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OCCASIONAL PAPERS

8

THE ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Tāhā J. al ‘Alwānī

Translated into English by
Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE of ISLAMIC THOUGHT

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- *Al Ijtihād wa al Taqlīd fī al Islām* [Legal Reasoning and Imitation in Islam].
- *Huqūq al Muttaham fī al Islām* [Rights of the Accused in Islam].
- *Adab al Ikhtilāf fī al Islām* [The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam].
- *Uṣūl al Fiqh al Islāmī* [Source Methodology in Islamic Jurisprudence].

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- *The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam*.
- *Source Methodology in Islamic Jurisprudence: Uṣūl al Fiqh al Islāmī*.

The Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today

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THE OCCASIONAL PAPERS SERIES

The publication program of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) has already addressed important issues in the field of Islamic thought and the Islamization of Knowledge. In this respect a number of books have already appeared in several languages under fifteen main series: *Academic Dissertations*; *Accessing the Islamic Intellectual Heritage*; *Concepts and Terminology*; *Human Development*; *Indices*; *Islamic Methodology*; *Islamization of Culture*; *Islamization of Knowledge*; *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought*; *Lectures*; *Occasional Papers*; *Perspectives on Islamic Thought*; *Reform Movements and Methodologies of Change*; *Research Monographs* and *Rasa'il Islamiyah al Ma'rifah* [Studies in the Islamization of Knowledge].

The *Occasional Papers* series, published by the Institute's London Office, covers a number of research papers, articles and lectures from the Institute's worldwide program as well as from Muslim scholars willing to make contributions. These are presented individually in the form of booklets that can be easily read or referred to. It is hoped that the booklets will reach students, scholars, and specialists as well as major sections of the world's Muslims alike in order to generate a fruitful debate on the vital issue of Islamization, and to create an awareness of the intellectual crisis in its various shapes and forms, while encouraging an active role in the proposed course of action and solution. This series is also translated into other languages.

The eighth paper in this series, *The Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today*, was first published in the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences (AJISS)*, Vol. 12, No. 1.

The use of Islamic terminology in transliteration is a policy of the IIIT. Some of the terms used are untranslatable, while others are so important that the Institute feels that familiarity with them is necessary for a better understanding of Islamic issues. These terms have been footnoted once or sometimes explained briefly between brackets. All those which have not yet been accepted in Anglo-Saxon dictionaries are in italic. As many of these occur

more than once, readers are advised to refer to the relevant footnotes whenever necessary.

When mentioning dates the Islamic one comes first, separated from the Gregorian one by a slash. When an Islamic date is mentioned alone, it is followed by AH.

The translation of the Qur'an used in this series is that of 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī (Amana Corporation, revised, 1989). However, we made changes to verses quoted from it whenever we deemed it necessary for the sake of elucidation and precision of meaning.

IIIT, London
1416/1995

Editors' Note

In the welter of today's philosophies, claims and counterclaims, Muslims, indeed people worldwide, are confused and disoriented. Unable to discern a clear or convincing truth about the ultimate questions that trouble their souls, many have allowed their intellectual and spiritual integrity to be swept along by the daily rush of the consumeristic traffic. Others have surrendered long-guarded psyches to the fantasies and delusions of otherworldliness and extremism. The "balance" (and the "middle course") preached by Islam is lost, except to a few.

However, being an egalitarian faith and a holistic way of life, Islam would not give the "few" the satisfaction of individual salvation in the midst of general despair or misplaced euphoria. Indeed, a mark of an "enlightened" person (and a conscientious Muslim) is the sense of empathy, even oneness and mutual dependence, a believer should have or develop within the fraternity of faith—a fraternity that should not be hermetically sealed against the larger world community with all its possibilities and challenges, as well as duty due to it.

So it is both a "religious" obligation and a free act of will to reach out for one's fellow believers **and** fellow human beings with whatever insight or learning one has attained or accumulated. This is to be done in a spirit of humility and with a readiness to accept other views and perspectives if proven valid and conducive to the realization of the envisaged goals and a further discernment of truth.

