

# REFLECTIONS ON QURANIC EPISTEMOLOGY

Absar Ahmad

In these days of specializing it is perhaps something of a risk for one whose competence and training is mainly in Western Philosophy and thought to write on Quran and, in particular, Quranic epistemology. But surely none of us who professes to be a convinced and committed Muslim is spared from the task of making a rational enquiry into the foundational beliefs of his faith, and particularly from the obligation of epistemological reflection. This is because; living in a scientific ethos, every dialogue or debate between the secular-oriented scholars and protagonists of religion leads ultimately to a discussion of epistemological issues. In this article my concern is with an exploration in the epistemological zone of the Quran and with some basic questions in the relation of epistemology to a broad philosophical world-view.

My interest in the subject grew and was stimulated while working on my M. Phil dissertation at Reading University (England) in the year 1967-69. It consisted of a comparative study of the philosophies of Kant and Kierkegaard.<sup>2</sup> More recently, I have been hearing during the past several years extremely perceptive and deep exegetical sermons and lectures of a renowned religious scholar of Lahore on Quranic epistemology and allied themes. These also motivated me to write the present article: a humble contribution towards the great goal of analyzing the Quranic epistemological

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<sup>2</sup> It has been published under the title "Kant and Kierkegaard—A Comparative Study" by Karvan Book House, Katchery Road, Lahore, August 1983.

schema. And in this venture I have tried my level best to adhere to the most essential rule recently phrased very aptly by Dr. Fazlur Rahman thus:

"What is required is a willingness to get into the Quran itself rather than to go around it indulging in what must be distortions of the Quran at worst and trivialities at best."<sup>3</sup>

At the outset, let me say a few things which must be appreciated positively by any scholar studying Islam and its doctrines. About the character of the Quran one thing is abundantly clear. It neither is nor purports to be a book of philosophy or metaphysics. It calls itself "guidance for mankind" (hudan-lil-nas) and demands that people live by its commands. Islam has, as its central task, the construction of a social order on a viable ethical basis. It is a practical remedy for the multiple ailments of humanity and a recipe for how man may transcend his banalities and create a positive human brotherhood. In order, therefore, to derive epistemology from it, a determination of its teaching into a cohesive enough unity is required. Islam is a divinely revealed monotheistic religion: it is a complete way of life—ideology or Deen. As such, its epistemology is deeply enmeshed in its over-all metaphysical view of reality and being. In the present paper I shall mainly concentrate on the concept and nature of knowledge in the Quranic scheme of things and the sources of veridical knowledge.

### **Knowledge and Social Reality:**

In the present climate of academic 'learning' one usually drives a wedge between epistemology and moral philosophy. It has become a standard practice that philosophy teaching departments allot separate courses to epistemology and to moral philosophy. This seems to enshrine a fact/value distinction into the very structure of education. (In one course we discuss knowledge, in another values). One of the central questions of 'epistemology'

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. his contribution to Levi Della Vida Conference Proceedings entitled 'Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems', edited by Malcolm H. Kerr, Malibu, California, 1980.

concerns the conditions under which it is possible to acquire knowledge. But the knowledge about which this question is asked is usually knowledge of facts about the 'material world'. If the question is understood to include knowledge about oneself, about the Ultimate Reality, about one's society and one's relationship with others, then the Islamic contention that secularism (Scientism included) is intrinsically a mystifying social formation in which people are systematically prevented from seeing the truth about their lives, ideals and their society immediately become relevant. The question about knowledge has to be dealt with in the context of the question: what kind of society and social relations would enable a non-mystified view of reality, would replace illusion with knowledge? This transfers the focus of the epistemological question from trivial extraneous considerations to the individual mind and the type of society which makes knowledge possible and accessible. It also raises the question of how this knowledge enters the mind, and the relationship between the person and his knowledge; thus it would involve issues about non-oppressive forms of education, an education which liberates people's capacities to discover and to do things for themselves and with others which enables them to understand their society. It is a feature of the modern secular system that it cannot allow this to happen, that its nature and operation is obscure to those who work and live under it.

