OCCASIONAL PAPERS

1

Outlines of a Cultural Strategy

Ṭāhā Jābir al ʻAlwānī

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PUBLISHING HOUSE
AND
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

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ARABIC

- His edition of ***Al Maḥṣūl fī 'Ilm Uṣūl al Fiqh*** [The Sum and Substance of *Uṣūl al Fiqh*], by al Imam Fakhr al Dīn al Rāzī, in six volumes.
- ***Al Ijtihād wa al Taqlīd fī al Islām*** [Legal Reasoning and Imitation in Islam].
- ***Ḥuqūq 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***

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- ***Outlines of a Cultural Strategy*** Occasional Paper 1
- ***The Qur'an and the Sunnah: The Time-Space Factor*** Occasional Paper 3
- ***Ijtihad*** Occasional Paper 4
- ***Ethics of Disagreement in Islam***
- ***Source Methodology in Islamic Jurisprudence: Uṣūl al Fiqh al Islāmi***

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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 *Rasā'il Islāmiyat 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 first paper in the series, *Outlines of a Cultural Strategy*, was originally a lecture entitled "Towards an Islamic Alternative in Thought and Knowledge," delivered in Rabat, Morocco, in Dhū al Ḥijja 1408/August 1988, at the invitation of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO).

The use of Islamic terminology in transliteration is a policy of the IIIT. Some of the terms used defy adequate translation, while others are so essential that the Institute feels that familiarity with them is necessary for a better understanding of Islamic issues. These terms are routinely footnoted once or sometimes explained

briefly between brackets. All those which have not yet been accepted in Anglo-Saxon dictionaries are in italics. As many of these occur more than once, readers are advised to refer to the relevant footnotes whenever necessary.

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

English translations from the Qur'an used in this series come from 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī's *The Meaning of The Holy Qur'an* (Amana Corporation, revised, 1989) with occasional modifications for further clarity.

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1416/1995

Introduction

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

By way of introduction, we will give a brief description of the state of thought and knowledge, and of the educational and cultural systems, in the contemporary Arab and Muslim world.

The Present State of Thought

When examining the present state of thought among the Muslim peoples, three basic approaches can be identified.

The first can be described as the traditionalist approach, which, by and large, considers the Ummah's traditional thought to be self-sufficient and capable of being presented as it is or with very little alteration. This approach holds that the Ummah's intellectual (and cultural) life can be formed and organized on this basis. The approach often seeks to derive its legitimacy from **authentic** and **pristine** sources.

The second trend considers contemporary Western thought and its world view—its concepts of existence, of life and humankind—to be universal; without it a modern culture and civilization cannot be built. This tendency maintains that Western thought must be adopted in its entirety, and any consequent negative aspects are the price which must be paid if a modern culture and civilization are to be established. This view is often described as **modernistic.**

The third trend, or the **eclectic** approach, advocates yet another

view. It contends that one must select from traditional thought what is most sound, and from "modern" contemporary thought that which one considers and proves to be correct, and combine the two to form an intellectual structure which will provide a guaranteed basis for achieving what is required.

However, the traditional approach, in the manner in which it has been presented and applied, did not prevent the Ummah from falling into a state of decline and failure from which it is still suffering. Likewise, Western thought, also as it is presented and applied, cannot protect the Ummah from its inherently adverse, even disastrous effects. Moreover, the advocates of the eclectic or selective approach have not yet presented the details of this proposed blend, let alone tried to put it into effect. All this leads us to ask the wide-ranging question: is the Ummah going through a serious intellectual crisis, and, if so, what is the way out of it?

The Present State of Knowledge

To answer the above question, a brief look at the contemporary state of knowledge is necessary. There are at present two types of knowledge imparted to our students. Firstly, there are the contemporary social sciences and humanities as well as the technical and applied sciences. These branches of knowledge all exercise a dominant control over the organization and functioning of all aspects of life. They comprise—regardless of Muslim contributions to the bases of many of these branches—a body of knowledge whose principles, rules, objectives and methods were formed by the Western mentality from its doctrinal and intellectual framework and general background. Every aspect of this knowledge is closely bound up with the Western form of civilization.

Secondly, there is the knowledge which is described variously

by the Muslims as *shar'ī*[1] or *aslī*.[2] This knowledge is itself of two types: the knowledge of objectives and the knowledge of means. Experts on classification and cataloging include both under the heading of *al 'ulūm al naqliyyah* ("transmitted knowledge").