With this perspective in mind, the present paper marks a watershed. It has its own point of departure in the seminal and epoch-making book, *The Islamization of Knowledge*, 1982. In its time, that book was offered as a "timely" gift to an Ummah beset by calamities from within and without, an Ummah that was nevertheless aspiring to regain its balance and resume its world role. Momentous events have since taken place in the world, but the condition of the Ummah remains unchanged, in both the severity of its plight and the pressing need to rise to its destiny.

Indeed, the gravity of the Ummah's decline and the enormity of the task of salvaging its future were prime movers behind the formulation of the 1982 declaration, which, while taking a hard, cold look at the causes and manifestations of the malaise, still spiritedly urged the Ummah to rise to its destiny and reap the harvest promised for the diligent and conscientious. The note of optimism was certainly not out of place. Muslims are enjoined not to allow their psyches to be consumed by despair, however implacable the malady might be. Besides being inimical to the very spirit of faith, despondency is likely to sap the energy needed for continual struggle and creativity, which are essential to humankind's civilizing role on earth.

Nor was that dose of optimism proven fatuous by later developments. The response to the 1982 statement and Work Plan was truly phenomenal. Many have been the seminars, conferences, studies, and publications devoted since then to the issue of the Islamization of Knowledge. The movement, constantly acquiring more insights, breadth and refinement with the passage of time and the contribution of many men and women, has now become a central issue of debate among Muslim scholars worldwide. The idiom itself has evolved from being a strange coinage to be defended, frowned upon or overhauled, to becoming a byword. By design or not, it has served as a fulcrum for a robust exchange of views, and seems destined to continue to do so.

Nevertheless, the need for a further clarification and updating of the original "manifesto" has been felt for some time. This paper sets out to do that, among other things. It shares with the 1982 formulation of principles a rational examination of the Ummah's malaise, however pervasive, and the possible solutions, however demanding in terms of effort and time. It partakes of the original declaration's belief in the immense, though largely untapped, potential of the Ummah in its fourteenth Hijra century, but it departs from the inevitable simplicities, rigidities, and polarities (East vs. West, etc.) of the original manifesto and its somewhat austere Work Plan. Trekking a path of its own, this paper offers a number of valuable insights. These are insights gained from a long engagement with Islamic as well as global issues, with

traditional as well as contemporary concerns, with work from within the social sciences and outside of them. It not only surveys the field along with the powers and challenges at work, but also charts a way out of the present impasse. More immediately, it offers an updated review of the progress of the Islamization of Knowledge project and a timely clarification of the very concept itself. Clearly, that concept, though responsible for generating a worldwide debate, even action at times, has been so often misinterpreted and/or inflated since its inception in 1982 that a need for such elucidation has been called for, and is now met.

This does not, however, mean that the task of the Islamization of Knowledge will henceforth be made crystal-clear and effortless. Rather, and as the concept of the Islamization of Knowledge advocates (and requires), there will always be new and different interpretations.

As matters now stand, the Ummah has still to make up its collective mind about which direction it ought to take. Arguments rage as to whether it should reinvolve (or clone) the past with all its pristine purity and glory or allow the tide of modernity to rush into and bail out the partly stagnant waters which have generally characterized the Muslim intellectual endeavor for the past few centuries. Obviously, the argument put forward by this paper is concerned to see the Ummah in tune with its past but working for its present and future with skill and clarity of vision. The fervent, but reasoned, appeal for the "two readings"—of both God's Book and His Cosmos—seems destined to provoke as much debate as the original slogan of the Islamization of Knowledge. Such debate must be anticipated with joy—though more is required.

The gradational nature of the Islamizing project is all too obvious, and was never far from the minds of the authors of the 1982 declaration. It would certainly have been juvenile to think otherwise. And yet there is a need now to stress, as the present paper does, the ambitious (but also imperative) nature of the enterprise. For, despite the highly commendable effort invested in further elaboration and, in some brave instances, attempted implementation of the concept, the Islamization of Knowledge

remains at an initial, some might even say, prenatal stage. Much work needs to be done, many talents galvanized and resources pooled, institutions set up or reorganized, etc., before a truly genuine and sustainable realization of the concept can be said to have begun. Such a realistic vision needs to accompany and inform every stage of the way. To be lulled into a false or premature sense of achievement is a costly setback at a time when standing idly by for a day may have serious consequences for decades to come.

