

ABC OF ISLAMIC THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem*

Abstract

Main Thesis of this article is that man is the vicegerent of God in this world. And in order to enable him to fulfill his responsibilities (of his vicegerency), God has endowed man with the potentials of creative & conceptual knowledge. Faculties, required for acquisitional of knowledge, such as, eyes, ears, head & heart, are laid into the human constitution. Further, man is also endowed with revelational knowledge which offers him the requisite wisdom & values that may economize his time & labor & guide him to the right path. Life & knowledge, so to say, go together. Knowledge is meant for the transformation of his life. Since there are different forms of life, so is the case with knowledge. All forms of knowledge, however, are indispensable & an integral part of human existence. Islam, it may be underlined advocates a holistic view of knowledge. It does insist though that there is a logical hierarchy. Revelational knowledge, for instance, is deemed supreme & all other forms of knowledge (such as scientific or empirical, rational & intuitive, etc.) are subsumed & sub-ordinated to revelational knowledge. All these forms of knowledge are to be harmonized in a proper logical order. If this order is somehow disturbed & wisdom/values are divorced & detached from power (scientific & political) it could prove disastrous for human life.

Introduction

As a prelude, it may be stated that Islam envisions a very unique and comprehensive theory of knowledge. It covers our life not only from the cradle to the grave but also goes beyond. Here not only life but death also serves as a source of knowledge. In fact, Islam admits various levels of life and consciousness; and corresponding to these levels it also acknowledges various forms of knowledge, some of which are verifiable,

* Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, Qurtuba University of Science & IT, Peshawar, Pakistan, Email: ff_int@yahoo.com

effable and communicable while others are ineffable, not-communicable and confined exclusively to the individual percipient.

The Qur'an maintains that man has been endowed with various faculties of knowledge, such as eyes, ears, head and heart, that is, an intuitive or apprehensive faculty. And it is by virtue of these faculties that he is capable of creative or conceptual knowledge, something which is denied even to the angels. The Qur'an frequently exhorts man to employ these faculties or the gifts of God, to the understanding of the "Signs" or the manifestations of God (*Ayat Allah*), that is, nature, man, and history. Further, it may be underscored that nature, man and history—the main sources of wisdom—are regarded valuable not as an end in themselves but as pointers or indicators to something beyond themselves. Different faculties may help us in understanding these sources. But our knowledge will remain incomplete if we fail to understand these elements without reference to the ultimate Being. If we study them in isolation as is recommended by secularist approach to knowledge; we may gain power and insight as is indeed gained even by secular approach. But their true value will remain hidden from us. It will dawn upon us only when we study them with reference to the Ultimate Being. It means that in Islamic theory of knowledge we can't afford to dispense with metaphysical dimensions to our knowledge: fact and value seem to be interwoven. We can delineate the fact and study it apart from all metaphysical underpinnings. This knowledge, however, will be divorced of its true value which can be obtained only when we examine/study things with reference to their Creator. It seems that true knowledge will eventually marry us to God Almighty. *If we lose this reference, we will lose the real anchorage to our knowledge and are likely to land in serious difficulties.* It means that even though the Qur'an

permits a division of labor amongst these faculties, eventually it wants them to reinforce and supplement each other, for, they cannot work properly in isolation. In other words, we are not supposed to seal them apart and have an exclusive reliance on senses alone, or reason, or intuition, alone. On the contrary, they are to function as an organic and integral whole in the process of our knowledge.

In addition to this potentiality for creative and conceptual knowledge Islam, also highlights the need and necessity of Revelation as the source of guidance to humankind. For in the absence of revelation, the Qur'an insists, man may remain groping in darkness but will never find the right way to success (*Falah*) here or in the hereafter. It is interesting to note that in Islam even Dreams are acknowledged as the source of knowledge. Besides, unlike the materialistic and naturalistic theories of knowledge which terminate the possibility of knowledge with the physical Death of man, Islam underscore even death as a source of knowledge though this knowledge is confined exclusively to the percipient alone. According to Islam our experience in the grave is a pertinent pre-view of what lies ahead for us after Resurrection. Finally Resurrection, particularly the Day of Judgment, is underlined as probably the height of all human experience, for on the Last Day "the veil of our ignorance will be lifted", all "disputes" concerning the right and wrong ways of life, will be "settled and resolved", our "sight" will be sharpened and we will be able to "see" the moral consequences of our own deeds, something which cannot be realized fully in this world. Moreover, man will find that Hell or Heaven are the logical end of his own deeds and no injustice is done to him.

In brief, Islam contends that life and knowledge go together and knowledge is essentially meant to reform and transform our life from a lower to a higher level of existence. For instance, the Qur'an enquires. "Is one who knows equal to one who does not know (or is ignorant)" (39:9) "Is the blind man equal to seer or is the darkness equal to light" (13:16). And it is assumed that the answers to these rhetorical questions are self-evident. Just as Islam does insist upon the continuity of life after death, likewise it does insist upon the continuity of knowledge on the other side of the grave as well. We should not miss the point, however, that the main purpose of the Qur'anic reference to eschatology, that is the Islamic doctrine of Resurrection, Day of judgment, Hell and Heaven, and so forth is to educate us and cultivate in us a specific ethico-religious attitude (or taqwa) that is, a deep sense of awareness that man is essentially accountable to God for his deeds and that reward or punishment will be meted out to him according to the nature and merit of his own conduct. In fact, faith in God and faith in the Day of Judgment provide us with the most powerful regulative principles of human conduct. Our faith in God provides us with the metaphysical anchorage, integrates our personality, adds new meanings and dimensions to our life, and gives us the proper sense of human dignity and human freedom. Similarly, our faith in the Last Day infuses in us a spirit of moral responsibility and exhorts us to stay away from the "foot-steps of Satan" for they positively lead us to our self-destruction. Since both these regulative principles are known to us at the authority of the Prophets, our faith in the Prophets and their teachings also becomes central to Islamic way of life and its orientation towards knowledge. This is the brief outline of what will follow in the subsequent pages.

Islamic Theory of Knowledge

Our main concern here is to reconstruct an Islamic theory of knowledge primarily on the Qur'anic teachings. All other sources and interpretations are kept to the bare minimum. From the Qur'anic studies it appears that there are two foundational principles of the Islamic theory of knowledge. Materialism proclaims: everything comes from water/matter and to water/matter it returns, *while Islam maintains that everything comes from God and to God it returns*. However, it may be noted that the Qur'an does not "prove" God in any formal sense but simply "points" to Him from the existing universe. Islam identifies that the real problem is not how to make man come to belief by giving complex and intricate theological proofs of God's existence, but how to shake him into belief by drawing his attention to certain obvious facts and turning these facts into "reminders" of God. According to the Qur'an man is so conceited and short sighted that if natural conditions are favorable to his plans of life, he seldom thinks of God. Instead, he thinks of himself as the monarch of all that he perceives. It is only in utter helplessness and total disillusionment that he finds God. But the moment he is out of the teeth of danger and affliction, he promptly returns to his earlier heedlessness and misdeeds. This is how the Qur'an bears testimony on his conduct:

"It is He who conveys you on the land and the sea, and when you are in the ship- and the ship run with them with a fair breeze, and they rejoice in it, there comes upon them a strong wind, and waves come on them from every side, and they think they are encompassed, they call upon God, making their religion (faith) sincerely His: 'If Thou deliverest us from these, surely we shall be among the thankful'" (10:22).

“Nevertheless when He has delivered them behold, they are insolent in the earth, wrongfully. O’ men, your insolence is only against yourselves, the enjoyment of this present life, then unto Us you shall return, then We shall tell you what you were doing (10:23).

"When they embark in the ships, they call on God, making their religion (faith) sincerely His: but when He has delivered them to the land, They associate others with Him" (29:65).

"And as for the disbelievers, their works are as a mirage in a spacious plain which the man athirst supposes to be water, till when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing; there indeed he finds God, and He pays him his account in full, (and God is swift at the reckoning)"(24:39).