Most of this knowledge was produced to deal with the issues of the period following that in which the Islamic sciences had been established in the third century Hijrah,[3] and in response to the historical reality of the Ummah at that time. The books and the reference works current among the students of this kind of knowledge were prepared after ijtihad[4] had ceased and *taqlīd*[5] had become widespread. The authors of these works used to prepare them with the utmost care, paying great attention to linguistic details and artistic style in order to display the depth of their knowledge to their students, colleagues and rivals. They are more like monologs than textbooks. The methods and content of such material supported the concept of *taqlīd* and encouraged people to adhere to it. The intention was to turn people away from—even despise—any form of ijtihad other than that needed to understand

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1. *shar'ī*: Relating to Shari'ah which is the collective name for all the laws of Islam, including Islam's whole religious and liturgical, ethical and jurisprudential systems.
2. *aslī*: Relating to the basis of Islam.
3. hijrah: Migration. The act of leaving a place to seek sanctuary in another for freedom of worship or for any other purpose. Also the act of abandoning a bad practice in order to adopt a righteous way of life. Specifically, the Hijrah refers to the Prophet's journey from Makkah to Madīnah in the month of Rabī' al Awwal in the twelfth year of his mission, corresponding to June 622 AC. The Islamic calendar begins from this event (AH).
4. ijtihad: Considering that the accepted juridical sources of Islam are valid for all times and places, ijtihad may be described as a creative but disciplined intellectual effort to derive legal rulings from those sources while taking into consideration the variables imposed by the fluctuating circumstances of Muslim society. For papers on the subject see: Tāhā J. al 'Alwānī, "*Taqlid* and Ijtihad," AJISS, VIII, no. 1, 129-42; "The Crisis in Fiqh and the Methodology of Ijtihad," VIII, no. 2, 317-37; "*Taqlīd* and the Stagnation of Muslim Mind," VIII, no. 3, 513-24; "*Taqlīd* and Ijtihad," IX, no. 2, 233-42; "The Scope of *Taqlid*," IX, no. 3, 383-6; "The Crisis of Thought and Ijtihad," X, no. 2, 234-7; *Ijtihad* (London: IIIT, 1993).
5. *taqlīd*: Uncritical imitation of a particular scholar or adoption of a school of thought (*madhhab*).

the books themselves. This type of knowledge could not equip anyone to face the realities of life. Rather, it strenuously encouraged and promoted blind imitation and brought an end to intellectual activity and creativity. Those seeking knowledge were thus caught between following alien ideologies of the day or sticking to old traditional ways of thinking. Neither type of knowledge could enable them to achieve the kind of operative ijtihad conducive to tackling current problems in a sound and appropriate way.

The Present State of Muslim Education

Meanwhile, in the education provided in the Muslim world nowadays a dual system of instruction prevails. First is the traditional "Islamic system" which offers the student a program including the Shari'ah sciences.[6] This system is confined to preparing and enabling graduates to deal with personal affairs, meet some educational needs, and lead *ṣalāh*[7] in mosques. This sector, for the most part, remains a private affair that has a limited access to public funds. The money needed for this sector comes from the residue of charitable endowments (*awqāf*). Where public funds are made available, demands of secularization are imposed in the name of "modernism."

The second—and most widespread—is the secular or non-religious system which imparts all kinds of contemporary knowledge and sciences in the various stages of education. It advocates an un-Islamic orientation and has assumed tremendous proportions, elbowing the Islamic system out of the field. Because the graduates of the Islamic system are kept out of touch with the reality of contemporary life and its challenges, they usually present no real threat to the trainees in the secular system. Consequently, it is the un-Islamic secular system that produces the Ummah's

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6. Sciences pertaining to Islamic law.
7. *ṣalāh* (pl. *ṣalawāt*): The supreme act of worship in Islam, inadequately translated as "prayer." Basically there are five appointed ritual *salawāt*; but a person can—and does—perform voluntary ones.

intellectual, political and social leaders, the managers of its services and means of production.

As a result of this dichotomy, the system of education has become a means of dividing the Ummah and draining its energy. In practice, education should be a means of bringing Muslims together and providing them with a unified cultural perspective, directing them towards progress and construction. It should create harmony and provide a common purpose, thus directing all efforts towards developing the righteous Muslim whose mind and soul, behavior and powers of individual initiative and reasoning are keen and constructive.

