

*Islamic Philosophy: An Introduction**

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From the perspective of Islam, a
'worldview' is not merely the mind's
view of the physical world and of
man's historical, social, political and
cultural involvement in it as reflected,
for example, in the current Arabic
expression of the idea formulated in
the phrase *naẓrat al-islam li al-kawn*.
It is incorrect to refer to the
worldview of Islam as a *naẓrat al-islam li al-kawn*. This is because,
unlike what is conveyed by *naẓrat*,
the worldview of Islam is not based

upon philosophical speculation formulated mainly from
observation of the data of sensible experience, of what is
visible to the eye; nor is it restricted to *kawn*, which is the
world of sensible experience, the world of created things. If
such expressions are now in use in Arabic in contemporary
Muslim thought, it only demonstrates that we are already
being unduly influenced by the modern, secular Western
scientific conception of the world that is restricted to the world
of sense and sensible experience. Islam does not concede to
the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane; the worldview of
Islam encompasses both *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhirah*, in which the
dunyā-aspect *must* be related in a profound and inseparable
way to the *ākhirah*-aspect, and in which the *ākhirah*-aspect
has ultimate and final significance. The *dunyā*-aspect is seen
as a *preparation* for the *ākhirah*-aspect. Everything in Islam is
ultimately focused on the *ākhirah*-aspect without thereby
implying any attitude of neglect or being unmindful of the
dunyā-aspect. Reality is not what is often 'defined' in modern
Arabic dictionaries as *wāqī'īyyah*, whose use, particularly in
its grammatical form *wāqī'īy*, is now in vogue. Reality is
ḥaqīqah, which significantly is now seldom used due to the

* The following paper is excerpted from the *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, with the generous permission of the author, Syed Naquib al-Attas. Originally published by ISTAC, Kuala Lumpur, 1995.

preoccupation with *wāqifīyyah* which only points to factual occurrences. A factual occurrence is only one aspect in many of *ḥaqīqah*, whose ambit encompasses *all* of reality. Moreover, a factual occurrence may be an actualization of something false (i.e. *bāṭil*); whereas reality is the actualization always of something true (i.e. *ḥaq*). What is meant by ‘worldview’, according to the perspective of Islam, is then the *vision of reality and truth* that appears before our mind’s eye revealing what existence is all about; for it is the world of existence in its totality that Islam is projecting. Thus by ‘worldview’ we must mean *ruʿyyāt al-islam li al-wujūd*.

The Islamic vision of reality and truth, which is a metaphysical survey of the visible as well as the invisible worlds including the perspective of life as a whole, is not a worldview that is formed merely by the gathering together of various cultural objects, values and phenomena into artificial coherence.¹ Nor is it one that is formed gradually through a historical and developmental process of philosophical speculation and scientific discovery, which must of necessity be left vague and open-ended for future change and alteration in line with paradigms that change in correspondence with changing circumstances. It is not a worldview that undergoes a dialectical process of transformation repeated through the ages, from thesis to antithesis then synthesis, with elements of each of these stages in the process being assimilated into the other, such as a worldview based upon a system of thought that was originally god centered, then gradually became god-world centered, and is now world centered and perhaps shifting again to form a new thesis in the dialectical process. Such a worldview changes in line with ideological ages characterized by a predominance of the influence of particular and opposing systems of thought advocating different interpretations of worldview and value systems like that which have occurred and will continue to occur in the history of the cultural, religious and intellectual tradition of the West. There have not been in the history of the cultural, religious and intellectual tradition of Islam distinct ages characterized by a preponderance of a system of thought based upon materialism or idealism, supported by attendant methodological approaches and positions like empiricism, rationalism,

1. I mean by ‘artificial coherence’, a coherence that is not natural in the sense we mean as *fitrah*. Such coherence projected as a worldview must necessarily be subject to change with the change of circumstances.

realism, nominalism, pragmatism, positivism, logical positivism, criticism, oscillating between centuries and emerging one after another right down to our time. The representatives of Islamic thought—theologians, philosophers, metaphysicians—have all and individually applied various methods in their investigations without preponderating on any one particular method. They combined in their investigations, and at the same time in their persons, the empirical and the rational, the deductive and the inductive methods and affirmed no dichotomy between the subjective² and the objective, so that they all affected what I would call the *tawhīd* method of knowledge. Nor have there been in Islam historical periods that can be characterized as ‘classical’, then ‘medieval’, then ‘modern’ and now purportedly shifting again to ‘post-modern’; nor critical events between the medieval and the modern experienced as a ‘renaissance’ and an ‘enlightenment’. Proponents of shifts in systems of thought involving changes in the fundamental elements of the worldview and value system may say that all forms of cultures must experience such shifts, otherwise in the process of interaction with changing circumstances they exhaust themselves and become uncreative and petrified. But this is true only in the experience and consciousness of civilizations whose systems of thought and value have been derived from cultural and philosophical elements aided by the science of their times. Islam is not a form of culture, and its system of thought projecting its vision of reality and truth and the system of value derived from it are not merely derived from cultural and philosophical elements aided by science, but one whose original source is Revelation, confirmed by religion, affirmed by intellectual and intuitive principles. Islam ascribes to itself the truth of being a truly revealed religion, perfected from the very beginning, requiring no historical explanation and evaluation in terms of the place it occupied and the role it played within a process of development. All the essentials of the religion: the name, the faith and practice, the rituals, the creed and system of belief were given by Revelation and interpreted and demonstrated by the Prophet in his words and model actions, not from cultural tradition which necessarily

2. By ‘subjective’ I mean not the popular understanding of the word. The human soul is creative; by means of perception, imagination, and intelligence it participates in the ‘creation’ and interpretation of the worlds of sense and sensible experience, of images, and of intelligible forms. ‘Subjective’ here is something not opposed to what is objective, but complementary to it.

must flow in the stream of historicism. The religion of Islam was conscious of its own identity from the time of its revelation. When it appeared on the stage of world history Islam was already 'mature', needing no process of 'growing up' to maturity. *Revealed* religion can only be that which knows itself from the very beginning; and that self-knowledge comes from the Revelation itself, not from history. The so-called 'development' in the religious traditions of mankind cannot be applied to Islam, for what is assumed to be a developmental process is in the case of Islam only a process of interpretation and elaboration which must of necessity occur in alternating generations of believers of different nations, and which refer back to the unchanging Source.³ As such the worldview of Islam is characterized by an authenticity and a finality that points to what is ultimate, and it projects a view of reality and truth that encompasses existence and life altogether in total perspective whose fundamental elements are permanently established. These are, to mention the most salient ones, the nature of God; of Revelation (i.e., the Qur'ān); of His creation; of man and the psychology of the human soul; of knowledge; of religion; of freedom; of values and virtues; of happiness—all of which, together with the key terms and concepts that they unfold, have profound bearing upon our ideas about change, development, and progress. I propose here in this Introduction to give a gist only of some of these fundamental elements of the worldview of Islam. A comprehensive statement of their nature is already set forth in the chapters of this book. It is these fundamental elements of our worldview that we maintain to be permanently established that modernity is challenging, seeing that the shifting systems of thought that have brought modernity forth from the womb of history were fathered by the forces of secularization as a philosophical ideology. But as a matter of fact modernity or postmodernity has itself no coherent vision to offer that could be described as a worldview. If we could strike even a superficial similitude between a worldview and a picture depicted in a jigsaw puzzle, then the jigsaw of modernity is not only far from depicting any coherent picture, but also the very pieces to form such a picture do not fit. This is not to mention postmodernity, which is already undoing all the pieces. No true worldview can come into focus when a grand-scale ontological system to project it is denied, and when

3. Cf. Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur, 1978), chap. II.

there is a separation between truth and reality and between truth and values. These fundamental elements act as integrating principles that place all our systems of meaning and standards of life and values in coherent order as a unified system forming the worldview; and the supreme principle of true reality that is articulated by these fundamental elements is focused on knowledge of the nature of God as revealed in the Qur'ān.