*The Qur'an contends that once you think of the whence and the whither of nature you will "find God" But, unfortunately, if you fail to find and discover God, then, you cannot really "prove" His existence: "Only the straight path leads to God—(all) other paths are deviant": The Qur'an further maintains that: "those who have taken friends besides God, their likeness is that of spider which takes for itself a house, but the weakest of all is the spider's house, if only they know" (29:41). Faith in God, on the other hand, is likened to a house built on an immovable and indestructible rock (*al-Samad*), and man is admonished that actions based only on such a solid foundation will carry "weight" in the eyes of God whereas actions based on any other foundation would perish like a spider's web. In short God is presumed and postulated here as the first foundational principle of the Islamic theory of knowledge. He is indeed the sole source of knowledge.*

“Say: the knowledge is with God alone” (67:26), “Lo, God has knowledge of everything” (20:98), “My Lord embraces all things in

His knowledge” (6:80), “And that God encompasses everything in knowledge” (65:12), “Surely He has knowledge of everything”, The Qur'an mentions the names of seventeen Prophets from Noah and Abraham onwards and says: "We chose them and guided them to the right path” (6:86-7), But quickly adds: “If they had associated (anyone with God) their previous deeds would have come to naught” (6:88), It means God is the Ultimate Reality and the sole source of knowledge.

As a corollary, it follows that man's knowledge, especially his ability for conceptual and creative knowledge, is essentially the gift of God and is not something which he has developed independently on his own. The Qur'an frequently tells us that man was born ignorant out of his mother's womb. But, then, God endowed him with eyes, ears, and heart, that is, the faculties of conceptual and creative knowledge. This is how the Qur'an speaks:

“And it is God who brought you forth, knowing nothing from your mother's wombs, and He blessed you with hearing, and sight, and hearts, that haply so you will be thankful” (16:78).

Again it reads: “Read: And thy Lord is the most generous Who taught by the pen Taught Man, that which he knew not” (96:3-5). “... God is Light upon Light and He guides to His Light whom He wills” (24:35). “He .found you (O, Muhammad) probing in the dark and guided you to the right path” (93:7). Further, the Qur'an maintains that man's knowledge is limited to what God has granted him: On his own, he could find no knowledge or guidance. “... he whom God has denied His Light can get no Light” (24:40). Moreover, “He knows what is before them and what is behind them, while they comprehend not anything of His knowledge save such as He wills” (2:255). *These and similar other verses clearly indicate that God is the Ultimate Source of knowledge.*

But, unfortunately, man is so conceited, arrogant and rebellious that he often forgets his Real Benefactor and deems himself as self-sufficient and independent. The Qur'an underscores this weakness of man in the following words: “No indeed, surely man is rebellious for he thinks himself self-sufficient: Surely Unto thy Lord is the Returning” (96:6-7). But if in his blindness and arrogance he arrogates God's gifts to himself, he is immediately reminded—backwards, of his lowly physical origin (from a sperm drop), and forwards, of his responsibility and final return to God.

But in spite of all what man is, God has “imposed upon Himself the law of mercy” (6:12). “His mercy comprehends all” (7:156). In fact, man's creation— preservation— guidance— judgment, all are the result of His outpouring mercy. *Naturally, man's creation and his potentiality for conceptual and creative knowledge, as we shall examine shortly, are also the result of His Mercy; and so is His Revelation.* For instance, the Qur'an while addressing the holy prophet Muhammad, the recipient of His Revelation, says: “If We willed, We could take away that We have revealed to thee, then thou wouldst not find anyone to guard thee against Us” (17:86). Again, the Prophet is told that you were quite unaware of what faith is and what the Book is like. *In fact, His guidance and His revelation came to you as the “mercy of thy Lord” Surely His favor to thee (O' Muhammad) is great*” (4:113). In brief, we should note that God is the ultimate Reality and the sole source of knowledge. And it is sheerly the result of His infinite mercy that He created man and endowed him with the potentialities of conceptual and creative knowledge, something which is denied even to the angels.

Man's Quest for the Real

The second foundational principle that emerges from the Qur'anic teaching is that a basic quest for the Real is laid into the human constitution. In his pre-mordial existence, the Qur'an tells us, man has undertaken a covenant with God that he would recognize Him as his Sovereign. This quest for the Real, however, may be confounded, and benumbed by his own heedlessness and rebelliousness. But if he remains vigilant and watchful and keeps his heart (or conscience) sensitive and alive, and does not lose his ability of seeing, reflecting and pondering properly he will positively find that "Whatever is in the heavens and the earth sings His glories, He is the Mighty One, the Wise One": The only condition is that he should listen to what the Qur'an says and must be "humble before the unseen and brings with him a heart such that it can respond (when the truth hits it)": The Qur'an assures us that "it is a reminder to him/her who has a heart and surrenders his/her ears in witnessing" (50:37).

This quest for the Real, therefore, is indispensable for the acquisition of knowledge. Doubt and skepticism are, of course, necessary elements of this quest, but apart from it they have no significance whatever. In other words, observation, investigation, doubt, skepticism, search, research, wonder, thinking, feeling, reflection, recollection, intuition, affirmation, attestation, belief and commitment all are essential steps and hallmarks of this quest. Of course, doubt and skepticism are instrumental and conducive to the realization of truth since whatever fails to satisfy this quest and is devoid-of the proper attributes of the Real is automatically dismissed as a false deity and man moves on in his longing and yearning for the Real. Abraham's quest for the Real may be referred to as a paradigm case in point. Abraham was,

in fact, prompted by his native urge to find and discover the ultimate Reality. Initially, by way of parable, he was attracted to astral gods and he took moon, sun, and the stars as his god; but since his heart was disinclined to take such contingent and transitory objects as his God (6:75-79)—this is where skepticism played its role— he went on rejecting them one after the other till God the Almighty, out of His sheer mercy, guided him to the Truth. Also, it may be conceded that doubt and skepticism agitate the mind and breed an inner tension whereas knowledge brings certainty and contentment to the heart. For instance: “And when Abraham said (unto his Lord): My Lord show me how thou givest life to the dead, He said: Dost thou not believe? Abraham said: Why not, but (I ask) in order that my heart may be at ease: (2:260). Besides, the Qur'an insists that God guides aright those who listen, are sincere, and fear God, Similarly the Qur'an observes that if man turns on his heels and forgets God, then, God will also forget him and eventually make him to forget himself. *It is evident, therefore, that God's guidance or misguidance is not meted out to man in any whimsical and arbitrary manner. On the contrary, it is predicated to human struggle. In a way, man earns it by his own efforts:* “But those who struggle in our cause surely we shall guide them in our ways” (29:69). God chooses unto Himself whomsoever turns penitent (to Him)” (13:27). “And He guides unto Himself all who turn unto Him” (42:13). “Say: Is there any of your associates who guides to truth? Say: God- He guides to truth, and which is worthier to be followed—He who guides to the truth, or he who guides not unless he is guided? What then is wrong with you? How you judge!” (10:35) Further, God urges man to make an all-out struggle to discover Him” “And struggle for God as is His due, for He has chosen you, and has laid on you no impediment in your

religion” (22:78). Similarly, the Qur'an under lines that those who are heedless and forgetful of God, God will eventually make them to forget themselves and leave them to wander in darkness: “When they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve, and God guides never the people of ungodly” (61:5), God guides not those who He leads astray” “Surely God guides not him who is a lair, unthankful: (40:28). The Qur'an also instructs us that God's guidance is to man's own good: “whosoever is guided, is only guided to his own gain” “Whosoever struggles, struggles only to his own gain” But it is really a pity that in spite of all such clear assertions, the non-believers, as the Qur'an observes, are deaf, dumb, and blind and their hearts are sealed. They do not “see” or “reflect” upon the “signs” and manifestations of God and are truly worst than animals. Primarily they are lost into this world and its base pursuits but are oblivious of *akhirah* or higher ends and values: “They (Makkan merchants and non-believers) know well the externalities of the worldly life, but are ignorant, (heedless) of the ultimate consequences”. According to the Qur'an the real trouble with the non-believers is that instead of following the Book of God they— “follow only (their own) surmise, and surmise avails naught against truth”. Indeed, it is only the Book of guidance that can lead "to the truth and to a straight path", but the non-believers do not pay any heed to it. It is obvious, therefore, that God's knowledge and guidance are predicated to man's sincere efforts. Unless man takes the initiative and tries to educate and transform himself there will be no change or improvement in his life: “Lo “God changes not the condition of a people until they (first) change that which is in their hearts". But if man is penitent, humble, sincere and keen to “discover” God, he will find Him on his side helping and guiding him to success both here and in the hereafter. These then, are the two pivotal points of the Islamic theory of knowledge:

- (i) That God is the ultimate Reality and the sole source of knowledge. And that it is essentially because of His infinite mercy that He created man and endowed him with the faculties of conceptual and creative knowledge by virtue of which he excels even the angels. Revelational knowledge, it may be underlined, is something that we share with angels.
- (ii) That man has been endowed with a native quest for the Real. Of course, he can weaken or destroy this quest by his own heedlessness. But if he keeps it alive and makes an all-out struggle to find and discover God, he will find Him on his side. In fact, man's struggle, coupled with God's infinite mercy, can ensure him a success both here and in the hereafter.

In order to facilitate man's struggle for the realization of his objectives, that is, search for God, and service to humankind—incidentally, these are also the twin objectives of the Islamic theory of knowledge—it seems evident from the Qur'an that God has blessed man with two types of knowledge:

(a) Acquisitional Knowledge

The potentials of this knowledge are laid permanently into the human constitution, such as, eyes, ears, head and heart. And it is by virtue of these faculties as has already been pointed- out, that he is capable of creative knowledge. These three faculties, however, lead to three different types of knowledge.

- (i) '*Ilm al-Yaqin: Sam'* (the ears). The commentators of the Qur'an suggest that these terms, that is, *Sam'*, *Basar*, and *Fu'ad* or ears, head and heart should not be taken in a narrow sense. Instead, they have a very wide sense and

comprehensive connotation. *Sam'* or *'Ilm al-Yaqin* for instance, includes the collective heritage of the past. It stands for the knowledge gained at the authority or testimony of others.

- (ii) **'Ayn al-Yaqin: basar** (or the eyes). This stands for empirical or scientific knowledge or knowledge gained through observation, experience or experimentation.
- (iii) **Haqq al-Yaqin: Fu 'ad** (or the heart). This is an apprehensive or intuitive faculty. It's both cognitive and regulative in nature. In its cognitive role it forms natural laws while it apprehends moral laws which are either obeyed or disobeyed. By virtue of this faculty, man can go beyond the testimony of senses as well as of reason and draw both natural and moral laws. Of course, our heart (or apprehensive and intuitive faculty) is parasitic upon the data provided by the senses and reason and it cannot work properly without their active help and assistance. Let us go into some detail. According to the Qur'an man was born ignorant out of his mother's womb. But, then, God out of His sheer mercy, blessed him with eyes, ears, head and heart in order that he may see, observe and understand the phenomenal world around him, acquire knowledge and power there from, and recruit them to his own good as well as the good of humankind. Of course, the Qur'an also expects that man should show reverence and gratitude to his Real Benefactor, something which he seldom does, for, he is appallingly ungrateful indeed. Here are some of the Qur'anic verses that lend support to our contention:

“And it is God who brought you forth, knowing nothing from your mother's womb, and He blessed you with hearing, and sight, and hearts, that haply so you will be thankful” (16:78). Again we are told: “It is He who created for you ears, and eyes, and hearts: little thanks you show” (23:78). “Say: It is He Who created you, and blessed you with hearing and sight and hearts; little thanks you show” (32:9). Then He shaped him, and breathed His spirit in him. And He appointed for you hearing and sight, and hearts; little thanks you show” (67:23).

Further the Qur'an expects that by virtue of these faculties, man, unlike the animals, would have rational and reasoned approach to life and faith -- and will not remain groping in darkness and ignorance. He is therefore asked: "And pursue not that thou hast no knowledge of; the hearing, the sight, the heart— all of these shall be questioned of: (17:36). These and similar verses clearly indicate that eyes, ears, and heart are indeed the great gifts of God and man is constantly encouraged to employ them for the understanding of the signs or manifestation of God (that is, nature, man, and history), failing which he will be gravitating down towards the earth and be worst than animals.

One may note that unlike the speculative spirit of Greek philosophy that discredits the testimony of senses as deceptive and illusory and takes the phenomenal world as a mere appearance, Islam introduces the external world as a real “sign” of His own existence and recommends an empirical, experimental and inductive methods of knowledge and reasoning. Islam insists that the testimony of our senses, though their range is limited, is nonetheless reliable and trustworthy. Similarly, Islamic approach to knowledge is also distinct and different

from the mystical philosophies of the East, such as, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, that recommended an anti-rational and anti-empirical approach to knowledge. In fact, Islam invites man to look around and see the signs of God writ large in the general order and harmony of this universe. Nature with all its incomprehensible richness and complexity, is introduced as the greatest miracle of God.

“And of His signs is that He created you of dust, then lo, you are mortals, all scattered abroad. And of His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses, that you might repose in them, And He has set between you love and mercy. Surely in that are signs for a people who consider. And of His signs is the creation of heavens and earth and the variety of your tongues and hues surely in that are signs for all living beings. And of His signs is your slumbering by night and day, and your seeking after his bounty. Surely in that are signs for a people who hear. And of His signs He shows you lightning for fear and hope, and that He sends down out of heaven water and He revives the earth after it is dead. Surely in that are signs for a people who understand. And of His signs is that the heavens and earth stand firm by His command; then, when He calls you once and suddenly, out of the earth, Lo you shall come forth¹¹ (30:20-40). Surely in the creation of the heavens and earth and in the alteration of night and day there are signs for men possessed of minds. So much for the general harmony and order of the universe; as for the creation of man and the process of history we are told:

"We shall show them our signs in the horizons (external world) and within themselves, so that Truth becomes clear to them—is your Lord not a sufficient witness over everything" (41:53). "Is it not a guidance to them, how many generations we destroyed before them in whose

dwelling places they walk? Surely in that are signs for men possessing reason" (20:128)

We should remember, however, that according to Islam both the senses and reason are necessary but not self-sufficient. Our senses report the data and our reason, or more properly speaking our imagination, conceptualizes this data and preserves it in our memory, the store house of our knowledge. But our empirical knowledge or rational knowledge will be incomplete without the active help and assistance of our heart—the intuitive and apprehensive faculty. Our heart (or *Fu 'Ad*) as has already been stated, is both a cognitive and a regulative faculty. In fact, it is the heart, our apprehensive and intuitive faculty, which enable us to go beyond the bounds of senses and of reason and draw natural and moral laws and axioms, something which cannot be justified either on empirical or rational grounds. For instance, when we formulate a general law, say, all men are mortal, or all bodies expand when heated, we go beyond the bounds of empirical and rational knowledge. Our sense-experience, as the philosophers have very aptly demonstrated, have reference to the past or to the present and cannot be logically applied to the future, for, then, it would amount to saying that we have had an experience of that (i.e., future instances) of which we have no experience, a blatant contradiction, indeed. Neither these laws can be justified on purely formal deductive or rational ground; for, such formal inferences tacitly assume that the course of nature will remain the same whereas it is logically conceivable that nature may change its course and whatever is today may not be tomorrow. Some kind of intuitive or apprehensive faculty (or as Hume calls it an animal belief) is needed to justify these natural and moral laws and in all probability the Qur'an has attributed them to the heart. We can see that all three faculties, that is