Introduction

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

Essential to the process of development are an ongoing critique and the attempt to derive particulars from the general. The initial articulation of the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking and the Work Plan (1982) was therefore produced in general terms. At that early stage, the focus was on criticism of both traditional Muslim and Western methodologies, as a way of introducing the Islamization of Knowledge and explaining its significance. The first edition of the *Islamization of Knowledge* pointed out the principles essential to any attempt to fashion an Islamic paradigm of knowledge based on the world view of Islam and the unique concepts and factors that constitute it. In a very brief manner, the intellectual aspect of the Islamization of Knowledge was also addressed in that early work. Despite all that, however, the work was directed toward the practical aspects of producing textbooks for use in teaching the social sciences, as this was considered the priority at a time when the Ummah was losing its best minds to the West and the Western cultural and intellectual invasion. Accordingly, twelve steps were identified as the basis from which the preparation of introductory texts in the social sciences might proceed.

The Work Plan and the principles elaborated in the first edition of the *Islamization of Knowledge* were met with a great deal of enthusiasm, as these represented a novel intellectual endeavor. There was wide acceptance for the new ideas, and many scholars were quick to endorse them. Indeed, the popularity and appeal of the Islamization of Knowledge were such that several academic institutions immediately attempted to give practical form to its concepts. Some people, however, were unable to discern the essential methodological issues in the Islamization of Knowledge, perhaps owing to the pragmatic manner in which "Islamization" was first articulated, so that they considered it little more than a naive attempt to replace "knowledge" with knowledge that had somehow been "Islamized." For this reason, there were those who criticized the undertaking in the ways that they did. Nor was the undertaking spared the criticism of those who meant only to ridicule it, or those whose habit it was to interpret everything they read in terms of their own preconceived notions. Some people went so far as to suppose the Islamization of Knowledge to be an attempt on the part of Islamic fundamentalists to somehow transform culture and the world of ideas into tools for the attainment of political power. Undoubtedly, it was this view which led some people to consider the Islamization of Knowledge an ideological discourse rather than an epistemological or methodological one.

Likewise, those who are captivated by contemporary Western knowledge and suppose everything it produces to be scientifically objective and universally applicable assumed that the Islamization of Knowledge was symptomatic of the state of conscious or unconscious denial of the "other." To their way of thinking, the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking reflected an attitude of self-affirmation through the attempt to characterize everything of significance as "Islamic." Some of them saw it as a manifestation of the desire on the part of "Islamists" to control everything in the state and society, including worldly knowledge, or the social sciences and humanities in particular, by making scholarship and academia their exclusive domain, and stripping from the Marxists, leftists, and secularists in the Arab and Islamic Worlds the right to practice their scholarship, or, at the very least, to speak with

authority on anything to do with Islam or Muslim society. The fact of the matter, however, is that none of this ever occurred to any of those participating in the beginning of the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking.¹ In fact, no mention of any of these matters has ever been made in any of the literature produced by the school.

The Islamization of Knowledge school is not blind to the fact that it may take decades before the methodological and epistemological issues covered by this proposition are clarified in any definitive manner. Indeed, these matters are not the sort that can be outlined in a declaration of principles, or a press release, or a party manifesto. They should instead be understood as landmarks on the road to the sort of learning which may assist in reforming the Muslim mind, so that the Ummah may address its own crisis of thought and participate actively in the attempt to deal with the crises of thought affecting the rest of the world. Moreover, those concerned with the Islamization of Knowledge realize that intellectual undertakings, especially at this level, represent the most difficult and complex of a society's activities, and that these may require decades, if not generations, before they come to fruition. Even then, they rarely come to an end for knowledge is limitless, and Allah's creation is greater. Moreover, for every learned person there is one who is more learned. Anyway, the essence of knowledge and its foundation is method, in the general sense of the term. This is why the message of Islam is said to be a complete way of life, rather than a specific set of guidelines, except as regards the fundamentals which are

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1. The Islamization of Knowledge, as understood by the International Institute of Islamic Thought, is a systematic methodological concept which the Institute, its branches, and representatives are attempting to develop and realize in practical terms. It appears, however, that the concept in general is one which has appealed to several different quarters and that these, in turn, have produced in its name (or in similar names they have chosen either with or without care) whatever they have produced. The Institute in no way considers itself responsible for the work done by these quarters, or for their views. In fact, the work they have produced fails to express the issue in terms of the methodology and comprehensiveness that characterize the Institute's concern with it as evinced by its literature and publications.

