identity could not stand in combination with another aspect of identity, for it would cease being exclusive if it meets a different category of identity, such as in the case of Muslim and Sumatran.
The data shows that being Muslim is not necessarily abandoning other identities. When asked the second most important personal identity, the majority still point to this religion (29.3%) and ethnic background ranks second (17.6%). Interestingly, a further question as to which identity is the third most important, most respondents (20%) prefer Indonesia, while ethnic background comes third (19%) after occupation, and religion (10.9%) accounts for fifth after social status. Owing to the interchangeable usage of these identities, we cannot conclude that the emergence of the ‘Islamist’ power has altered the long-established pattern of common identity among Indonesian Muslims. There is a strong tendency among these people to adopt the three identities altogether as their defining personal characters.

This non-contradictory relationship of Islamic and Indonesian identity has been further indicated in the respondents’ attitude towards the state ideology and constitution. The overwhelming majority of them (91.6%) endorse Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as the national political ideology and the state constitution. Those who agree with a blanket statement that the state ideology is Pancasila and not Islam account for 84.7%, meaning Muslims’ support of Pancasila is beyond question. For that reason, 90.4% of the respondents feel it necessary to adjust Islamic law to the framework of national ideology and the constitution. Nevertheless, as has been indicated earlier, 22.8% of respondents support the idea of erecting an Islamic state. In addition, the implementation of Islamic law, such as the punishment of cutting off the hand, also receives substantial support (26.2%). Surely, one cannot neglect these phenomena, even if we cannot have a conclusive argument that the state ideology is in danger. For one thing, the existence of the ‘Islamist’ faction in Indonesia is a fact, not fiction, such as is empirically indicated in the support for an Islamic state and law. However, there is an overlap in support for Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (91.6%) and support for an Islamic state (22.8%), implying that some supporters
of Pancasila also aspire to have Islam as part of the national ideology. This could be a small number of groups which are seeking to have Pancasila 'Islamised'.

Given that Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and national identity have a firm grip on Muslims’ socio-political visions, it seems unlikely that the ‘Islamist’ faction will be able to change Indonesia’s political foundations in the foreseeable future. This movement would need enormous support and investments in order to change the people’s fundamental beliefs about who they are and which direction their society should be headed. Still, if they were able to secure that financial support, some findings have given strong indications about the opportunities that the ‘Islamists’ could harness to advance their agenda. People’s trust in Muslim religious leaders is higher than in the state bureaucrats, and religious tolerance among Muslims is relatively weak. Theoretically, the ‘Islamists’ could ride on this trend to further disseminate their messages throughout the country. A closer look at these trends among Muslims, however, reveals that the opportunity for the ‘Islamists’ to capitalise on the people’s dissatisfaction with the government is only partially available.

The trust in the ‘ulamā’ is as high as ever. According to the PPIM-UIN survey in 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2007, the ‘ulamā’ always rank the top above any leaders in winning the heart of Muslims. Interestingly, trust in the ‘ulamā’ also experiences fluctuation, where in the course of 2001–04 only about 25% of respondents gave their recognition to religious leadership. This number underwent a steep increase from 2004 onward, and in 2007 reached a record of more than 40%. Even though less popular, the president and armed forces also experienced the same trend, gaining more support especially after 2004. Unfortunately, support for politicians in the People’s Representative Council and in political parties has not increased; they remain the least trustworthy leaders in the eyes of Indonesians. At this point, the popularity of religious leaders is likely correlated with the growing discontent towards public institutions in general that has been generated by the political transition in the early years of democratisation. In other words, given that the president and armed forces have also undergone the same fluctuation, the high popularity of the ‘ulamā’ does not necessarily indicate the rise of the ‘Islamist’ groups. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that the majority of the ‘ulamā’ in the influential Muslim organisations are not ‘Islamists’, in the sense that they hold a more moderate political vision.

Discontent towards the government’s performance is quite serious, not only as pertains to its minimum capacity but also to the demand for fundamental reforms. Most people at the grassroots level do not turn to the government when they meet difficulties, but to other social institutions outside the state to ask for help. For instance, if they become victims of crime, they prefer to go to a local leader (45%) or family and neighbours (31.5%) rather than to the police (16.8%). Likewise, they prefer to go to neighbours (44.6%) and local leaders (35.3%) to ask for assistance if
they have economic hardship but not to the Office of Social Affairs (10.9%). This tendency may partly explain the reason why religious leaders are more popular than the state officers, as their presence in society is more salient. The gap between the state and society is also apparent in the people’s demand for the transfer of more power from central to local government. When asked their preferences regarding the state administrative system, 53.9% of respondents prefer to have power balanced between local and central government, and only 22.8% choose to maintain a more centralised government. Interestingly, those who aspired to have a federal system constitute only 8.3% of respondents, and those who agree with granting independence to the provinces that wish to obtain it are less than 1%. At this point we could infer that, even though many people feel dissatisfied with the government, such a feeling does not likely lead to the withdrawal of support for the Indonesian nation-state. It would be a rushed conclusion to say that current social unrest and economic dissatisfaction would inevitably lead to the break-up of this country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Islam in Indonesia will always be a political issue. Not only do Muslims constitute 87% of the Indonesian population, but Islam is also still a form of political capital and political identity.

By taking all of these trends into account, does it all mean that the ‘Islamists’ can never gain power? The answer is affirmative for at least the foreseeable future. This is the reason behind the weakening of Indonesian support toward ‘Islamist’ groups. Some ‘radical’ ‘Islamist’ groups, such as Lasykar Jihad, have had to close themselves down, as Indonesian Muslims showed their disagreement with their ideology and activities. Moreover, the performance of Islamic-based political parties in the Indonesian general election in 2004 and 2009 were showing trends of decreasing support. While social identity as a Muslim is quite strong, it does not transform into political support for Islamic political parties.

• In closing, it seems that moderation in the platform and activities of political parties has become a prerequisite to gain support from Indonesian Muslims. This is the exact reason why the PKS changed its platform and agenda from being a more ‘Islamist’ agenda to focusing on social services and clean performance of its politicians. This party has created a social platform on health care, education, and sound leadership.
• ‘Islamist’ social movements have to take into account the diversity of Indonesian Muslims.
• Though we could see the revival of ‘Islamist’ group in Indonesia over time, it will not be prolonged unless ‘Islamist’ groups moderate their ideological platforms.
Notes


2. Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990); Sivan, *Radical Islam*. Kramer, for instance, pointed out that Muslim individuals and communities commonly react to and/or defend divinely-derived concerns, particularly when they perceive a disadvantage or long-standing abuse at the hands of anti-Islamic or secular institutions. The emergence of ‘Islamist’ political phenomena are therefore perceived as a natural manifestation of integral Islamic injunctions and identities; see Kramer, “Fundamentalist Islam”, 37–71.


NAVIGATING A FRACTAL WORLD: IBN AL-ʿARABĪ, CIVILISATIONAL RENEWAL, AND THE NEW SCIENCES

Eric Winkel*

Abstract: After surveying visions of the future, this article engages some of the most interesting conceptualisations coming from the ‘new sciences’ and resonating with the perspective of civilisational renewal. The focus is on the environment, as the most accessible point of departure for visions of the future, and ‘transition’, as the best description of where we are. From here, the language of Islamic civilisational renewal is brought out to both deepen and sharpen the contemporary discourse.

Introduction

Sufis have always loved stories of the miraculous. Stories about Dhū ’l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 859) and Mullā Naṣr al-Dīn (fl. 13th cent.), and especially of the Prophets, give sustenance to people who do not, or do not want to, believe this unmiraculous world of competition, selfishness, isolation and fragmentation is all there is. A mechanistic science in the West taught for three centuries that we live in such an unmiraculous, dead world. But in the last three decades, a very different picture is coming into focus. A new science is emerging which talks of connectedness (and quantum entanglement), of the robustness provided by diversity in complex systems, of the self-organisation of dissipative systems, of the inner coherency of fractals that are the ‘fingerprint of God’, and of impossible facts in the quantum world, where, for example, one thing occupies two spaces (quantum superposition). Whether recognised or not, whether one is actively involved or passively receptive, these strange ideas of the new science permeate human society and create a new vocabulary, language, metaphor. In the same way the world changed when the automobile entered, or the telephone, or the phonograph, or the internet, ideas from the new science change our language, and thereby change, and expand the limits of, our world.

The last three decades also coincide, not coincidentally, with the massive increase in interest and writing about Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240). Here in his Futūhāt

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al-makkiyyah (‘Mekkan Openings’) we find worlds far beyond that described by the ‘binding intellect’. He talks about worlds where one thing is in two places, where an effect occurs without cause (Aharonov–Bohm effect), and where ants are intelligent (swarm intelligence). Hakim Bey anticipates that Ibn al-ʿArabī “might prove a goldmine to Quantum Theorists, but the ‘mingling of two oceans’ conjured up by such an imagined confrontation would involve decades of hard labour to grasp and contain – and so I leave it to someone else to follow up”.¹

When scientists started talking about these things, people like Fritjof Capra, Frank Pirsig, and Ken Wilber started finding shared vocabularies with ancient wisdom, Heraclitus, and mysticism. If we as Muslim scholars are to contribute toward a civilisational renewal, we will have to speak in a language that is shared with a world that has been changed by new science. Fortuitously, we have in writings like the Futūḥāt languages and metaphors that speak to this new world.

Computers, high energy, instruments that extend the senses (e.g., microscopes, telescopes), and new perspectives and paradigm shifts have opened up a ‘new world’ for science. My hope is that the metaphors and understandings of the new science will be evocative for a contemporary Muslim worldview, and that the descriptions of discoveries in the new science will call out from members of an Islamic civilisation a response. My suggestion is that a language that is able to understand and integrate these discoveries, and play them back and forth at a civilisational level, already exists in writings like the Futūḥāt. Its language was developed to describe discoveries at a level beyond the bounded intellect, and to describe worlds accessed through alternative paths.

These paths and worlds include: the dream accessing the dream world; the imagination accessing the imaginal world; the metaphor accessing the inward spirit linked to the outward matter; the heart alternating with the fluctuation of the universe in every breath; and faith in the Unseen accessing the knowledge divinely provided to the messengers and prophets. Arabic words for the above are ruʿyā, khayāl, iʿtibār, qalb, and īmān in risālah.

Today, Muslim societies are poorly prepared to contribute to the new science. They are also poorly prepared to speak with and engage others at a civilisational level. The enterprise of applying the higher goals of Islam, the maqāṣid, has been dormant for centuries, allowing those who are hostile to Islam to portray “both the Qurʾān and Islamic jurisprudence as primitive in concept, irrelevant to any framework of justice, and focused entirely on superficial do’s and don’ts without any higher purpose or coherent meaning”.² The ‘Salafi’ movement is an explicit attempt to reject the higher goals of Islam by erasing twelve centuries of Islamic development.

The Salafi response to the problem of making Islam relevant in the modern world is to proclaim, ‘Islam is simple’, and to reduce religious consciousness to a calculus of ritual...
obligations, external symbols of group identity (such as modern 'Islamic' dress), and political doctrines that promote cultural and creedal exclusivism.

It is precisely to make Islamic civilisation once again relevant to justice globally, by renewing our understanding and application of its coherent meaning, that Islam Hadhari was conceived.

The need to renew is perennial. Opposition to renewal is also perennial. Ibn al-ʿArabī speaks of the legal scholars who are “congealed onto the outward”. It seems clear that in order to engage the new science, we must re-engage the Islamic heritage, which functions fully at a comprehensive level of seen and unseen, outward and inward, literal and symbolic. The mechanistic science of the last 300 years is being replaced by a new science. The mechanistic science was suited to a ‘binding intellect’ that functions only at the level of seen, outward, and literal. A new perspective is opened up by computers, high energy, and paradigm shifts. If we are to engage it, the fully functioning, comprehensive nature of the Islamic heritage, which includes the unseen, inward, and symbolic, must be rediscovered.

Opening up to a New World

Gaston Julia, born in Sidi Bel-Abbas in Algeria in 1893, discovered an “iteration of a rational function $f$” with a “precise description of the set $J(f)$ of those $z$ in $\mathbb{C}$ for which the $n$th iterate $f^n(z)$ stays bounded as $n$ tends to infinity”. That is, the outside boundary line goes to infinity as the inside bounded area stays finite. With the advent of computers, Benoit Mandelbrot was able to describe complex iterations such as this Julia Set as fractals. So although fractals are the patterns “by which nature organises clouds, rivers, mountains, many plants, tribal villages, our brains, lungs, and circulatory systems”, Margaret Wheatley says, “we lacked a means for seeing them. Now that we can see them, there are some wonderful lessons to be learned.”

The computer, then, opens up a new world. After billions of iterations of complex formulas are entered in a computer, a self-organising structure becomes visible, centring on a ‘strange attractor’. Although fractals are everywhere, in coastlines and ferns and snowflakes, it is with the computer that they can be explored.

Other worlds opened up when the senses were extended as E. Atlee Jackson points out. Computer data acquisition and analyses expand scientific physical observables, in high energy physics, meteorology, medicine, industry, and astronomy. Satellite instruments extend observables in astronomy (with the Hubble telescope, COBE-cosmic background radiation). In neurology, extensions of observables come from EEG, PET, MRI, and MEG (magneto encephalography) instruments. For the microscopic world, there are electron and high-field intensity microscopes, and fluorescent microscopes. Information about complex structures comes from
holographic-generated laser pulses, and optical fibres obtain information from many difficult areas, such as the interior of the functioning human body.  

Another gateway seems to be nothing more than a perspectival shift. A generation ago dentists did not use anaesthesia with children because it was thought unnecessary. Piaget characterised the first few weeks of infancy as “vegetative”. Researchers exploring the world of the infant and the very newly born say they were not taken seriously for years. When they documented that babies less than an hour old would stick their tongue back at them, they were dismissed by people who could not accept the conclusions: that an infant, within an hour, knew that the researcher was a human being like her, that the researcher had a tongue and she had a tongue, and that she could respond by sticking out her tongue. How did the babies recognise that other people are “like me”, that “we are like other people and they are like us”? As with any paradigm shift, one had to wait for one generation to pass on before the next could tackle these kinds of questions.

How did the new science discover that ants are intelligent? The idea of “swarm intelligence” apparently first surfaced in robot research. It also was found “in the field of semiotics to describe the kind of irrational buzz of ideas in the mind that underlies the communication of signs between two individuals”. The Santa Fe Institute was saying “an ant colony can be thought of as a swarm whose individual agents are ants, a flock of birds is a swarm whose agents are birds, traffic is a swarm of cars, a crowd is a swarm of people, an immune system is a swarm of cells and molecules, and an economy is a swarm of economic agents”. The use of ‘swarm’ as a new metaphor corresponds to a shift in perspective.

The shift in scientific perspectives over the past half-century has been from considering the ant as an individual without dignity, locked in a tyrannical web of conformity, to the ant as a simple but powerful information processor, to the metaphor of the individual ant as a component of a brain, to the modern view that the ant colony, composed of many collaborating individuals, is itself a powerful information processor. Contemporary ants are individuals as individuals, rather than parts of individuals, and their accomplishments are credited to their interindividual interactions.

Clearly the idea that ants are intelligent and individuals is productive and offers many directions for further study, such as developing strategies to get airplanes to the gates more efficiently. The idea of the ant being “without dignity”, it seems, was taught, just as is the idea that animals are different and inferior (but not everyone in every culture is so taught). That animals are creatures like humans, and therefore intelligent, is there from the beginning; we have to be taught to believe that animals are separate and different from us.

With these gateways, modern scientists have found things that were invisible before. But in the Futūḥāt are worlds whose landscapes are described in similar
metaphors. One can describe both experiences with the same language. Ibn al-ʿArabī describes fractals without using any such word and without the idea of complex numbers. But his descriptions, as will be shown, are of fractals nevertheless. Ibn al-ʿArabī talks about tiny worlds, and about unimaginably large numbers and distances and times. He talks about things that are contradictions to the intellect but are nevertheless real. And he tells about his own daughter at 18 months answering a legal question, and recognising the approach of her father in a caravan coming to Mecca long before the adults could see him.

Although many science writers find wonder in the new science, not all, or even most, scientists see or speak of wonder in what they are studying. And even where there is wonder, something still seems to be missing. Recently a sea creature was reported frolicking around a camera cable 600 feet under the ice in Antarctica, and caught in a video which became a hit on YouTube. A similar story is told by Ibn al-ʿArabī but with a difference. I juxtapose the two here.

Yet scientists were puzzled at what the food source would be for these critters. While some microbes can make their own food out of chemicals in the ocean, complex life like the amphipod can’t, Kim said. So how do they survive? That’s the key question, Kim said. “It’s pretty amazing when you find a huge puzzle like that on a planet where we thought we know everything,” Kim said.13

[From the Futūhāt 7:169:] It was said someone broke a hard dry rock and saw in the core of that rock a cavity in which was a larva in whose mouth was a green leaf she was eating. And it is related by an ancient prophet that the True one has under the earth a massive rock formation; in the core of this formation is an animal who has no outlet in the formation; and that the True One had made for him in there nourishment, and he praises True one, saying, “Praise to the one who has not forgotten me despite the distance of my place”, meaning his distance from the site from which comes nourishments, not the distance of his place from the True One, because the relationship of the True One to his creation with respect to nearness (qurb) is one, but with respect to nearing (qarb), the relationship is various. So understand that.14

After looking at the obstacle to the gateways (the binding intellect), we explore five gateways that Ibn al-ʿArabī describes. There is the heart, which is the seat of God, in the divine saying, “The earth and the heavens are not vast enough for me, but the heart of my sincere creature is.” There is the dream world, which Prophet Muhammad encouraged people to cultivate, and which he taught was one of 46 parts of prophecy. There is the ‘creative imagination’, the place where things are assembled and configured before they become and enter into the physical world. There is metaphor, which is finding the inner spirit attached to every outer reality. A metaphor for ‘the metaphor’ is the husk and the kernel, and the Qur’ān speaks
of the people who understand the inner kernel, hidden by the outer husk. Finally, there is ‘faith’ or ‘belief’ in the unknown. One takes the word of one who has experienced the other worlds. If one does not have access to the other worlds, one can still be transformed by them. If one does not hear animals speak, one can accept that others do, and this may transform one’s ideas about them as a resource to be exploited to seeing them as beings, who are as valuable as oneself, who teach and help us.