eyes, ears, and heart concur, reinforce and supplement each other in the process of our knowledge. But we should not miss the point, however, that according to the Qur'an our heart is the final authority or the discriminating faculty. The Qur'an tells us that the discrimination between good and evil is "ingrained in his heart". Besides, the Qur'an inquires: "Have they not traveled around the earth, so that they might come to possess hearts whereby they can understand or ears wherewith they can listen? For it is not (physical eyes) that become blind but the hearts in people's breasts (that lose perception)" (22:46). It means that in all eventuality, it is the heart, the real core of our being that determines the nature and character of our decision and forms or deforms our being. It appears that the role of our senses and reason is similar to that of a lawyer while the function of our heart is akin to that of a judge. Now the duty of a lawyer is to collect all possible information and solicit every possible evidence in support of his contention. But this is the ultimate limit of his job. For when all is said and done, it is the judge who takes the decision. Of course, the judge cannot do justice if he is ill-informed. So correct information/knowledge must precede and is a pre-condition to correct judgment. But this correct judgment may not be forthcoming if the judge (i.e. our heart) is corrupted or predisposed to a wrong judgment. It implies that both sides must be free from possible corruption, i.e. corrupt information; corrupt inclination. Both sides must do their job properly. But when all is said and done the role of the heart can't be over-emphasized.

We may illustrate this point with the following example. Let us suppose that we have not seen the fire nor do we have any idea of its properties. Let us assume further that someone introduces us to fire and tells us that burning is its chief property' Now if we happen to know or

believe that the man is trust-worthy we may come to believe his testimony and understand that fire burns. This is what we mean by *Ilm al-Yaqin*, that is, knowing or believing something at the authority of others. At the second stage, this person may lit the fire and invite us to observe and see for ourselves that it actually burns. This is *'Ayn al-Yaqin* (or *basar*), that is knowledge gained by one's own sense-experience. Lastly, he may invite us to touch the fire by our own hand and see if it really burns. This experience of touching the fire and getting burnt is something which is most violent and indubitable. In all probability, we will never doubt the validity of this experience (that fire burns) for the rest of our life. This is *Haqq al-Yaqin* or absolute knowledge which transcends all kinds of doubts and skepticism. Now Islam maintains that if initially we believe (or have *Ilm al-Yaqin* in God as the ultimate source of creation, preservation, guidance, and judgment, and then, reinforce our belief by "observing and reflecting upon the "Signs" of God (i.e. nature, man and history) may be we will be shaken to an understanding (*tasdiq bi 'l-qalb*) of His nature and thus come to a stage of *Haqq al-Yaqin*. This *Haqq al-Yaqin* may however, remain feeble and fragile so long as we are alive and subject to all kinds of doubts and skepticism. But in the life of hereafter, particularly on the Day of Judgment, this *Haqq al-Yaqin* will become most invincible and impregnable indeed. For, here, the veil of our ignorance, will be lifted off and the reality will dawn upon us with its utmost force and vivacity. Form this example it seem evident that Islam allows a gradual evolution or advancement of knowledge whereby man moves from a lower to a higher stage of knowledge and certitude. And in this process all our faculties reinforce each other and make the acquisition of knowledge possible.

(b) Revelational Knowledge

But had man been left to these sources of knowledge, that is, eyes, ears, head and heart, he would have found himself in wilderness without cognizing properly the whence and the wither of his life. Islam underscores that without Revelation and Guidance of God which have been granted to mankind through His chosen Prophets, all other human faculties would have failed him miserably. Revelation, as the primary & principle source of knowledge, therefore, provides us the proper light in the presence of which and with reference to which man can put to proper use all other faculties granted to him by God. Unlike the acquisitional form of knowledge which is pre-conditioned to human struggle and initiative and the potential for which is laid permanently in human constitution, revelational knowledge is granted by God to His Prophets for the Guidance of mankind. One can't acquire prophecy or prophethood by his own initiative and struggle. God chooses His prophets as He wishes- sheerly on the basis of His out-pouring mercy and He does so for the guidance of mankind.

"And verily We had established them in that We have not established you, and we blessed them with hearing, and sight, and the hearts, and yet their hearing, and their sight and their hearts availed them nothing since they denied the revelations of God, and they were encompassed by that they mocked at" (46:26).

We should not miss the point, however, that His revelation, like His creation of man with faculties of creative knowledge, is the result of His outpouring Mercy: "We send Messengers as a Mercy from your Lord" (44:5-6). While addressing the holy Prophet, the Qur'an says: "You never did expect that the Book would be given to you— it is only a Mercy from your Lord" (28:86). "You did not know before

this what the Book is nor Faith — We have made it a light whereby we guide whomsoever we will" (42:52). The Qur'an frequently reminds the holy Prophet that His revelation is sheerly the "mercy of thy Lord. Surely His favor to thee (O' Muhammad) is great" (17:87)

May be we should pause here for a moment and point out what makes the Islamic theory of knowledge most fascinating and perfect is that it attributes to the heart the key-role both in the realm of acquisitional knowledge and the revelational knowledge. For not only the empirico-rational knowledge has to strike the heart, but the Revelation was also brought down upon the heart of the Holy Prophet: Say (O' Muhammad, to mankind): Whosoever is an enemy to Gabriel— he it was that brought it (the Revelation or the Book) down upon thy heart by the leave of God, confirming what was before it, and for a guidance and good tidings to the believers" (2:97). "Truly it (the Qur'an) is the Revelation from the Lord of the worlds, brought down by the Faithful Spirit upon thy heart, that thou mayest be one of the warners" (26:193). Again we are told. "He (Muhammad) speaks not from his own desire— it is but a Revelation vouchsafed to him" (53:3-4)... "And He revealed unto His servant (Muhammad) that which He revealed. The heart of (Muhammad) lied not (in seeing) what it saw" (53:10-11). Further the Qur'an tells the holy Prophet that:

"God might have cut of the revelation and sealed his heart had He so willed" (17:86).

It may be noted that not only the Qur'an has come down upon the heart of the holy Prophet but through him it is also addressed to the heart of humankind. Hence the Qur'an insists upon persuasion and education, rather than coercion and indoctrination: "There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from

error. And he who rejects false deities and believes in God has grasped a firm handle which will never break: God is All-knowing” (2:256). It means that man is absolutely free to accept or reject the Revelation and surrender his heart to the Guidance of God and the *Sunnah* of the holy Prophet, And whatever he may do will do to his own gain (*falah*) or loss (*Khusran*).

These and similar verses clearly indicate that acquired knowledge as well as revelational knowledge both are directed to the human heart. It means that our heart assumes the foundational role in the process of our knowledge. It is indeed the decision-making and discriminating faculty as the distinctions of right/wrong are "ingrained in the (human) heart". Further it is not only a cognitive faculty, that is a faculty that forms/apprehends the natural and moral, laws—but is also a regulative and motivating faculty because without the concurrence and promptings of our heart no action is possible. This is how Al-Ghazali defines the role of our heart. "When we speak of the heart, know that we mean the reality of man, which sometimes is called *ruh* (spirit) and sometimes *nafs* (soul); we do not mean that piece of flesh which lies in the left side of the chest; that organ is not worthy, for the cattle possess it, as do the dead. It can be seen by the ordinary eyes, and whatever could be seen by eyes, belongs to this world, which is called the visible (*Shahadah*) world. The reality of the heart is not of this world; it has come to this world as a stranger or a passer-by, and that visible piece of meat is its vehicle and means and all of the bodily features are its army and it is the kind of the whole body; *the realization of God and the perception of His beauty is its function*". (*Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*)

Iqbal has also identified and stressed the cardinal role of the heart in a similar manner. He frequently draws our attention to the

contrast between the intellect (*'aql*) and the Heart (or *'Ishq*) wherein *'Ishq* reigns supreme. According to Iqbal ⁴*Ishq* (or the heart) embraces the flames while the intellect coils back and remains hesitant and calculating. Further in the intuition or apprehensive function the heart-transcends the bounds of space and time (or the limits of senses and of intellect) and brings us nearer to the ultimate Reality.