Many of the manifestations of division and fragmentation—even tragic conflicts—which afflict several parts of the Arab and Muslim world today bear the hallmarks of the negative aspects of this dichotomy.

The Present Civilizational State of the Ummah

The territories of the Ummah today are among the most strategically important and rich areas of the world. They contain the most vital raw materials needed by Western industry and house tremendous human resources. Muslims have a magnificent legacy and possess the best sources of guidance, namely the Divine Revelation *(Waḥi)* with its two parts: the inimitable Qur'an, including its interpretation and application, as well as the Sunnah of the Prophet (ṢAAS).[8] In spite of this, however, the Muslim world today is plagued with social strife and division, unrest and self-contradictions, extravagant wealth and excessive poverty, famine and epidemics.

The Ummah is divided against itself, torn up and fragmented

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8. ṢAAS—*Ṣalla Allāhu 'Alayhi wa Sallam*: May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. This prayer is said by Muslims whenever the name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned, or whenever he is referred to as the Prophet of Allah.

into some fifty or more nation-states, separated by artificial boundaries designed to create and ensure the continuation of friction, tension and confrontation, especially between neighboring states. None of these states has had the chance to attain outright freedom and stability, or the integration of its citizens, to be able to concentrate its energies on construction and development. The factors of disharmony, such as sectarianism, factionalism and nationalism, have been so dominant that they have led to a continuous state of instability and uneasiness which could be easily manipulated by foreign powers at any time, thus leading to perpetual turmoil and anarchy. The lack of individual freedom does not allow for intellectual and cultural growth or the natural psychological development of the people. The Muslim continues to live under the shadow of poverty, oppression and terror, either from those who were specially prepared to impose incompatible forms of thought and culture on the Ummah, or from military dictators who seize power and impose by force, torture and intimidation the frivolous, arbitrary and whimsical policies of one individual. In such dictatorships the role of political and administrative bodies and institutions is completely abolished, which severely compromises all the qualities and cultural potential of humankind.

The overwhelming majority of the Ummah are illiterate. Their needs far outweigh the goods, materials and services they can provide. Even in the important and vital necessities of life, none of these Muslim states is self-sufficient. This deficiency is usually made up by imports and international loans which increase dependency on outside powers. What makes the situation even more intolerable is the fact that raw materials are bought from Muslim states at the lowest price, or even taken for nothing, and are returned to them as manufactured goods at much higher prices. Many of these states live on the brink of starvation, while the rest could be reduced to such a level, almost immediately, if the exporters and outside powers so wished.

The few Muslim states which have followed the path of industrialization have been unable to attain complete self-sufficiency simply because they depend on foreign sources for most of the equipment needed to develop their industry. Such

sources are, therefore, able to control the local industry and direct it according to their own political and economic interests.

In most cases, "Muslim industries" are not designed to meet the desperate and vital needs of the Muslims, but rather those tangential and secondary demands which cater for consumeristic desires and habits planted in the Muslim minds for the benefit of others. The Muslim world has overwhelmingly developed the habit of merely consuming the products of contemporary civilization and adopting many of its outward aspects. It has built "modern" roads, buildings and places of entertainment in its capitals, reflecting the Western style. It has also established some political and economic institutions based on the Western model. But all this has failed to bring about the desired transformation and has not even set the Ummah on the road of such transformation. How can this be rectified?

Towards an Islamic Alternative in Thought

In order to present the Islamic alternative in thought to the Ummah today, we must revise Muslim thought as a whole and reassess its methods. We must also understand the position of "regional" and "nationalistic" thought, as well as Western thought. Furthermore, we must grasp the extent of the influence of the latter in the Muslim world in order to become aware of the enormous challenges we are facing and the pressure which both history and the present are exerting on the Muslim mind.

There are several important conditions for such a reformation of thought. It should be comprehensive and free from all psychological pressures, whether historical or contemporary; it should be carried out with the purpose of self-examination and correction, and must pursue scientific alternatives governed by theoretical and intellectual principles.

Revision should tackle controversial issues which have occupied the Muslim mind and prevented it from being positive, effective and influential. These issues include causality, the alleged conflict between transmitted knowledge and reason, the blind imitation of

previous scholars with its crippling effects, and the dignity of humankind. It should reinterpret these issues in a sound and objective fashion, and seek to free the Muslim mind from the negative effects and shackles which these issues have had on its mentality, educational system and way of life.