These worlds exist beyond the world constrained by the ‘binding intellect’. In Arabic, the word for intellect *ʿaql* is linguistically linked to the word for shackles or binding straps, *ʿuqūl*.

**The Binding Intellect**

“This is one of the strangest things to me, that a human being follows his ratiocinations and ideas when they are as ephemeral as he is.” Ibn al-ʿArabī goes on to say that even though the intellect depends on the senses, people follow it instead of “following one’s Lord in what he has reported about himself in his book and on the tongue of his Messenger”. He then explains how some people move beyond the binding intellect, in this passage, which will open for us the subject of the gateway of the heart.

They do not accept the statement of the one who tells them, “There is after all another faculty behind you giving something different from what the faculty of ratiocination gives you, bestowed on the people of Allah from the angels and prophets and saints, articulated by the books sent down, so take from them these divine reports, as following the True one is better [...].”

They know there is after all another knowledge of Allah which does not come through the path of ratiocination, so they take up spiritual exercises, retreats, struggles with the self, severing associations, being alone, and sitting with Allah by emptying their place, and sanctifying the heart from tarnishes of ratiocinations, as it is connected to them. One takes this path from the prophets and the messengers, and one hears that the True One – his glory is beyond comprehension! – comes down to his creatures and asks about them. One knows the path to him in his direction is closer to him than the path of one’s ratiocination, and especially if one is a person of faith. And one hears his word, “Who comes to me walking, I come to him running”, and that one’s heart is vast enough for the majesty and greatness of Allah. So one turns toward him in one’s entirety and disconnects from everything which had been taken from these faculties. Upon this turning, Allah bestows generously on one from his light a knowledge of the divine [...].

In that is an indicative gesture to knowledge of Allah, with respect to witnessing, “as a reminder for the one who has a heart” [Qur’ān 50:37], and nothing else was mentioned, because the heart is known for fluctuating with the states ever, and it does not stay in
one state; like that are the divine flashes. Whoever does not see the flashes with his heart, denies them, because the intellect binds, as do other faculties, except the heart, because it does not bind and is quick to fluctuate with every state. Because of this, the law-giver said, “The heart is between two of the fingers of the Merciful, who fluctuates it as he wills.” It fluctuates with the fluctuations of the flashes, but the intellect is not like that. So the heart is the faculty behind the mountain of the intellect. If the True One had meant by ‘heart’ in this verse [Qur’ān 50:37] ‘intellect’, he would not have said, “to one who has a heart”, because every human being has intellect, but not every human being is given this faculty which is behind the mountain of the intellect, called heart in this verse, so because of that, he said “to one who has a heart”. (Futūhāt 1:435)

In the next passage, Ibn al-ʿArabī makes it clear that the intellect is not able to accept or reach knowledge of God. But even recognition of the limitations of the intellect is not something every intellect has access to.

The basis of the establishment of the shariʿah in the world, and its purpose, is the amelioration of the world and knowledge about what is unknown about God, about what the intellect cannot accept; that is, the intellect cannot reach it independently, with respect to it the prophets spoke of it, peace be upon them, and the ones with intellects know by that that their intellects are deficient in knowledge of God, things which the messengers filled in for them. And I do not mean by ones with intellect the scholars today of ‘wisdom’, but instead I mean by the ‘ones with intellect’ the ones who are on their path, concentrating on their selves, doing spiritual exercises, and struggling with themselves, and who go into retreats and train for the rushes coming onto their hearts when they are polished by the upper world, inspired in the upper heavens; these are the ones I mean by ‘ones with intellect’. The people who chatter and discourse and debate use their ratiocinations on linguistic roots originating among the ancients and are hidden from the matter from which these Men draw. [...]
The love of this world has taken possession over their hearts, and seeking standing and being in charge [...]. The muftī or faqīh of the religion of God with the least piety is in every respect a better state than these. (Futūhāt 1:490)

The intellect binds, and therefore cannot independently gain knowledge about the divine. If the intellect binds itself successfully, it reaches the truth of Abū Bakr’s famous statement, that “the inability to perceive is perception”. Instead of making wild guesses and presumptuous statements, the one with correctly bounded intellect will halt with one’s inability to perceive. In this way, the state of the non-intellectual with the least piety is better than that of the intellectuals who chatter and discourse and debate.
The Heart

The Ever-Changing World Can be Seen by the Heart

Ibn al-ʿArabī has said that not everyone has access to the heart behind the mountain of the intellect. In this passage, he talks about the very, very rare being who can be called Muḥammadi, meaning, ‘Muḥammadan’. He says,

[Rather, the Muḥammadan] is at every breath, and at every time, and at every state with a form required by that breath or time or state. But one doesn’t stay attached to it, because the divine forces differ in every time, so one is different with their differences, because he “is every moment doing something” [Qur’ān 55:29], so likewise with the Muḥammadan. It is his word, “Verily in that is a reminder for the one who has a heart” [Qur’ān 50:37]. He did not say ‘intellect’, because the intellect binds. The heart ṣalb is named only because of its fluctuation taqallub during experiences and matters, constantly changing with every breath. (Futūḥāt 7:113)

This idea of fluctuation connects with universal metaphors of being and becoming. Mechanistic science tends to focus on being and stability and solidity; new sciences look at fluidity, change, and emergence. Historically the concept of Islamic legal practice focused on ‘becoming’, where the role of the judge was to ascertain at that moment the best legal solution for the problem presented. Now, Islamic legal practice is biased toward ‘being’, and uses fixed, code books. The role of ‘judge’, meaning judging between different options, has almost disappeared. A similar situation applies in the United States, where mandatory sentencing removes the ‘judging’ part of the legal process. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, things change instantly and all the time. A person’s behaviour is non-linear, and one can never be tied into a single, essential definition; one may be on a cusp, where one acts in a predictable manner until suddenly, one behaves completely differently. This flickering and fluctuation between states is familiar in the dream world.

The Dream

The flickering world of the heart and the dream is disturbing to the person who wants assurance and stability. The world when one is awake, one wants to believe, is full of solid and unchanging objects. If one wants to believe the solid, unchanging world is true, one will disparage the other, dream world. Ibn al-ʿArabī describes the true value of the dream.

Because of this, the Messenger, when he got up in the morning when his Companions were with him asked them, “Has anyone of you seen a dream?” because it is prophecy,17 and he used to love to see it among his community.
But the people today are in the utmost ignorance about this level which the Messenger was concerned for, asking every day about it. The ignorant in this time, when they hear something that happened while one was asleep, would not lift their heads, and they say, He wants to make judgments from his sleep! This is imagination and nothing but a dream! So they disdain the dream when one relies on it. This, all of it, is from his ignorance of its station and ignorance that while awake and being in a dream and in his sleep he is in a dream. He is like the one who dreams that he wakes from sleep while he is sleeping. It is his, peace be on him, word, "The people are asleep." How wondrous the prophetic reports! They explain the realities as they really are, and they give majesty to what the limited intellect disdains. It comes out only from the centre of the great; it is True. (Futūhāt 4:14)

The idea that dreams provide scientists, for example, the visualisation of what they later discover in their study is well known, as for example Watson’s dream of the entwining snakes representing the double helix and Einstein riding the beam of light. Some of the stories around scientific discovery may be apocryphal, but even so, dreams put in place what later is discovered or found. One kind of dream is about events that later come to pass. This dream corresponds with the imaginal realm where things are assembled and configured before entering the physical world.

The Imaginal Realm
Ibn al-ʿArabī describes a ‘date palm world’:

When the True One made Adam, who is the first bodily human creature, and made him a root for human bodies to come into being, and there was extra fermented clay left over, he made from it the date palm. The Date Palm is the sister of Adam, and she is our aunt. Her epithet is aunt and she is likened to the sincere person. She has strange mysteries beyond the rest of the plants. After the creation of the date palm there was extra clay the size of a sesame seed, almost hidden. So the True One stretched this left-over into a planet of vast space.

When he made the throne and everything circling it, and the footstool, and the heavens and the earth, and everything under the ground, and the gardens, all of them, and the fire, in this planet, the entirety of it was like a ring tossed in one of the deserts of earth. With every breath the True One made worlds orbiting night and day, never flagging. The True One’s immensity appears in this planet, and his power is magnified upon seeing the planet. Many things which are impossible to the intellect – which can reject them with sound intellectual proofs – are present in this planet and are displayed for the eyes of the wise who know the True One. In it they roam. The True One made one of the planet’s worlds in our image. When the wise one sees it, one sees oneself in it. Ibn ʿAbbās points to the likes of that in his story about this Ka‘bah, that it is one of fourteen houses of
worship, and that in every one of the seven earths there is a creation like us, up to there being ‘an Ibn ʿAbbās like me there’. The ones who see through the veil confirm this story. (*Futūḥāt* 1:195)

Here are a quantum world and a multiverse in the imaginal realm, where opposites can be combined, where a body can be in two places, where an effect happens before its cause, and where the symbol of something becomes the thing itself.

[In the date palm world] everything which the intellect with its argumentations says is impossible, we find it in this world possible, and already having happened, and “God is Powerful over everything” [*Qur’ān* 2:20]. So we learn that the intellect is restricted, and that God is able to combine two opposites; create one body in two places; make a reaction an independent action and make it move to another place; and can make a symbol of something the thing itself. (*Futūḥāt* 1:201)

This list of things incomprehensible to the intellect reminds one of the debate on the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, which seems to centre on whether the strangeness of this new world is epistemological or ontological. In other words, are the illogical events so because we are unable to understand them or are they really, ontologically, illogical? Physicists seem to accept the illogical as a fact and go about their work; but the question remains very important. Is the world strange only because we cannot see clearly enough?

It seems that the strangeness is ontological, with Ibn al-ʿArabī, and that some people see through the stability and solidity of the world and find a moving, changing reality called, in this next passage, the Great River. This is a metaphor of the world as a Great River, on which the people with unveiled insight travel. The people who cannot see this great river try to build houses and imposing palaces on it, but the enterprise is doomed to failure, because they are building on a dam made of sticks.

They do not lay brick on brick or reed onto reed, and like this was the Messenger until he passed away to his Lord, not building at all any place for himself. The reason for that is that they see this world as a dam laid up with sticks against the Great River, while they are fording it and travelling on it. Have you seen anyone building a house on a dam of sticks? By God no, and especially when you know that the rains will come down, and that the river will become huge with floods from the rains, and that the dams will break, and that everything that is ‘built on a dam’ is a byword for destruction. If God pulled off the veils from the sight of the builders of this world, so they would see the buildings as dams and the river on which they were built as potent and perilous, they would not build what they build on it, such as imposing palaces. They do not have eyes to see that the world is a bridge of sticks over a Great River roaring. (*Futūḥāt* 1:322)
Metaphor

‘Metaphor’, from the Greek, is meta-phorein, something I carry across. It is the process, here, of moving from the outside of something to its inside.

[...] because human beings may forget things they had recognised as they are; then one is reminded. It is his word, “But only those with the kernels remember” [Qur’ān 2:269] and his word, “so that they may remember, those with the kernels” [Qur’ān 38:29]. The kernel of something is its inner secret, its heart, and only its outer physical form hides it, which is to it like the husk over the kernel, a form hiding it with its own outerness. (Futūḥāt 7:356)

This problem of seeing the ‘outerness’ but missing what is inside corresponds to the lesson of the shadow play, which is saying something very important about outward forms, or shadows.

They take their religion as play

If you want to know the truth of what I am alluding to in this subject, consider the shadow play and its figures, and the vocalisation of these figures before the little children who are away from the veiling curtain drawn between them and the puppeteer of these figures and the vocaliser of them.

The matter is like that with forms of the world, and the people, most of them, are the little children whom we charge with obligation, so they know from where it is coming to them. The little children in the other setting are delighted and having fun, and the forgetful ones are taking it as ‘mere amusement’ and ‘play’. But the ones who know read it metaphorically and recognise that God has set this up only as a parable, and because of that, in the beginning of the show a person comes out, called the Story Teller, and he starts a speech in which he says God is Great and he glorifies him. Then he speaks about each kind of puppet form that will come out after him from behind this curtain.

Then the gathering realises that God has set this up as a parable for his creatures, so they would read it metaphorically, and so they would know that the situation of the world, with God, is like these puppets with their being moved here and there, and that this curtain is a veil over a mystery of Predetermination put into effect for all creation. And despite all of this, the forgetful ones take it to be ‘mere amusement’ and ‘play’. It is His statement: “Those who take their Religion as mere amusement and play” [Qur’ān 7:51]. Then the Story Teller disappears – he is in the place of the first to come into existence among us; it is Adam, peace be upon him – and when he disappears, his disappearance from us is to his Lord behind the curtain of his invisibility. God speaks the truth and He is the guide along the way. (Futūḥāt 5:100)
The people congealed on the outward

The ‘forgetful ones’ above miss the truth of the shadow play, and they miss the kernel-truth inside the husk. They are stuck at the “literal thinking” stage of small children. They are unable to move from the outward to the inward. Ibn al-ʿArabī explains, just before this following passage, that he will inshā’ Allāh write out all the requirements of zakāt, with their ‘metaphors’ (iʿtibārāt) in the Inward, just as he did with the requirements of prayer (ṣalāḥ), “where we combine the Outward and the Inward for a complete configuration.” He says that “God has anchored to every physical form a spiritual meaning.”

The fractal world

The truth of a matter is not only hidden inside; it is also hidden in plain sight. Thus as with the fractal world, the truth of self-similarity may be lost on the observer. Ibn al-ʿArabī describes a treasure trove of particles. Each particle arrives from the treasure trove to you, the observer, and you two make an arc. The circumference defines a centrepoint, from which a line is drawn to the circumference and then outside, making another circumference, “half of it inside the first circumference and half of it outside it, to make Outward and Inward”. The two new edges meet as they met when making the first circumference, “until it becomes its shape”. Then another particle arrives in the new circle, “on and on without end. It is what protruded from the treasure troves which have no end of what is contained there. It is the New Creation which existence is upon ever and always, and some people, or most people, are in confusion about that, as he said, ‘Rather, they are in confusion about the New Creation’ [Qur’ān 50:15] with each breath.”

As the circles appear, whatever the number, and they keep on appearing, the first circle, which brought about these circles, starts to become hidden, not recognised, not perceived, because every circle approaching it or going away from it has its same form. So about each circle one can say it is seen, and it is not seen. This is the unseen in the seen. (Futūḥāt 6:101)
The new creations, here, are self-similar and scalable. The word Ibn al-ʿArabī uses is amthāl, which means likenesses or metaphors. The circumferences of each event are like in shape and contain particles that are likenesses to what came before. The view from very close is the same as the view from very far away. So the truth of each event is both seen and unseen.

**Faith**

“There is nothing but it glories him with his praise” [Qur’ān 17:44]; “thing” is undefined, and nothing glorifies unless it is alive, intelligent, knowledgeable about its glorification. It was related that the one who gives the call to prayer is attested to as far as his voice carries by anything wet [e.g., plants] and dry [e.g., rocks], and the revealed Laws and Prophecies are filled with this sort of thing. (Futūḥāt 1:225)

Gateways to other worlds open up when one moves from the outside to the inside, and when, as with fractals, it is seen that an iteration can be said to be both the first and not the first. The perspectival shift suggested as opening other worlds in the new science may correspond to ‘faith’, where one operationalises the idea, for example above, that everything is alive. Once this idea takes hold, the world is seen differently.

**Spots on the Microscope**

With the explorations of these worlds, there is also an extensive body of literature over the centuries concerned with evaluating data, and warning about “faulty instrumentation”. There are many “inrushes”, and together with descriptions of them come evaluations and assessments. Dreams and inrushes may come from the divine, from the angelic realm, from the ego self, and from Satan. The list of activities that anyone on the path must undertake is long and includes spiritual exercises, struggles with the ego, going into retreat, fasting, and solitude, which are, it is assumed in traditional circles, supplements to one’s own communal, religious life. The discoveries of someone whose microscope had spots on its glass or whose heart had not been polished are equally useless.

Ibn al-ʿArabī uses a particular metaphor to warn against the havoc that the ego, one of the possible ‘spot makers’, creates when trying to navigate the path.

So this person who is walking on this path, if he does not really guard his lamp from the winds (ahwā’, winds, ego) from blowing it out with its gusts, then the wind will gust against it fiercely and blow out his lamp and take away his light. (Futūḥāt 4:473)

The lamp, here, is illumined by two sources of light, the light of sharīʿah and the light of insight, and the two are required. If one does not have the light of insight, one is blind to the light of the sharīʿah.
**Principles**

**Change**

In the description of the *Muḥammadī* the ‘divine forces’, the *ahkām*, apply to states, the *ahwāl*, which change moment by moment. The intellect binds, and therefore cannot keep up with the changes, and so the heart is needed. Providing a comparison point for Ibn al-ʿArabī’s ideas on the heart and change as they relate to understanding the *shariʿah*, is another Andalusian, Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388). He writes,

A second perspective is above this and finer, truly growing from the result of *taqwā* (mindfulness of God) mentioned before, in His word, "If you are mindful of God, He will provide for you a Criterion" [Qurʾān 8:29]. It may be expressed as "wisdom", alluded to by His word, "Wisdom is given to whom He wills, and who has been given wisdom has been given an immense Good" [Qurʾān 2:269]. Mālik said, “One of the ‘matters’ [from His word, ‘Every moment He is upon some matter’; Qurʾān 55:29] of the children of Adam is that [one moment] they don’t know, then [the next moment] they know. Haven’t you heard the word of God, that ‘If you are mindful of God, He will provide for you a Criterion’?”