The nature of God as revealed in Islam is derived from Revelation. We do not mean by Revelation the sudden visions great poets and artists claim for themselves; nor the apostolic inspiration of the writers of sacred scripture; nor the illuminative intuition of the sages and people of discernment. We mean by it the speech of God concerning Himself, His creation, the relation between them, and the way to salvation communicated to His chosen Prophet and Messenger, not by sound or letter, yet comprising all that He has represented in words, then conveyed by the Prophet to mankind in a linguistic form *new in nature* yet comprehensible, without confusion with the Prophet's own subjectivity and cognitive imagination. This Revelation is final, and it not only confirms the truth of preceding revelations in their original forms, but includes their substance, separating the truth from cultural creations and ethnic inventions.

Since we affirm the Qur'ān to be the speech of God revealed in a new form of Arabic, the description of His nature therein is therefore the description of Himself by Himself in His own words according to that linguistic form. It follows from this that the Arabic of the Qur'ān, its interpretation in the Tradition, and its authentic and authoritative usage throughout the ages establishes the validity of that language to a degree of eminence in serving to describe reality and truth.⁴ In this sense and unlike the situation prevailing in modernist and postmodernist thought, we maintain that it is not the concern of Islam to be unduly involved in the semantics of languages in general that philosophers of language find problematic as to their adequacy to approximate or correspond with true reality. The conception of the nature of God that is derived from Revelation is also established upon the foundations of reason and intuition, and in some cases upon empirical intuition, as a

4. For further details, see my book, *The Concept of Education in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur, 1980), pp.1–13.

result of man's experience and consciousness of Him and of His creation.

The nature of God understood in Islam is not the same as the conceptions of God understood in the various religious traditions of the world; nor is it the same as the conceptions of God understood in Greek and Hellenistic philosophical tradition; nor as the conceptions of God understood in Western philosophical or scientific tradition; nor in that of Occidental and Oriental mystical traditions. The apparent similarities that may be found between their various conceptions of God with the nature of God understood in Islam cannot be interpreted as evidence of identity of the One Universal God in their various conceptions of the nature of God; for each and every one of them serves and belongs to a different conceptual system, which necessarily renders the conception as a whole or the super system to be dissimilar with one another. Nor is there a 'transcendent unity of religions', if by 'unity' is meant 'oneness' or 'sameness'; and if by 'unity' is not meant 'oneness' or 'sameness', then there is plurality or dissimilarity of religions even at the level of transcendence. If it is conceded that there is plurality or dissimilarity at that level, and that by 'unity' is meant 'interconnectedness of parts that constitute a whole', so that the unity is the interconnection of the plurality or dissimilarity of religions as of parts constituting a whole, then it follows that at the level of ordinary existence, in which mankind is subject to the limitations of humanity and the material universe, any one religion is incomplete in itself, is in itself inadequate to realize its purpose, and can only realize its purpose, which is true submission to the One Universal God without associating Him with any partner, rival, or like, at the level of transcendence. But religion is meant to realize its purpose precisely at the level of existence in which mankind is subject to the limitations of humanity and the material universe, and not when mankind is not subject to these limitations as the term 'transcendent' conveys. If 'transcendent' is meant to refer to an ontological condition not included under any of the ten categories, God is, strictly speaking, not the God of religion (i.e. *ilah*) in the sense that there could be such a thing as a 'unity' of *religions* at that level. At that level God is recognized as *rabb*, not as *ilah*; and recognizing Him as *rabb* does not necessarily imply oneness or sameness in the proper acknowledgement of the truth that is recognized, since Iblīs also recognized God as *rabb* and yet

did not properly acknowledge Him. Indeed, all of Adam's progeny have already recognized Him as *rabb* at that level. But mankind's recognition of Him as such is not *true* unless followed by proper acknowledgement at the level in which He is known as *ilah*. And proper acknowledgement at the level in which He is known as *ilah* consists in not associating Him with any partner, rival, or like, and in submitting to Him in the manner and form approved by Him and shown by His sent Prophets. If 'transcendent' is meant to refer to a psychological condition at the level of experience and consciousness which 'excels' or 'surpasses' that of the masses among mankind, then the 'unity' that is experienced and made conscious of at the level of transcendence is not of religions, but of religious experience and consciousness, which is arrived at by the relatively few individuals only among mankind. But religion is meant to realize its purpose for the generality of mankind; and mankind as a whole can never be at the level of transcendence for there to be a unity of religions at that level. Then if it is denied that the unity at that level is the interconnection of the plurality or dissimilarity of religions *as of parts constituting a whole*, rather that every one of the religions at the level of ordinary existence is not a part of a whole, but is a whole in itself—then the 'unity' that is meant is 'oneness' or 'sameness' not really of religions, but of the God of religions at the level of transcendence (i.e. esoteric), implying thereby that at the level of ordinary existence (i.e. exoteric), and despite the plurality and diversity of religions, each religion is adequate and valid in its own limited way, each authentic and conveying limited though equal truth. The notion of a plurality of truth of equal validity in the plurality and diversity of religions is perhaps aligned to the statements and general conclusions of modern philosophy and science arising from the discovery of a plurality and diversity of laws governing the universe having equal validity each in its own cosmological system. The trend to align modern scientific discovery concerning the systems of the universe with corresponding statements applied to human society, cultural traditions, and values is one of the characteristic features of modernity. The position of those who advocate the theory of the transcendent unity of religions is based upon the assumption that all religions, or the major religions of mankind, are *revealed* religions. They assume that the universality and transcendence of esoterism validates their theory, which they 'discovered' after having acquainted themselves with the metaphysics of

Islam. In their understanding of this metaphysics of the transcendent unity of existence, they further assume that the transcendent unity of religions is already implied. There is grave error in all their assumptions, and the phrase 'transcendent unity of religions' is misleading and perhaps meant to be so for motives other than the truth. Their claim to belief in the transcendent unity of religions is something suggested to them inductively by the imagination and is derived from intellectual speculation and not from actual experience. If this is denied, and their claim is derived from the experience of others, then again we say that the sense of 'unity' experienced is not of religions, but of varying degrees of individual religious experience which does not of necessity lead to the assumption that the religions of individuals who experienced such 'unity', have truth of equal validity as *revealed* religions at the level of ordinary existence. Moreover, as already pointed out, the God of that experience is recognized as the *rabb*, not the *ilah* of revealed religion. And recognizing Him as the *rabb* does not necessarily mean that acknowledging Him in true submission follows from that recognition, for rebellion, arrogance, and falsehood have their origin in that very realm of transcendence. There is only one revealed religion. It was the religion conveyed by all the earlier Prophets, who were sent to preach the message of the revelation *to their own people* in accordance with the wisdom and justice of the Divine plan to prepare the peoples of the world for reception of the religion in its ultimate and consummate form as a Universal Religion at the hands of the last Prophet, who was sent to convey the message of the revelation not only to his own people, but to mankind as a whole. The essential message of the revelation was always the same: to recognize and acknowledge and worship the One True and Real God (*ilah*) alone, without associating Him with any partner, rival, or equal, nor attributing a likeness to Him; and to confirm the truth preached by the earlier Prophets as well as to confirm the final truth brought by the last Prophet as it was confirmed by all the Prophets sent before him. With the exception of the people of this last Prophet, through whom the revealed religion achieved utmost perfection whose original purity is preserved to this day, most of the peoples to whom the earlier Prophets were sent deliberately renounced the guidance preferring instead cultural creations and ethnic inventions of their own, claiming these as 'religions' in imitation of revealed religion. There is only one genuine