One can safely infer that if our heart is free from depravity and corruption, and is endowed with rectitude or *taqwa* (a deep sense of moral responsibility), and is 'working in the light of revelation, then, the knowledge and power acquired by man through his creative abilities will be used to “reform the earth” and be serviceable to humankind. But if, on the other hand, our heart is corrupted and depraved, has lost *taqwa* (or the right vision of life), and is heedless to the revelation and guidance of God, then, this knowledge and power will be used for “corrupting the earth” and will be detrimental and destructive to the interest of humanity. Incidentally, this is exactly where the human race is standing now. And if nothing is done in the immediate future to avert this explosive situation there is every likelihood that the entire humanity may be constrained to commit suicide and share the common grave.

Further, we learn from the Revelation that Islam permits various forms of life and consciousness, and, corresponding to these forms, it also underlines various levels of knowledge and experience. For example, death and *barzakh* (or the state of our mind in the grave), martyrdom, Resurrection, and the final Day of Judgment are all introduced as various forms of life and levels of knowledge and experience. In the following pages we shall discuss these forms or kinds of knowledge in a separate order. .

One may contend, however, that since all our knowledge/belief pertaining to eschatology is derived from revelation, it is really ill-advised to treat them as distinct and separate sources of knowledge; instead, they should all be lumped together under revelation. Well, it may be conceded that revelation is indeed the sole source of our knowledge concerning eschatology but as the Qur'an introduces them as distinct stages in the evolution of our life and the advancement of our knowledge (regarding the nature of ultimate Reality), it seems perfectly justified that they be examined under separate heads:

“No I swear by the twilight and the night and what it envelops and the moon when it is at the full, surely you will go from stage to stage" (84:16-19). We may note that just as the moon goes through various stages, from the crescent to the full moon, even so is man to advance from a lower to a higher form of life. Thus, there is a justification to treat these stages separately.

But before we move on to eschatology, one of the most crucial and indispensable part of Islamic teachings, it seems essential to discuss in passing the nature and place of dreams in the Qur'an.

(i) Dreams

It may be pointed out that the Qur'an does not rule out the possibility of the Freudian or Satanic dreams and the negative whisperings or misgivings of visible (man) or the invisible (Jinn) evil mongers. In fact, man is repeatedly exhorted to guard himself against such negative forces and seek refuge with God. What is interesting to note, however, is that unlike Freud, the Qur'an also acknowledge dreams as an important source of knowledge. It may be emphasized that not only the dreams of the Prophets, but even the dreams of the ordinary mortals—virtual non-believers—are also

acknowledged by the Qur'an as a vital source of knowledge. The true dreams, it seems do contain a prophetic and predictive element and fore-tell great events which in some cases do touch upon the life of generations. Here are some of the Qur'anic references:

“When Joseph said to his father, “Father” I saw (in a dream) eleven stars (planets), and the sun and the moon; I saw them bowing down before me: He said, “O my son, relate not thy vision to thy brothers, lest they devise against thee some guile(or plot). Surely Satan is to man a manifest enemy. So will thy Lord choose thee, and teach thee the interpretation of fables (and events) and perfect His blessing upon thee and upon the House of Jacob, as He perfected it formerly on thy fathers Abraham and Isaac, surely thy Lord is All-knowing, All-wise” (12:4-6).

These verses indicate that the Prophet Jacob could see clearly that Joseph was destined to be the Prophet of God. Further, he could equally apprehend that if Joseph were to narrate his dream to his brothers he might incur their wrath and jealousy and get himself in trouble. Subsequent events, as we shall examine a little later, indicate that both the dream (of Joseph) and the interpretation of the dream (by Jacob) came out to be true and were indeed a genuine source of knowledge.

The Qur'an also mentions the dream of the King of Egypt, an ordinary mortal, virtually a non-believer, whose dream obviously touches upon the life of the millions of people.

“And the King said, I saw in a dream seven fat kine, and seven lean ones devouring them; likewise seven green ears of corn, and seven withered. My counselors pronounce to me upon my dream, if you are expounders of dreams. A hotchpotch of nightmares, They said'. We know nothing of the interpretation of nightmares. Then said the one who had been delivered, remembering after a time, I will myself tell you its

interpretation; so send me forth" (12:43-45). He came to Joseph and addressed him thus:

“Joseph, thou true man pronounce to us regarding seven fat kine, that, seven lean one were devouring, seven green ears of corn, and seven withered; haply I shall return to the men, haply they will know. He said; "You shall sow seven years after you wont; what there shall come upon you seven hard years that shall devour what you have laid up for them, all but a little you keep in store. Then thereafter there shall come a year wherein the people will be succored and press in season" (12:46-49).

Again the Qur'an tells us:

“So, when they entered unto Joseph, he took his father and mother into his arms saying, "Enter you into Egypt, if God will, in security". And he lifted his father and mother upon the throne; and the others fell down prostrate before him. “See, father, he said, this is the interpretation of my vision of long ago, my Lord has made it true" (12:99-100). Similarly, the Qur'an also describes the dream of Abraham "and when he (Ishmaiel), had reached the age of running with him, he said, 'My son, I see in a dream that I shall sacrifice thee; consider, what thinkest thou? He said, My father, do as thou art bidden; thou shall find me, God willing, one of the steadfast: When they had surrendered, and he flung him upon his brow, We called unto him, Abraham, thou hast confirmed the vision; even so We recompense the good-doers. This is indeed the manifest trail" (37:102-106). It may be pointed out that this *Sunnah* of Abraham (i.e. to sacrifice in the name of God) is revived and preserved by the teachings of Islam and Muslims do offer their sacrifices to God particularly on the occasion of Hajj. The Prophet Muhammad also had a vision that he was entering the

sanctuary at Makkah in peace and safety and his dream was fulfilled a year later. "God has indeed fulfilled the vision He vouchsafed to His Messenger truly: You shall enter the holy Mosque, if God wills, in security" (48:27).

(ii) The Quranic Doctrine of Eschatology. That is Death (Or Martyrdom). Resurrection and the Day of Judgment

The Qur'an finds man as extremely vain and forgetful. Mostly he is oblivious both of his origin and of his destiny. He considers himself as self-sufficient and independent. He presumes that he will never be called back to account for his conduct in life. In fact, the Makkan materialists and atheists (probably no less than modern materialists and atheists), found the Islamic doctrine of Resurrection and the Final Day of Judgment, besides the concept of the Unity and Oneness of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad, rather too hard to believe. They considered this idea as a "fiction of earlier communities", they enquired with a sense of utter disbelief as to who would revive them and raise them up again after they were dead and fully reduced to dust? The Qur'an promptly responds that He would revive them who created them in the first instance. The Qur'an frequently tells us that we can neither escape death nor run away from this universe. Hence we should take the Qur'anic admonitions seriously and get ready for the Day of Judgment. The Qur'anic way of introducing eschatology and its attendant stages is quite natural and common sensical. For instance, the Qur'an insists that man must think of his origin: was he not created out of nothing? What would then prevent God from recreating him when once he is dead? The Qur'an also draws our attention to certain empirical facts the reflection of which, it is presumed, will convince us that the process of life coming out of death, and death coming out of life is as natural as night follows

the day or day follows the night. Moreover, in winter we see that all greenery and foliage disappear and it seems as if death has prevailed upon the earth. Then the rainy season starts and all of a sudden the whole earth springs up to life again. Man's resurrection, the Qur'an tells us, is no different than the revival of the earth. Virtually the Qur'an resorts to innumerable similes and parables by virtue of which it tries to bring home to us that death, resurrection, and the Day of Judgment are all positive realities and man will surely confront them at appointed times. Thus, the Qur'an mainly for the betterment of man himself, recurrently warns him not to squander away his life but to take it seriously and send something good for the morrow, otherwise he will have to suffer the grave consequences of his own misdeeds. For once he dies he won't be able to come back and take a fresh start. Nor he would be able to buy his release even with an earthful of gold or procure his intercession or redemption from some other quarters. He could rely only on two things, first, his own righteous conduct, and second, the infinite mercy of his God. Nothing else will count or do him any good. We should not miss the point, however, that the sole purpose of the Qur'an in drawing our attention to eschatology, as has already been pointed out, is to cultivate in us a specific ethico-religious attitude, an attitude of *taqwa*—a deep sense of accountability to God for our deeds— without which man cannot achieve success either here or in the hereafter. Let us examine these stages in a separate order.