One says too that wisdom is the angels brushing against the heart of the creature. And another says wisdom is light God emits onto the heart of the creature. And another says, there occurred in my heart wisdom of the understanding (*fiqh*) of the religion of God; a matter God put in the hearts from His kindness and excellence. Mālik disliked the writings on al-ʿilm, meaning something like [collections of] *fatwās*. So he was asked, “What should we do?” He said, “Keep being mindful, and keep trying to understand, until your hearts are illumined; then you won’t need the writings.”

**Inner readiness**

The principle of directness is found in *ijtihād*, the effort one makes to understand and apply the *shariʿah*. The person who does that is called a *mujtahid*. In this following passage, Ibn al-ʿArabī addresses the widespread rejection of *ijtihād* in his time. He says,

The Law-giver has affirmed the decision of the *mujtahid* for himself and for whoever follows him, but the legal scholars of our time reject that and presume that that leads to playing with the religion, but that is the height of ignorance on their part. The matter is not, by God! as they presume, despite their affirming for themselves that they are not *mujtahids* and they have not reached the level of the *mujtahid*, and they do not transmit from their founders that *they* followed this method, so they give the lie to themselves in their statements that they are not, according to themselves, prepared to do *ijtihād*, but the thing they restrict the followers to do is only by *ijtihād*! We take refuge in God from...
blindness and being forsaken! God only sent his messenger “as a mercy to the worlds” [Qur'ān 21:107], and what mercy is greater than the relief from this distress? (Futūḥāt 2:24)

It is a telling irony that the ‘gates of ijtihād’ can only be closed by ijtihād.

The mujtahid has two rewards for the correct decision and one reward for the erroneous decision. Ibn al-ʿArabī traces being correct or erring to preparation, or readiness. “If he errs, the mujtahid errs only in readiness, as we spoke of it, and if he hits the mark in his readiness, the mujtahid never errs” (Futūḥāt 5:399).

Names and rulings

The importance of getting the name right is a theme in Ibn al-ʿArabī’s writings. In the shariʿah, the decision (ḥukm) follows the named situation (ḥāl). As already seen, the situations change instantly and always, and therefore the heart, not the binding intellect, is required.

Mālik b. anas, one of the leaders of the religion, was asked, What do you say about the Pig of the ocean, is it a fish? He said, “It is unlawful [to eat].” He was asked, “But it is a fish of the ocean, and the ocean’s beasts and carcasses are lawful.” So he said, “You all have called it a pig, and Allah has made the pig unlawful [to eat].” So the ruling changed, according to Mālik, with the change of the name, and if they had asked him, “What do you say about the fish of the ocean or the beasts of the ocean?” The ruling would be according to the situation, and like that changing situations changes rulings. So the one person who is not in a dire situation eats a carcass and it is unlawful, but when that same person is in an emergency, he eats the carcass and it is lawful for him, so the ruling differed because the situation differed, but the thing is one and the same. (Futūḥāt 5:232)

Living

In this passage, Ibn al-ʿArabī contrasts a worldview that is static and dead with one that feeds directly into life.

Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī, God be pleased with him, said, about this experience and its authenticity, speaking to superficial scholars, “You take your knowledge dead from the dead, but we take our knowledge from the living who does not die, and, ones like us say. My heart spoke a hadith to me from my Lord, but you say, ‘So and so gave a hadith, but where is he?’ They say, ‘He is dead, but it came from so and so.’ Where is he? They say, ‘He is dead.’” And Shaykh Abū Madyān, God be kind to him, when he was told, “So and so told so and so from so and so,” he said, “We don’t want to eat jerky! Bring to us some fresh meat to raise the spirits!” (Futūḥāt 1:423)

The permission to engage this living law is special to “this community”, in the law of “who makes a practice (sunnah) which is fine”. Ibn al-ʿArabī says,
This principle is special to this community, and I mean by ‘principle’ calling it a *sunnah*, given as an honour to this community [...].

The difference between ‘following’ and ‘innovating’ is understandable, and because of this, the Lawgiver inclines to calling it *sunnah* and does not call it *bidʿah* (innovation). Innovation is bringing out something whose origin has no similar model, and because of this, God said about himself, “**Creator (al-bādi’)** of the heavens and the earth” [Qur’ān 2:117], that is, the one who brought it into existence without any previous model. If human beings today make a law that has no basis in the Law, then that would be an innovation, and it would not be acceptable for us to take it. The Lawgiver turns from the word ‘innovation’ to the word *sunnah*, as the *sunnah* is set by the *sharīʿah*. (Futūḥāt 1:497)

**Easefulness**

With the principle of ease, there is the principle of fewer laws. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, “it is the increase in knowledge we are told to pursue, not *ʿilm* (knowledge) of *taklīf* [things we must do], because the less in it is what is sought by the prophets, on whom be peace, and because of this, the Messenger said, ‘Leave off me what I leave off of you’” (Futūḥāt 3:175).

Thus, the principle of ease which lies in accepting differences in legal rulings. In this passage, Ibn al-ʿArabī has just explained how to understand the seeming contradiction between prayer times being distinct or overlapping. He says,

> It is appropriate in this issue and its likes that there would not appear differences, but God has made this difference a mercy to his creatures and a spreading out of what he has told them to do in worship. But the legal scholars of our times have fenced in and constricted for the people who are following the *ʿulamāʾ* what the Law-giver has spread out for them. So they say to the follower, if he is of the Ḥanafi school, don’t look for an allowance from the Shāfiʿis for what happened to you, and like that for every one of them. This is one of the greatest disasters of the religion and of hardships, as God says [Qur’ān 22:78], “We have not made for you in the religion any hardship.” (Futūḥāt 2:24)

**Avatar**

If the ‘revealed laws and prophecies’ are filled with stories of a world alive, intelligent, as Ibn al-ʿArabī says, then even today stories of such a world are also to be found, in popular culture, for instance in the recent movie *Avatar*. In this movie, Jack Sully moves through many ‘worlds’ until he reaches his ultimate, or at least most real, world, which he sees at the very moment his eyes open and the movie ends. He has a twin, whose death opens up the opportunity for him to become an ‘avatar’ (from root *tṛ* meaning ‘cross over’ and *ava* meaning ‘down’, with a source text in the *Gita* 4:8). Sully then sleeps for six years in space, waking up on Pandora.
There, he enters into another coffin-like machine where his self is transferred to another, Pandoran body. Along the way, he receives initiation into the tribe, which for him is the death of his earthly aspirations and the birth of his new affiliation with the tribe. Finally, he must shake off once and for all his earthly body to live fully as a new being in the world he opens his eyes to as the movie ends.

It is interesting how easily the metaphors flow in this movie about sleep and dreams, this body and another body, death as entering a new life and new world. The movie series *Star Wars* explicitly adopted metaphors from Sufism, such as the ‘sword of light’, *dhū ‘l-fiqār*, the green (*khiḍr*) man of indeterminate age and vast wisdom (Yoda), and a concept of chivalry (*futuwwah*) different from that of medieval Europe. Both tell stories that live beyond the mechanistic worldview of the last three centuries.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Are either of the two parties ready to converse in the language spoken above? Scientists respond in widely different ways: one, utterly dismissive of religions and spirituality, another excited about finding human meaning in the new discoveries, and another, unaware that his own religious tradition could speak to his research and studies in the new science.

- With people coming from religious backgrounds, one has come to the conclusion that ‘religion’ is irrelevant to the new science and world today and another is very concerned that if ‘religion’ gives any room to innovation, change, and process, it will be destroyed.
- The signs of the divine are in every place and time, and the new science has simply opened up another set of signs, for those who can read them.
- If religion-as-it-is-practised does not respond to and find signs in every place and time, it stagnates. Without a living stream of signs in a religion as it is practised, people, perhaps especially the intelligent youth, look elsewhere for sustenance. Islam, expected by Muslims to be a totality, becomes bifurcated into ‘religion’ over here, meaning ritual and culture, and ‘life’ over here.

This language seems to pool around ‘life’ instead of ‘religion’. And is this not what the twentieth-century Islamic ‘revivalists’ said, that Sufis ‘weakened’ the Muslim *ummah* because they encouraged a spirituality that was individual and private? And that to ‘revive’ Islam and its dominance in the world Muslims had to fight for an ‘Islamic state’, advancing an outward religion and attacking inward spirituality? Does this mean that a ‘new’ language would affirm the co-existence of private spirituality with public religiosity? How many people in pious societies
see themselves privately or anonymously as secular or unaffiliated with official religion and public religious practice?

- Or does this language speak of a universal Islam, one which is both seen and unseen, which draws its sustenance from signs everywhere and always, which is relevant to the pressing concerns of globalisation, pluralism, environment, and ever increasing militarisation? I think it does, and I think this language supports civilisational renewal and especially the process of gaining a view of the coherency of Islam and the higher goals of the Law.

Notes

4. The political dimension, however, cannot be suspended or ignored. Muslim societies politically are not able to contend with science and technology dominated by corporations and governments wed to corporations. My hope is that there is some space where communication can take place, with scientists who are aware of this political dimension.
5. See http://www-groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history/Biographies/Julia.html (accessed on 2 December 2010).
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 103.
15. Futūḥāt 1:435.

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16. For example, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 4, ḥadīth no. 1,656: “The Messenger said, ‘Our Lord comes down every night to the sky of this world and says, {Is there anyone beseeching me that I may answer? Is there anyone asking something from me that I may provide it? Is there anyone seeking forgiveness that I may forgive?}.’”

17. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 29, ḥadīth no. 5,622: “The dream of a sincere person is one of forty-six parts of prophecy.”


20. A description of these criticisms and their refutation is found in Cornell, “Practical Sufism”.
The 'Common Good' and Malaysia's Education System

Zarina Nalla*

What is the 'Common Good'? 

This Viewpoint is an attempt to understand the concept of the 'common good' and in light of this, assess how the Malaysian school system can best educate young minds to create and serve this ideal. As a concept, the ‘common good’ is often debated among commentators. It would be safe to say, however, that it may be understood in two ways: first, as a state of general welfare which occurs when society attains the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals, not shared equally in an arithmetic sense but according to people’s needs and abilities. The second, and more important, aspect would be the procedural principles, set up by custodians of that society, to best ensure the growth and flourishing of every citizen.

The common good is by no means merely material, but also spiritual and its manifestations include the common happiness borne out of shared experiences from shared settings and the development of civic behaviour.

What is the 'Common Good' in Relation to Education?

The institutions of a society then become instruments of the common good. We can all agree that education is a key institution required to ensure the flourishing of every individual in our society.

Policy-makers in Malaysia need to grapple with the question of how the education system can cultivate and develop in our children a moral identity that will support the common good. Preparing them for a life in a multiethnic setting in which they are expected to empathise with the other and play their roles as good citizens of this nation is a noble goal of education. Hence, the issue of creating a moral identity as an agent of change becomes a pressing one.

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Malaysia's Social Reality

Malaysia is not a ‘nation-state’ like Japan but a family of many ethnicities and religions. Each ethnic group is championing its own causes in almost all areas, among them economics, education, and religion. The prevailing political multi-party systems based on ethnicity or communalism makes the goal of Bangsa Malaysia (Malay for ‘Malaysian nation’, lit. ‘Malaysian race’), in its truest or extreme sense, elusive, i.e. a Malaysian nation-state of citizens rather than a nation-state of ethnicities.

In reality, however, Malaysian leaders concur that assimilation is not desirable, because loyal citizens should not demand that an individual be made to choose between his or her identities, but rather be given space so as to accommodate them all. An individual may be a woman, a Chinese, a Muslim, and a mother all in one.

Some have suggested that it may be realistic to aim for a level at which ordinary citizens will claim to be Malaysians first, while being of Indian, Chinese, or Malay ethnicity coming second. Education is unarguably one of the most powerful tools a nation has to build its identity. Especially a young nation such as ours.

A local survey reveals that there is a clear correlation between age and mixing outside one’s own ethnic group. Younger Malaysians find it difficult to relate to those who are different from them ethnically and hence reluctant to mix with other races. We can extrapolate from here that they obviously do not perceive themselves as Malaysians first. This has fragmented the Malaysian identity in terms of nation-building.

The ethnic divide – so apparent in this country – could be made less prominent if the notion of ‘common citizenship’ can be reinforced to our children during their impressionable years. Students could think of themselves as Malaysian rakyat (citizen) or warganegara (nationality) in order to create a national identity that will unite the community and galvanise its members to serve the ‘common good’ as opposed to the ‘particular good’.

Hence the notion of the ‘common good’ is inextricably linked to the notion of unity as a community and the appreciation of others. The current Prime Minister, Najib Tun Razak, said that the government concept of 1Malaysia was a continuation of the agenda of nation-building and, for the country to progress, the people must achieve progress first, and this had to begin with the attitude of inter-racial acceptance which brought about strong unity. When unity had been achieved, then the process of national development would be smoother, he said.

Shared Experience during Critical School Years

The education system has not been instrumentalised effectively to unite the nation. In 2004, former Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that the government
was concerned with the current poor level of ethnic integration and understanding where schools were becoming more ‘mono-racial’, with non-Malay enrolment in national schools growing smaller with time. According to his address to the 2004 Malaysian Education Summit, 93 per cent of the Malays attend national schools, 90 per cent of the Chinese attend Chinese vernacular schools, and 70 per cent of the Indians attend Tamil vernacular schools. Moreover, at the 13th Education Summit in 2009, the Deputy Secretary-General of the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) reiterated that despite the government’s steps toward promoting national unity in national schools, the greatest obstacles are language barriers and ethnic polarisation. Hence at the primary level, where children are most impressionable, we have three ‘mono-ethnic’ streams!

Most young Malaysians spend the first six or even up to eleven formative years in an environment which is dominated by one race, language and culture. Our children are robbed of a shared experience, and the polarisation does not end there, it continues during the pre-university years and then to university periods, when non-bumiputeras generally attend private institutions of higher learning and the bumiputeras go to national universities. The school system is an important tool to nurture young minds, to imbibe moral values that we treasure in our society. Individuals construct moral knowledge and their sense of justice through early interaction.

In 2010, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Badr al-Din Hassoun, Grand Mufti of Syria and a known proponent of intercultural dialogue, addressed an audience at IAIS Malaysia and emphasised that children should be exposed to other cultures, ways of thinking, and histories, so that when a child leaves its ‘safe space’ or his original environment it will not be unfamiliar with others. In a way, the school is a child’s ‘first world’ in which he or she is socialised and has the golden opportunity to experience interaction within a multicultural setting. As the Grand Mufti said, this prepares the child for young adulthood in the larger society.

Recommendations

Some have suggested multicultural education as a possible solution. It will help students understand and affirm their own cultural identities, while not allowing these boundaries to limit them in any way. By respecting and recognising the diverse cultures of their fellow citizens, it becomes possible to create a civic community that will work for the ‘common good’. Others think that teaching history is important. Malaysia’s Education Ministry recently announced that history will be compulsory for Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia which is equivalent to the ‘O’ levels. There was debate as to what ‘version’ of history should be taught to the students. The most controversial path mooted was the call to abolish the segregated school system which many feel obstruct national unity. This provoked an outcry from several quarters.
• Policy-makers who are cognisant of the sensitivities need to rise to the occasion and find a suitable compromise or solution that most can accept.
• Perhaps this shortcoming can be addressed by civil society, parents, the private sector, and other stakeholders who can assume the responsibility of bridging the different ethnic groups in the Malaysian polity.
• Research demonstrates that even weekly exposure of children in a teamwork setting to other students from different racial backgrounds will improve integration.

Note

1. In Malaysian parlance, the originally Sanskrit term *bumiputera* (lit. ‘son of the soil’) is referring to the ethnic Malays and several indigenous peoples.
Post-Secular Piety: Interfaith Prospects and Promises

Tengku Ahmad Hazri

During a lecture at the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia in November 2010, the British theologian Graham Ward argued that while religion in Europe’s past may have been relegated to the background, in recent years it has returned from exile and increasingly makes its presence publicly visible. Although its expression in institutionalised form, such as church attendance, remains static, the outward religiosity is now even more strongly felt. This hints at a return of religion after years of outcast from the public sphere, ushering in what is called a ‘post-secular’ age in the vocabulary of philosophers such as Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor and Slavoj Žižek. This means that faith-inspired activism is steadily gaining ground, and more importantly, individuals now articulate their concerns in overtly religious terms.

This, no doubt, signals a positive development. The spiritual deficit of modern life has been recognised as early as at the dawn of the twentieth century, when René Guénon, penning his decisive and iconoclastic critique of the modern world, censured modernity’s neglect of transcendence or ‘higher principle’ upon which its values should be based. Religion represents the door through which spirituality may re-enter the worldly theatre, no doubt through the agency of individuals committed to the spiritual aspirations envisioned in religion. In recent years we have witnessed the flourishing of such initiatives, from a spiritual vision of the environment that gave birth to ‘eco-theology’ (spearheaded by contemporary scholars by the likes of Seyyed Hossein Nasr in the Islamic tradition and Michael Northcott in the Christian tradition) to religiously-based organisations offering social services. Of course, the religious character of social life is not new. For the most part of history, humanity has lived within a religious and spiritual ambience. It is the marginalisation of religion that is radically new in the experience of humanity. Nevertheless, this new piety presents some new challenges while holding immense prospects for interfaith cooperation.