Thus the structure of education and knowledge reproduces the fragmentation of understanding which seems to be an essential feature of secular society. How, while remaining within the academy can we avoid being agents of this and other forms of oppression? How can we ourselves avoid being screwed up by the false positions and compromises we are forced into? Can we as Muslims get our own heads (and lives) straight while we are subject to its domination, to the disruption it imposes on our thinking should we not get out, trying to contribute to the building up of a truly and radically religious culture, living in a more integrated, humane manner?

The present-day academic philosophy is created and transmitted in an atmosphere of so-called 'scholarly detachment.' It appears to be entirely

remote from the struggles and needs of the world. Academic philosophers, both in their thought and in their lives have almost entirely withdrawn from any relationship with the concrete social reality around them. In short they seem to have abdicated from any socially valuable role, and their work consequently becomes entirely trivial and irrelevant. Though replete with technical jargon, hair-splitting distinctions and logic-chopping, modern philosophy is empty, formal and sterile. We Muslims, however, should stand for less academics and more self-understanding and concrete social change. We should liberate humanity from inhuman and enslaving philosophical presuppositions and reconstruct knowledge in the light of broad religious-humanistic framework of Islam. Let me here briefly explore how the above mentioned fragmentation and summarization of knowledge took place in the West.

### **Knowledge and Value:**

The historical roots of man's present intellectual crisis can be traced back to the Enlightenment and its successors "logical positivism", "logical empiricism" and "utilitarianism". Our physical and spiritual crisis is a logical outcome of the worship of Reason and Scientific Fact and the divorce of values from knowledge. A new theory of knowledge, multi-dimensional and multicultural in character, which reintegrates values and knowledge calls for an alternative epistemology—the epistemology of Islam--which synthesizes metaphysics with physics This theory of knowledge will be appropriated by any one who has a new awareness concerning our needs for enlightened cosmology and ontology. Let me here give a brief historical survey of the contemporary scene.

The epistemological and intellectual tradition which is responsible for the present status of modern knowledge and science has its roots in the Enlightenment which by many is considered to be the beginning of modern times. The Enlightenment was the work of the Philosophers - the

intellectuals who conceived and perfected it. The philosophers looked at science and exploration not just for new knowledge but also for new attitude towards knowledge. From science they acquired the skeptical attitude of systematic doubt (Descartes), and from exploration—a new relativistic attitude towards belief and used them as ammunition against traditional norms and values. Curiously, the effect of such skepticism and relativism was to glorify and magnify man in general and European man in particular.

When the Enlightenment wanted to characterize its power in one word it called it "Reason". "Reason" became the verifying force of the Eighteenth century, expressing all that it strives for and all that it achieves. The epistemological concerns of the Enlightenment derived from the seventeenth century. The intellectual spokesmen of that century—Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Newton—all appealed for a rational criterion of truth. The philosophy of the Enlightenment takes up this call, particularly the methodological pattern of Newtonian mechanics and begins to generalize it. This then became the basic epistemological framework of the Enlightenment. However much individual thinkers and scholars agree or disagree with the end results, they are all unified in their framework of knowledge.

The new tools of "reason" and "analysis", however, were not only for mathematical and physical knowledge but they were also used by the philosophers to dissect all branches of human Endeavour. Such fundamental disciplines as metaphysics, religion, politics, and ethics were also analyzed on the basis of reason and logic with a view to ending their perplexities once and for all. The principles which both the rational and empiricist philosophers attempted to apply were the new scientific cannons of the seventeenth century; there was to be no a priori deduction from "natural" principles without concrete experimental evidence. Isaiah Berlin writes;