(iii) Death and Martyrdom

It is important to note that according to the Qur'an death is as real as life and both are created with a view to examining who amongst the humans are fearful of God and righteous in conduct: “[It is God] Who created death and life that He might try you, which of you is best in conduct; He

is All-mighty, All-forgiving" (67:2). Further, the Qur'an admonishes man to guard his steps and avoid drifting towards the Satanic ways of life. He is constantly urged to realize that there is no escape from death and that eventually he will have to face God and embrace the consequences of his own deeds: "Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, though you should be in raised up towers" (4:78). "And fear a day wherein you shall be returned to God, and every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned; they shall not be wronged" (2:281). Again the Qur'an tells us: "Every soul shall taste of death, you shall surely be paid in full your wages on the day of Resurrection. Whosoever is removed from the Fire and admitted to paradise, shall win the triumph. The present life (if it is lived without consciousness of the hereafter) is but the joy of delusion" (3:185). "Surely God gives you life, then makes you die, then He shall gather you to the Day of Resurrection, wherein is no doubt, but most men do not know" (45:26).

Both the Traditions of the holy Prophet and the Muslim scholars tend to suggest that our life in the grave (or *barzakh*) will offer us a pre-view of what lies ahead for us after Resurrection. Al-Ghazali and Shah Waliullah, in particular, contend that our death is, in fact, comparable to sleep and our mental state in the grave (or our life in the *barzakh*) is comparable to dream. Just as a dreamer goes through acute psycho-physical pleasure/pain depending upon the nature of his dream, similarly our life in *barzakh* offers us a pre-view of what lies ahead for us after resurrection, that is, whether our soul is destined to hell or to heaven. It may, however, be added that our life in *harzakh* is, of course, an uninterrupted sleep and an un-interrupted dream till we are raised up again on they Day of Resurrection. There is yet an other

vital difference. We can, as we have already seen, narrate our dreams to others and have them interpreted. But we cannot physically come back from the grave and communicate our experiences to others. In a way, these experiences are confined to the individual percipient. It may be noted that the Qur'an unlike the Hindu Karma, does not believe in cycles of rebirths and deaths. According to the Qur'an this life is the only life and man is strictly admonished to take it seriously if he is to avert the evil doom.

It is interesting to note that the Qur'an gives a separate treatment to martyrdom and does not consider it at par with the ordinary death for even though the martyr is physically removed, still he continues to enjoy life in a different form:

“Think not of those who are slain in God's way as dead. Nay, they are alive, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord; they rejoice in the Bounty provided by God: and with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss). The (martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve. They glory in the Grace and the Bounty from God, and in the fact that God suffereth not the reward of the Faithful to be lost (in the least)” (3:169-71). “And those who emigrated in God's way and were slain, or died, God shall provide them with a fair provision, and surely God is the best of providers” 22:58). “If you are slain or die in God's way forgiveness and mercy from God are a better thing than all that they could amass” (3:157). These and similar verses indicate that martyrdom offers us a new form of life. *It seems apparent that a martyr who sacrifices his life for the cause of God or lays down his life for ends/goals which are deemed more valuable than life itself will not be subjected to the horrors of ordinary death or the agonies and forlornness*

of resurrection because he continues his life in a new and elevated form.

In fact, martyrdom, as Iqbal in his dialogue with Muhammad Hussain Arshi rightly suggests, is a shortcut to immortality:

“It (Resurrection) depends on the intensity of the will to live. The greater the will to live, the shorter the duration of the state of *Barzakh*. In martyrs the will to live is much stronger hence the state of *Barzakh* almost does not exist for them. As soon as they shake off their mortal clay they see new vistas of life opened to them. "Arshi further enquires "Is there no state of *Barzakh* for a believer (*Mu'min*) in the real meanings of the term? Iqbal replies: “No (and) the reason is the will to live.”

(iv) Resurrection and the Day of Judgment

It may be observed that the Makkan materialists and atheists did not deny death so much—for they could see it in their daily experience—as they did (deny) the possibility of resurrection and the Day of Judgment. Often they enquired with sense of utter disbelief as to who would revive their bones when once they were reduced to dust: "He (the atheist) says, who will revive the bones when they have decayed? Say: He will re-create them who has created them in the first place and He knows all (forms of) creation. He who brings out for you fire out of green tree whence you are enabled to light (your fires). Is He who has created the heavens and the earth not able to create their (human) likeness? Surely because He is the Creator Who knows (all manner of creation). Whenever He wills to create something He simply says Be and there is it' Glory be to Him, then in whose power is the mastery of everything and to whom you shall be returned" (36:78-83).

According to the Qur'an, among others, it is mainly because of their denial of resurrection and the Day of Judgment that the atheists stand to be the real losers:

“Say: shall We inform you of .those who are the greatest losers (in consequences of) their actions, while they think they have made wonderful achievement. These are the ones who rejected their Lord's signs (revelations) and denied that they would face Him (that is, denied the Day of Judgment), thus their deeds have come to nothing and We shall not consider them of any weight on the Day of Judgment” (18:103-105). Contrary to the expectations of the atheists, however the Qur'an does insist upon the reality of Resurrection and the Day of Judgment. Frequently it paints in the most eloquent and moving language the horrors of Resurrection and of the Day of Judgment with a view to cultivating in man a specific psycho-moral attitude— an attitude of *taqwa* or a deep sense of accountability to God. Here is one of the typical representation of the grinding pains of this Hour:

“When the sun shall be darkened and the stars fall, and when mountain move, and when she-camels with mature fetuses are abandoned; and when the wild beasts are herded together, and the seas boil; and when kindred spirits are united; and the infant girls buried alive shall be asked for what sin she was slain, and when the deed-sheets are unrolled (before people) and when the sky is skinned off; and when Hell is ignited and when the Garden is brought near— then every soul shall know what it had prepared (for the morrow)” (81:1-14). It means that the Day of Judgment will clearly provide us with an opportunity of knowledge of what we have been doing in our life. Obviously, the purpose of such Qur'anic utterances, as we have so often stated, is to remind us that we are morally accountable for our deeds. We will be

raised up again to account for our life conduct and will be punished or rewarded accordingly. Hence we are constantly admonished to send something good for the morrow, otherwise we will be at a great loss. For, once we are dead, we will not be able to come back and take a fresh start. Nor there will be any escape from the Final judgment. Now if man spends his life in heedlessness and rebellion, he alone will be the real loser: "So God wrongs not mankind in aught; but mankind wrong themselves. And on the day when He shall gather them together, (when it will seem) as though they had tarried but an hour of the day, recognizing one another, those will verily have perished who denied the meeting with their Lord and were not guided" (10:44-45).