revealed religion, and its name is given as *Islam*, and the people who follow this religion are praised by God as the best among mankind. As for some among the peoples who preferred to follow their own and diverse forms of belief and practice described as ‘religions’, their realization of the Truth is their rediscovery, by means of guidance and sincerity of heart, of what is already clearly manifest in Islam even at the level of ordinary existence. Only Islam acknowledges and affirms the Unity of God absolutely without having to arrive at the level of transcendence to do so; without confusing such acknowledgement and affirmation with traditional forms of belief and practice described as ‘religions’; without confounding such acknowledgement and affirmation with cultural creations and ethnic inventions interpreted in imitation of revealed religion. Therefore Islam does not admit of any error in the understanding of the Revelation, and in this sense Islam is not merely a *form*—it is the *essence* itself of religion (*dīn*). We do not admit in the case of Islam of a horizontal dividing line separating the exoteric from the esoteric understanding of the Truth in religion. We maintain rather a vertical line of continuity from the exoteric to the esoteric; a vertical line of continuity which we identify as the Straight Path of *islam–imān–ihsān* without there being any inconsistency in the three stages of the spiritual ascent such that the Reality or transcendent Truth that is recognized and acknowledged is in our case accessible to many. It is futile to attempt to camouflage error in the religions, in their respective understanding and interpretation of their scriptures which they believe reflect the original revelation, by resorting to the characteristics and peculiarities of different forms of ethnicity and symbolism, and then to explain away the symbolism by means of a contrived and deceptive hermeneutic such that error appears as truth. Religion consists not only of affirmation of the Unity of God (*al-tawḥīd*), but also of the *manner* and *form* in which we verify that affirmation as shown by His last Prophet, who confirmed, perfected and consolidated the manner and form of affirmation and verification of Prophets before him. This manner and form of verification is the manner and form of submission to God. The test of *true affirmation* of the Unity of God, then, is the *form of submission* to that God. It is only because the form of submission enacted by the religion that affirms the Unity of God is *true to the verification of such affirmation* that that particular religion is called *Islam*. Islam, then, is not merely a

verbal noun signifying 'submission'; it is also *the name of a particular religion* descriptive of true submission, as well as *the definition of religion*: submission to God. Now the manner and form of submission enacted in religion is definitely influenced by the conception of God in the religion. It is therefore the conception of God in the religion that is crucial to the correct articulation of the form of true submission; and this conception must be adequate in serving to describe the true nature of God, which can only be derived from Revelation, not from ethnic or cultural tradition, nor from an amalgamation of ethnic and cultural tradition with sacred scripture, nor from philosophical speculation aided by the discoveries of science.

The conception of the nature of God in Islam is the consummation of what was revealed to the Prophets according to the Qur'ān. He is one God; living, self-subsistent, eternal and abiding. Existence is His very essence. He is one in essence; no division in His essence, whether in the imagination, in actuality, or in supposition is possible. He is not a locus of qualities, nor is a thing portioned and divisible into parts, nor is He a thing compounded of constituent elements. His oneness is absolute, with an absoluteness unlike the absoluteness of the natural universal, for while being thus absolute He is yet individuated in a manner of individuation that does not impair the purity of His absoluteness nor the sanctity of His oneness. He is transcendent, with a transcendence that does not make it incompatible for Him to be at once omnipresent, so that He is also immanent, yet not in the sense understood as belonging to any of the paradigms of pantheism. He possesses real and eternal attributes which are qualities and perfections which He ascribes to Himself; they are not other than His essence, and yet they are also distinct from His essence and from one another without their reality and distinctness being separate entities subsisting apart from His essence as a plurality of eternals; rather they coalesce with His essence as an unimaginable unity. His unity is then the unity of essence, attributes, and acts, for He is living and powerful, knowing, willing, hearing and seeing, and speaking through His attributes of life and power, knowledge, will, hearing and sight, and speech; and the opposite of these are all impossible in Him.

He is unlike the Aristotelian First Mover, for He is always in act as a free agent engaged in perpetual creative activity not involving change in Him or transformation and

becoming. He is far too exalted for the Platonic and Aristotelian dualism of form and matter to be applied to His creative activity; nor can His creating and His creation be described in terms of the Plotinian metaphysics of emanation. His creating is the bringing forth of ideal realities that preexist in His knowledge into external existence by His power and His will; and these realities are entities that he causes to become manifest in the interior condition of His being. His creating is a single act repeated in an eternal process, whereas the contents of the process which are His creation are noneternal, being originated in new yet similar guises in discrete durations of existence for as long as He wills.

It is through Revelation, in which God has described Himself, His creative activity and His creation, and not through Greek or Hellenistic philosophical tradition, neither even through philosophy nor through science, that Islam interprets the world together with all its parts in terms of events that occur within a perpetual process of a new creation. This interpretation entails the affirmation of realities and their double nature consisting of complementary opposites; their existential condition of permanence and change; their involvement in a continual process of annihilation and renewal by similars; their absolute beginning in past time and their absolute end in future time. There are limitations to time and space; and both are the result of the creative act that brings the cosmos into existence. Change is not in the phenomenal things, as that would imply the persistence of existence in the things making them substrata for change to take place, but at the ontological level of their realities which contain within themselves all their future states. Change is then the successive actualization, by means of the creative act, of potentialities inherent in the realities of things which as they unfold their contents in correspondence with the creative command preserve their identities through time. The dual condition of the realities involving permanence on the one hand and change on the other presupposes a third ontological category in the interior condition of Being between external existence and non-existence. This is the realm of ideal realities subsisting as permanently established entities in the consciousness of God, and they are none other than the forms and aspects of the names and attributes of God considered in their aspect of difference from Him.

Islam affirms the possibility of knowledge; that knowledge of the realities of things and their ultimate nature

can be established with certainty by means of our external and internal senses and faculties, reason and intuition, and true reports of scientific or religious nature, transmitted by their authentic authorities. Islam has never accepted, nor has ever been affected by ethical and epistemological relativism that made man the measure of all things, nor has it ever created the situation for the rise of skepticism, agnosticism, and subjectivism, all of which in one way or another describe aspects of the secularizing process which have contributed to the birth of modernism and postmodernism.

Knowledge is both the arrival of meaning in the soul as well as the soul's arrival at meaning. In this definition we affirm that the soul is not merely a passive recipient like the *tabula rasa*, but is also an active one in the sense of setting itself in readiness to receive what it wants to receive, and so to consciously strive for the arrival at meaning. Meaning is arrived at when the proper place of anything in a system is clarified to the understanding. The notion of 'proper place' already implies the existence of 'relation' obtaining between things which altogether describe a system, and it is such relation or network of relations that determines our recognition of the thing's proper place within the system. By 'place' is meant here that which occurs not only in the spatio-temporal order of existence, but also in the imaginal, intelligible, and transcendental orders of existence. Since objects of knowledge from the point of view of human cognition are without limit, and since our external and internal senses and faculties of imagination and cognition all have limited powers and potentials, each created to convey and conserve information concerning that for which it was appointed, reason demands that there is a limit of truth for every object of knowledge, beyond which or falling short of which the truth about the object as it and its potentials should be known becomes false. Knowledge of this limit of truth in every object of knowledge is either attained by way of common sense if the object is already something obvious to the understanding, or it is achieved through wisdom, either practical or theoretical as the case may be, when the object is something obscure to the understanding. The apparent and obvious meanings of the objects of knowledge have to do with their respective places within the system of relations; and their 'proper' places become apparent to our understanding when the limits of their significance are recognized. This then is the position of truth: that there are limits to the meaning of things

in the way they are meant to be known, and their proper places are profoundly bound up with the limits of their significance. *True* knowledge is then knowledge that recognizes the limit of truth in its every object.