unchanging and unaffected by the differences of time and place. As such, these specifics are relatively very few.²

When the scholars of our school of thought attempt to define the Islamization of Knowledge they do so in general terms only, rather than attempt to produce a strictly "inclusive and exclusive" definition in the classical manner. In fact, the Islamization of Knowledge should be understood as a loose designation calculated to convey the general sense of the undertaking and its priorities. Take, for example, the definition proposed by Dr. 'Imād al Dīn Khalīl, who wrote:

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

Abū al Qāsim Ḥajj Ḥammād wrote:

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

He also defined Islamization of Knowledge as:

...the Islamization of applied science and of scientific principles as well. This may be accomplished through an understanding of the similarities between the principles of the natural sciences and those of nature itself. This, in fact, is the foundation upon which all religious values are based. Therefore, the philosophical references in scientific theories may become 'Islamized' when they negate the postulative aspect of those theories and recast them in terms of the natural or the universal, which carries with

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2. These include matters like the pillars of faith, the prescribed duties, the acts of worship, the prohibited acts and substances, or the things referred to by certain scholars as being "known to be an essential part of Islam."
 3. 'Imād al Dīn Khalīl, *Madkhal ilā Islāmīyat al Ma'rifa* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1991), 15.
 4. Abū al Qāsim Ḥajj Ḥammād, *Manhajiyat al Qur'an al Ma'rifiyya* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1991), 19, internal publication.

it the notion of a divine purpose to all existence and movement.⁵

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

Rather, these definitions have been proposed for the purpose of lending clarity to the issue and describing its characteristics and distinguishing traits. These were never intended to be precise delineations in the classical mold. In fact, we prefer that the Islamization of Knowledge not be limited to the confines of a hard and fast definition. After all, the Islamization of Knowledge is the foundation of the *tawḥīdī* episteme which holds that the universe has a Creator who is One, Unique, the Originator of all things and their Provider, Observing yet Unobserved, Subtle and All-Knowing, Unfathomable and beyond human comprehension; He has charged humanity with His stewardship and taught them what they knew not, making revelation a principal source of knowledge and likewise the natural world, so that by means of reading the two within a framework of pure *tawḥīd*, proper, discerning, and purposeful knowledge may result.

Therefore, when we present our ideas on the issue and attempt to formulate principles, we do so with the logic that our proposals are no more than landmarks or indicators for the benefit of scholars interested in producing academic work from an Islamization of Knowledge perspective. These first steps have

5. Ibid.

come about as the result of a variety of experiences in dealing with the practical and theoretical aspects of the Islamization of Knowledge. Undoubtedly, as researchers continue to work with these indicators, or with any of the six discourses explained later in this paper, they will further clarify the issue, postulate its principles, and test its intellectual and academic efficacy.

The Reality and Importance of the Islamization of Knowledge

The Islamization of Knowledge represents the intellectual and epistemological side of Islam which began with the Patriarch, Ibrahim, upon him be peace, and was completed by the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (ṢAAS)⁶. Indeed, the final revelation began with the words, "Read..." and ended with the verse, "Today, I have completed your religion for you..." The epistemological aspect of Islam was first evinced in the revelation of the following verses of the Qur'an:

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

And then in the revelation of the opening verses of *Sūrat al Qalam*:

Nūn! By the pen and what they write... (68:1-2)

Followed by the opening verses of *Sūrat al Raḥmān*:

The All Merciful! [Who] taught the Qur'an, created humankind, and taught them expression.... (55:1-3)

From the above verses it may be deduced that humankind has been commanded to undertake two different kinds of readings, and

6. ṢAAS—*Ṣalla Allāhu 'Alayhi wa Sallam*: May the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him; said whenever the name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned, or whenever he is referred to as the Prophet of God.

to understand its situation in the universe from an understanding of how the two complement one another. The first of these readings is the Book of Allah's revelation, and the second is the book of His creation. Now, the Book of Allah's final revelation is the Qur'an, the Noble Recitation in which all matters of religious significance are explained (Qur'an 12:111) and the book of creation is the natural universe from which nothing has been omitted (Qur'an 6:38). To undertake a reading of either of these two books without reference to the other will avail humanity nothing at all, nor will it lead to the sort of comprehensive knowledge necessary to the building and maintenance of civilized society, or to knowledge worthy of preservation and further development or exchange among the civilized peoples of the world. In fact, such a one-sided reading will never enable humankind to fulfill its role as the stewards of Allah (*istikhlāf*), or the keepers of His trust (*amānah*). Of course, if that does not happen, then humanity will never be united in faith, nor will it be guided. Likewise, the divine purpose in creation will never be realized. Never will the earth be united in worshipping Allah. Never will the stars join the rest of creation in bowing to His will and saying His praises.