The Qur'an frequently reminds man that nothing except his own pious deeds would avail him on that Day. He will not be able to buy his release even with an "earthful of gold". Nor will he find anyone to intercede on his behalf and redeem his miserable lot:

"And beware of a day when no soul for another shall give satisfaction and no intercession shall be accepted from it, nor any counterpoise be taken, neither shall they be helped" (2:123). The only thing that he can count on is the infinite Mercy of his God. According to the Qur'an the evil doer will like to run away from his own being but it will not be possible: "But as for him who shall be given his book in his left hand, he shall say, I wish I had not been given this book of mine and I did not know what my account was. I wish death would over take me. My wealth has not availed me; and authority (which I used to exercise in life) has perished" (69:25-29). Indeed, it will be a horrible moment so much so that even one's own bodily organs will speak out and bear witness against him. His own mind will, as did the graves before, empty out its contents and make them public. Thus he will stand thoroughly convicted: "And the day

when the foes of God shall be gathered toward the Fire and they shall be driven on—until when they approach it, their own ears, and eyes, and skins will give evidence against them of what they knew" (41:19-20). In fact, man will be a victim of his own miscalculations for usually he thinks that God does not and, in fact, cannot know much of what he does. It is his own erroneous judgment about his Lord, then, which will eventually drive him to his perdition.

Each individual will be alone that day and his relatives will not do him any good. "We shall inherit from him (man) whatever he says and he shall come to us alone" (19:80). In fact, as alone as he was created (alone) in the first place.

It may be noted that *Surah* 50 specifically deals with the resurrection of man and is, in fact, the lengthiest single treatment of this subject in the Qur'an. Here are some of its most pertinent verses:

"By the glorious Qur'an they are rather surprised that a warner from among themselves has come to them, and the disbelievers say: This is a strange thing' When we are dead and turned to dust (shall we be resurrected?)—this is a far fetched return'. We know what the earth takes away of them, and with Us is a Recording Book. Nay' they have disbelieved in the Truth when it came to them and they are, therefore, in a troubled situation" (50:1-5).

"Have they not observed the heaven above them: How we have built it and beautified it and how there are no rifts therein. And the earth that We have opened and We have cast firm mountains therein and We have caused all lovely pairs (of male and female), to grow thereon as a lesson and reminder to every servant (of Ours) who is sincere of heart. And We sent down from the sky blessed water wherewith We cause gardens and crop-grains to grow, and lofty date-palms with ranged

clusters—as sustenance for our servants— and We quicken thereby dead land. Even so shall the Resurrection (of the dead)” (50:6-11)

“Have We been fatigued by the first creation, that they are in doubt about a new one? Indeed We have created man and We know what his inner mind whispers to him. We are, indeed, nearer to him than his jugular vein. The agony of death shall come in truth (and it will be said to him). Is this what you were trying to avoid? And the Trumpet shall be blown—that will be the threatened day... (It shall be said to the evil ones), you were (sunk) in heedlessness of this (hour of resurrection, self-awareness, Truth, and judgment) but We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is keen and sharpened” (50:15-22).

“The day when we shall say to Hell, Are you satiated? and it will answer. Is there any more? And the garden shall be brought near to those who had the fear of responsibility and will not be very distant (from them) (And it will be said to them), This is what you had been promised— it is for every penitent who was heedful— he who humbled before the Merciful in the Unseen and came with a sincere heart. Enter the garden in peace; this is the day of eternity. They shall have therein whatever they wish, and We have much more” (50:30-35).

“We have destroyed before them many a people who were much greater in their might than them (the Makkans), who over ran lands. (But) was there any escape for them (from Our Judgment)? Therein, indeed, is an admonition for one who possesses a heart or attentively gives ear, fully witnessing. We, indeed, created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them in six days but were not touched by fatigue” (50:36-38).

“The Day when they shall hear the cry in truth—that will be the Day of Resurrection. It is We who give life and death, and to Us is the

return. The day when the earth shall split away from them suddenly that is a gathering easy for Us (to undertake). We know best what they say, but you (O' Muhammad) are no compeller over them, but warn, through the Qur'an, him who fears My threat" (50:41-45).

According to the Qur'an, the Last Judgment is crucial for the following reasons:-

First, Truth must become manifest and clear in that "Hour of Truth". There is no doubt that Truth is made clear even in this life and is visible and writ large in the external world as well as in the creation of man and the rise and fall of bygone civilizations. Further, these latent signs and pointers are reinforced by His open Revelation—that is, Books revealed to His chosen Prophets. But in spite of their vivacity and veracity these signs still call for serious reflection and a positive disposition for faith in God. *In other words, a combination of right reason and a pure and responsive heart is most essential pre-condition for the realization of Truth.* But man, as the Qur'an observes is highly conceited. As a consequence thereof, he seldom pays attention to these reminders and pointers to God. It is only when he is beset with deep frustration, helplessness, and disillusionment that he "finds" God but the moment he gets out of the teeth of danger and affliction he loses Him again and returns to his habitual heedlessness and misdeeds. Thus, even though the Truth is visible he cannot see it and his own blindness leads him to endless disputes and dissensions. These disputes, however, as the Qur'an tells us, will be permanently resolved in that Hour of Truth and Decision.

"Say (to the Makkans): You are not going to be asked about the crimes we are committing, nor shall we be asked about what you do. Say: Our Lord will bring us together and then He will decide between

us in truth—He is the Decider, the knower” (34:25-26). Again the Qur'an Says:

“Those who believe (Muslims) and the Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Magians and the Polytheists—God shall decide among them on the Day of Resurrection (as to who was right), for God is witness over everything” (22:17).

Those verses clearly indicate that on the Day of Judgment all disputes, dissensions and conflicts amongst the various claimants to Truth and the right way to success will be settled and resolved. Indeed/it is a natural and inborn quest of man, as has already been examined in an earlier section, that Truth must be known. And if it cannot be fully-known here, it should at least be realizable and knowable in full on the Day of Judgment, that is the moment of Truth and truly the height of human experience/knowledge.

Secondly it is also the instinctive and natural desire of man that full justice must be done and meted out to every soul. In a way it is categorical duty of the Muslims as a midmost community and the successors of the holy Prophet to strive for the establishment of justice and eradication of corruption and injustice from this world. But even if such a just socio-moral order is established, the human conditions are such that they preclude the administration of full justice in this world. Even a cursory reflection can convince us that at best only partial justice is realizable in this world. So far as full justice is concerned, one has to wait for the Day of Judgment. We can illustrate this point with the following example. Let us suppose that a man drops a bomb and kills thousands and millions of innocent people. Let Us assume further that we get hold of this criminal and after due process of law we find him guilty and execute him. Needless to emphasize that it is very hard to

meet all the requisite legal conditions. In fact, it becomes virtually impossible if we are dealing with a criminal state rather than a solitary individual. Supposing that we do satisfy all the legal conditions, do you think that we have done full justice by executing one man in return to thousands and millions of innocent victims? This example clearly indicates that full justice cannot be accomplished in this world.

It is significant to note that while talking of Resurrection, the Qur'an does not talk of sheer destruction but of transformation and transmutation. For instance, the Qur'an clearly maintains that the earth will be transformed into a Garden and granted to its rightful "inheritors"—the true believers: The day when the earth shall be transmuted into something else and the heavens as well (that is, they will become different from what they are now)".

"Those who had developed *taqwa* towards their Lord shall be carried forward to the Garden in troops. When they arrive there and its gates are opened, its guards shall say, peace be upon you, be you happy, enter in it abiding therein. They shall reply, All praise be to God who has kept His promise with us and has given us the earth as inheritance, we will make our abode in its Garden wherever we will—what an excellent reward for those who do good" (39:73-74).

It will not be just the earth and the heavens that will be transmuted and rearranged even the man will also be resurrected in a new form, with a new life and, of course, with a new potential for knowledge and experience. Here are some of the Qur'anic verses that support our contention:

"We have appointed for you the death and none may excel us in that We shall transmute your models and recreate you in (form) you don't know. You already know the present (form of) your creation, so

why do you not take a lesson (from this)? (56:60-62). "God will then create the next creation" (29:20). "Strange indeed is their statements shall we be in a new creation after having turned to dust"? (13:5)

“If He wills He can destroy you (all) and bring out a new creation” (14:19). “Have We become fatigued by the first creation that they are in doubt about a new creation" (50:15).