The inherited historical cultural structure of the Ummah must be revised and corrected with a view to weeding out the weakness, dichotomy and lack of realism which hamper its efficiency. All the prevalent concepts need looking into, and work must be carried out to achieve correct perspectives on life, the universe and humankind, as well as on all other related issues. In addition, Muslim thinkers must agree on the sources for these perspectives, endeavor to design Islamic systems and institutions, and define a role for each of them, so that they may be able to attain the aims of Islam, even if they do not exactly match the historical reality in form and structure. This should lead towards an Islamic concept of civilization which will enable Muslims to strive assiduously towards the revitalization of the Ummah and the achievement of its goals and objectives. We should strive rationally and methodically for the transformation of all the above into a harmonious cultural system which will acculturate and educate the entire Ummah and change it into a dynamic, operational system.

In our opinion, the sound intellectual basis, which is a prerequisite for building a civilizational system, must have three characteristics. It must be based on infallible sources and be free from error and destructive deviation, so that thinking will not degenerate into fantasy or caprice; it should be rationally and logically acceptable, so that if ideas are presented to the Muslim mind they will be correctly dealt with; it should also be realistic, so that it will be able to interact with reality and change and influence it positively.

Towards a Strategy for Knowledge

Nowadays, scientific knowledge is defined according to the following maxim: *"Every piece of knowledge is subject to tangible*

experiment." This definition has been prevalent for a long time and has been adopted by UNESCO. It has been used as a means of deciding which knowledge is scientific and which is not. The adoption of this concept and widespread reliance on it meant that Revelation was rejected as a source of knowledge, culture and civilization, and that all the branches of knowledge which are based on Revelation were excluded from the field of scientific knowledge, regardless of whether they dealt with the tangible world or that which is beyond perception.

As a result, the empirical method was considered to be the only means of gaining scientific knowledge. The human being was regarded only as a mass of biological substances. The social sciences and the humanities were subjected to the laws of the natural sciences. Experiments were carried out on animals in an attempt to define laws which could be applied to humans in such areas as behavior, response, domination and ways of meeting material and other needs.

The Muslims also adopted this approach. As a result the contemporary social sciences and humanities, with these methods and such a philosophy, became the basic sources for the Muslim's education, the formation of his/her mentality and the definition of his/her attitudes towards the values of truth and goodness. Likewise, the arts based on this philosophy became the source which formed the Muslim's psychology and defined his/her tastes and attitudes towards aesthetic values. The teaching methods and curricula in universities, institutes and schools were subjected to this approach, and Westernization and alienation from Islam deepened, leading to the equation of Revelation with myth. A strong link was established between the power, productivity and ability of the West on the one hand, and Western thought and beliefs on the other.

In the light of the above, the first step towards formulating an Islamic cultural strategy consists in redefining knowledge in terms of an Islamic epistemology and in a way that will be embraced by Muslims everywhere.

The contemporary theory of knowledge affirms that the only

possible source of scientific knowledge is the tangible universe. The Islamic theory of scientific knowledge, on the other hand, stresses that knowledge has two sources: Revelation and the tangible universe. Revelation is the source of absolute facts and truth about which there is no doubt whatsoever and is not subjected to relativity. Revelation is contained in the Qur'an, which is the word of Allah (SWT)[9] revealed to the Prophet. Allah has challenged humankind to produce a sūrah[10] to match even the shortest one of the Qur'an:

> And if you are in doubt as to what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a surah like thereunto. (2:23)

The second source of Revelation is the legally binding elaborations of the Qur'an, contained in the Sunnah of the Prophet, which consists of his authentic *aḥādīth*[11] and decisions, namely, all that he said, did, approved of, or condemned.

Furthermore the Islamic theory of knowledge considers the means of gaining knowledge to be reason, perception and experiment. The Qur'an says:

> And Allah has brought you forth from your mother's wombs knowing nothing—but He has endowed you with hearing and sight and minds so that you might have cause to be grateful [to Him]. (16:78)

According to Islam, no information can be considered true knowledge or worthy of acceptance without evidence from Revelation or from the tangible universe. Knowledge from the latter would have to be derived via one or a combination of the

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9. SWT—*Subhānahu wa Ta'ālā*: May He be praised and may His transcendence be affirmed. Said when referring to Allah.
10. sūrah: a unit (chapter) of the Qur'an. Each sūrah is divided into a number of verses (*āyāt*) and the *sūwar* are characterized according to the place of their revelation, either Makkah or Madīnah.
11. hadith (pl. *aḥādīth*): The verbalized form of a tradition of the Prophet constitutive of his Sunnah. The word Hadith when H is capitalized also applies to the sciences dealing with the Prophet's Tradition in all its aspects. A hadith narrative is divided into two parts: the *isnād* (chain of transmission) and the *matn* (content of the narrative).