There is not a thing but celebrates His praise: and yet you do not understand how they declare His glory. (Qur'an 17:44)

Indeed, whenever any sort of disruption occurs in any aspect of human life it serves to indicate imbalances in the way the readings were undertaken; perhaps only one reading was undertaken, or perhaps the two were not done together, or perhaps there was a preponderance in the scales by which matters are measured, or maybe the wrong methods were used.

To each among you have We prescribed a law and a way. (Qur'an 5:48)

Under such circumstances nothing will begin to go right unless and until equilibrium has been reestablished, and the only way to restore it is by a balanced and complementary reading of the two books. Clearly, each of the two readings must be considered an epistemological fundament and a creative source that may not be ignored. It is impossible that a discerning and sound society could

exist without joining these two readings and integrating them in a comprehensive manner. This is because a society which ignores the first reading, the Book of Revelation, preferring instead to immerse itself in the second, the book of the real-existential, will lose sight of its relationship to the Almighty, and its responsibilities of stewardship or *istikhlāf*, trust or *amānah*, and accountability to a higher authority. The result of this negligence is that society grows self-centered and overweening, believing itself independent and free of the Unseen. Such a society will inevitably set out to spin for itself a web of speculative philosophy which is ultimately incapable of enabling it to attain true knowledge. On the contrary, such knowledge will lead the people of such a society, under the best circumstances, to become like,

...those who know but the outer aspects of worldly life, but who, in regard to the afterlife, are very negligent. (Qur'an 30:7)

The philosophies produced by such societies are powerless to answer the "ultimate questions," and generally dismiss everything beyond their abilities to perceive by means of the senses as "supernatural." Such philosophies are also prone to suggesting utterly baseless replies to these questions, leaving people to wander and stray. Even in regard to the Almighty Creator, people nourished on such philosophies think of Him as just another element of the supernatural. If He did actually create the universe, so their "reading" goes, He did so all at once and then forgot, or ignored, whatever He had created, leaving it to act and react mechanically in accordance with previously established natural laws. This type of reading, even if undertaken by people who think themselves religious, will never on its own lead to knowledge of Allah, the One, All-Powerful, and Unparalleled Creator. Rather, if such people believe at all, they believe in a god who is the way they want "him" to be, often equating "him" with the powers of nature itself. Such faith is generally of the sort which jumbles doctrines of incarnation with *shirk* and idolatry, and often leads to theories, like dialectical materialism, which end up denying the existence of any sort of creator or to those, like the theories of natural selection and evolution, which are both unacceptable and inadequate as alternatives to belief in the Almighty.

Within the framework of such a one-sided reading of the natural universe the world may assume the form of mutually opposed powers. As the result of the distorted picture emerging from such an incomplete reading, individuals may suppose themselves divine and answerable to no one but themselves. Such individuals, supposing with their limited knowledge and understanding that they are in control of their surroundings, will worship themselves, make their desires their guides, and attempt to derive their values from nature. Religion for such individuals becomes no more than something to be used when the need arises, to fill a psychological gap, or to fulfill a subliminal desire.

Nay, but man transgresses all bounds when he looks upon himself as self-sufficient. (Qur'an 96:6-7)

When man becomes so presumptuous, he becomes overbearing and tyrannical with the result that he destroys the environment by polluting the land, sea, and air by means of his own hands. When the natural order is disrupted, the earth becomes overspread by the diseases of excess and perversion. Entire continents become enveloped by hunger, destitution, pestilence, and destruction, so that the majority of inhabitants must live in misery.