"This use of observation and experiment entailed the application of exact methods of measurement, and resulted in the linking together of many diverse phenomena under laws of great precision, generally formulated in mathematical terms. Consequently only the measurable aspects of reality were to be treated as real - those susceptible to equations connecting the variations in one aspect of a phenomenon with measurable variations in other phenomena. The whole notion of nature as compounded of irreducibly different qualities and unbridgeable 'natural' kinds, was to be finally discarded. The Aristotelian category of final cause - the explanation of phenomena in terms of the 'natural' tendency of every object to fulfill its own inner end or purpose—which was also to be the answer to the question of why it existed, and what function it was attempting to fulfill— notions for which no experimental or observational evidence can in principle be discovered—was abandoned as unscientific, and, indeed, in the case of inanimate entities without wills or purposes, as literally unintelligible. Laws formulating regular concomitances of phenomena—the observed order and conjunctions of things and events—were sufficient, without introducing impalpable entities and forces, to describe all that is describable, and predict all that is predictable, in the universe, Space, time, mass force, momentum, rest—the terms of mechanics—are to take the place of final causes, substantial forms, divine purpose, and other metaphysical notions".<sup>4</sup>

This conviction—that reason and analysis can bring man knowledge of all reality—gained footholds in the most varied fields of eighteenth century culture. The celebrated saying of Lessing, that the real power of reason is to be found not in the possession but in the acquisition of truth, has its parallel everywhere in the intellectual history of the eighteenth century. This fundamental idea of the Enlightenment was the adhesive which united the Christian and romantic poets.

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *The Age of Enlightenment*, Mentor Books, New York, 1956, p. 17.

The Enlightenment separated knowledge from values with-out giving an adverse judgment on the either. The philosophers were in favour of reason; but they did not throw intrinsic values overboard. Kant, for example, clearly saw in Newtonian mechanics knowledge of the law of the physical universe, but he did not submit the autonomy and sovereignty of man to deterministic mechanics. He separated the domains of physical knowledge and intrinsic values by proclaiming "the starry heavens above you and moral law within". The Philosophies that followed the Enlightenment took the divorce of knowledge and values further.

The nineteenth century heralds the true triumphs of reason in the unparalleled spread of materialism. Logical positivism and materialism (of which Marxism is a part) and their twentieth century counterpart logical empiricism threw, values overboard altogether. In their epistemological framework values are not considered proper knowledge. Utilitarianism declared that the goal, the ideal, of all moral endeavour is the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. What came to be practiced, in fact, was the greatest, number of material goods for the largest possible number of people. Industrialization, which also became the main agent of the environmental devastation, had produced this reality.

Contemporary Anglo-American linguistic and analytic philosophy, I strongly feel is at a dead end. Its academic parishioners have all but abandoned the attempt to understand the world, let alone change it. - They have turned philosophy into a narrow and specialized academic subject of little relevance or interest to anyone outside the small circle of professional philosophers. The result has been that serious philosophical work beyond the conventional sphere has been minimal. The great mass of human beings undoubtedly have real need for an enlightened philosophy—that is, for a consistent world view and a body of guiding principles and clearly defined aims. This mass is effectively deprived by contemporary philosophers of any ideological material which might prove relevant to their existences.

## **Bazarovism:**

Henryk Skolimowski<sup>5</sup> has aptly coined the phrase "Bazarovism" to describe the currently widespread intellectual and academic climate. The spirit of the age is characterized by Sergei Bazarov (from Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Children*) who is a robust, exuberant believer in science, in materialism, and in the world in which fact and positive knowledge are supreme values. He has no use for art, for poetry, for other 'romantic rubbish'. The modern man is engulfed so completely by the worship of reason and scientific fact and bogus empiricism that it is often difficult to see through them and assess their impact on society. According to Skolimowski, Bazarov is at once an embodiment of the prevailing nihilism, materialism, scientism and positivism, which, in their respective ways, regarded intrinsic values as second, insignificant, or even non-existent in the world of cold facts, clinical objectivity and scientific reason.