The fruits of such religiosity have always been positively esteemed. But lest it be forgotten, public religiosity too had unleashed undesirable consequences, such as religiously-motivated violence, exclusivism, and persecution of the ‘other’ (terrorism is a ‘fine’ example). Although the increasing visibility of religion in the public sphere is a welcome development portending ever more significance to religion, its résumé is hardly a spotless register of innocence – hijacked, as it always

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has been, by excesses in outward piety. As the Malaysian public intellectual, Chandra Muzaffar, often reiterates, these are classic instances of religions failing their own spiritual ideals, when religiosity is on the rampage but spirituality is in slumber. How then, can post-secular piety be cautioned against that and seek rather to foster interfaith initiatives towards the common good? The contemporary Muslim world is no stranger to this experience – ‘jihadist’ enthusiasm is usually short-lived, and even then appeals to only a fraction of the religious populace. The majority seems to find sojourn in the middle way.¹

Reflecting on the manifold problems affecting the contemporary Muslim world, the American journalist, Fareed Zakaria, observed that “in a religion without an official clergy, Bin Laden has as much – or as little – authority to issue fatwa as does a Pakistani taxi driver in New York City”.² Islamic history, however, bears witness that such instances of extremism are often the voices on the fringes. Even when it seized political power, classical Islam knew only two episodes of systematic state-backed inquisition: the Muʿtazilite persecution of their rivals under the Abbasid caliphs between the years 833 and 848, and, in the sixteenth century, the demolition of Iranian Sunnism under the Shiʿite Safavids.³ Closer to our time (and perhaps on a more hopeful note), when in 2006 Pope Benedict XVI made some remarks on Islam which resulted in misunderstandings of various sorts,⁴ Muslim scholars from around the world responded with the ‘Common Word’ initiative. Such a move represents an intellectual engagement and response born of an authentic knowledge tradition.

One is then compelled to ask: if the post-Enlightenment discourse has always borne the secular imprint, from where then do post-secular activists draw their intellectual resources? The Islamic experience, we have seen, demonstrates the efficacy of intellectual response derived from a rich, centuries-old scholarly tradition that always asserts the primacy of the ‘middle path’ against the excesses of overzealous adherents. The ecclesiastical leviathan that kept such reactions at bay is not personalised in a single authority but disseminated in a loose body of scholars, whose only real excuse for people listening to them is not their divine authority but their knowledge and character. If Islam maintains an egalitarian exterior, as Zakaria noted sarcastically, it is because its internal makeup is already profoundly elitist and hierarchical, exalting above all else the centrality of knowledge and those who possess it: “Are they equal those who know and those who do not know?” (Qur’ān, 39:9). A scholar is not an appointed office but an earned one. This runs counter to the post-secular logic which, in the words of the political theorist Fred Dallmayr, “is freed from the hierarchical tross of the past”.⁵

Post-secular piety, if it is to safeguard against the same fanaticism and abuse that the various religions have bitterly experienced at some time or other, ought to be able to develop internal mechanisms of constraint against any prospect of excess. Admittedly, the knowledge tradition to which it is heir is itself a conscious revolt
against religion and the transcendent, born of post-Enlightenment optimism – if not conceit – in reason (restrictively understood) as the sole guide in public affairs. The socio-political life itself is constructed on such ideological infrastructures. Are we then, to echo David Hume’s remark about religious works, to “commit it then to the flames”? Most decidedly not – and here lies the promise of post-secular interfaith engagement.

The ‘third wave’ of globalisation that we witness today may have, in some ways, brought about uniformity throughout the lands which universalises western civilisational preferences. Yet at the same time and in other ways, it has also introduced new actors into its discourse: no longer portraying the West as the sole superhero in the public sphere, the latter’s dramatis personae now enlists people from across the globe. Orientalism, often discredited for its supposedly negative characterisation of the West’s ‘other’, is now mellowed by post-colonial protests that participate in it (aided partly by the ‘globalisation’ of the English language), but inspired, among others, by the spiritual wisdom of the various religions. The discourse that once instrumentalised to facilitate domination, is now vulnerable to auto-critique fertile enough to welcome domestication of exogenous traditions as part of its own agenda, and simultaneously plant the seeds for its own self-transformation.

These developments are why post-secular religiosity is different from religion’s public role in the past that we are familiar with. On the one hand, the socio-political infrastructures were built precisely so they can operate without religious interference; purportedly under the universal auspices of reason (the modern post-Westphalian nation-state is one such example). On the other hand, it is on these infrastructures that post-secular discourse now may capitalise. It is true that many of the outspoken critics of secularism operate within societies where it has been long since established, hence profiting from the very embodiments they wish to do away with. But the orientation has now changed: the public sphere is no longer the realm of ‘religious neutrality’ but a rendezvous of ‘shared values’. These values, however, are dynamic – their continued relevance can only be secured when clothed in rational narratives. The said infrastructures then, are now not the pretext to marginalise religion but an avenue where absolute and transcendent values can find institutional expression. This is then the meeting point that synthesises post-Enlightenment discourse with mainstream religious ones, thus allowing for the latter’s vision to be articulated in modern vocabularies.

Interfaith dialogue often insists on shared values to establish a common ground for understanding, but without the adequate intellectual resources rooted in the scholarly tradition, its lofty project risks losing the internal cohesion necessary for dialogue. The abuse and ideologisation of religion that we hinted earlier is only one of its symptoms. Shared values must be invigorated by shared discourse, and shared discourse must ultimately draw its nourishment from the intellectual-spiritual
traditions of the respective religions that serve at once to advance the spiritual vision of each and check against wayward ‘piety’ not supported by knowledge. Significantly, such a project is already underway in the Islamic world. The project styled ‘islamisation of knowledge’ is meant to negotiate with modernity through the prism of tradition. Although its aim is to harmonise contemporary knowledge with the Islamic worldview, other communities may appreciate its methodology, which they may fruitfully utilise to advance their own aspirations by identifying the common principles that bind their agendas together.

These should then establish continuity with the intellectual traditions to which they are heir and lay the spiritual infrastructures necessary for interfaith alliance and harmony.

Notes

Balance, Moderation, and the ‘Middle Path’: Toward Trust between Muslims and Theravada Buddhists in Southern Thailand

Christoph Marcinkowski*

When looking at strategies leading toward conflict-resolution in the troubled Muslim-dominated deep South of Thailand one should also take into account existing touching-points between Islam – understood by many of its followers as an all-encompassing approach toward life that is, nevertheless, grounded in spirituality – and Theravada Buddhism which is practised by the overwhelming rest of the Thai citizens. Theravāda (Pali for ‘Teaching of the Elders’ or ‘Ancient Teaching’) is the oldest surviving Buddhist school. It is relatively conservative and generally closest to early Buddhism. Elsewhere this writer has argued that the currently ongoing conflict in southern Thailand is mainly not a religious one, but rather the result of mutual deep distrust between a far-away central administration in Bangkok and the local Malay Muslims in the South. However, this writer would like to argue that a meaningful dialogue between truly religious people on both sides of the fence could help to dissolve tensions and misconceptions.3

The ‘Middle Path’ in Islam

In 2010, IAIS Malaysia published in its Monograph Series Moderation and Balance in Islam: The Qur‘anic Principle of Wasaṭiyyah from the pen of Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali, the Institute’s CEO and Chairman. Throughout this volume, Kamali makes the salient point that Islam – in its original conceptualisation as laid down in the Qur‘ān and Sunnah – does reject extremism of any sort – whether in terms of beliefs, political persuasions or even devotional practices. It is up to contemporary Muslims to rediscover that message, which, alas, is all too often forgotten by the ignorant ones. Islam views itself as a ‘middle path’ (wasaṭiyyah) between the life of this world and the world to come. This ‘middle path’ applies to principles of belief, worldview, cultural interaction, and – a part on which I would like to focus here – to religious and spiritual practices.

At first glance, Buddhism and Islam could not be more apart from each other – to wit, for instance, the different architectural arrangements of its religious buildings (gilded images of the Buddha in the wat, no images whatsoever in the mosque). Looking beneath the surface, however, there are numerous points of convergence.4

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The ‘Middle Path’ in Theravada Buddhism

Like Islam, Theravada Buddhism, too, is scripture-based. Even Buddhists coming from other traditions admit that the Theravada Tipitaka (Pali, lit. ‘three baskets’) canon has preserved the essential and original utterances of the Buddha. One of the most pervasive topics of that vast corpus of literature is the notion of the ‘middle path’ (Pali: majjhimā paṭipadā), the descriptive term which the Buddha used to describe the character of the ‘Path of Liberation’ which he discovered. It was coined in the very first ‘teaching’ (Pali: sutta) which he delivered after his enlightenment. In this sutta he describes the ‘middle path’ as a way of moderation between the extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification. This, according to him, was the path of wisdom. The ‘middle path’ does not mean a mid point in a straight line joining two extremes represented by points, but rather a dynamic teaching in order to reach harmony.

Convergences and Divergences

On the levels of spirituality and devotional practice, there are several ‘touching points’ between Islam and Buddhism which could be explored by sincere people from both traditions. Historically speaking, the influence back and forth between the Sufi movement and Buddhism in Central Asia and India was manifold. For instance, it is now generally acknowledged that Sufism and Buddhism entered into some sort of cultural symbiosis in Central Asia during the early medieval period. As pointed out by numerous scholars, among them Annemarie Schimmel in her magisterial Mystical Dimensions of Islam, several Muslim ceremonial devotional rituals such as the dhikr, the mantra-like invocation of the names of God – in particular when involving breath-control as practised by the Naqshbandi Sufis who actually have their origins in that region – can be traced back to similar Buddhist practices (although it is true that the term dhikr appears already in the Qur’ān 13:28), however, in a more general fashion and without elaborating on practical issues. Exchanges between Sufism and certain notions of Buddhist spirituality are particularly strong among those Sufi orders (ṭarīqāt) which are prevalent in areas which had been under Turkic cultural influence, such as Central Asia and the non-Arabic parts of the former Ottoman Empire (Anatolia and the Balkans), in particular the orders of the Bektashis, Bayramis, and Naqshbandis, to name only a few. Moreover, in both religions there is emphasis on generosity and on equality.

On the other hand, it must be stated that the belief in an omnipotent creator deity – as the case with the three major monotheistic religions, Islam, Christianity and Judaism – would not be in line with the basic teachings of the Buddha as laid down in the Tipitaka canon, as such a belief would – from the perspective of Theravada thought – result in dukkha, a Pali term roughly corresponding to a
number of terms in English including ‘suffering’, ‘pain’, ‘discontent’, ‘unsatisfactoryness’, ‘unhappiness’, ‘sorrow’, ‘stress’, ‘frustration’ and the like. This is mainly grounded in the Buddhist notion of ‘causation’ or ‘dependent origination’ (Pali: paticcasamuppāda) a cardinal doctrine which refers to the causal relations between the phenomena which sustain dukkha. ‘Dependent origination’ – one of the key components of the Buddhist ‘Four Noble Truths’ – is therefore incompatible with the teachings of Islam. Another issue of content with Islam, and one of the consequences of the previous point, is the Buddhist denial of the notion of a ‘soul’ or a ‘self’. In Theravada Buddhism – as one of its key concepts, the Pali term anattā refers to the notion of ‘not-self’. In the early suttas, the Buddha commonly uses the word in the context of teaching that all things perceived by the senses (including the mental sense) are not really ‘I’ or ‘mine’, and for this reason one should not cling to them.

Some Suggestions

This writer has always been convinced that approaches which bring together real people from real life have been more fruitful than the myriads of ‘interfaith’ conferences and alike. Take for example, the course of Franco-German relations: in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the rise of mutually hostile modern nationalism, writers, historians, and politicians in both countries tended to project their ‘enmity’ backwards, regarding all past history as a single, coherent and unbroken narrative of ongoing conflict and re-interpreting earlier history to fit into the concept of a ‘hereditary enmity’. Today, France and Germany are among the most enthusiastic proponents of the further integration of the European Union, which is also due to post-WWII student exchanges which enabled people from both sides of the Rhine to get to know (and appreciate) each other more closely. Literature and the movie industry also played a positive part in this process. This could also be a way forward in order to overcome hatred and mutual distrust in southern Thailand.

Some work in this respect has already been done: back in 1985, Thai director Euthana Mukdasanit created the movie Butterfly and Flower (Pee seu lae dawkmai), which was drawn from a popular Thai novel of the time and which highlighted the hardships along the Thai-Malaysian border. Not only did the film help expose urban Thais to regional (southern) poverty; the film also broke new ground by portraying a Buddhist–Muslim romance. The movie was very popular nationwide and earned a Best Film Award at the 1986 East–West Film Festival in Honolulu, Hawaii. The film is adapted from a 1978 novel of the same title by Nippham (Makut Oradee), which won an award at the Thailand National Book Fair. The book has become required reading for secondary schoolchildren in the kingdom.
More recently, in 2003, Nonzee Nimibutr wrote and directed *OK Battong*, a movie about Muslim–Buddhist relations in southern Thailand: Tum is a young man who has been a monk living in a Buddhist temple in Thailand since he was five years old. However, after hearing that his sister has been killed in an attack on a train by Malay insurgents, he decides to leave the monastery and make his way to southern Thailand where his sister ran a beauty salon in Battong, a town in a district of Yala province which borders Malaysia. In trying to put his sister’s affairs in order, Tum finds himself in a conflict: should he take over his sister’s business? His sister has left a daughter by a Muslim man who lives on the Malaysian side of the border.

Poster, *OK Battong* (2003), written and directed by Nonzee Nimibutr
(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Okbaytong.jpg; © Sahamongkol Film International Co. Ltd)

Should Tum try to take a greater role in the raising of the child? But first, Tum must figure out how to zip up his trousers without hurting himself. It’s only one of the many new things to the young man, who has worn a Buddhist monk’s robes
for most of his life. He also encounters romantic (and physical) feelings when he develops a relationship with a neighbouring lady, who was a friend of his sister. In addition, Tum must reconcile the feelings of hate and rage that sometimes come into his head when he thinks about Muslims, and especially the Malay insurgents who were responsible for his beloved sister’s death.

In closing, perhaps it is about time that Muslims and Buddhists read their scriptures once again (and perhaps more thoroughly), keeping ‘tuned’ their ‘spiritual antennas’ in order to understand properly the all-encompassing objectives of religiosity. In the case of Islam, it is the view of this writer that the qur’ānic expression ‘People of the Book’ (ahl al-kitāb; see 2:62; 3:64; 3:199; 3:113–15; 29:46; see also 22:17) could also be extended to include people who believe in some higher abstract principle of ethics and morality which, in a sense, created or continues to order the world.

Notes

1. Theravada Buddhism is also dominant in Burma/Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and – outside Southeast Asia – Sri Lanka, not, however, in Vietnam, Malaysia, and Singapore, countries where Mahāyāna (Sanskrit for ‘Great Vehicle’) is prevalent among the Buddhists.

2. Christoph Marcinkowski, “‘Kidnapping’ Islam? Some Thoughts on Southern Thailand’s Muslim Community between Ethnocentrism and Constructive Conflict-Solution”, Islamic Culture 78, no. 2 (2004), 79–86. An earlier version is also available online at http://mis-pattani.pn.psu.ac.th/registra/grade/temp/speche/20020823/Panel18%B1%5D.doc (accessed on 6 December 2010).

3. On some of those misconceptions from the part of Muslims, see Christoph Marcinkowski, “‘Holier than Thou’: Buddhism and the Thai People in Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim’s 17th-Century Travel Account Safineh-yi Sulaymani”, Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 156, no. 2 (2006), 407–19.

4. Recently, the Muslim World journal (Hartford CT, United States) has published a Special Issue on Islam and Buddhism (vol. 100, nos. 2–3, April–June 2010). There is also Reza Shah Kazemi’s (ed.), Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism (Louisville KY: Fons Vitae, 2010), a work, which carries introductions by the Dalai Lama, Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali, and Prince Ghazi of Jordan.

Benefits of Risk-Sharing in the Structuring of Ṣukūk

Abdul Karim Abdullah (Leslie Terebessy)*

Several cases of ṣukūk defaults and near defaults have occurred recently. In Malaysia, according to the Securities Exchange Commission, seven ṣukūk with a combined value of more than RM740 million, have defaulted. Ṣukūk issued by the Saad Group of Saudi Arabia, Dar Investment Group, the International Investment Group of Kuwait, East Cameron Partners in the United States and others also defaulted. In December 2009, several ṣukūk issued by Dubai World and its subsidiaries nearly defaulted. Was the way the ṣukūk were structured among the reasons for the defaults, as alleged by some, or were the ṣukūk investors simply the victims of the larger global economic and financial crisis?

There is no denying that the global economic and financial crisis played a key role in the defaults and near defaults. Upon closer inspection, however, one finds that the way the ṣukūk were structured also played a part. It is clear that the vast majority of ṣukūk were structured to mimic conventional bonds. It hardly comes as a surprise, therefore, that they also replicated some of the risks that also face buyers of conventional bonds, albeit in an altered form, in particular the risk of default.

With respect to ṣukūk, the risk of default is better known as ‘asset redemption risk’. Ṣukūk which defaulted or nearly defaulted imitated conventional bonds in two fundamental respects. They were structured to pay predetermined dividends (to produce a ‘fixed income’ instrument) and to return the initial amount invested to the ṣukūk holders in one lump sum on the maturity date of the ṣukūk. In conventional finance, the action of returning to creditors the principal amounts they lent to borrowers by buying bonds is known as ‘redeeming’ the bonds. The process of returning to ṣukūk buyers the initial amount they invested by buying the ṣukūk took place by means of ‘repurchasing’ the underlying assets on the day the ṣukūk ‘matured’. The obligation to repurchase the underlying assets, which was inserted into the ṣukūk contract, created an ‘amount owing’ by ṣukūk issuers to the ṣukūk holders. This obligation to ‘repay’ a large amount of capital on the maturity date of the ṣukūk by repurchasing the underlying assets put enormous pressure on the issuers to ensure that they had the necessary funds ready to ‘redeem’ the ṣukūk. Those which did not have this amount ready, for whatever reasons, either ‘defaulted’ or nearly defaulted.