Those who turn from remembering Me shall live lives of misery. (Qur'an 20:124)

It may happen that the second reading, the reading of the real-existential, is ignored by those undertaking the first reading, that of revelation. When this happens, great imbalances result. Sometimes these take the form of aversion to the world and worldly pursuits, so that people become ascetics and lose the ability to participate in and contribute to society, and fail to undertake their responsibilities as stewards and keepers of Allah's trust. In other instances, such a loss of equilibrium will leave people incapable of independent and creative thinking. When people begin to believe that humans are not really capable of independent actions, they no longer value their own deeds and, ultimately, conclude that there is no meaning to their existence. All such notions are, of course, in complete contradiction of the teachings of the Qur'an and the way of the Prophet.

To neglect the reading of the natural universe or to fail to balance and complement it with the reading of revelation will often lead to confusion in regard to important issues of faith. Often, those who read only the Book of Revelation suppose that true elimination of anthropomorphic elements from the concept of deity requires negation of the value of human actions, rejection of the belief in free will, and a mystical denial of the positive role fashioned by the Almighty for humankind. Anyone who reads the writings of people who hold such notions, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, will find that they are thoroughly confused about what constitutes human as opposed to divine deeds, about the meanings of free will and predetermination, and about issues of cause and effect, and others.

In conclusion, there can be no escaping the matter of combining the two readings; that of revelation and that of the natural universe. For if these two are not allowed to complement one another, the result is certain to be an imbalanced understanding of reality. This is why the Islamization of Knowledge is such an epistemological and civilizational necessity not only for Muslims but also for all of humankind, and may be considered a solution to the worldwide crisis of contemporary thought. With the adoption in the West of rationalism as the basis for thought, Western civilization found itself confronted with the problem of defining methodologies in ways that were based on its own scientific progress. Marxism, for example, was one such attempt at fashioning a Western, scientific methodology that was based on dialectical materialism. Clearly, however, neither Marxism nor any of the other liberal, positivistic, or secular Western schools of thought have been able to provide the answers to the issues which beset Western society and the rest of the contemporary world.

For Muslims the crisis is especially vexatious. By virtue of our submission to Western intellectual, cultural, and institutional influences and the impact these have had on our lives, we are now full partners in the worldwide crisis. Our relationship with the West is no longer, as some continue to believe, a marginal one. Rather, we and the rest of the world have accepted the West's methodology, world view, and perspectives on history, science,

knowledge, culture, progress, and so on. What, then, is this Islamization of Knowledge proposal? What solutions does it offer to the crises of thought which presently plague the world? And how may these solutions be brought about?

The Islamization of Knowledge may be brought about, as indicated earlier, by the combined readings of the two books and the establishment, on the basis of their similarity and complementarity, of a methodology for research and discovery. Indeed, the Qur'an, like the natural universe, bespeaks and directs toward the other. In other words, the Qur'an is a guide to the real-existential, and the real-existential is a guide to the Qur'an. Moreover, true knowledge may not be attained except by means of a complementary reading of these two sources. This is what is referred to as "combining the two readings." One reading is a reading of the Unseen, in which revelation is accompanied by interpretation and the attempt to discover its universals and the ways these manifest themselves in nature; while the other is an objective reading of the real-existential in the light of the universals expounded in the verses of revelation. The reason for reading revelation, then, is to settle from the general to the particular, and to link the absolute to the specific, to the extent that relative human rational abilities allow. The reading of the categorical real-existent represents an ascent from the specific and particular toward the general and absolute, to the extent that relative human rational abilities allow. In this way, the supposed differences between the teachings of revelation and the objective truths of the natural universe may be seen as nonexistent. This is emphasized in the first few verses of *Surat al 'Alaq* quoted above.

When, however, these two readings are undertaken separately, the results may be perilous. Those who rely solely upon the reading of revelation, ignoring knowledge of the real world, will transform religion into something mystical which accords no value to either humankind or nature, rejects cause and effect, and ignores the usages of society, history, psychology, and economics. Ultimately, the result of such a reading is that thought becomes rigid and inflexible, and ignores the elements of time and history. Quite often, this approach is thought to be a "religious" approach,

when in fact it has nothing to do with religion.