By raising reason and fact to the level of 'gods' the modern man has brought himself into the era of supersonic age. The achievements and successes of modern science and technology no doubt have brought some benefits to humanity, but they have also brought us alienation, urbanization, moral degeneration and ecological crisis. The worship of economic growth has brought us fragmented and meaningless work, cracked and superficial relations. The assembly lines symbolize the way things should be done: rapidly, efficiently and, of course, massively. The whole society operates as a machine—including people. The vast amount of published work on philosophy and epistemology in the west is of utter worthlessness, and I have here in mind the works published strictly within the academic nexus. Indeed, the very system of contemporary 'learning' is in its structure and method geared to anaesthetize any incoming organism that might threaten its supremacy. According to the present social culture and academic milieu,

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<sup>5</sup> Ecology p. 5, 18 January 1975.

reality begins with the group, with publicly available data. The private project and inner life is denied any reality.

### **'Knowledge' in the Islamic Perspective:**

Historically speaking, philosophical thinking epistemological doctrines included, is closely related with religious beliefs and gnostic traditions. It has often culminated in the attempt to do intellectually what religion has done practically and emotion-ally: to establish human life in some satisfying and meaningful relation to the universe in which man finds himself, and to get some wisdom in the conduct of human affairs.

Knowledge, according to the Quranic doctrine, is both a gift of Divine revelation as well as a creative element or aspect of the human spirit. Most of recent philosophy threatens our spiritual existence and freedom by driving the contemporary mind into irrational and compulsive negation of religious truth. Islam, however, is a faith that is reasonable and rational, a faith that we can adopt with intellectual integrity and ethical conviction.

Philosophy, with all its variegated disciplines, in the frame-work of Islam cannot be squared with an antiactivist or 'spectator' view of it which aims merely at an enlargement of the understanding. Indeed it here becomes an essentially practical subject: it seeks to get people to do things. It cannot remain uncommitted to social action. The attack on spectator-ism which we find in Existentialism and in the pragmatists is very relevant to current philosophical scene. Moreover, Anglo-American academic philosophy is presently built around the assumption that its true centre is epistemology. This assumption is apparent particularly in the structure and content of university courses. The approach to the various areas of philosophy via the problem of knowledge is one possible way of organizing one's conception of philosophy. But the outcome has been the abstraction of 'man as Knower' from the rest of human life, and in particular from human practice. This has

been a distinguishing feature of the empiricist tradition—and epistemology is still dominated by that tradition: the so-called 'problems of knowledge' are the problems of the isolated individual knower confined to the world of his own sense perceptions.<sup>6</sup> Conversely it is essential to see the activity of 'knowing' as arising out of, and part of, man's general attempt to organize and cope with his world, in order to vindicate the status of human knowledge as a meaningful totality rather than a series of discrete sense impressions.

It is Ludwig Wittgenstein, the venerated philosopher of the later half of this century, who has said:

"Even if every possible scientific question were answered, the problems of our living would still not have been touched at all".

What are the real problems of our living to which Wittgenstein is referring? I am sure that he and his acolytes know it very well that these pertain to the meaning and value of human existence and his ultimate destiny.<sup>7</sup> All human beings worth the name feel that life must have a meaning--but what is it? Do they find it in the contradictions, double talk, and cynical resignation they encounter at every turn? They long for happiness, for truth, for justice, for love, for an object of devotion. Are the modern academics able to satisfy their longing?

According to Islamic doctrine, no one is born with knowledge; however, everyone is born with a greater capacity to acquire knowledge. We read in the Quran:

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<sup>6</sup> This contention is borne out by a study of contemporary philosophical treatises of Russell, Ayer, Ryle, Hemlyn and many others.

<sup>7</sup> Aspat of articles published in journals and books by philosophers like Kurt Baier, Ronald w. Hepburn, Antony Flew, Ilham Dilman, among others, prove my point beyond any shadow of doubt.

'It is He who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers. You did not know a thing; and He gave you hearing, sight and winds in order that you may give thanks, (al-Nahl 16:77).