Neither of the two features that ṣukūk share with conventional bonds characterises genuine risk-sharing instruments, such as ordinary company shares. To promise

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predetermined ‘dividends’ to investors in an uncertain economic environment, even if the dividends are pegged to an ‘Islamic’ benchmark, and to require the issuer to ‘repay’ the initial amount invested to ṣukūk holders, has the effect of shifting the risk of losses squarely onto one party – the issuer. Such an arrangement can by no stretch of the imagination be viewed as a risk-sharing partnership. ṣukūk of this nature are better described as risk-shifting instruments, similar to conventional bonds. Like conventional bonds, they shift risk from the investor to the issuer.

In bona fide risk-sharing relationships the counterparties are partners, such as in a muḍārabah or a mushārakah. They share both the good times and the bad. In creditor–debtor relationships, a basic inequality characterises the relationship between the counterparties, where the creditor usually holds the upper hand. Conventional creditors are basically fair-weather friends. They wish to share gains, but not losses.

Moreover, in the great majority of ṣukūk issues the legal ownership of the underlying assets remained with the originators. The ṣukūk holders became merely the ‘beneficial’ rather than legal owners of the underlying asset. ‘Beneficial’ ownership characterises about 90 per cent of all ṣukūk issued. The concept of beneficial ownership entitles one to the ownership of the usufruct of an asset (such as rent), but not of the asset itself.

ṣukūk which confer merely ‘beneficial’ ownership of the underlying assets on the ṣukūk holders are known as ‘asset-based’ ṣukūk. ṣukūk where the legal ownership of the underlying assets is transferred to the ṣukūk holders, on the contrary, are known as “asset-backed” ṣukūk. These constitute only about 10 per cent of all ṣukūk issued.

Asset-based ṣukūk are similar to conventional unsecured bonds. Asset-backed ṣukūk resemble conventional secured loans. The difference between the two may seem unimportant during normal times, but attains a decisive significance in times of distress, when the prospect of a bankruptcy of the issuer may be looming on the horizon and thus present great risks to ṣukūk holders.

Some Recommendations

- In the interests of transparency and investor protection, it is necessary that ṣukūk contracts clearly stipulate whether the ṣukūk being marketed to investors are asset-backed or asset-based. Not specifying whether ṣukūk holders are the legal owners of the underlying assets, whether by means of a bankruptcy remote SPV acting on their behalf or in some other way, and therefore become entitled to claim the underlying assets in case of default by the issuer as a way of recovering their investments, considerably reduces the transparency of the ṣukūk contract. It creates uncertainty for the investors, as they will be left in
the dark as to whether they are buying secured (asset-backed) or unsecured (asset-based) ṣukūk.

- Structuring ṣukūk to mimic conventional bonds exposes buyers of ṣukūk to risks that are nearly identical to the risks facing buyers of conventional bonds, in particular the risk of default. In order to enhance investor protection, it is necessary to structure ṣukūk as genuine risk-sharing instruments. In such instruments, the risk of default does not arise in the first place.
- The way forward is to utilise genuine risk-sharing vehicles such as mushārakah and muḍārabah. Issuers may initially raise less money, but in all likelihood whatever funds are raised will be used more efficiently and wisely. In the interest of greater stability in the longer term, it may well be worth making a short-term sacrifice implied by making the required paradigm shift in the structuring of ṣukūk toward risk-sharing instruments such as the muḍārabah and the mushārakah.

**Note**

1. Ṣukūk (pl. of ṣakk, ‘legal instrument’, ‘deed’, ‘check’) is the Arabic name for financial certificates, but commonly refers to the Islamic equivalent of bonds. Since ‘fixed income’, interest-bearing bonds are not permissible in Islam, ṣukūk securities are structured to comply with the shari‘ah and its investment principles, which prohibit the charging, or paying of interest.
Islam’s Views on Sorcery and Black Magic

Mohammad Hashim Kamali*

Black magic is condemned in Islam but Muslim thinkers are not clear on how to deal with this superstitious holdover from an earlier age. Sorcery or witchcraft (sihr) is often equated with trickery aimed at conflating falsehood with the rational association of causes and effects.

Sorcery is difficult to define. Our knowledge of sihr and what is not within reach of our sense perception is also limited. The available information in the scriptural sources of Islam also falls short of elaboration on detail. Sihr may aim at inflicting harm on its object or at realising a benefit, and the sorcerer often resorts to irrational and impermissible means. Muslim scholars have differed on the reality of sihr.

The Mu‘tazilite rationalists held that sorcery is mere image-making and has no reality, and even considered one who believed in it as an infidel (kāfir), claiming as authority a hadīth stating that “one who resorts to sorcery truly associates other deities with God”.

The majority of Muslim scholars have, however, concurred on the reality of sihr, its actual occurrence and its effects, as is also evident from the numerous references to it in the Qur‘ān. Some have deemed sihr a branch of knowledge that subscribes to a methodology and set of rules. The Mu‘tazilites concurred, however, with the majority that God alone has the power to create body and soul, and natural endowments such as colour and taste ab initio. No sorcerer, jinn or Satan could genuinely transform, as Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) wrote, a human into an animal. Such would interfere in the order of God’s creation.

While the ʿulamā’ of all persuasions confirm the reality of sihr and the existence of invisible beings, the jinns and Satan, the one protective recourse against their harm, as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 1356) wrote, is faith in God and remembrance of Him such that fills the heart and mind of the believer. He then quotes this hadīth: “When the son of Adam prostrates and recites God’s praise, Satan runs away and weeps saying ‘the son of Adam was ordered to prostrate – he did and gained admission to Paradise; I was ordered to prostrate – I refused and fire became my refuge’.” The implication is that prayer and supplication drive the evil forces away in suppression and defeat.

The Qur’ān views sihr as a pollutant of true belief (113:4) and speaks of it in reference to Pharaoh versus the Prophet Moses (7:116), the narratives of prophets David and Salomon, and in denunciation generally of those who teach and practise

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it (2:102, 21:3), yet provides the assurance also that no harm will come to anyone unless God wills it (2:102). Whereas humans were created from earth, the jinns were created from fire (15:27). We cannot see the jinns but they can see us (7:27). They can travel with great speed and can appear to us in different forms.

Satan is a variety of jinn; they differ from the angels but share much of our predicament on this earth. They are endowed with intellect, feelings of love, jealousy and hate, and are bound by the laws of good and evil, accountability and worship. Some among them are pious and others transgress the divinely ordained limits. The hadīth speaks of the evil gaze that can harm its victim: Ubay bin Ka‘b narrated that he was present when a Bedouin came to the Prophet and asked him to help his brother who was unwell. The Prophet enquired and was informed that the sick man was possessed by spirits. On the Prophet’s instruction, the man came and sat before him, who then recited a number of verses (31 in total) from different parts of the Qur’ān. Then the man rose and looked his normal self. Of interest here is that all the selected passages have a feature in common: affirmation of the oneness of God as the sole master of our destiny, His sovereignty over the universe, and belief in Him with total submission.

Sihr has an aspect in common with religion as both subscribe to belief in a supreme being, which is why it is difficult to define. Anthropologists maintain that superstition and magic predate religion and that the latter often came to curb the former. In the history of religion, when one religion triumphed over another, the latter was often called mere superstition and sorcery. Religion promotes moral and social objectives that inspire the approval of societies and generations whereas sihr aims at subjective benefits, and in its black variety at the infliction of harm. It is the object generally of repulsion and fear among sound-minded people. Black magic is objectionable as it harms people without their knowledge and opportunity to defend themselves. This kind of magic became a menace in medieval Europe often leading to the killing and burning alive of its perpetrators.

The further back one goes in the history of almost all societies, the greater one finds the hold of superstition among them. It is also true that scientific knowledge and true faith have a suppressing effect on sorcery, hence, the conclusion that sorcery is linked to superstition and ignorance. Primitive societies resorted to sorcery and magic to seek cures for disease. When religion and science fail to respond to the people’s needs, superstition begins to take hold and fill their space. Advancements in medical science have also acted as a suppressor to a great extent, yet not entirely, as almost 50 per cent of known diseases to mankind have no known cure.
BOOK REVIEWS

Chandra Muzaffar, *Exploring Religion in Our Time*  

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The cliché is now almost ubiquitous, that religion is back on stage and is now defining the shape of the public sphere. If the West once heralded the Promethean revolt against Heaven, it is now acknowledging that religion is a force to be reckoned with, insofar as it is now recognised that the secular and loss of the transcendent from the vision of humanity has been responsible for many of humanity’s catastrophes today.

Religion’s public role is of course not new. The world’s religions have each brought to the fore their own perspectives in global affairs. Weaving these strands together has been the signature and trademark of Malaysian public intellectual, Chandra Muzaffar, since the 1970s. His vision, like that of the organisation that he founded and now leads, the Malaysia-based International Movement for a Just World (JUST), is to return to the spiritual and moral worldview found in religion as the compass to navigate our public life. Chandra maintains that religion offers a solid basis to look for answers, for indeed the ultimate causes of our present predicament are brought about by “those traits in the human being and in society that are antithetical to the spiritual and moral perspectives found in religious thought” (p. 74).

In his most recent work, *Exploring Religion in Our Time*, Chandra examines the role that religion can play in the context of a post-secular world with its comeback from the long exile. The four chapters – “Religion in Asia”; “Religion as Protest; Religion in Power”; “Religion and Identity in a Globalising World”; and “The Role of Religion in Overcoming Contemporary Global Challenges” – explore how religions may articulate a universalist framework and forge a spiritually and morally inspired alliance towards a just civilisation. Sure enough, in Asia, religion has always been a central part of people’s lives, but there have been anomalies (such as colonialism and secularisation of society) which made the contemporary picture somewhat different from the past. It is because of these that “no mainstream religious leader from any of the major faiths was able to anticipate any of the great crises facing humanity today” (p. 84). This renders the resurgence of religion a significant event, not just for the West, but also for Asians. Historically, religions have been on
both camps: in power and in protest or critique against the powers-that-be. In the modern world, religions’ track record in the latter case is hardly flattering as seen, for example, in the influence of Hindutva ideology in Indian politics (pp. 5–7), with its adhesion to Hindu chauvinism and attacks on Muslim minorities.

Such religious exclusivism is at odds with global religious resurgence that now demands religious communities to foster greater interfaith cooperation, yet it is constantly intensified by a plethora of factors, such as identity politics. In answering the question of what religion means to people, Chandra’s first answer is identity (p. 1). Yet he concedes on its complexity (pp. 60–2) while calling for a universal and inclusive identity. His major complaint is when identity becomes exclusive. Identity, he explains, is the reason behind preoccupation with nomenclature, symbols and forms over substance. The author’s definition of identity (p. 46) situates it in a social context. Is religion’s public role then significant only in relation to ‘the other’? Of course, interfaith cooperation towards social transformation is more constructive than doctrinal debates on matters of creed (p. 66). Nevertheless, theology does hold some prospects for meaningful interfaith engagement as our learned author acknowledges when he credits Islamic theology for securing a harmonious revelation–reason synthesis that safeguards Muslim civilisation from secularisation when it developed scientific thought (a fate which, however, was to befall the Christian West later on) (p. 78). This is in fact how the uniqueness or ‘particularities’ of each religion may serve to complement one another.

It is in this sense that one sees a convergence between theoria and praxis in the author’s narrative on the role of religion in a globalising world. To effectuate a transformation of consciousness towards a universal and inclusive approach demands that three fundamental features of religions emerge strongly, namely faith in Transcendent Reality; recognition of absolute, transcendent values and self-transformation. These can be achieved through mass education that highlights the deeper meanings of religious practices (one can think of Ali Shariati’s work on the Hajj as an example) (pp. 86–7). Such transformation is pivotal since many of the obstacles to interfaith harmony that thwart any prospect for cooperation are in reality deep-seated prejudices embedded in the collective and individual psyche. Naturally it is these root causes that have to be addressed, which often require the discursive and theological tools within the religion itself. The author recalls his own experience as a member of the committee set up by the Malaysian Attorney-General in 2006 which reveals the difficulty of dialogue on controversial issues when prejudice and dogmatism hold sway (p. 67).

On a more global scale, the author applies empirical diagnoses to contemporary conflicts and crises – addressing mainly the fuel, food, financial, environmental and nuclear crises – yet ultimately, he notes that they have profound spiritual causes. Thus greed and the denigration of justice explain the fuel crisis, self-centredness
is responsible for the environmental crisis, and the desire to dominate and lack of trust brought about the nuclear crisis (pp. 73–5). By the same token, there are also practical socio-political reasons behind what appear to be “religious” conflicts: hence the Israeli–Palestinian conflict pertains to usurpation and annexation of land, the Hindu–Muslim conflict in Kashmir is about occupation and territory, the Sinhalese conflict is linked to political rights and independence (pp. 58–9). Such analyses give an insight into the complexity and organic inter-relationship between the spiritual and the empirical rarely appreciated in discourses on socio-political affairs—a rich theme in itself yet one that would have been beyond the scope of the book, although the author’s struggle to explore their dynamism and tension can be readily discerned in these pages.

Dr Chandra here is critical of hegemony and the elite who abused their position for their own gains, yet he does not dismiss their role altogether. The religious elite especially, has an important role to shape public opinion, but for that, “the influential stratum of society should acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding of not only the similarities and differences among the various religions, but also their underlying values and principles” (p. 62). At the popular level, all elements of society have to be mobilised towards this task, involving the state, civil society, educational institutions and the family. The latter especially, must continue their role as the means “through which values such as respect for cultural and religious diversity and the accommodation of the other [are] transmitted” (p. 88). The primary role of the state would be to create an atmosphere that will allow good values to flourish (p. 41). Indeed, the state itself, like the model exemplified by the Medina Charter, should be one based on shared values (p. 39).

The book hints at many promising themes and issues that appear as call-to-action. Yet to fully empathise with the author’s intent, it is crucial to appreciate that his discourse is ultimately a spiritual one that demands patient and sustained struggle, both in society and within oneself.

Mohamed Ajmal Abdul Razak (ed.), Islam Hadhari: Bridging Tradition and Modernity

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As a manner of introduction, the editor of the book under review gives the background to Islam Hadhari or Civilisational Islam, essentially a comprehensive

Islam and Civilisational Renewal
blueprint for progress postulated by the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato’ Seri (now Tun) Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in the 2004 National Front Manifesto.

In “Civilizational Dialogue and the Islamic World”, Seyyed Hossein Nasr traces the Greek, Sanskrit, and Latin Christian origins of the word ‘civilisation’. He speaks of the “Presiding Idea”, or “heavenly-given dispensation” that underlies all traditional civilisations, and attributes the decline of Islamic civilisation from the eighteenth century onward partly to colonisation and partly to the (erroneous) efforts of the Muslims themselves to uncritically emulate the West. Islamic civilisation, he concludes, is still best suited for inter-civilisational dialogue, occupying as it does the globe’s “middle belt”.

In his essay “Islam Hadhari from a Sharīʿah Perspective”, Mohammad Hashim Kamali elaborates on each of the ten principles, interspersing his work with references to the Qur’ān and Sunnah. He regards the ten principles as open themes for the most part, on which to develop common perspectives and understanding; and views Islam Hadhari as a means to advance common interests of Malaysians of all faiths.

Next, in “New Approaches to Sharīʿah: Appreciating Islamic Values in Light of the Changes in Muslim Societies”, Ahmad Kazemi Moussavi surveys the theories of four renowned scholars – Abū Isḥāq al-Shāṭibī (legal methodology on the theory of maqāṣid), Shāh Walī-Allāh of Delhi, Muhammad Iqbal (concept of human development as imbued in their legal approach), and Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman (legal thought) – offering novel approaches whereby legal rules find a new characterisation suitable to the Muslim societies of their times.

In his exposition on “The Meaning of Civilization as Perceived by the Malays”, Baharuddin Ahmad defines (and redefines) Malay culture, citing Western and Asian scholarly works, the cultural influence of India, links to Indonesia, the role of Islam and the legacy left behind by early Malay civilisation, which is largely manifest in the language rather than in buildings and structures. Islam Hadhari is perceived as a continuity of what has been practised by the Malays all along (faith in God, morality etc).

In “Islam Hadhari in the Context of the Traditional Malay-Islamic Discourse in the Malay World”, Muhammad Uthman El-Muhammady studies each principle of Islam Hadhari by deeply interconnecting with the five universal necessities of uṣūl fiqh. He quotes frequently from Muslim scholars in the Malay world such as ‘Abd al-Samad al-Falimbānī; and recounts narratives within the royal circles, interweaving his elaboration with poetic passages which extol virtues such as justice and trustworthiness.

“Islam Hadhari as a New Government Policy” by Mohd Kamal Hassan traces the historical background, the leadership’s rationale behind Islam Hadhari, the responsibilities of the Malay people that it entails, and each of the ten principles
of Islam Hadhari, explaining them with Qur’anic injunctions and illustrating its relevance to today’s plural society. Above all, Mohd Kamal stresses the importance of implementation, consistency between theory and practice, and participation of the people.

In his essay on “Environmental Health and Welfare as an Important Aspect of Civilizational Islam”, Osman Bakar contrasts the modern and the Islamic routes to environmental wisdom, rationalising why ecological consciousness is central to Islam, with insightful reference to works of renowned Muslim writers such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and even Christian and Jewish scholars. Fundamental ideas in Islamic ecological and environmental science are explored, underscoring the relevance of Qur’anic environmental wisdom to contemporary human life.

Cemil Akdoğan in his “Reappraisal of Islam’s Impact on Modern Science” details how Muslims woke the Europeans from the ‘slumber’ of the Dark Ages, leading to their advancements in science and technology. He relates how Muslims established the tradition of normal science. He also explains how the achievements of the Muslim scholar al-Ghazālī anticipated the main ideas of Descartes, the father of modern Western philosophy, and also preceded Hume’s work on causality, thereby reaffirming Islamic competence in the “rigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge”.