Our real challenge is the problem of the corruption of knowledge. This has come about due to our own state of confusion as well as influences coming from the philosophy, science, and ideology of modern Western culture and civilization. Intellectual confusion emerged as a result of changes and restriction in the meaning of key terms that project the worldview derived from Revelation. The repercussions arising from this intellectual confusion manifest themselves in moral and cultural dislocation, which is symptomatic of the degeneration of religious knowledge, faith, and values. The changes and restrictions in the meanings of such key terms occur due to the spread of secularization as a philosophical program, which holds sway over hearts and minds enmeshed in the crisis of truth and the crisis of identity. These crises, in turn, have become actualized as a result of a secularized system of education that causes deviations, if not severance, from historical roots that have been firmly established by our wise and illustrious predecessors upon foundations vitalized by religion. One must see that the kind of problem confronting us is of such a profound nature as to embrace all the fundamental elements of our worldview that cannot simply be resolved by legalistic and political means. Law and order can only find their places when recognition of *truth* as distinguished from falsehood, and *real* as distinguished from illusory, is affirmed and confirmed by action in acknowledgement of the recognition. This is achieved by means of right knowledge and right method of disseminating it. So let us not dissipate our energies in attempting to find the way out by groping in the labyrinths of legalism, but concentrate them instead by grappling the main problem, which is bound up intimately with the correct understanding and appreciation of religion and the worldview projected by it, because that directly concerns man, his knowledge and purpose in life, his ultimate destiny.

The process of acquisition of knowledge is not called 'education' unless the knowledge that is acquired includes moral purpose that activates in the one who acquires it what I call *ādab*. *Ādab* is right action that springs from self-discipline founded upon knowledge whose source is wisdom. For the sake of convenience I shall translate *ādab* simply as 'right

action'. There is an intrinsic connection between meaning and knowledge. I define 'meaning' as the *recognition of the place of anything in a system, which occurs when the relation a thing has with others in the system becomes clarified and understood*. 'Place' refers to right or proper place in the system; and 'system' here refers to the Qur'ānic conceptual system as formulated into a worldview by tradition and articulated by religion. Knowledge as we have already defined is the *arrival of meaning in the soul, and the soul's arrival at meaning*, and this is the *recognition of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence*. But knowledge as such does not become an education unless the recognition of proper places is actualized by acknowledgement—that is, by confirmation and affirmation in the self—of the reality and truth of what is recognized. Acknowledgement necessitates action that is proper to recognition. *Ādab*, or right action, consists of such acknowledgement. Education, then, is the absorption of *ādab* in the self. The actualization of *ādab* in individual selves composing society as a collective entity reflects the condition of justice; and justice itself is a reflection of wisdom, which is the light that is lit from the lamp of prophecy that enables the recipient to discover the right and proper place for a thing or a being to be. The *condition* of being in the proper place is what I have called justice; and *ādab* is that cognitive action by which we *actualize* the condition of being in the proper place. So *ādab* in the sense I am defining here, is also a reflection of wisdom; and with respect to society *ādab* is the just order within it. *Ādab*, concisely defined, is the spectacle of justice (*ʿadl*) as it is reflected by wisdom (*ḥikmah*).

In order to explain what I mean by *ādab* and to appreciate my definition of it, let us consider, for example, one's self. The human self or soul has two aspects: the one predisposed to praiseworthy acts, intelligent by nature, loyal to its covenant with God; the other inclined to evil deeds, bestial by nature, heedless of its covenant with God. The former we call the rational soul (*al-naḥs al-nāṭiqah*), the latter the carnal or animal soul (*al-naḥs al-ḥayawānīyyah*). When the rational soul subdues the animal soul and renders it under control, then one has put the animal soul in its proper place and the rational soul also in its proper place. In this way, and in relation to one's self, one is putting one's self in one's proper place. This is *ādab* toward one's self. Then in relation to one's family and

its various members; when one's attitude and behaviour toward one's parents and elders display sincere acts of humility, love, respect, care, charity; this shows one knows one's proper place in relation to them by putting them in their proper places. This is *ādab* toward family. And similarly, such attitude and behaviour, when extended to teachers, friends, community, leaders, manifest knowledge of one's proper place in relation to them; and this knowledge entails requisite acts in order to *actualize ādab* toward them all. Again, when one puts words in their proper places so that their true meanings become intelligible, and sentences and verses in like manner such that prose and poetry become literature, then that is *ādab* toward language. Further, when one puts trees and stones, mountains, rivers, valleys and lakes, animals and their habitat in their proper places, then that is *ādab* toward nature and the environment. The same applies to one's home when one arranges furniture and puts things in their proper places therein until harmony is achieved—all such activity is *ādab* towards home and furniture. And we cite also putting colours, shapes, and sounds in their proper places producing pleasing effects—that is *ādab* toward art and music. Knowledge too, and its many branches and disciplines, some of which have more important bearing upon our life and destiny than others; if one grades them according to various levels and priorities and classifies the various sciences in relation to their priorities putting each one of them in its proper place, then that is *ādab* toward knowledge. It should already become clear that my interpretation of the meaning of *ādab* reveals that *ādab* implies knowledge; it is knowledge derived from wisdom (*ḥikmah*); it manifests the purpose of seeking knowledge; it is also internal and external activity of the soul that springs from ethical and moral values and virtues; its fount of origin is not philosophy nor science, but revealed truth that flows from religion.

From the above definitions of some of the major key concepts in Islam, which all converge upon the concept of knowledge, it becomes clear that their meanings are closely interrelated, in particular their meanings which all focus upon the notion of 'proper place' which points to a certain 'order' in the system and one's relation to that order. The order is in the form of hierarchy which pervades the created order of being and existence, both external existence and mental existence. The hierarchy I mean, when applied to the human order, is not to be misunderstood as the kind of hierarchy created by man

and articulated into a social structure such as a system of caste, or a graded priestly organization, or any kind of social stratification according to class. It is not something to be organized into a social structure; it is rather something to be organized *in the mind* and actualized *in the attitude and the behaviour*. The organization in the mind is not formulated by the human criteria of power, wealth, and lineage, but by the Qur'ānic criteria of knowledge, intelligence, and virtue. When the mind recognizes the reality that knowledge and being are ordered according to their various levels and degrees, and when the attitude and the behaviour acknowledges by action what the mind recognizes, then this conformity of the acknowledgement with the recognition, by which the self assumes its proper place in coincidence with the act of acknowledgement, is none other than *ādab*. But when the mind displaces the levels and degrees of knowledge and being, disrupting the order in the legitimate hierarchy, then this is due to the corruption of knowledge. Such corruption is reflected in the confusion of justice, so that the notion of 'proper places' no longer applies in the mind or externally, and the disintegration of *ādab* takes place.

The disintegration of *ādab*, which is the effect of the corruption of knowledge, creates the situation whereby false leaders in all spheres of life emerge; for it not only implies the corruption of knowledge, but it also means the loss of the capacity and ability to recognize and acknowledge true leaders. Because of the intellectual anarchy that characterizes this situation, the common people become determiners of intellectual decisions and are raised to the level of authority on matters of knowledge. Authentic definitions become undone, and in their stead we are left with platitudes and vague slogans disguised as profound concepts. The inability to define; to identify and isolate problems, and hence to provide for right solutions; the creation of pseudo-problems; the reduction of problems to mere political, socio-economic and legal factors become evident. It is not surprising if such a situation provides a fertile breeding ground for the emergence of deviationists and extremists of many kinds who make ignorance their capital.

Language reflects ontology. Introducing key concepts foreign to a language involves not merely the translating of words, but more profoundly the translating of symbolic forms belonging to the super system of a foreign worldview not compatible with the worldview projected by the language into

which such concepts are introduced. Those responsible for introducing them and advocating their currency are the scholars, academics, journalists, critics, politicians and amateurs not firmly grounded upon knowledge of the essentials of religion and its vision of reality and truth. One of the main causes for the emergence of intellectual confusion and anarchy is the changes and restrictions which they have effected in the meanings of key terms that project the worldview of Islam which is derived from Revelation. The major factor that influenced their thinking is undoubtedly the introduction of the concept *secular* and its implications into our language and our universe of discourse, which Muslims as a whole have yet to perceive from its proper perspective.