We may recall that unlike the materialists¹ and atheists' views of life (and of knowledge) the Qur'anic view of life and eschatology does insist upon the continuation of life as well as of knowledge on the other side of the grave as well. Of course, both of these (that is, our life and our knowledge) will be quantitatively and qualitatively superior to what we have now. For instance, our life will not be terminated by death again. Nor there will be any veil of ignorance to hide the Truth.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let us recapitulate and read the following verses of the Qur'an in juxtaposition:

- (i) “And it is God who brought you forth, knowing nothing from your mothers wombs and He blessed you with hearing and sight, and hearts that haply so you will be thankful” (16:78). “It is He who created for you ears, and eyes, and hearts little thanks you show” (23:78). “Say It is He who created you, and blessed you with hearing and sight and hearts, little thanks you show” (67:23). “Then He shaped him and breathed His spirit in him. And He appointed for you hearing and sight, and hearts; little thanks you show” (32:9)
- (ii) “And verily We had established them (People of ‘Ad) in that wherein We have not established you (the Makkan Merchants and non-believers) and We blessed them with hearing and sight, and

the hearts and their hearts availed them nothing since they denied the revelations of God and they were encompassed by that they mocked at (implying thereby that since the Makkans like the people of 'Ad are also guilty of denying the revelation—The Qur'an, their fate will not be any different from their predecessors)" (46:26). "Say shall we inform you of those who are the greatest losers (in consequence of) their actions, while they' think they have made wonderful achievements. These are the ones who rejected their Lord's signs and revelation and denied that they would face Him—thus their deeds have come to nothing and We shall not consider them of any weight on the Day of Judgment" (18:103). "If We had revealed the Qur'an in a foreign language they (the Makkan non-believers) would assuredly have said, why are its signs not distinguished (that is, expounded in clear Arabic). What of foreign language and Arabic? Say To the believers it (the Qur'an) is a guidance and a healing; but those who disbelieve, there is deafness in their ears and it is a blindness for them. Such are called to from a far" (41:44). Also see the verses above, where the non-believers are characterized as deaf, dumb, and blind virtually worst than beasts and animals.

When these verses (i.e. set I and II) are pieced together and read in juxtaposition they clearly establish that it is God alone who out of His sheer mercy has created man and endowed him with the faculties of creative knowledge. It is further evidenced that God out of His infinite mercy has also blessed man with His Guidance and Revelation through His Prophets. It means that in the final analysis it's God alone who is the ultimate source of both creative and revelational knowledge. Nonetheless, the Qur'an does insist that man must combine both of these sources, as the

indifference to either of them will be suicidal to his life here and in the hereafter. It is also evident that in this union the creative knowledge is to be subsumed under revelational knowledge and not the other way around. It means that according to the Qur'an knowledge and power gained through creative faculties of man should be regulated and supervised by revelational knowledge otherwise he might run into total disaster and self-annihilation. If on the other hand, man reverses this order and gives supremacy to creative knowledge and hammers revelation to subject itself to creative or human knowledge, he will be guilty of violating the spirit of the Qur'an and will also run into an insoluble difficulty of justifying, among others, eschatology, the most vital part of revelational teaching, on empirico-rational grounds, something which cannot be done in this life. Obviously this mistake will drive him to skepticism and nihilism and will seriously impair and confound his attitude to life, the attitude of *taqwa* or a sense of responsibility to God. However we should remember that if God is the ultimate source of both creative and revelational knowledge, then the oft debated issue of whether creative or revelational knowledge, is supreme loses much of its force and significance. In any case, the Qur'an strictly admonishes man not to dispense with the Revelation of God and declare his independence. For such a declaration would amount to saying that man is god-unto-himself, and that God, His Guidance and the *Sunnah* of His exemplary Prophets are totally irrelevant to human existence. In fact, he can do better if God is dead and absent. Needless to emphasize that according to the Qur'an such a psycho-moral and metaphysical attitude is not only heretical but is also a declaration of an open war against God and His Prophets wherein man alone will be the sole loser. Hence the Qur'an recommends that

man must unite both these sources in the right order and cultivate in himself a specific psycho-moral and religious attitude, the attitude of *taqwa* & and a sense of responsibility to God for one's own conduct. And this attitude, as the Qur'an underlines is indeed the key to success here and in the hereafter.

Now if we review the modern trends of knowledge with their loud claims of neutrality to values and their professed secularism and assess them in the light of the Qur'anic theory of knowledge that we have outlined above, it is not very difficult to see that the modern man is engaged in a war against God and His Prophets. He proclaims that his creative faculties alone are sufficient and he can do without revelation. These trends are most conspicuous in Communism and other Western philosophies as well as natural and social sciences. What is most appalling, however, is that even the Muslim scholarship right from *al-Mansur*, the Abbasid, down to the present era—with some honorable exceptions—is engaged in a suicidal activity. Generally, the Muslim scholars have lost sight of the Qur'an and its most constructive and comprehensive theory of knowledge and are blindly trying to reconstruct Islam now on Greco-Persian and now on Anglo-American models. There is no dearth of those who read Communism in the Qur'an. What is still more shameful and pathetic is that the Muslims are rooted neither in their own cultural heritage, that is the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the holy prophet, nor are they transplanted in the Western systems. Totally confused and bewildered, they are just floating in the air without cognizing the whence and whither of their destiny. Now if our dreams and slogans for the resurgence of Islam are more substantive than just shallow attempts for the restoration of our self-confidence, then, we must immediately return to the Qur'an and the

Sunnah of the holy prophet and resurrect its most vibrant and revolutionary message in the context of its original socio-historical and ethico-political and religio-economic conditions. Then, we must generalize the moral lesson by divesting it of its specific and concrete context and try to solve our problems in the light of this spirit. What is inevitable is, first, to lay down squarely the foundations of Islamic theory of knowledge and then, from this vantage point go on evaluating critically the modern advancements in knowledge and assimilate from them what is deemed useful. Of course, all of this should be done without trading away the spirit of Islamic teachings.

It may be noted that Islam, after the cultivation of *taqwa* or just for the sake of cultivating *taqwa*, exhorts man to seek wisdom from the study of Nature, Man, and History. According to the Qur'an all these three areas are, in fact, pointers or indicators to the same ultimate Reality, that is, God. What the Qur'an recommends is that we should study these contingent facts with reference to their ultimate cause that is, God. It means that we should develop our natural and social sciences with God-consciousness and recruit these sciences to the service of humankind. It does not mean, however, that Islam debar the Muslims from knowing such sciences or fields which could be disserviceable to humankind if only to foil and counteract the Satanic designs of the enemies of humankind. But, in all eventuality, the final goal of the Islamic theory of knowledge is to enable the Muslims, the midmost community and the successors of the holy prophet, to reform this earth and cultivate a just socio-moral order, and establish the sovereignty of God and the vicegerency of humankind in this world.

Bibliography

A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*, Touchstone; 1 edition, 1996

A.J. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, Penguin Books Ltd; New Ed edition, 1990

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran: Text Translation and Commentary*, Kazi Pubns Inc., 1995

Al-Ghazali *The Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihya Ulum Al-Din)*, Islamic Texts Society, 1990

Bertrand Russell, *Theory of Knowledge, The 1913 Manuscript*, Routledge; 1 edition, 1992

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Oxford University Press, USA; New Ed edition (February 21, 2000)

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford University Press, USA; New Ed edition (May 18, 1999)

David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Oxford University Press, USA; 3 edition, 1975

Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Quran*, Bibliotheca Islamica; 2 edition, 1989

George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Hackett Publishing Company; New Ed edition, 1982

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Prometheus Books, 1994

M. Hamidullah, *Introduction to Islam*, Kitab Bhanvan, India, 1992

Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Oxford University Press, 1934

Osman Bakr, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Policy Research, 1992

S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981

S. M. Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993

Syed Abdul Latif, *Basic Concepts of the Quran*, Academy of Islamic Studies, Hyderabad, India, 1958