In “Islamic Economics in a Globalised World: Opportunities and Challenges for Muslims”, Amer Al-Roubaie gives an in-depth account of Islamic economics by defining the problem before explaining the Islamic concept of development, its ethical foundations, economic institutions and administrations, ownership rights, and Islamic finance. He urges that Muslims need to re-engineer their own economic order and restructure the social equilibrium, adding that the revival of Muslim civilisation depends on the capabilities of the Muslims themselves in order to enhance their mastery of knowledge and to invest in modern technologies.

Sabri Osman’s “Intercivilizational Exchange of Knowledge in the Intellectual Tradition of Islam: A Case Study on the Relationship between Islam’s ʿIlm Tadbīr al-Manzil and Ancient Greek’s Oikonomia” takes the example of these two disciplines, which literally mean the ‘Science of Household Management’ in Islamic civilisation and Ancient Greece, respectively. Finding similarities between the two, he concludes that Islam is an open communicative civilisation, its process of critical selectivity being guided and administered by a unique perspective.

In “The Clash of Cultures: A Study of Muslim Literary Reaction to Western Domination”, Hassan A. El-Nagar studies two works of Muslim fiction, viz. Qindil Umm Hāshim (The Saint’s Lamp) by Egyptian writer Yahyā Haqqī and Ambiguous Adventures by Hamidu Kane, a Senegalese author. In Qindil Umm Hāshim, Haqqī emphasises the spiritual side of the East–West clash, which is considered by him a major component of the supposedly happy synthesis of religion and science in
the Arab world, while *Ambiguous Adventures* powerfully depicts the ‘evils’ of the East–West encounter.

Amir H. Zekrgoo’s “Trans-Cultural Nature of Islamic Art” defines Islamic art, recounts its genesis, distinguishes Persian from Byzantine art, and delves into Islamic art in Southeast Asia, referring also to works of art in other cultures such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. His essay prolifically provides actual examples found throughout the world’s sacred, religious and non-religious domains. He ultimately sees Islamic art as a form of traditional art where beauty and use go hand in hand, being two “inseparable aspects of perfection”, as he has it.

Finally, in “Minorities in Muslim Societies: The Civilizational Context of Malaysian Pluralism” Muddathir Abdel-Rahim lays the religious and philosophical foundations of pluralism in the Islamic worldview, considers the legal status of non-Muslims in traditional Islamic states and societies, and relates the life of dhimmīs (non-Muslims, essentially ‘People of the Book’ but later broadened to include Zoroastrians and Hindus as well) in traditional Muslim societies; citing Malaysia as an outstanding example of tolerance and positive acceptance rooted in faith.

In conclusion, the book is an overview of *Islamic Hadhari*, explaining its relevance to modernity through various narratives of scholars within and without Malaysia. It touches the principles of faith in God and piety, rigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge, a balanced and comprehensive economic development, cultural and moral integrity and safeguarding natural resources and the environment; allowing inferences to a just and trustworthy government, a free and independent people and a good quality of life. Admittedly, more could be said in this volume – particularly on the protection of the rights of women and minorities and strong defence capabilities – but as a ‘primer’ on *Islam Hadhari* and backed by links between the old and the new, the book is a useful reference and worthwhile read.

**Charles Tripp, A History of Iraq**  
ISBN: 978-0521702478. £17.00

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Charles Tripp’s *A History of Iraq* is now in its third edition. Since 2000, when the first edition appeared, it has become a classic in Middle Eastern studies. The current edition has been updated to include the 2003 Anglo-American invasion, the fall and capture of Şaddām Ḥusayn, and the subsequent insurgency. Its author
is Professor of Politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in the University of London.


The current third edition of Tripp’s work is divided into seven chapters:

Chapter 1 deals with the three Ottoman provinces (*wilāyāt*) of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, which made up what is now Iraq toward the end of Ottoman rule. Tripp’s account of that period focuses in particular on the multicultural character of Iraqi society. In the mainly Kurdish-speaking areas of the north and north-east of the Mosul and Baghdad provinces Sunnites – among them the Sufis of the Qādirī and Naqshbandī traditions – and strongly shaped by Kurdish *shaykh* and *sayyid* s, were joined by Kurdish-speaking adherents of the syncretistic religion of Yezidism, as well as Christian and Shi’ites (of the latter, some Kurdish, some Turkmen). These characteristics, in addition to the general linguistic differences and geographic isolation in mostly mountainous territory, led to the emergence of several semi-independent local lordships and petty principalities. The Arabic-speaking areas of the *wilāyah* of Mosul and its rural population featured sedentary as well as nomadic tribal groups. The city of Mosul was somewhat more directly integrated into the Ottoman administrative system, as was Baghdad.

The *wilāyah* of Baghdad featured as a peculiarity the *‘atabāt* (lit. ‘thresholds’), the tombs of most of the Twelver Shi’ite Imāms – *‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib* in Najaf, ah-Ḥusayn b. *‘Alī* in Karbalā’, and two more Imāms in al-Kāzimiyah, a suburb of Baghdad. Like Qom in neighbouring Iran, those places had over centuries developed into...
eminent centres of Shi’ite scholarship and major pilgrimage destinations. They were also home to the leading Shi’ite marājiʿ (pl. of marjaʿ, in English usually referred to as ‘Grand Ayatollahs’). The atabāt had also a key influence over the surrounding Arab tribal areas which became their major bases of support.

Finally, there was the wilāyah of Basra in the south, which was largely Shi’ite and Arab and traditionally and for centuries involved in the overseas trade with India.

Tripp’s first chapter is crucial in order to understand modern Iraq’s history and the involvement of the armed forces in politics since the late Ottoman period, as in the nineteenth century the sultan’s Arab-speaking units that were stationed in Iraq became the nucleus of subsequent Arab and Iraq nationalism vis-à-vis as a response to parallel developments among the Young Turks.

Chapter 2 deals with the British ‘Mandate’ – Iraq’s first occupation by a Western power in the aftermath of the First World War which led to the dissolution and partition of the Ottoman Empire. The most significant event of that period was the Great Uprising of 1920 (referred to by Tripp as ‘revolt’) against the British – perhaps the earliest manifestation of Iraqi national feeling, which brought together almost all strata and religious sects of Iraqi society for a single cause.

Chapters 3 and 4 tell us about the various internal developments under the British-installed and -sponsored Hashemite monarchy in Iraq after the country had gained nominal ‘independence’ from Britain in 1932. Britain remained, however, deeply involved in Iraqi politics and even re-occupied the country in the course of the Second World War to keep control over its oil reserves. The dominant figure during the post-war period was the pro-Western Prime Minister Nūrī al-Saʿīd, whose highly controversial rule and political schemes were marked by total disregard for the aspirations of the Iraqi people, the economic hardships faced by them, the rampant corruption of the political leadership, the anger of ‘Arab street’ – Arab public opinion – about the disastrous outcome of the 1948 war between Arabs and Jews in Palestine, and lastly the emergence of a revolutionary Arab nationalist regime under Nasser (Jamāl Ṭāhir al-Nāṣir) in Egypt in 1952. All this together led to the Iraqi revolution of 1958 and the bloody overthrow of the monarchy.

Chapter 5 offers an account of Iraq between 1958 and 1968, a period which featured several rather unstable military regimes (led by Ṭāhir al-Kārīm Ṭāhir, Ṭâhir al-Salām Ṭāhir, and Ṭâhir al-Raḥmān Ṭāhir, respectively) and a first (unsuccessful) Ba’thist coup (in 1963).

Chapter 6 – the longest chapter of Tripp’s book (pp. 186–276) – gives an overview of the Ba’thist regime (1968–2003) and the dictatorial rule of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, its most brutal exponent. It starts with the consolidation of power, Ṣaddām’s takeover, the Kurdish and internal Shi’ite challenges (especially after the fall of the Shah in neighbouring Iran in 1979), the Iraq–Iran war (1980–88) – started by Ṣaddām on behalf of the West – and the horrific methodical extermination of any kind of
opposition. This is followed by the invasion of Kuwait, the first show-down with the coalition forces led by the United States (his former ally), which were also supported by fellow Arab nations Egypt and Syria, and the fall of the Ba’thist regime as one of the results of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Chapter 7 ends this book with an account of the US-led occupation of the country and the first years of the new democratic republic which were marred by bloody sectarian strife and an insurgency that brought Iraq to the brink of a civil war.

*A History of Iraq* is a well-researched, highly readable, unemotional and balanced study – which is quite remarkable in light of the circumstance that its author happens to come from a country (Britain) which like no other (the late Ottomans included) has shaped the fate of Iraq in the course of the twentieth century before being replaced by the United States in the twenty-first. To the taste of this reviewer, who for the last two decades or so has studied major developments in the world of Middle Eastern Shi’ism, Tripp could have put somewhat stronger emphasis on that crucial feature – in particular within the Iraqi setting. Aside from this, however, his work is a major achievement. It will certainly see further updated editions in times to come as Iraq’s future is far from being settled.

Nicholas Pelham, *A New Muslim Order: The Shia and the Middle East Sectarian Crisis*  

Christoph Marcinkowski  
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Nicholas Pelham’s *A New Muslim Order*, written by a senior journalist of international standing, tries to make sense of the current phenomenon of a multi-faceted Shi’ite ‘revival’ in the Arab world, a phenomenon which has been termed by others – wrongly, to the mind of this reviewer – as the emergence of a ‘Shi’ite Crescent’ (apparently in analogy to the ‘Fertile Crescent’ of Antiquity, spanning from Mesopotamia/Iraq over Syria to what is now Lebanon).

Pelham has spent two decades writing and broadcasting in the Middle East and North Africa. In 2003, he covered the Anglo-American invasion and occupation of Iraq as a correspondent for the *Economist* and the *Financial Times*. He is currently a Senior Analyst for the Brussels-based think-tank, International Crisis Group.

While focussing on Iraq, in his book Pelham tries to show how the centre of Shi’ite political power has (supposedly) moved from Iranian Qom to Najaf in Iraq. He argues (correctly, in this writer’s view) throughout his account that Sunnite anxieties in this respect have been exploited by several of their contemporary political leaders...
in the region who seek to ‘contain’ an increasingly assertive Iran – a scenario, which has resulted in a potentially highly explosive setting.

This reviewer, however, has argued elsewhere that the fears of a ‘Shi’ite Crescent’ are, for the most part, chimerical as the current assertiveness of the Arab Shi’ites in Iraq cannot be considered to be quasi ‘remote-controlled’ from Tehran, aiming at the establishment of a theocracy à la khomeinienne. Senior Iraq-based Shi’ite clerics – among them ‘Grand Ayatollahs’ Sayyid ‘Ali al-Sīstānī and the late Sayyid Abū’l-Qāsim al-Khū’ī (d. 1992) – have always kept a distance from Iran-inspired ‘Khomeinist’ ideas as to a supposed leading role for the Shi’ite ‘ulamā’ in government (wilāyat al-faqīh). What is going to happen with Iraq when firebrand cleric Muqtadā’ al-Ṣadr has finished and completed his further studies in neighbouring Iran (which, eventually, could make him an ayatollah) is another story. Moreover, one could well argue that the currently rather strong entrenchment of the Shi’ite Hizb-Allāh movement in Lebanese politics and social life does not make them (automatically) satellites of Tehran. Arabs – including Shi’ites among them – seem to know too well that Iran’s strategic interests in the region are merely based on that country’s own national(istic) interests according to which the Arab Shi’ites serve just as useful tools to achieve Iranian hegemony over its Arab neighbours – to wit the recent WikiLeaks ‘revelations’ which quote King ‘Abd-Allāh of Saudi Arabia as inciting the Americans to “cut off the head [i.e. Iran] of the snake [i.e. the Shi’ites].” Whether a secular, say even more nationalistic, Iran would be the better bargain could be doubted as already in 1971 Iran had forcibly seized control of the Tunb Islands and Abū Mūsā in the Gulf against Arab resistance. This happened under the last Shah of Iran and not under his ‘successor’ Khomeini.

Returning to Pelham’s narrative, he has arranged his book into four ‘sections’, adding to it (on p. 224) a ‘Map of Shi’ites in Selected Countries’ and (on p. 255) a ‘Table of Muslim Population in the Middle East by State and Sect’. ‘Section 1’ (“Before the Fall”) ‘makes up’ in good journalistic (but nevertheless quite appropriate) fashion a truly remarkable characterisation of the basic features of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s inhumane and brutal regime, a characterisation which should bring even the last supporter of this (supposedly ‘Muslim’) leader – also and especially here in faraway Malaysia – back to their senses. Pelham (p. 3) states:

Saddam Husain was nothing if not a good Mesopotamian. He followed loyally in the footsteps of Sargon the Akkadian, Nebuchadnezzar and the Assyrian tyrant who, in the words of a 3,200 year-old stele which until the US invasion sat on a plinth in the Baghdad museum, “trod on necks with my feet, as if they were footstools.” For 35 years, he trampled over Iraq’s composite identities, making footstools of the country’s kaleidoscope of cultures. He had a name to match. Derived from the Arabic trilateral root s-d’-m – to go crushing – Saddam is perhaps best translated as Bruiser. And over the course of a
generation of cultural brutalism, he decked the country in Bruiser monuments. There were Bruiser schools, Bruiser hospitals and Bruiser cities. And Bruiser’s likeness hung from every lamp-post, school wall, bridge, home and railway carriage [and even in mosques and religious shrines, as this reviewer could see with his own eyes during one of his visits to Iraq in 1989].

The rest of this section of the book consists of gripping accounts by the author of the weeks leading to the 2003 US-led invasion.

Sections 2 (“Unravelling Iraq”) and 3 (“Balkanization of the Broken State”) deal with the aftermath of the 2003 invasion, dissolution, and fragmentation of Iraq as a unified state. Pelham criticises in particular the United States for what he refers to as the “reconstruction myth” (pp. 77ff.).

The final Section 4 (“The Regional Wars of Religion”) tries to look beyond Iraq and discusses in a – to this reviewer’s taste – rather sensationalist fashion the issue of a possible spill-over effect of the events in Iraq – the coming to power of the once down-trodden Shi’ite majority – to other Arab countries. For example, on page 204 he states:

In Bahrain, they [the Shi’ites] formed 60 to 70 per cent [sic!] of the population, and elsewhere sizable minorities: 42 [sic!] per cent in Yemen, 35 per cent in Kuwait, 15 per cent in the United Arab Emirates and 11 per cent in Saudi Arabia. Zoom out, and Shias comprised 140 million people, or half the population in the arc stretching from the eastern Mediterranean through Iran and Azerbaijan to the borders of Afghanistan. In Lebanon they were the largest single confessional group, official estimated at 38 per cent, and there were substantial constituencies in Syria, Turkey, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and East and South Africa. If Iraq’s Shias could shrug off Saddam, the most brutal of Arab dictators, what more could they achieve with the effete corrupt royals in neighboring states?

Looking at statements like the one above, the reader would get the rather frightening impression that perhaps tomorrow some Shi’ite could knock at his door to ‘take over’ his home. On the other hand, Pelham – a layman in terms of Shi’ite studies – observes quite accurately the difference between Khomeini’s idea of the ‘vicegerency of the Islamic jurist’ (wilāyat al-faqīh) and that of ‘popular sovereignty’ (wilāyat al-ummah),2 conceptualised by the Iraqi ayatollah Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr who was gruesomely murdered by Ṣaddām Ḥusayn in person.

At the beginning of this review, it has been said that Pelham “tries to make sense” of the current assertiveness of Arab Shi’ism. However, the uninitiated reader might close this book after having read its final page somewhat more confused than before. Surely, Pelham’s book is somewhat better researched than the myriads of other ‘I-have-been-in-Iraq’ books written by other members of his guild. Unfortunately,
however, Pelham, who might not have access to the Arabic language,³ arranged his material in a rather haphazard manner, making it appear like a puzzle to which the clue is missing. A better bargain is Vali Nasr’s *The Shi’a Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future.*⁴

**Notes**


2. On p. 205, Pelham quotes from al-Sadr’s *Lamḥah fiqhiyyah*: “Islamic theory rejects monarchy as well as the various forms of dictatorial government; it also rejects aristocratic regimes and proposes a form of government, which contains all the positive aspects of the democratic system,” a translated passage, which, according to Pelham, is found in Sama Haddad, *The Development of Shi’ite Islamic Political Theory*, for which no complete bibliographical reference has been provided by him and which couldn’t be traced by this reviewer otherwise.

3. In relation to this, I am refraining here from pointing out all of the countless errors in terms of transliteration, referring here only to “al-Qaddisyah” instead of “al-Qādisiyah” (p. 6), “Saladin al-Ayyubbi” instead of “Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī” (p. 8), and “Nidhamiya” instead of “Niẓāmiyyah”, while on the same page referring to Niẓām al-Mulk (the founder of the Niẓāmiyyah colleges) (p. xi).


**Abdulkader Thomas (ed.), Sukuk**


**Abdul Karim Abdullah (Leslie Terebessy) International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia**

This book, which contains a foreword by Tan Sri Sheikh Ghazali Haji Abdul Rahman, the Chairman of the *Sharīʿah* Advisory Council of the Securities Commission of Malaysia, has been introduced by the Securities Commission of Malaysia under the Islamic Capital Market series. It is the first of six volumes. It consists of 16 chapters and several case studies, figures, tables and a list of abbreviations. The objective of the book – published before the effects of the recent global financial and economic crisis were felt in the Islamic capital markets – is to introduce *ṣukūk* to the general reader.