The early latinized Western Church monopolized learning and coined the term 'secular' (*saeculum*) to refer to people who are unable to read and write, who are therefore not learned in the arts and sciences, especially in law and medicine, who are then generally called the 'laity': the nonprofessional, not expert. Due to the preoccupation of such people with mundane matters, the term also conveys a general meaning of 'being concerned with the affairs of the world'; of being 'not sacred', 'not monastic', 'not ecclesiastical'; of being something 'temporal', something 'profane'. Hence we find this term being translated by Christian Arabs into Christian Arabic as *‘almānī*, meaning: *laysa min arbāb al-fann aw al-hirfah*; and 'secularity' as *al-ihitimām bi ūmūr al-dunyā*, or *al-ihitimām bi al-‘alamīyyat*; and 'to secularize' as *hawwal ila gharad ‘alamīy ay dunyawīy*. This translation of the term and its various grammatical forms, in the sense understood by the Western Christian Church and its Christian Arab translators, has been allowed to gain currency in contemporary mainstream Islamic Arabic, despite the clear fact that it has no relevance whatsoever to Islam and to the Muslim *ummah*. There is no equivalent in Islam to the concept *secular*, especially when there is no equivalent to 'church' or 'clergy', and when Islam does not concede that there is a dichotomy of the sacred and the profane which naturally brings about a demeaning of the profane world. If the nearest equivalent were to be found in Islam to the concept *secular*, then it would be that which is connoted by the Qur'ānic concept of *al-hayat al-dunyā*: 'the worldly life'. The word *dunyā*, derived from *danā*, conveys the meaning of something being 'brought near'. This something that is being 'brought near', according to my interpretation, is the world together

with all its parts; for it is the world that is being brought *near*, that is, being *brought near to the experience and consciousness of man*. Hence the world is called *dunyā*. By virtue of the fact that what is being brought near—that is, the world and the life in it—surround us as it were and overwhelm us, they are bound to distract from consciousness of our final destination, which is beyond this world and this life, which is what comes *after*, that is, *al-ākhirah*. Since it comes at the *end*, *al-ākhirah* is felt as *far*; and this accentuates the distraction created by what is *near*. The Holy Qur’ān says that the Hereafter is better than the life of this world; it is more abiding, everlasting. But the Holy Qur’ān does not derogate the world itself; or dissuade from contemplation and reflection and interpretation of it and its wonders; rather it extols the world of creation and urges us to contemplate and reflect upon it and its wonders in order that we might be able to interpret and derive their practical and beneficial purpose. The Holy Qur’ān only warns of the distracting and ephemeral nature of life in the world. The warning emphasis in the concept of *al-hayat al-dunyā* is the life in it, not the *world*, so that the world and nature are not demeaned as implied in the concept *secular*. That is why I said that *al-hayat al-dunyā* is the nearest equivalent to the concept *secular*, because in actual fact there is no real equivalent concept in the worldview of Islam projected by the Holy Qur’ān. Moreover, since the world is that which is ‘brought near’, and since the world and nature are signs or *āyāt* of God, it is the signs of God that are brought near to our experience and consciousness; and it would be blasphemous, to say the least, to derogate the world and nature knowing them in their true character and purpose. It is God’s manifestation of His infinite mercy and loving kindness that He caused His signs to be brought near to us, the better for us to understand their intended meanings. There can be no excuse, therefore, for those who, struck by awe of the signs, worship them instead of God to whom they point; or those who, seeking God, yet demean and abjure His signs because they see tempting evil in them and not in themselves; or again those who, denying God, appropriate His signs for their own materialistic ends and change them in pursuit of illusory ‘development’. The world cannot develop as it is already perfect according to its own *fiṭrah*; only life in the world can develop. There is a final end to the world just as there is a final end to life in the world. Development of life in the world is that which leads to success in that which comes after it, for

there is no meaning to 'development' unless it is aligned to a *final objective*.

The Latin term *saeculum* in its original sense relates to the doctrinal formulations of the Western Christian religious tradition. The true meanings couched in it, however, gradually asserted their intentions in the experience and consciousness of Western man extending over a period of more than seven centuries of his intellectual and scientific development until their full implications have now become actualized. Whereas originally the term 'secular', from *saeculum*, conveyed a spatio-temporal connotation, as can be understood from the way it was used, the order of precedence in the formulation of the dual meaning has now undergone a change emphasizing the *temporal* rather than the *spatial* aspect. The original spatio-temporal connotation is derived historically out of the experience and consciousness born of the fusion of the Graeco-Roman and Judaic traditions in Western Christianity. It is this 'fusion' of the mutually conflicting elements of the Hellenic and Hebrew worldviews which have deliberately been incorporated into Christianity that modern Christian theologians and intellectuals recognize as problematic, in that the former views existence as basically *spatial* and the latter as basically *temporal*. The arising confusion of worldviews becomes the root of their epistemological and hence also theological problems. Since the world has only in modern times been more and more understood and recognized by them as historical, the emphasis on the temporal aspect of it has become more meaningful and has conveyed a special significance to them. For this reason they exert themselves in efforts emphasizing what they conceive to be the Hebrew vision of existence, which they think is more congenial with the spirit of 'the times', and denouncing the Hellenic as a grave and basic mistake. So they now say that the concept *secular* conveys a markedly dual connotation of *time* and *location*; the time referring to the 'now' or 'present' sense of it, and the location to the 'world' or 'worldly' sense of it. Thus *saeculum* is interpreted to mean basically 'this age' or the 'present time'; and this age or the present time refers to events in this world, and it also then means 'contemporary events'. The emphasis of meaning is set on a particular time or period in the world viewed as a *historical process*. The concept *secular* refers to the *condition* of this world at this particular time or period or age. Already here we discern the germ of meaning that easily develops

itself naturally and logically into the existential context of an ever-changing world in which there occurs the relativity of human values. And this natural and logical development of the concept *secular* is now taking place in contemporary, modern Western civilization, which is propagating it throughout the world.

We must see, in view of the fact that secularization is not merely confined to the Western world, that their experience of it and their attitude toward it is most instructive for Muslims. We must be made aware that secularization, in the way in which it is also happening in the Muslim world, does effect our beliefs and way of life, even if not in the same way it does the beliefs and way of life of Western man; because problems arising out of secularization, though not quite the same as those besetting the West, have certainly caused much confusion in our midst. It is not surprising that these problems are caused due to the introduction of Western ways of thinking, and judging, and believing emulated by some modernist as well as traditionalist Muslim scholars and intellectuals who have been unduly influenced by the modern West and overawed by its scientific and technological achievements, who by virtue of the fact that they could so readily be thus influenced betray their lack of true understanding and full grasp of both the worldviews of Islam and of the modern West and the essential beliefs and modes of thought that project them. They have, because of their influential positions in Muslim society, become conscious or unconscious disseminators of unnecessary confusion that is founded upon a crisis of identity. The situation in our midst can indeed be seen as critical when we consider the fact that Muslims are generally unaware of what the secularizing process implies. It is therefore essential that we obtain a clear understanding of it from those who know and are conscious of it, who believe and welcome it, who teach and advocate it to the world.

Secularization is defined as “the deliverance of man first from religious then from metaphysical control over his reason and his language”⁵ It is the setting free of the world

5. This definition was formulated by the Dutch theologian, Cornelis van Peursen, who occupied the chair of philosophy at the University of Leiden. It was given in a report on a conference held at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland, in September 1959. See also the work of the Harvard theologian Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York, 1965), p. 2; and for what follows, pp. 2–17; 20–23; 30–36; 109 *et passim*. A fuller treatment of secularization as a

from religious and semi-religious understandings of itself; the dispelling of all closed worldviews, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols; the “defatalization” of history; the discovery by man that he has been left with the world on his hands, that he can no longer blame Fortune or the Furies for what he does with it; it is man turning his attention away from the worlds beyond and toward this world and this time.