This Quranic verse amply shows that in Islam great emphasis is laid on empirical investigation and observation and it is in this sense that Allama Mohammad Iqbal rightly asserts that Islamic civilization represents the advent of inductive intellect 1. The knowledge of physical world is attained through 'hearing' sight and minds'. However, the aim of such knowledge is to produce appreciation of Allah's attributes of creativity, power and wisdom, and to discharge man's duty as His vice-regent on earth with humanity:

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for men of understanding. Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and reclining on their sides and contemplate (the wonders) in the creation of the heavens and the earth" (al-Imran 3:191)

'Only the learned among His people truly fear Allah' (Fatir 35:28)

Scientific knowledge directed toward the glorification of man leads man to his own destruction in this world as well as in the Hereafter. The Quran relates the story of Quran explaining this point:

"He (Quran) said, 'This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge which I have.' Did he not "know that Allah had destroyed before him generations which were superior to him in strength and greater in number?" (Al-Qasas 28:78).

The only authentic source of knowledge concerning the Unseen realities is the Quran, the final and most perfect form of Divine guidance. Speculation, philosophical theories, and man-made theologies or 'isms' do not constitute true knowledge.

Islam is not against rational speculation. But it does not grant authority to such speculation. The ultimate source of knowledge is the Quran and the Holy Prophets sunnah. Allah gives<sup>1</sup>. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal: Reconstruction of Religions Thought in Islam, Lahore (Pakistan) p. 127, passim.

examples of such human speculations and surmises in order to reject them. For example, He say:

"And they say, 'What is there except our earthly life? We shall die and we live, and nothing destroys us except time.' But of that they have no knowledge; they merely speculate'. (al-Jathivah 45 24)

"But most of them follow nothing but conjecture; indeed, conjecture is of no consequence against the truth; Verily, Allah is well aware of what they do. This Quran cannot be produced by other than Allah ; but is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it and a fuller explanation of the Book — wherein there is no doubt—from the Lord of the world" (Yunus 10: 37).

A person's faith must be based on knowledge. As Jung has acutely remarked, 'The modern man abhors dogmatic postulates taken on faith and the religious philosophies based upon them. He holds them valid only in so far as their knowledge-content seems to accord with his own experience of the deeps of psychic life. He wants to know—to experience for himself'. To be sure, Islamic faith is not a blind faith, whereby one is asked to believe in something which is either a contradiction, such as 'One-in-three and three-in-one' or if not a contradiction, so remote from reason that one has to twist his logic to bring him to say, 'I believe'. An example of this is the theory of reincarnation, in which a man's actions are judged by none (as there is no God) so that this none decides in what form to send him back to earth after his death. The faith in Islam, on the contrary, has to be sustained by metaphysical knowledge and enquiry. The worlds of reason and of religion do not turn in different orbits. The Real is to be known through reflection or 'tafaqquh' in Quranic terminology.

The intellectual approach to the knowledge of supreme reality is insisted in Islamic thought. We have to think out the metaphysical presuppositions and attain personal experience of the religious verities, from which alone the truly authentic and living faith starts.

Let me now dwell upon a few basic Quranic expressions which provide a clue to the understanding of essentially Islamic theory of Knowledge.

1 C. G. Jung ; Modern Man in Search of a Soul, Routledge & Kagan Paul, London, p. 163.

'Tazakkur'--Recalling the Fundamental Truths Intuitively:

'Tazakkur' is a very significant Quranic term which means recalling to mind the fundamental truths intuitively recognized by human nature For understanding the significance of this term we have to note that the Quran frequently calls itself 'Zikr', 'Zikra', 'Tazkir'—derivatives of the same root from which 'Tazakkur' stems. In essence, 'tazakkur' pertains to the first stage in the comprehension of divine realities and meanings. It also alludes to the truth that the Quranic teaching is not extraneous to the human nature. It actually reflects the Experiences of man's inner self and it is meant to awaken reminiscences of something already apprehended rather than to import anything altogether new. The Holy Quran appeals to all thoughtful persons whom it address as 'Ulul albab' (men of understanding) and 'Qaum-an-Yagilun' (people who have comprehension and insight) to think and ponder over the outer universe of matter as well as the inner universe of the spirit, as both are replete with the unmistakable signs of the Almighty Creator. Simultaneously, it invites them to deliberate over its own signs, i.e., its divinely inspired verses.' Thus the Quran, in addition to its own verses, regards both 'anfus' (self) and 'afaq' (world) as sources of knowledge. Pondering over the three categories of signs, a man will be able to perceive a