In the preface (“Foundation and Framework”) Iqbal A. Khan writes that the “distinguishing feature of sukuk and Islamic finance […] is that its tenets are based on the principles of fairness”. He emphasises “certainty” and “transparency” in contracts, the sharing of “business risks and returns” (losses are not mentioned), and “direct participation in real asset performance”. He adds that, *ṣukūk* are “deemed equivalent in structure to asset-backed trust certificates rather than bonds”, which
are “contractual debt obligations” (p. ix). The great majority (90 per cent) of the ṣukūk, however, are not ‘asset-backed’ but rather ‘asset-based’. The difference is important in so far as asset-backed ṣukūk confer legal ownership of the underlying assets on the ṣukūk holders while asset-based ṣukūk do not. (Asset-based ṣukūk only confer ‘beneficial’ ownership.) In addition, it is somewhat puzzling that one finds no mention here of the fact that ṣukūk need to be first and foremost interest or ribā-free. Indeed, the expression ‘interest’ or ribā cannot be found anywhere in the preface. The index likewise lacks an entry for ribā or interest.

In Chapter 2, “Ṣukuk and the Capital Markets”, Shabnam Mokhtar, Saad Rahman, Hissam Kamal, and Abdulkader Thomas acknowledge that, “sukuk are generally structured to have bond-like characteristics” (p. 19). In relation to the sale of the dividend-generating assets by originators to the ṣukūk holders, the authors state that in a “true sale” the asset is “separated from the accounting and bankruptcy estate of the originator [...]. In a true sale transaction, the ultimate investor will enjoy the risk and reward, or have the right of disposal of the underlying assets” (p. 20).

The authors could have added that in a true sale investors not only have the “right of disposal of the underlying assets”, but come into full, legal ownership of those assets. This sometimes remains unclear, thus causing a lack of transparency about precisely what kind of ownership ṣukūk holders actually have. The type of ownership ṣukūk holders have becomes especially relevant at a time of distress. Investors in asset-backed ṣukūk are legal owners of the underlying assets. This is not the case with investors in asset-based ṣukūk. With asset-based ṣukūk, the ownership of the underlying assets remains, in one form or another, with the originators. Holders of asset-based ṣukūk enjoy merely ‘beneficial’ ownership. They are owners of the usufruct produced by the assets, but not the assets themselves. At a time of distress (default), the investment of the holders of asset-backed ṣukūk is protected. That of the holders of asset-based ṣukūk is not. This is a crucial difference.

In Chapter 6 (“Basel II and Sukuk”), Natalie Schoon observes that ṣukūk which confer “beneficial ownership” allow the underlying assets “to be considered as collateral (asset-backed sukuk) or not (asset-based)” (p. 114). This statement is only partly true. The fact is that ‘beneficial ownership’ does not allow ṣukūk to be considered as ‘asset-backed’ but only as ‘asset-based’. For the ṣukūk to be considered as asset-backed, a true sale of the underlying assets to the ṣukūk holders would have to have taken place. Clearly, this did happen in the vast majority (90 per cent) of the ṣukūk issued, where ṣukūk holders can claim ownership only of the dividends generated by the underlying assets but not of the assets themselves. Should the issuer default on paying the dividends, holders of asset-based ṣukūk have no legal recourse to the assets because they do not own them. Their only recourse is to the originator. Unlike holders of asset-backed ṣukūk, holders of asset-based ṣukūk are
not in a position to recover their capital by selling the underlying assets as the ownership of the assets has remained with the originators.

The difference between asset-based and asset-backed ṣukūk is important, as significant implications follow for investors’ protection at a time of distress. The investment of the holders of asset-backed ṣukūk is protected against loss, as they are the legal owners of the assets. Should a default occur, they can recover their capital investment by selling the assets in the open market. They can do this because they are the legal owners of those assets. Holders of asset-based ṣukūk, by contrast, cannot sell the underlying assets to recover their investment, as they are merely the ‘beneficial’ but not the legal owners of the assets. Thus, holders of asset-based ṣukūk are exposed to the risk that they might lose their investment. From a legal point of view, the status of the holders of asset-based ṣukūk is no different from that of unsecured creditors.

In Chapter 16 (“How Expansive Are the Frontiers”) Rodney Wilson discusses some “unresolved issues” (p. 335). However, while we find optimism about “where the industry is going”, a number of pressing issues receive little or no attention. One of these is investor (ṣukūk buyer) protection. Another is the question of whether ṣukūk should continue replicating conventional bonds or be structured as genuine PLS instruments.

In general, the book raises more questions than it answers. Let us hope the next volume will rectify these shortcomings.

**Bertrand de Speville, Overcoming Corruption: The Essentials**
ISBN: 978-967-5942-03-7

**Zarina Nalla** *International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia*

The title of the book is very reflective of its length and style: brief and succinct almost like a handbook, it is meant for anticorruption decision-makers from the developed and developing world who are too busy to read laborious pieces on the subject.

The author, an English law barrister who went to Hong Kong in 1981, became Solicitor General prior to his appointment as Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) of Hong Kong from 1992 to 1996, just before the city was returned to China. He turned ICAC into a leading anti-graft body admired by international observers. In London, where he is currently based, he became adviser to the Council of Europe’s Multidisciplinary Group on Corruption from 1997 to 2003. He is consulted by a number of international development
institutions. De Speville’s many years of experience in the anti-graft industry provide him with a solid foundation for writing a book such as this. *Overcoming Corruption*, which was launched in Malaysia recently, has also been translated into several European languages, Arabic, and even Pashto.

The author begins with an overview of the ‘basics’ of corruption before highlighting the seven essentials of fighting graft and concludes with a list of possible pitfalls which can arise in this unenviable occupation. The key elements of the blue print, in no particular order, include: political will, values in criminal, administrative and civil law, a national strategy, coordinated action, resources, public support and endurance. In each chapter, de Speville explains every one of the seven prerequisites. His descriptions appear so simple and straightforward, as if to make up for the arduous and thorny road ahead for corruption fighters.

The strategy for fighting corruption comprises three steps: “enforcement of the laws against corruption; second, prevention of corruption by minimizing in systems and procedures, the opportunities for corrupt activity; third, the education of the community about corruption and the development of public support for the fight.” Coordinating those three steps is indeed a challenge but is key to the success of the grand plan. In fact, the coordinating role is so vital that de Speville recommends that a person or body is asked to be committed to this task alone.

He also repeatedly emphasizes the powerful function of the public. People need to be first convinced that the investigation carried out by an anti-corruption agency is credible. If inquiries are not known to be conducted properly, allegations will continue to accumulate and poison the atmosphere. Confidence will then plummet and before long all public figures are perceived to be ‘corrupt’. This state of mind is pervasive in many countries where people are unsure of the work of anti-graft bodies.

At the book launch, this particular point was supported by Chief Commissioner Datuk Abu Kassim Mohamed, head of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), who has recently begun the process of involving credible and well-known citizens in the work of the commission. A committee of such individuals will decide if investigations have been carried out successfully in a particular case and have the mandate to close the case or continue the investigation. Work in Hong Kong, Singapore and Botswana has revealed that most investigations do not result in prosecution. This is because of the absence of the necessary evidence or a mistaken allegation.

Additionally, de Speville explains that many nations underestimate how critical it is to educate the public about corrupt practices, core values, and prevention. Countries can utilise the mass media and also direct face to face communication to convey the important message. He realises that the most effective channel is through community leaders who are well-placed to speak to their members or congregations on the importance of the issue at hand.
Interestingly, the author highlights the conceptual difference between good governance and anticorruption work. He states that they “are not at all the same thing,” because the former is concerned with operations but the latter is really about preserving certain values that the community holds dear. He warns that governments who fail to make the distinction continue making reforms that are doomed to fail as they are repeatedly undermined by pre-existing corrupt practices. Moreover, the core values on corruption should be clearly stated in the criminal law of any modern state, he points out. Often laws against corruption are inadequate because they are unintelligible and convoluted.

The main prerequisites of any anticorruption agency are accountability and independence. Proven best practices show that the leadership of such an organisation should be of ministerial or permanent secretary rank to be effective when dealing with all three elements of the strategy identified earlier. This position should be occupied by a candidate selected by the head of the state after consulting the leader of the opposition.

De Speville prescribes six lines of accountability which would ensure that an agency is answerable for its conduct – to the executive, the legislature, the public prosecutor, the courts, the advisory committees, and directly to the public via the media. The agency should be required to only deal with criminalities that are directly connected to or facilitated by corruption. Dealing with offences outside its control will only undermine the raison d’être of an agency created specially to address a particular type of crime.

Experience has confirmed that a nation’s past has the potent ability to destroy anticorruption efforts or policies. This for mainly two reasons: first, those with vested interests will use their influence to ensure that the war against corruption does not take off; secondly, as the flood gate opens to years of corruption, the volume of cases may overwhelm officers and discourage them from continuing with their mission. The only salvation would be for the leadership of the country to decide at the outset, how to deal with what has already taken place. Much political will is required to manage corrupt and powerful individuals and also to decide when and how to successfully accommodate past misconducts. There are moral, practical, and political justifications to consider for such a course.

Charting and walking down the road out of corruption is a painful process, but it is comforting to know that “it will be more than compensated for when the results begin to show, when the country’s revenue streams begin to flow again into the treasury, when citizens begin to realise that things can be different, that the cost of corruption does not have to be part of the cost of living or doing business.”

Measuring progress is best done by way of public opinion surveys done independently of the anticorruption body which should examine: the public
opinion of the situation in the country, the public perception of the local anti-graft organisation, and the community’s individual attitude towards corrupt practices.

It would have been ideal, if the author could have drawn upon his own immense practical experiences and highlighted some key case studies – without revealing actual names. Real cases leave a lasting trail.

Finally, de Speville has dedicated his book to “To all those who long for freedom from corruption,” and this clearly includes every member of every society who cares for their nation. Therefore, this simple book deserves our full attention.

Response to Daniel Martin Varisco: Review of Christoph Marcinkowski (transl., intro.): *Measures and Weights in the Islamic World. An English Translation of Professor Walther Hinz’s Handbook ‘Islamische Maße und Gewichte’,* with a foreword by Professor Clifford Edmund Bosworth, FBA


**Christoph Marcinkowski**  
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Since its publication, *Measures and Weights in the Islamic World* has established itself as a standard work – at least in the English-speaking Muslim world.

There can be no doubt that reviews, when done out of purely professional interest, might be considered a valuable tool for raising scholarly standards. The reviewer is not personally known to me as we are apparently working in different fields – Varisco (Hofstra University, Hempstead NY, United States) seems to be largely involved in anthropology, with emphasis on Yemen, whereas I have so far contributed toward the study of contemporary and historical Shi’ism as well as security issues and Iranian Studies. However, the overall tenor of the wording of Varisco’s review as well as what he deigned to present to his audience as ‘facts’ do require a stern response1 in order to re-establish a climate of mutual respect and fairness among colleagues. For matters of brevity, I should like to focus in the following on only some selected issues:

(i) his criticism of the purpose and usefulness of the work under review;
(ii) matters of translation;
(iii) some basic advice on collegiality and fairness.

To begin with (i), Varisco (pp. 333–4) doubted the purpose of my translation of a work that had been published in German by the late Professor Walther Hinz several...
decades back. The reviewer considers my translation “unnecessary”, as – in his view – a basic “working knowledge” of German could be expected from scholars (sic!) “who should either know a little German or could with minimal effort consult the Hinz original with a basic German dictionary” (ibid.).

In response, I should like to mention that Hinz’s intricate style might often tell otherwise. More seriously, however, anyone who is browsing the bibliographies of works published in particular in the United States – at least in Islamic studies – will find that references given therein to German sources are often reproduced (“copied-pasted”?) faultily. To the point: although this might not apply to earlier periods of rather more thorough European scholarship on Islam, the purpose of a translation of a scholarly work from German into English during our times does serve an obvious purpose and needs no justification whatsoever.

More grave, however, is Varisco’s erroneous suggestion to the reader that my translation was targeted primarily at a scholarly audience in the Western Islamic studies industry. I cannot help but consider this a falsification of the facts: in my own introduction I have clearly and unmistakably stated that

 [...] during my teaching I have observed that my students face problems with regard to converting measures and weights, which they frequently encounter [...]. Since they usually have no command of the German language, they are not aware of Professor Hinz’s momentous contribution. I thus felt compelled to prepare my own ‘teaching-material’.2

The book has thus explicitly been published by me with a renowned Muslim institution of higher learning – ISTAC – and with a mainly Muslim audience in mind, although I could have done easily otherwise. It is thus the producing of wrong premises and their presentation as ‘facts’ to prospective readers of my book which has to be branded here.

On a more positive note, however, Varisco has – rightly – pointed out (and has quoted to that effect various sources) that new work has appeared since the publication of Hinz’s German book – sources though that are mostly scattered over several journals. However, again, and in line with what has been said above in terms of the target group, I have never claimed that this translation would be the dernier cri. The audience was mainly restricted to undergraduate students in institutions of Islamic learning in the English-speaking parts of the Muslim world in order to provide them with basic knowledge of their heritage. (Other points of the reviewer’s criticism against Hinz’s (!) work shall not be addressed here.)

(ii) The reviewer had also something to criticise on the translation itself (p. 334), whereas other scholars of rather more senior standing than Varisco seem not to have found any serious faults with it. Thus it does not come as a surprise that Professor Clifford Edmund Bosworth FBA, for instance, one of Britain’s leading scholars in Arabic and Islamic studies, whose German is excellent, states in his foreword to

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my translation, that he is “very happy to commend” it as Hinz’s original German version “has stood the test of time and has not been replaced”.3 Again, Professor Lawrence I. Conrad of Hamburg University in Germany writes in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society that

[…] Marcinkowski’s translation is clear and accurate. He has incorporated into the text the revisions made by Hinz in his second edition, and for non-specialist readers he has also added explanatory notes on such matters as terms and names of cities, dynasties and individuals. The English rendering is therefore a welcome aid […]4

However, it is even more embarrassing and unfortunate that the American reviewer has been trying his hand (p. 334) at ‘correcting’ the German of the translator who is a native speaker of that language – a fact that might have been unknown to him. This assumes, at times, strange forms when, for instance, he is criticising my translation of German third-person references, such as “Sein erweiterter Wiederabdruck an dieser Stelle […]”, by erroneously referring “sein” to Hinz, when actually an earlier referred to scholarly article is meant.5 There are three genders in German, and in the above case “sein” substitutes a neuter (rather than a masculine noun or personal name, as erroneously assumed by the learned reviewer). This and other similar mistaken judgments leave Varisco’s readers in a state of uncertainty in terms of his own German language credentials. In short, as I do not wish to venture doubting Varisco’s knowledge of American-English, I should like to expect from him the same in return with regard to my own mother tongue – German. (By the way, on p. 334 of his review it should be “centre français” not “française”…)

Regarding (iii), i.e., the regrettable tenor of his review, some examples of which have already been given above, I would like to state the following: The study of a civilisation other than one’s own requires a much deeper, finer, almost ‘insider-like’ understanding of its ‘working mechanisms’ than, let’s say, a mere appearance on the internet or elsewhere in the guise (and dress) of an eccentric Lawrence of Arabia-style ‘friend of the Muslims’ or than some comments on an online blogger site could offer. In terms of the genre of ‘negative’ review (radd in Arabic and traditional Islamic learning, but not entirely congruent with it), this would mean to retain always a respectful language – in spite of often harsh criticism of the topics at hand which, nevertheless, should be always based only on what an ‘opponent’ (or ‘reviewed’ author) has actually written (and not what he has not). Anything else would be either sharh, hāshiyah, tafsīr, or alike – ‘commentary’ or ‘interpretation’ etc. – but not scholarly review. It goes without saying that, aside from other requirements, a reviewer should be well-versed himself in the subject-matter of a reviewed work of another scholar and that the ethnic background or the religion professed by a ‘reviewed’ author should not play any part. I am saying this in

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particular with an eye on the current issues and misunderstandings between the United States and the Islamic world.

I should like to close with some words of sincere advice (nasîḥah) on proper conduct (adab) by the Ḥaḍramī sage ʿAbd-Allâh b. ʿAlawî al-Ḥaddâd (d. 1720), who said once that

[...] signs of humility include a liking for obscurity, dislike of fame, [and] acceptance of truth whether it be from a lowly or noble person.6

This humility would, of course, apply to both, the reviewer and the reviewed.

Notes

1. Contrary to professional academic practice, the Journal of the American Oriental Society, the publisher of Varisco’s review, has declined to publish the rejoinder – although it has done so in the past with regard to American authors.
5. Marcinkowski (transl., intro.), Measures and Weights, 1, n. 1 (emphases mine).
EVENTS AND SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

King Abdullah I bin Hussein International Award 2010 for Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali

On 29 September 2010, Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali received the King Abdullah I bin Hussein International Award 2010 from His Majesty King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein of Jordan at a ceremony in Amman. The award is conferred in recognition of Professor Kamali’s outstanding intellectual and academic contributions towards serving Islam and the Muslims, and his active role in the fulfilment of the mission of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought.

The purpose of the Royal Aal al-Bayt is to serve Islam and humanity at large. Among its objectives are: promoting awareness of Islam and Islamic thought, highlighting the Islamic intellectual contribution and its impact on human civilisation, deepening dialogue and fostering cooperation between the schools of Islamic jurisprudence, highlighting the achievements of Āl al-Bayt (Household of the Prophet) and their calling for a ‘middle ground’ (wasatiyyah), moderation, and tolerance, fostering the encounter of Muslim scholars, the strengthening of their

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intellectual links and exchange of opinions, and cooperating with research centres, institutes, academic entities and universities in accordance with the objectives of the Aal al-Bayt Institute.

(Report by Christoph Marcinkowski, IAIS Malaysia)

**International Conference ‘Family as a Value in Terms of Religion, Tradition, and Modernity’**
**(26–27 November, Antalya, Turkey)**

This two-day event took place in Antalya, a city on the Mediterranean coast of southwestern Turkey, and was organised by the Women’s Platform, Dialogue Eurasia Platform and the Intra-Cultures Dialogue Platform, which are sub-organisations of Turkey’s Journalists and Writers Foundation (GYV).