Secularization encompasses not only the political and social aspects of life, but also inevitably the cultural, for it denotes “the disappearance of religious determination of the symbols of cultural integration”. It implies an irreversible historical process in which culture and society are “delivered from tutelage to religious control and closed metaphysical worldviews”. It is considered a “liberating development”, and the end product of secularization is historical relativism. Hence according to them history is a process of secularization. The integral components in the dimensions of secularization are the “disenchantment of nature”, the “desacralization of politics”, and the “deconsecration of values”. By the disenchantment of nature—a term and concept borrowed from the German sociologist Max Weber⁶—they mean as he means, the “freeing of nature from its religious overtones”, which means to deprive nature of spiritual meaning so that man can act upon it as he pleases and make use of it according to his needs and plans, and hence create historical change and ‘development’. By the desacralization of politics they mean the “abolition of sacral legitimation of political power and authority”, which is the prerequisite of political change and hence also social change allowing for the emergence of the historical process. By the deconsecration of values they mean the “rendering transient and relative all cultural creations and every value system” which for them include religion and worldviews having ultimate and final significance, so that in this way history, the future, is open to change, and man is free

philosophical program is given in my *Islam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1978), chs. I and II.

6. The phrase ‘disenchantment of the world’ was used by Friedrich Schiller and quoted by Weber. Another term which Weber used in this connection is ‘rationalization’. See Weber’s *Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1958); see also his *Sociology of Religion* (Boston, 1964); chs. III and V of the former; and for Weber’s concept of rationalization, see Talcott Parson’s explanation of it in the Introduction to the latter work, pp. xxxi–xxxiii.

to create the change and immerse himself in the 'evolutionary' process. This attitude toward values demands an awareness on the part of secular man of the relativity of his own views and beliefs; he must live with the realization that the rules and ethical codes of conduct which guide his own life will change with the times and generations. This attitude demands what they call 'maturity'; and hence secularization is also a process of 'evolution' of the consciousness of man from the 'infantile' to the 'mature' states, and is defined as the "removal of juvenile dependence from every level of society"; the process of "maturing and assuming responsibility"; the "removal of religious and metaphysical supports and putting man on his own". They further say that this recurring change of values is also the recurrent phenomenon of "conversion" which occurs "at the intersection of the action of history on man and the action of man on history", which they call "responsibility", the acceptance of "adult accountability". Thus as already mentioned, they visualise the contemporary experience of secularization as part of the evolutionary process of human history; as part of the irreversible process of 'coming of age', of 'growing up' to 'maturity' when they will have to 'put away childish things' and learn to have 'the courage to be'.

If the full implications of the foregoing brief exposition of the meaning of secularization is understood, it will become obvious that the twentieth century Christian Arabic usage and accepted translation of the term 'secular' as *‘almāniy* merely reflects its meaning as formulated by the latinized Western Christianity of the thirteenth century. Even though the modern translators vaguely refer to the term 'secular' as meaning also *jilīy* or *qarnīy*, yet they were completely unaware of the way in which the concept couched in the term 'secular' has evolved during the last seven centuries in the experience and consciousness of Western man, causing the rise of contemporary problems never encountered before. Their description of secularity as *al-ihimām bi umur al-dunyā*, or as *al-ihimām bi al-‘alamiyyat* is not quite correct, because to be preoccupied with the affairs of the world, or with worldly things, is according to us not necessarily to be opposed to religion; whereas secularity understood in the modern sense is necessarily opposed to religion. Similarly, to secularize is not quite the same as *hawwal ila gharaḍ ‘alami ay dunyawī*, because to change in accordance with what is good in the pursuit of worldly ends is according to us not necessarily to change in opposition to religion. Secularization

in the modern sense described above, and which is actually happening, is a process which is definitely opposed to religion; it is a *philosophical program* or an *ideology* that seeks to destroy the very foundations of religion. ^c*Almāniyyah*, then, cannot be a description of 'secularism'; as it seems to me nearer the truth to describe it as *wāqī'īyyah* in view of its close conceptual connection with the philosophical ideology of positivism. Be that as it may, since the dual connotation of *place* and *time* is fundamental to the concept of *saeculum*, which conveys already the germ of meaning that evolves naturally and logically into its present, contagious fullness; and since the place and the time refer to *here* and *now* respectively, it would be more precise to describe 'secularism' literally by some compound word such as *hunalāniyyah*, from *huna* and *al-ān*. For the 'here-and-nowness' elicited by *hunalāniyyah* clearly projects a conception of the world and of life in it that rejects other worlds beyond; that repudiates the past except insofar as it confirms the present; that affirms an open future; that altogether denies religion and worldviews having ultimate and final significance. But better still to emulate the method of discerning scholars, savants, and sages among our early predecessors who were very much aware of the paramount importance of language and its profound connection with reason; who were meticulous in the correct usage of language and the pursuit of authentic meaning; who exercised great care not to confuse Islamic terms and concepts with those that do not correspond and cohere with the worldview of Islam; who were not inclined to hasty and negligent arabization of alien terms and concepts opposed to our religion and our vision of reality and truth. Many of the Greek terms and concepts were transcribed in their original forms so as to render their foreign origin immediately recognizable such that their proper places become known. So it would be better if the term 'secular' were just transcribed into Arabic spelled '*sin ya kaf lam ra*', with *kasrah* to *sin*; *dammah* to *kaf* and *fathah* to *lam*. In this way we would know at once that the term and the concept is not Islamic Arabic. To arabize such terms and concepts is to introduce confusion in our minds, because that will give the impression that they are natural to Islam and would encourage Muslims not only to think in those terms and concepts, but to actualize such thought that are alien and opposed to Islam into concrete reality.

I strongly believe with sound reason that the arabization and introduction of the ambivalent concept of *‘almāniyyah* into mainstream contemporary Arabic is largely responsible for insinuating into the Muslim mind the dichotomous separation of the sacred and the profane, creating therein the socio-political notion of an unbridgeable gap separating what it considers to be a ‘theocratic state’ from a ‘secular state’. There is confusion in the Muslim mind in misunderstanding the Muslim ‘secular’ state by setting it in contrast with the ‘theocratic’ state. But since Islam does not involve itself in the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, how then can it set in contrast the theocratic state with the secular state? An Islamic state is neither wholly theocratic nor wholly secular. A Muslim state calling itself or is called by others ‘secular’, does not necessarily have to divest nature of spiritual meaning; does not necessarily have to deny religious values and virtues in politics and human affairs; does not necessarily have to oppose religious truth and religious education in the way that the philosophical and scientific process which I call ‘secularization’ necessarily does involve the divesting of spiritual meaning from the world of creation; the denial of religious values and virtues from politics and human affairs; and the relativization of all values and of truth in the human mind and conduct. It is this confusion in the Muslim mind that is causing the emergence in our midst of social and political upheavals and disunity. Unity has two aspects: the outward, external unity manifested in society as communal and national solidarity; and the inward, internal unity of ideas and mind revealed in intellectual and spiritual coherence that encompasses realms beyond communal and national boundaries. Understanding of our identity as Muslims pertains to the second aspect, which is fundamental to the realization of the first. The coherence of this second aspect depends upon the soundness and integrity of concepts connoted in language, the instrument of reason which influences the reasoning of its users. If the soundness and integrity of concepts in language is confused, then this is due to a confusion in ‘worldview’ caused by the corruption of knowledge.