perfect concord between them; and, with the realization of this concord, he will grasp certain fundamental truths which are borne by the internal testimony of his own nature. So to say, the truths cherished by his inner self will emerge from its depths and shine in all their brilliance on the screen of his consciousness. In other words, full and intense awareness of Absolute Reality will spring up to his consciousness like the memory of a forgotten thing shooting up from the dark depths of the psyche to the surface of mind with the aid of a pertinent suggestion.

I. It is noteworthy here that the Quran calls its verses 'ayat' i.e., Signs (of God) These verses are considered as signs of God—as important as any other of His signs in the universe or in the heart of man. It is because the Quranic verses are parts of Ralamullah (God's speech) and also because, like other signs of God they, too, turn man's mind to the Al—mighty.'

The Quran thus declares in unequivocal terms that every man can derive the benefit of 'tazakkur' from it. It does not matter if a person's intelligence is limited, and his knowledge of logic and philosophy is poor ; and if he has no fine sense of language and literature. In spite of these drawbacks, he can develop an inkling and appreciation of ultimate truths if he has a noble heart, a sound mind, and an untainted nature not perverted by any kind of crookedness. The central themes and basic subjects of the Divine Book are nothing new or unfamiliar to the true human nature. While reading it a man often feels as if he were listening to the echoes of his inner self. In this sense, the Quranic theory of knowledge subtly resembles the Platonic theory in which true knowledge is also attained through recollecting forgotten memories of eternal forms.

### **'Tadabbur'—Intellection and Reflection:**

The Holy Quran urges us again and again to study it intelligently and with deliberation, bringing our thought to bear upon it, and exercising our

reasoning faculty in following its arguments and comprehending its meaning. For this purpose it uses the location 'Tadabbur' and its cognates, 'fahm"aqil' 'fiqha' and 'fikir'. 'Tadabbur' generally means pondering and reflecting over the meaning and significance of ultimate questions. Specifically in the Quranic context, it connotes diving deep into the fathomless ocean of Divine wisdom. We learn from authentic traditions that the companions of the Holy Prophet used to reflect and ponder over the different surahs of the Quran for years on end.

This brings us to the question as to what reason, reflection and ratiocination mean in the Islamic perspective. Of course, one must distinguish between the use of reason and rational faculty, and rationalism which makes reason the sole source of gaining knowledge and the only criterion for judging the truth. One does sometime speak of Aristotelian rationalism, although in the philosophy of Aristotle there are metaphysical intuitions which cannot be reduced to simple products of the human reason or logical understanding. Most regrettably, the meanings of many words like thought, reason, reflection and others have shrunk tremendously in contemporary philosophy, with the result that the suggested association of ideas have become quite restrictive.

In the human microcosm, intellect is the deep spiritual centre or being, and not merely any specifiable mental faculty. It is necessary to distinguish between rational thought which is discursive and proceeds from the mental faculty alone; and intellectual thought which proceeds from intuition and pure Intellect. The Arabic counterpart of reason or intellect—'aqil—signifies etymologically both that which binds or limits the Absolute in the direction of creation and also that which binds man to the truth, to God Himself. In this sense, the word 'aqil' is at once intellectus or nous and ratio or reason. In the Islamic perspective it is precisely 'aqil' which keeps man on the straight path and prevents him from going astray. The sense of the numinous cannot be excluded from the world of empiricism. Experience is not exclusively what comes through science and scientific method. In other words, a

distinction has to be made between terrestrial thought, aroused by the environment and celestial thought aroused by that which is our true being and finding its term beyond ourselves and, in the final analysis, in God.<sup>8</sup> Reason; in the present day limited sense, is something like a profane intelligence essentially the profane point of view springs from there. It is necessary for reason to be determined, transfigured or enriched both by faith and gnosis which is the quintessence of faith. Gnosis, in the Islamic theory of knowledge, keeps its original meaning of wisdom made up of knowledge and spiritual sanctity. It is the higher type of knowledge which comes of intuition by the intellect, the term intellect having the same sense as in Plotinus or Eckhart. If human intellect 'aql' is obscured by the passions, by the nafs, then it can become the veil that hides man from the Divine. Were it not be so, there would be no need of revelation at all.