three means mentioned above: reason, perception, or experiment. The Qur'an challenges people as follows:

> produce your proof if you are truthful. (2:111)

About people affirming unsubstantiated beliefs, it asks:

> Have you any [certain] knowledge which you could proffer to us? You follow only conjectures and you yourselves do nothing but guess. (6:148)

And it categorically affirms:

> Never can surmise take the place of truth. (53:28)

The two fields of which humans should have some knowledge and understanding are the "Unseen" world (*'ālam al ghayb*), namely, all that is beyond the reach of a created being's perception; and the "Seen" or perceptible world (*'ālam al shahādah*), which is all that can be witnessed by a creature's senses or mind. The primary sources of knowledge of the "Unseen" world are Revelation and the Hadith. The basic source of knowledge of the "Seen" world is the tangible universe. Experiments and perception, which may support one another, provide evidence of the "Seen" world by a variety of means. If we succeed in laying down a firm foundation for the theory of Islamic knowledge and present it as an alternative to the contemporary Western theory of knowledge, we will have established the second basis of the proposed cultural strategy.

This strategy must stem from the realization that every nation has a main issue of concern, beliefs, or basic aims which provides its motivations, inspiration and impetus in all fields of knowledge and activity. Usually, each nation seeks to implant such beliefs or aims in the consciousness of its youth, using all the methods available, especially in the stages of childhood. It continues to nurture and strengthen this belief in all other stages of the individual's development.

The current system of education in the Muslim world has failed to instill any such beliefs, standards, or motives in the Muslim. As

a result of this failure, the aim of education for the Muslim, at various levels, is to obtain decent employment with a decent income. Materialism has become widespread among the educated, many of whom have lost any sense of a clear purpose in life. Academic syllabi have failed to establish a discernible direction in the Muslim conscience. The only way to achieve this is to establish a sound Islamic belief (*'aqīdah*) and to instill a sound Islamic vision in the hearts and minds of the Muslim youth. All available means and resources need to be used to nurture and develop this belief and vision, which in turn will be a driving force and an inspiration, as well as a means of uniting the Ummah and restoring its sense of purpose and balance. This belief is the driving force.

Secondary schools in the West, the dominant secularism notwithstanding, teach students about Western heritage, cultural history and traditions in an integrated and comprehensive manner. This gives the students a sense of belonging and instills in them the basic aims and strategy of their nation. They grow up with this feeling and carry with them the vision of their nation and its concepts of life, the universe, humankind and other cultures.

Our proposed cultural strategy must firmly establish Islam and its vision, not with limited classes on "religion," but throughout the entire education system. Every syllabus and program must aim at forming and establishing this belief. This should be done by reorganizing the education system in all Muslim countries and by removing the negative influences of the disparity between religious and other forms of education. Such a distinction has created and continues to perpetuate divisions amongst our people, so much so that graduates of "religious" schools and universities have ideas, opinions and concepts which sharply differ from those of the graduates of secular or military schools and universities. We certainly do not want to abolish variety and specialization in learning; what we want is to end the segmentation of knowledge.

This could be achieved by integrating all existing systems and creating one single system based on the teachings, spirit and vision of Islam. The new education system, its syllabi and methods, and those responsible for it, should all be infused with the principles and aims of Islam. They should abandon the educational programs

which were adopted without taking into consideration the particular needs and aspirations of our Ummah. Such a unified education system should generate a sense of mission, whereby professional advancement or material success may be regarded as unessential benefits, not the purpose and objective of education. The proposed education system must unify our ideas, concepts and feelings regarding all major issues. If there was then a diversification into various specializations, the students and scholars would still feel no sense of isolation or alienation.

If this unification of the education system is carried out in a sound manner, it will provide all the educated members of the Ummah with a salubrious dose of Islamic knowledge embracing the basic beliefs, values and aims of Islam, along with a knowledge of Islamic legislation, history and civilization, in addition to all that is necessary and essential of contemporary knowledge.