In the languages of Muslim peoples, including Arabic, there is a basic vocabulary consisting of key terms which govern the interpretation of the Islamic vision of reality and truth, and which project the worldview of Islam in correct perspective. Because the words that comprise this basic

vocabulary have their origins in the Holy Qur'ān these words are naturally in Arabic, and are deployed uniformly in all Muslim languages, reflecting the intellectual and spiritual unity of the Muslims throughout the world. The Islamic basic vocabulary is composed of key terms and concepts related to one another meaningfully, and altogether determining the conceptual structure of reality and existence projected by them. The *islamization* of language, which is a fundamental element in conversion to Islam, is none other than this infusion of the Islamic basic vocabulary into the languages of Muslim peoples. In this way, each language of a Muslim people with every other has in common this Islamic basic vocabulary as its own basic vocabulary; and as such all languages of Muslim peoples indeed belong to the same family of Islamic languages. What I wish to introduce here is the concept of Islamic language—that there is such a thing as *Islamic language*. Because language that can be categorized as Islamic does exist by virtue of the common Islamic vocabulary inherent in each of them, the key terms and concepts in the basic vocabulary of each of them ought indeed to convey the *same meanings*, since they all are involved in the same conceptual and semantic network. If, for example, we find today that the focus word *‘ilm*, which is a major key term in the basic vocabulary of all Islamic languages, conveys different connotations in each member of the family of Islamic languages, then this regrettable fact is not caused by what is vaguely termed as ‘social change’, but by ignorance and error, which is productive of the confusion that *causes* social change. To say that restriction of meaning, or alteration of meaning, such that the original intention is no longer conveyed, affecting key terms in the basic vocabulary of Islam, is due to social change, and to acquiesce to such restriction and alteration of meaning as the exponents of modern linguistics teach, is to imply the legitimacy of authority invested in the common people, in society, to effect semantic change. This kind of teaching, which has in fact been propagated in the name of ‘scientific’ knowledge, is misleading and dangerous and must not be tolerated, for Islam does not accept ‘society’ as authoritative in matters of knowledge, or invest it with authority to bring about changes that will lead Muslims astray. Society, insofar as knowledge and the understanding of Islam and its worldview are concerned, has no authority; on the contrary, society is generally ignorant and needs proper education and constant

guidance by the learned and the wise within it so as to ensure its salvation. This means that the learned and the wise among Muslims must exercise constant vigilance in detecting erroneous usage in language which impinges upon semantic change in major key concepts in order to prevent the occurrence of general confusion and error in the understanding of Islam and of its vision of reality and truth.

Many major key terms in the Islamic basic vocabulary of the languages of Muslim peoples have now been displaced and made to serve absurdly in alien fields of meaning in a kind of regression towards non-Islamic worldviews; a phenomenon which I call the *deislamization* of language. Ignorance and confusion, making possible the infusion of alien concepts, have also let loose the forces of narrow national sentiment and ideologization of ethnic and cultural traditions. Words conveying meanings which focus upon fundamental truths peculiar to Islam, such as among others, 'knowledge' (*'ilm*), 'justice' (*'adl*), right action (*ādab*), 'education' (*ta'dīb*), have been tampered with, so that 'knowledge' becomes restricted to 'jurisprudence', or to that which is based only on restricted forms of reason and sense experience; 'justice' to mean unqualified equality, or mere procedure; 'right action' to mean hypocritical etiquette; and 'education' to mean the kind of training leading to ends derived from philosophic and secular rationalism. If even a few of such focus words were restricted in their meanings, or were made to convey meanings which are not authentic and authoritative—by which I mean whose intentions no longer reflect those understood by authorities among the early Muslims—then this would inevitably create confusion and error in the minds of Muslims and disrupt intellectual and spiritual unity among them. Moreover, it would render sciences once considered praiseworthy to become blameworthy. I am not here suggesting something that may be construed as not allowing language to develop, to unfold itself according to its potential powers of tracing the rich tapestry of life as it unfolds, to evolve with ideas as they evolve, to grasp reality-truth as it manifests itself in the fleeting passage of time. I am only suggesting that the basic vocabulary in the Islamic language can only develop from its roots, and not severed from them, nor can they develop from roots stunted in restriction. Secular and materialistic value systems have their initial locus in minds, then they are translated into linguistic symbols, and afterwards become manifest in the external

world in urban areas whence they spread like a raging contagion to the rural masses. Failure to apply language correctly and to convey correct meaning implies unawareness of proper perspective of the true and real situation, which involves understanding not only the language, but the worldview projected by it. Widespread intellectual secularization due to ignorance of Islam as the true revealed religion, its manifestation as civilization, and its vision of reality and truth as worldview has tended to confuse many of our scholars and intellectuals and their followers into imitating the shifting slogans of modernity, effecting changes and restrictions in the meanings of key terms that reflect our system of values. Meanings reflecting reality and truth whose transparency was known to our experience and consciousness have now begun to become opaque in minds fused with the formulations of modernity. Fundamental elements of our worldview and the system of values they convey, involving the meanings of 'virtue', 'freedom', and 'happiness', are also affected.

Since we maintain that virtue (*faḍīlah*) is an activity of the soul, and that man has a dual nature, the animal and the rational, the realization of virtues in the self requires discernment of reality and truth accompanied by action in conformity with that discernment involving subordination of the bodily and appetitive faculties of the animal soul, to the practical and theoretical faculties of the rational soul such that a stable state of soul, commended by intellect and by religion, is attained. This exercise of subordinating the faculties of the animal soul to those of the rational soul requires freedom.

The activity that is called 'freedom' is in *ikhtiyār*, which is an act, not in *hurriyyah*, which is a condition. The act that is meant in *ikhtiyār* is that of making a choice, not between many alternatives but between two alternatives: the good or the bad. Because *ikhtiyār* is bound in meaning with *khayr*, meaning 'good', being derived from the same root *khāra* (*khayara*), the choice that is meant in *ikhtiyār* is the choice of what is good, better, or best between the two alternatives. This point is most important as it is aligned to the philosophical question of freedom. A choice of what is bad of two alternatives is therefore not a choice that can be called *ikhtiyār*, in fact it is not a choice, rather it is an act of injustice (*ẓulm*) done to oneself. Freedom is to act as one's real and true nature demands—that is, as one's *ḥaqq* and one's *fīṭrah* demands—and so only the exercise of that choice which is of

what is good can properly be called a 'free choice'. A choice for the better is therefore an act of freedom, and it is also an act of justice (*ʿadl*) done to oneself. It presupposes knowledge of good and evil, of virtues and vices; whereas a choice for the worse is not a choice as it is grounded upon ignorance urged on by the instigation of the soul that inclines toward the blameworthy aspects of the animal powers; it is then also not an exercise of freedom because freedom means precisely being free of domination by the powers of the soul that incites to evil. *Ikhtiyār* is the cognitive act of choosing for the better of two alternatives in accordance with virtues that culminate in justice to oneself and which is, as such, an exercise of freedom. The doing of what is good is accomplished by means of virtues. In Islam all virtues, including those considered as principal virtues such as wisdom, temperance, courage, and justice and their subdivisions, are religious virtues since they are derived from the Qur'ān and from the exemplary life of the Prophet. The source of these principal virtues and their subdivisions is true faith or *imān*, which is the verification by deed what tongue and heart affirm as real and true of God's Revelation and His commands and prohibitions. *Imān* already implies consciousness of God and remembrance of Him that brings about a condition of tranquility in the soul; it is *freedom* from worry resulting from doubt; *freedom* from disquietude and from fear that refers to ultimate destiny; it is inward security that comes about when the soul is submissive to God; and being submissive to God is *freedom*, which causes to arise in the soul the consciousness of peace called *islam*. These inner activities of the soul implies a prior consciousness in the soul of the truth that comes from divine guidance; and this consciousness is that of *certainty* of the truth (*yaqīn*). From this it is clear that happiness, which is the goal of virtuous activity leading to the state of stability of soul, is not something that relates only to this world; is not something that consists of only feelings and emotions that vary in degree from moment to moment; is not something only psychological and biological, which is shared also by animals. Nor is happiness an end in itself which somehow cannot be experienced consciously as something enduring, something permanent in the course of our worldly existence.