The conference addressed the following topics:

- **Anthropological-ethnological approaches**: Defining the concept of ‘family’ from earlier times up to today.
- **The concept of ‘family’ in terms of sociology**: Different approaches to ‘family’ in terms of social concerns.
- **The concept of ‘family’ in terms of religion**: Different approaches to ‘family’ in terms of religious and sectarian concerns.
- **The concept of ‘family’ in terms of law**: What does the modern judicial system bring to society? What kind of relationship was formed or not formed with traditional family?
- **The concept of ‘family’ in terms of ethics**: How should we define ‘family’ in a period of corruption of values? What are the remnants of the traditional family that are transferred to modern family? What kind of area does family belong to in terms of values?
- **The concept of ‘family’ in terms of psychology**: How family is perceived by individuals psychologically. How individuals are affected by different aspects of the family in terms of psychology.
- **The concept of ‘family’ in terms of demography**: Whenever there is an economic problem which seems to cause poverty in a society the institution of family is attacked directly on the basis of rising population. Families are immediately put under pressure to reduce the number of their children.

At the conference, Datuk Osman Bakar, Deputy CEO of IAIS Malaysia and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy in Kuala Lumpur’s University of Malaya,
presented a paper entitled “Family as a Concept and as an Institution in Islamic Social Thought: A Theological-Philosophical Perspective.”

His paper discussed the concept of family in Islamic social philosophy and its place and role as a social institution. According to Professor Bakar, the idea of family first arose in human thought with the need to categorise and differentiate human relations, particularly blood relations. He pointed that, in the Islamic perspective, family is not merely a social institution in the secular sense of the word; family also possesses a sacred character. It is regarded as a religious institution in the sense that it exists to serve as an instrument to help man realise the twin goals of his existence in accordance with God’s cosmic plan. The twin goals in question are of servitude (ʿubūdiyyah) and vicegerency (khilāfah) and equivalently of man’s perfect relationship with God (hablum min Allāh) and man’s perfect relationship with fellow men (hablum min al-nās). Islam views family as the most fundamental social unit and institution insofar as the human pursuit of these twin goals is concerned. The relation of the family to society is analogous to the relation of each biological cell to the body. Societal health presupposes family health. A crisis in the family institution can have grave consequences on the wellbeing of society as a whole. According to Professor Bakar, the role of the sharīʿah in Islam is, among others, to provide guidance to human beings to secure a healthy and happy family in which each member is taught and strives to be a good servant of God and also a good citizen. His presentation also touched on the idea of the ‘chosen family’ as conceived by Islam and its spiritual and leadership role in Islamic history.

(Report by Christoph Marcinkowski, IAIS Malaysia)

Resolution of the 'International Workshop for Islamic Scholars and Experts in Modern Biotechnology on Agri biotechnology – Sharīʿah Compliance’
(Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia, 1–2 December 2010)

The world population has almost tripled since 1960 and the percentage of undernourished people has also increased. Besides being net importers of food and agricultural products, members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) are mostly least developed countries, characterised by rampant hunger and extreme poverty whereby close to 2.7 billion poor people spend 80 per cent of their income on food. Food availability and accessibility for the Muslims should therefore be addressed to identify strategies to solve this problem in the midst of increased population and food and energy demand, decreasing food production resources and climate change.

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The writer of these lines went to this workshop with a degree of circumspection about the sharīʿah-compliancy aspects of genetically modified (GM) food and agro-industries. Having reviewed the scientific data to the effect that about one-third or more of food grains would be lost to insects had it not been for the scientific intervention to make the seeds insect resistant – instead of using more insecticide chemicals. Similarly without the aid of benign scientific intervention the issues of food sufficiency and security could reach unmanageable proportions. This writer chaired the inaugural session of the workshop and also made a presentation on relevant sharīʿah guidelines of concern to the workshop agenda. He returned from the workshop with a sense of conviction that agribiotechnology observes duly-organised criteria of scientific accuracy and thus merits recognition and support from the sharīʿah perspective.

Crops developed through modern methods of plant breeding termed as biotechnology (biotech) or genetically modified crops such as rice, soybean, corn, rapeseed and cotton with improved quality and quantity traits available in the market (biotic stress and herbicide tolerance) have been accepted and are being cultivated globally in 25 countries (in 2009) and are being used as food and feed in the majority of other countries. Efforts to improve crop plants’ tolerance to abiotic stresses such as drought and salinity (which are more relevant to the needs of OIC countries) are also ongoing. Records show that almost all members of the OIC have been importing these commodities from the large GM crop producing countries. In continuing promotion of global acceptance of biotech crops, OIC Members and Islamic scholars should be aware of GM and its benefits to accept the biotech agricultural products as ḥalāl for the society.

With a focus on alleviating the existing food problems and poverty, the ‘International Workshop for Islamic Scholars and Experts in Modern Biotechnology on Agribiotechnology – Sharīʿah Compliance’ held in Penang, Malaysia, on 1–2 December 2010, agreed upon the following resolutions:

1. Islam and science are complementary and support beneficial scientific innovations for mankind. Modern biotechnology and genetic engineering are important developments that merit promotion in all OIC Members. Regulatory measures should facilitate the acceptance and use of GM products particularly by Muslims. Genetic modification and GM products are ḥalāl as long as the sources from which they originate are ḥalāl. (The only ḥarām cases are limited to products derived from ḥarām origin retaining their original characteristics and are not substantially changed.)

2. Modern biotechnology and genetic engineering are methods of plant improvement and intrinsically are not different from other plant improvement techniques from the ḥalāl point of view.
3. In ensuring food security, our Islamic obligations require us to urge all Muslim countries, governments, international organisations and research institutions, to support research and development and use of modern biotechnology, genetic engineering and their products.

4. Because of their positive impacts on agriculture and the urgency of food security for the Muslim ummah, promotion of modern biotechnology and genetic engineering are considered farḍ al-kifāyah (collective obligation) and should not be neglected from the sharīʿah point of view.

5. Public awareness and education on modern biotechnology and genetic engineering, demand continuous interaction with the Islamic scholars, scientists and the general public.

6. Transparent and complete scientific information should be available for the interested stakeholders for informed decision making.

(Report by Mohammad Hashim Kamali, IAIS Malaysia)
NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Abdul Karim Abdullah (Leslie Terebessy) is Assistant Research Fellow at IAIS and holds dual Canadian and Slovak citizenship. He earned his MA in political philosophy from the University of Toronto, Canada (1999), his BA (Hons) from the University of Guelph, Canada (1976), in political science and economics, and an MEd (1986) from the University of Toronto’s Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) majoring in moral and religious education. He also served as lecturer, editor, writer and coordinator of the English programme at University Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM). Current IAIS projects involve research into the causes of the current financial crisis, critical thinking in Muslim societies, and (jointly with Sheila Ainon Yusof) sukūk defaults. Among his publications are (ed.) Islamic Studies at World Institutions of Higher Learning (Kuala Lumpur: USIM, 2004) and Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills Among Muslim Students (forthcoming IAIS Monograph).

Salam Abdallah is Assistant Professor of Management Information Systems at Abu Dhabi University, Al Ain Campus, United Arab Emirates. Dr Abdallah is known as an IS&T academic and practitioner both in Western Australia and the Middle East. Salam is an advocate of open source concepts and he is an active participant on the Global Text Project and Education Foundation of Europe. He has a PhD in Information Systems from Curtin University of Technology, Australia, and a Masters Degree in Industrial Engineering, specialising in Computer Application from the Cranfield Institute of Technology, United Kingdom. He is a prolific author; among his recent publications are “Islamic Ethics: An Exposition for Resolving ICT Ethical Dilemmas”, Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society 8, no. 3 (2010), 289–301, and (with Ashraf Khalil) “Internet as an Empowerment Tool in Conflict Zones: The Case of Gaza”, International Journal of Arab Culture, Management and Sustainable Development 1, no. 3 (2010), 276–84.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali is the Founding Chairman and CEO of IAIS Malaysia. He graduated from Kabul University, before going on to complete an LLM in Comparative Law and a PhD in Islamic and Middle Eastern Law in the University of London from 1969 to 1979. Kamali was a Professor of Islamic Law and Jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) (1985–2007) and also Dean of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and
Civilisation (ISTAC). He has taught at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, and has also held Visiting Professorships at Capital University, Ohio, and at the Wissenschaftskolleg, Berlin. Professor Kamali was a signatory of the international ‘Common Word’ document between Christians and Muslims and was a member of the Constitution Review Commission of Afghanistan (2003) and he also served as an expert on the new constitutions of Iraq, the Maldives and Iraq. He has published about 140 academic articles and 20 books, many of which are standard textbooks at English-speaking universities worldwide.

Jamhari Makruf is the Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs, State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia. He received his Master and PhD in Anthropology from the Australian National University (ANU). His doctoral dissertation was entitled “Popular Voices of Islam: Discourse of Religious Orientation in South Central Java”. He has undertaken several studies on the issue of democracy and the rise of ‘Islamic radicalism’ in Indonesia. He has written numerous articles on Islam as well as on religion and society, and co-edited with Fuad Jabali the book *IAIN dan modernisasi Islam di Indonesia* (The Role of Islamic Higher Education in Modernising Islam in Indonesia; Jakarta, 2001). His latest book is *Gerakan Salafi radikal Islam di Indonesia* (The Salafi Radical Movement in Indonesia; Jakarta, 2004, co-edited with Jajang Jahroni). He co-authored, with Jemma Parson, “Islamic Legal Education in Indonesia: Tradition and Transition”, in: Stacey Steele and Kathryn Taylor (eds), *Legal Education in Asia: Globalization, Change and Contexts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 298–325.

Christoph Marcinkowski, award-winning German scholar of Islamic and Middle Eastern, as well as Southeast Asian and Security Studies, is Principal Research Fellow and Co-Chair (Publications) at IAIS Malaysia. He holds an MA in Iranian Studies, Islamic Studies and Political Science from the Free University of Berlin, Germany, and a PhD in Islamic Civilisation from ISTAC, where he served also as Associate Professor of Islamic History. He has held numerous distinguished fellowships, such as at New York’s Columbia University, Switzerland’s University of Fribourg, Singapore’s Nanyang Technological University, the National University of Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur’s University of Malaya. Professor Marcinkowski has published eleven books, among them *Religion and Politics in Iraq* (Singapore: PN, 2004), *The Islamic World and the West* (Berlin: LIT, 2009), *Shi’ite Identities* (Berlin: LIT, 2010), *Islam in Europe* (Kuala Lumpur: IAIS, 2011) and *Malaysia and the European Union* (forthcoming, 2011), as well as about 100 articles and commissioned book chapters.
Zarina Nalla is currently a Policy and Project Development Consultant with IAIS Malaysia. She holds a BA (First Class Honours, 1994) in Islamic Studies and Political Science from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), an MA (1996) in Economics and International Relations from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and an MBA (2002) from the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. She was a Researcher at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia (ISIS), attached to then CEO and Chairman of ISIS, Dr Noordin Sopiee. In 2007, she assisted Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali in the establishment of IAIS Malaysia and served as its Chief Operating Officer until 2010. She helped organise and lead IAIS’ study on what is known in Malaysia as the ‘conversion issue’ – the debut project of the Islam and Policy Unit (IPU).

Shah M. Nister Jahan Kabir is a PhD candidate in the Department of Media, Film and Communication at the University of Otago, New Zealand. His current research focuses on the representation of Islam in Australasian newspapers (the topic of his dissertation being “Media Constructions of Muslims in Australasia: A Content Analysis of Selected Newspapers between 2005–2008”). Nister completed a Masters of Philosophy (MPhil) in the field of journalism in the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Queensland, Australia. He is the author of the book The Iraq War in Bangladeshi Newspapers (Saarbrücken [Germany]: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, 2008).

Sobhi Rayan is a Lecturer in the Department of Education at the Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education, Baqa al-Gharbiyya, Haifa District, Israel. Most recently, in 2010, he was a Visiting Fellow at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University, a top graduate school of public affairs in Syracuse NY, United States, doing research on Civic Engagement in academic institutions in the Middle East. His other research interest is the concept of multiculturalism in Islam and educating students within the realm of human values. He also has an interest in the benefits of dialogue and how people of different religious beliefs can find common ground, addressing conflict through peace building rather than violence. Dr Rayan earned his PhD from Haifa University, Israel. His dissertation was entitled, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Criticism of Aristotelian Logic”.

Tengku Ahmad Hazri is a researcher at IAIS Malaysia. He obtained his LLB (Hons) from the University of London and was subsequently attached to the International Movement for a Just World (JUST) (of which he is currently a member). He later joined the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC) in Kuala Lumpur for his graduate studies in Islamic thought, researching in particular
the philosophy of the Indian Muslim scholar and reformer Shāh Walī-Allāh of Delhi (d. 1762). He is also active online as a blogger – albeit irregularly – writing mainly general philosophical commentaries on contemporary issues. He also has contributed reviews and other writings to the Malaysia press, Amazon.com and other websites.

Eric Winkel is since May 2009 Principal Research Fellow at IAIS Malaysia. After obtaining his PhD in Government and International Studies from the University of South Carolina in the United States he worked with the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in Herndon, Virginia, and later the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) on ideas of Islamisation. He has taught at universities in the United States, Mexico, and Pakistan as a Senior Fulbright Scholar and again recently at the National College of Arts in Lahore. His primary study focus over the last 20 years was on Ibn ʿArabī’s (d. 1240) Futūḥāt al-makkiyah. His publications include Islam and the Living Law (Oxford University Press, 1996), Mysteries of Purity: Ibn al-ʿArabī’s Asrār al-Ṭahārah (Cross Cultural Publications, 1995), and a novel, Damascus Steel (CAR&D, 2001). His current work is an attempt to connect the world of the new sciences with the study of civilisational renewal.
Aims of the Journal

Islam and Civilisational Renewal (ICR) was established in order to link up the unique Islamic tradition of more than 1,400 years of dialogue, pluralism, and coexistence with other world civilisations.

ICR advances civilisational renewal, based on Malaysia’s Islam Hadhari (Civilisational Islam) initiative and its ten component principles:

1. Faith in God and piety
2. A just and trustworthy government
3. A free and independent people
4. A rigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge
5. Balanced and comprehensive economic development
6. A good quality of life
7. Protection of the rights of women and minorities
8. Cultural and moral integrity
9. Safeguarding the natural resources and the environment
10. Strong defence capabilities

ICR aims at becoming a platform of policy-relevant contemporary research that will contribute to a better understanding of Islam’s universal teachings through inter-faith and inter-civilisational dialogue.
CALL FOR PAPERS

Islam and Civilisational Renewal (ICR) invites scholarly contributions of articles, reviews, or viewpoints which offer pragmatic approaches and concrete policy guidelines for Malaysia, the OIC countries, civic non-governmental organisations, and the private corporate sector. The principal research focus of IAIS is to advance civilisational renewal through informed research and interdisciplinary reflection with a policy orientation for the wellbeing of Muslim communities, as well as reaching out to non-Muslims by dialogue over mutual needs and concerns.

Our enquiry and recommendations seek to be realistic and practical, yet simultaneously rooted in Islam’s intellectual and spiritual resources, Muslim political and social thought, inter-faith exchanges, inter-civilisational studies, and global challenges of modernity.

Based at the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) in Kuala Lumpur, ICR’s inaugural issue appeared in October 2008 with contributions from distinguished scholars including Mohammed Hashim Kamali, Osman Bakar, Syed Farid Alatas and Christoph Marcinkowski.

ICR invites contributions on the following topics:

• issues of good governance and Islamic law reform in Muslim societies
• science, technology, development and the environment
• minorities and culture-specific studies
• ethical, religious or faith-based issues posed by modernity
• inter-faith, inter-civilisational, and Sunni–Shi’ah dialogue and rapprochement.

A complete list of topics may be consulted at: http://www.iais.org.my/research.html. Contributions should be submitted as an e-mail attachment in Word for Windows (Mac files must be converted) to: journal@iais.org.my as well as a hard copy (double-spaced and consecutively numbered on one side only) to: Associate Editor – ICR, International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia, Jalan Elmu, Off Jalan Universiti, 59100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ICR is published in English and it is essential that to help ensure a smooth peer-review process and quick publication all manuscripts are submitted in grammatically correct English. For this purpose, non-native English speakers should have their manuscripts checked before submitting them for consideration. The Editorial Board holds the right to make any necessary changes in the approved articles for publication upon consultation with the writers.

Islam and Civilisational Renewal
GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Islam and Civilisational Renewal (ICR) publishes original research works. Contributors to ICR should take the following guidelines into consideration:

Form

• Articles should not have been published elsewhere or sent for publication. Articles that have been a part of a dissertation can be considered if there is a major modification and adjustment.
• Articles should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words. Authors should also include a 100 to 150 word abstract, outlining the aims, scope and conclusions but not containing sentences from the article. Book reviews should not exceed 1,200 words, and Viewpoints 1,500 words.
• All submissions must include a separate page with the author’s name and current affiliation as they should appear in the journal and contact information (e-mail address, phone and fax numbers, and mailing address: all to remain confidential).
• Contributors will receive a free copy of the Journal issue in which their article appears.
• Authors are requested to extract actionable policy recommendations from their research – preferably in brief bullet point format in the conclusion.
• Languages based on Arabic script should be transliterated following the system applied in the Journal of Islamic Studies, Oxford (see Transliteration Table). In terms of capitalisation in languages other than English in bibliographical references, authors are encouraged to consult the Chicago Manual of Style (ch. 10).

Content

• The Journal is devoted to civilisational renewal, in particular of Muslim communities, while, at the same time, reaching out to non-Muslims.
• Submitted articles should be scholarly, but also accessible to a wider audience.
• Articles should be of relevance to contemporary practical issues faced by Muslim communities, such as Islam and its encounter with the West, but also science, technology and ethics.
# TRANSLITERATION TABLE

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## Vowels

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## Urdu Aspirated Sounds

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. ħ, gh. For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.
SUBSCRIPTION RATES 2011

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