In developing an Islamic alternative in thought and knowledge, special attention must be given to the study of Islamic civilization. Such study based on a balanced, methodical syllabus, to which a number of selected Islamic thinkers, educationalists and psychologists will have contributed, is considered to be one of the most important means of creating and crystallizing the individual's feeling of belonging to the Ummah, and enabling him or her to understand the spirit which motivated earlier Muslims to make their great achievements in the fields of art and science, as well as in political, social and economic thought. Such an individual will also be aware of their pains and suffering, so that he/she can develop self-awareness and compare himself/herself with other peoples and civilizations. The study of Islamic civilization will help create and improve an awareness of its unique legacy and the spirit which produced and animated it. It will also help to generate the ability to plan for the future and look forward to it. The study of Islamic civilization will help to protect the Muslims from being swept away by the contemporary currents seeking to overwhelm them. It is certain that very few can escape unscathed from such influence unless they adhere firmly to a well-established but assertive civilization.

Our new educational strategy must include the planning of a

course of study explaining the bases, values, sources and aims of Islam as a source of thought, culture and civilization. This course should be studied for four years in the first stages of university education by all students, irrespective of their specialization. It would deal with the history of Islam, the historical achievements of Islamic civilization, and the basic characteristics of Islamic culture.

Following on from the above, we need to present the humanities, social sciences and arts from an Islamic perspective. We must appreciate that the methods and theories of the modern humanities, social sciences and arts were formed in a way that reflected Western thought, beliefs and strategies in accordance with Western aims and goals in life. The issues they deal with stem from Western theories of knowledge. Nevertheless, the West itself has begun to sense the shortcomings of these disciplines and their inability to meet even its own needs. Since these sciences are encountering many serious problems in their methods, theories and application, Western scholars are trying to find ways to correct them.

The Muslims desperately need to have their own humanities, social sciences and arts based on their own beliefs and the theory of knowledge which is derived from the sources of those beliefs. If this is achieved, it will not be the Muslims alone who will benefit from the fusion of knowledge with values. Such synthesis will indeed contribute to the general welfare of the whole human race.

A noble objective such as this can be achieved by studying the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah concerning social and human matters, and classifying them according to the issues dealt with by the humanities and the social sciences, so that they may provide guidelines and principles for our societies. This work should be carried out by groups of researchers composed of specialists in the humanities, social sciences, the Arabic language and the sciences of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

In addition, the Islamic legacy and its related material available in print or manuscript form must be studied and classified

according to the issues of the above-mentioned sciences. This classification should be carried out thoroughly and meticulously, so that the knowledge contained in the Islamic legacy may be readily available to researchers and specialists in a convenient and authoritative form. Information technology could provide an invaluable service in this area. A critical study of contemporary thought must be undertaken so as to select the best of it according to strictly defined standards. Finally, plans need to be drawn up to make use of and benefit from all this material. Textbooks used in colleges, institutes and schools need to be rewritten so that they reflect the Islamic vision of contemporary reality and needs. They need to be written and designed in such a way as to make them attractive and convenient to use.

All Arab and Muslim world universities must cooperate to achieve these goals. The International Institute of Islamic Thought has dealt extensively with all these matters, and is willing and eager to share its expertise with anyone who seriously wishes to tackle them.

IIIT Publications

Academic Dissertations

ARABIC

Al Khiṭāb al 'Arabi al Mu'āṣir: Qirā'ah Naqdiyah fī Mafāhīm al Nahḍah wa al Taqaddum wa al Ḥadāthah [The Contemporary Arab Discourse: A Critical Study of the Concepts of Renaissance, Progress and Modernism 1978-1987] (1411/1991). Fādī Ismā'īl.

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- supporting and selectively publishing works of scholars and researchers in universities and academic research centers in the Muslim world and the West;
- seeking to direct graduate studies toward furthering work on issues related to Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge.

The Institute has a number of overseas offices and academic advisors for the purpose of coordinating and promoting its various activities. The Institute has also entered into joint cooperation agreements with several universities and research centers.

ON THIS BOOK

The paper not only addresses the intellectual crisis in the Muslim world as manifest in the present state of Muslim thought, knowledge, education, and civilization—a crisis which is directly responsible for the Muslim world's social, economic, and political problems—but it also presents compelling and thought-provoking ideas for an alternative cultural strategy likely to alleviate the Ummah's malaise and benefit humanity at large.

Dr. al 'Alwānī argues that the proposed cultural strategy has never been so urgent and imperative and must establish the Islamic world view with rational educational policies on the basis of firm principles and a far-sighted strategy with the aim of dispelling the religious/secular disparity in education while keeping consistently in touch with our time.

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