The tradition of Western thought takes the position that there are two conceptions of happiness: the ancient which goes back to Aristotle; and the modern which gradually emerged in Western history as a result of the process of

secularization. The Aristotelian conception maintains that happiness relates only to this world; that it is an end in itself; and that it is a state that undergoes changes and variations in degrees from moment to moment; or it is something that cannot be consciously experienced from moment to moment and can be judged as having been attained only when one's worldly life, if virtuously lived and attended by good fortune, has come to an end. The modern conception agrees with the Aristotelian conception that happiness relates only to this world and that it is an end in itself, but whereas for the former the end is considered in terms of a standard for proper conduct, the latter considers it to be terminal psychological states having no relation with moral codes. It is the modern conception of happiness that is acknowledged to be prevalent in the West today. We do not agree with the Aristotelian position that virtue and happiness relate only to this world, and that consequently happiness as a permanent condition experienced consciously in the course of our worldly life is unattainable. We do not restrict our understanding of happiness only to the domain of temporal, secular life, for in accord with our worldview we affirm that the relation of happiness to the hereafter has an intimate and a profound bearing upon its relation to worldly life, and that since in the former case it is a spiritual and permanent condition there is, even in its temporal and secular involvement, an element of happiness that we experience and are conscious of which when once attained is permanent. As for the modern conception of happiness, it is not much different in essence from the ones known and practiced in ancient times by pagan societies.

Happiness (i.e. we mean *sa'adah*) as known in the experience and consciousness of those who are truly submissive to God and follow His guidance is not an end in itself because the highest good in this life is love of God. Enduring happiness in life refers not to the physical entity in man, not to the animal soul and body of man; nor is it a state of mind, or feeling that undergoes terminal states, nor pleasure nor amusement. It has to do with certainty (*yaqīn*) of the ultimate Truth and fulfillment of action in conformity with that certainty. And certainty is a permanent state of consciousness natural to what is permanent in man and perceived by his spiritual organ of cognition which is the heart (*qalb*). It is peace and security and tranquility of the heart (*tuma'ninah*); it is knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and knowledge is

true faith (*imān*). It is knowledge of God as He described Himself in genuine Revelation; it is also knowing one's rightful and hence proper place in the realm of creation and one's proper relationship with the Creator accompanied by requisite action (*'ibādah*) in conformity with that knowledge such that the condition which results is that of justice (*'adl*). It is only through such knowledge that love of God can be attained in earthly life.

From this interpretation of the meaning and experience of happiness in Islam we derive conclusion that happiness in this life is not an end in itself; that the end of happiness is love of God; that in worldly life two levels of happiness can be discerned. The first level is psychological, temporal and terminal states which may be described as feelings or emotions, and which is attained when needs and wants are achieved by means of right conduct in accord with the virtues. The second level is spiritual, permanent, consciously experienced, becoming the substratum of worldly life which is affirmed to be probationary, the testing of conduct and virtuous activity being by good fortune or ill. This second level, when attained, occurs concurrently with the first, except that wants are diminished and needs are satisfied. This second level of happiness is a preparation for a third level in the hereafter of which the highest state is the Vision of God. There is no change in this meaning and experience of happiness in the consciousness of genuine believers throughout the ages.

In the foregoing pages I have set forth in bare summary some of the fundamental, permanently established elements, together with the key concepts that they unfold, that act as integrating principles placing all our systems of meaning and standards of life and values in coherent order as a unified supersystem forming the worldview of Islam. These fundamental elements and the key concepts pertinent to them have profound bearing, we said earlier, upon our ideas about change, development, and progress. Even though diversity and change can and do indeed occur within the ambience of this worldview, such as the diversity in the schools of jurisprudence, theology, philosophy and metaphysics, and in the traditions, cultures and languages; and the change in meeting the tides of changing fortune in the course of history, yet the diversity and the change have never affected the character and role of these fundamental elements themselves, so that what is projected as a worldview by the supersystem

remains intact. This is so because the diversity and the change have taken their rise within the bounds of cognitive restraint deliberated by a knowing community conscious of its identity, ensuring thereby no involvement of change nor encroachment of confusion in the key concepts that serve the fundamental elements of the worldview. The worldview resides in the minds of genuine Muslims. The discerning ones among them know that Islam is not an *ideal* it is a *reality*; and that whatever may be demanded of them by the challenges of the age in which they live must be met without confusing that worldview with alien elements. They know that the advances in science and technology and their being put to adequate use in everyday life do not necessarily have to involve confusion in their vision of reality and truth. Technology is not the same as science; and acceptance of useful and relevant technology does not necessarily have to involve acceptance also of the implications in the science that gave it birth. Confusion arises only as a result of inadequate knowledge of Islam and of the worldview projected by it, as well as ignorance of the nature of the confronting intellectual, religious, and ideological challenges, and of the implications inherent in the statements and general conclusions of modern secular philosophy and science.

Change, development, and progress, in their true senses ultimately mean for us a conscious and deliberate movement towards genuine Islam at a time when we encounter challenges, as we do now, that seek to encroach on our values and virtues, our modes of conduct, our thought and faith, our way of life. Our present engagement is with the challenges of an alien worldview surreptitiously introduced into Muslim thought and belief by confused modernist Muslim scholars, intellectuals, academics, writers and their followers, as well as by religious deviationists and extremists of many sorts. They have wittingly or unwittingly come under the spell of modern secular Western philosophy and science, its technology and ideology which have disseminated a global contagion of secularization as a philosophical program. We are not unaware of the fact that not *all* of Western science and technology are necessarily objectionable to religion; but this does not mean that we have to uncritically accept the scientific and philosophical theories that go along with the science and the technology, and the science and the technology themselves, without first understanding their implications and testing the validity of the values that accompany the theories.

Islam possesses within itself the source of its claim to truth and does not need scientific and philosophical theories to justify such a claim. Moreover, it is not the concern of Islam to fear scientific discoveries that could contradict the validity of its truth. We know that no science is free of value; and to accept its presuppositions and general conclusions without being guided by genuine knowledge of our worldview—which entails knowledge also of our history, our thought and civilization, our identity—which will enable us to render correct judgements as to their validity and relevance or otherwise to our life, the change that would result in our way of life would simply be a change congenial to what is alien to our worldview. And we would neither call such change a ‘development’ nor a ‘progress’. Development consists not in ‘activating and making visible and concrete what is latent in biological man’ because man is not merely a biological entity: humanity is something much more than rationality and animality. Progress is neither ‘becoming’ or ‘coming-into-being’, nor movement towards that which is coming-into-being and never becomes ‘being’; for the notion of ‘something aimed at’, or the ‘goal’ inherent in the concept of progress can only convey real and true meaning when it refers to that which is understood as something permanently established, as already *being*. Hence what is already clarified in the mind and permanently established therein *and* externally, already in the state of being, cannot suffer change, nor be subject to constant slipping from the grasp of achievement, nor constantly receding beyond attainment. The term ‘progress’ refers to a *definite direction* that is aligned to a *final purpose* that is meant to be achieved in worldly life. If the direction sought is still vague, still coming-into-being as it were, and the purpose aligned to it is not final, then how can involvement in it truly mean progress? People who grope in the dark cannot be referred to as progressing, and they who say such people are progressing have merely uttered a lie against the true meaning and purpose of progress.

The concepts of ‘change’, ‘development’, and ‘progress’ presuppose situations in which we find ourselves confused by a commixture of the true and the false, of the real and the illusory, and become captive in the ambit of ambiguity. In such ambivalent situations, our positive action in the exercise of freedom to choose for the better, to accept what is good and relevant to our needs, to deliberate correctly in our judgment of needs, all the while maintaining our

endeavour to return to the straight path and direct our steps in agreement with it—such endeavour, which entails change, is development; and such return, which consists in development, is progress.