Those who undertake only the second reading are actually rejecting the unseen presence of the Creator and Manager of the natural universe. Either that, or they ignore it, so that they gradually arrive at a positivistic understanding of knowledge which, in turn, influences the makeup of society in the negative manner we witness in contemporary Western civilization where all notions of anything being sacred have been stripped away, where everything is deconstructed and reduced to its minimum. It is for this reason that Western society often views existence itself as a worthless commodity. This further explains the West's preoccupation with "ends" like the "end of history" or the "end of civilization," or progress, or modernity, or humanity.

Thus, humanity is divided between mysticism and positivism, even though the first of the Qur'anic revelations clearly refutes the mystical, in the Western sense of the term, as being a part of the Unseen, *al ghayb*. In fact, the first verses clarify the link between the Unseen and the second reading or the objective reading of the real-existential which is recorded by means of the pen. These same verses, when they link the real-existential to revelation, reject the speculative "ends" which result from the one-sided reading of the real-existential. So the right and true reader is the human whose faith in, and understanding of revelation on the one hand, and whose understanding of the real-existent and the principles which determine and govern categorical real-existents on the other, qualify him/her for the responsibilities of stewardship.

It is impossible to estimate, in terms of human suffering, the damage caused to modern society by the rift between science and religion that has been allowed to occur in its educational institutions and curriculum. Yet, even so, humanity has shown little interest in the endeavor to prepare students grounded in both. Obviously, the reason for this is that modern society has adopted the Western attitude of separating the two, so that students of theology attend seminaries and the like, and students of science attend colleges of engineering, and so on. In the Muslim World, where Western influence is all-pervasive, the same rift exists

between schools and colleges of Shari'ah and theology and colleges of practical and applied sciences, or social sciences and the humanities.

The very same attitude of separation is responsible for the rift between religious values and contemporary knowledge. For us, as Muslims, this attitude is perilous for the reason that it drives a wedge between the sciences of the Shar'iah and the social sciences which have been developed, for the most part, in accordance with a one-sided reading of the real-existential. The sciences of the Shari'ah, for their part, have contented themselves with descriptive and lexical studies of the texts of revelation (the Qur'an and the Sunnah), while largely ignoring the real-existents of societal phenomena and their spatiotemporal effects.

The dominant Western cultural paradigm has cast the social sciences and humanities in a positivistic mold that excludes the axiological verities of revelation. This narrow paradigm is responsible for drawing humankind into a debate over the conflicting dualities of mysticism and positivism, inflating in the process the place of the self at the expense of religious and ethical values. This, in turn, led to the spread of individual liberalism and the social and communal turmoil in which it has resulted.

The Islamization of Knowledge is primarily a methodological issue which is prepositioned on the identification and articulation of the relationship between revelation and the real-existential. In its essence, that relationship is one of integration and permeation which clarifies the comprehensive manner in which the Qur'an deals with the real-existential and the natural laws (*sunan*) and principles which govern and regulate it. Indeed, knowledge of those *sunan* is invaluable to an understanding of the principles of Qur'anic methodology. To summarize, then, this undertaking, the Islamization of Knowledge, may not be pursued except by those endowed with vast knowledge of the Qur'an and, with it, a firm grounding in the social sciences and humanities.

ON THIS BOOK

This paper offers a number of valuable insights gained from a long engagement with Islamic as well as global issues, with traditional as well as contemporary concerns. It not only surveys the field along with the powers and challenges at work, but also charts a way out of the present impasse. More immediately, it offers an updated review of the progress of the Islamization of Knowledge project and a timely clarification of the very concept itself. Clearly, that concept, though responsible for generating worldwide debate and action, has been so often misinterpreted and/or inflated.

The gradational nature of the Islamizing project is all too obvious, and was never far from the minds of the authors of the 1982 declaration. It would certainly have been juvenile to think otherwise. And yet there is a need now to stress, as the present paper does, the ambitious (but also imperative) nature of the enterprise. For, despite the highly commendable effort invested in further elaboration and, in some brave instances, attempted implementation of the concept, the process of the Islamization of Knowledge remains at an initial, some might even say, prenatal stage. Much work needs to be done, many talents galvanized and resources pooled, institutions set up or reorganized, etc., before a truly genuine and sustainable realization of the concept can be said to have begun. Such a realistic vision needs to accompany and inform every stage of the way. To be lulled into a false or premature sense of achievement is a costly setback at a time when standing idly by for a day may have serious consequences for decades to come.