### **'Love'—Mystic unitive apprehension**

There is intellectually nothing more depressing than to read the trivial writings of the linguistic philosophers and the existentially barren texts of the social theorists. The Islamically—oriented epistemological theory, on the contrary, represents a deep—knowledge process which transforms the seeker. Here the idea of knowledge being an ideational process is not even considered. The foundations of knowledge are only accessible to the one who is prepared to undergo a profound existential transformation. The Islamic approach to knowledge involves an operational zone taking in the whole life-pattern of the student.

According to Islamic epistemic theory, the sole element that can unite the soul to God is love, for love alone is desire of possession or of union;

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<sup>8</sup> I owe this very relevant and illuminating distinction to F Schuon. Ch. his book *Gnosis, The Divine Wisdom*, London, pp, 78-90 and *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Fact* London 1953, p. 54.

while discursive knowledge appears as a static element having no operative or unitive virtue. For securing a complete vision of Reality, therefore, sense perception must be supplemented by the function of what the Quran describes as 'fuad' or 'qalb' i.e., heart. 'Love' is held to include all modes of spiritual union, an eminently concrete participation in the transcendent realities. Intellect, divorced from Love, is a rebel (like Satan) while intellect wedded to Love has divine attributes. But surely 'loving' God presupposes being conscious of God. To be conscious of Him is to fix the heart in the Real, in permanent remembering of the Divine. 'Remembering' or 'dhikr' must be understood as referring essentially to an aspiration of the being towards the Universal with the object of obtaining an inner illumination. Heart, in Quranic epistemology, is symbolically the seat of the true self, of which we may be conscious or ignorant, but which is our true existential, intellectual and so universal centre. The heart is as it were immersed in the immutability of Being Contemplatively is here stressed more than the sharpness of intelligence. In contemplation of the heart things appear in their metaphysical transparency. The role of love is also emphasized in Christian philosophy. For example, Paul Tillich writes, 'Full knowledge does not admit a difference between itself and love, or between theory and practice'.<sup>9</sup>

Thus knowledge infused with intuition and love gives celestial and divine knowledge. Love acts as the purgative that effects the perfection of soul by purging it of all spurious matter accumulated by intellect. The practical explanation of love is also contained in Allama Iqbal's philosophy of self in a systematized exposition of it in the letter sent by Iqbal to Dr. Nicholson and incorporated in his introduction to the *Secrets of the Self*, the English translation of Iqbal's *Asrar-i-Khudi*, he says about love:

"The word is used in a very wide sense and means the desire to assimilate, to absorb. Its highest form is the creation of values and ideas, and

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, Penguin Books, 1966, p. 115.

the endeavour to realize them. Love individualizes the lover as well as the beloved".

The reason why in Islamic epistemological framework so much emphasis is laid on love or intuition is that intuition catches the glimpses of the ultimate reality while intellect fails to achieve that goal on account of its inherent imperfection. Love, in short, is able to know the unknowable.

To conclude, the various components of Islamic epistemology I have outlined are mutually supporting and interdependent. Islamic theory of knowledge, updated in idiom, sweeps away the contemporary western state of confused affairs in no uncertain manner. It recomposes man's divided self and restores his sanity because it restores the unity of knowledge and wisdom. It infuses in us the realization that the state of our knowledge is an important characteristic of the state of our being. It teaches one to be logical, rational and scientific without losing sight of the spiritual verities known through prophetic revelation, love and intuition. I have not loaded the essay with much technical detail but nevertheless tried to give a fairly intelligible account of the Quranic epistemology in the context of present philosophical scene.