A Concept of Philosophy in the Qur'anic Context

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One of the most debated subjects in philosophy is the nature and subject matter of philosophy itself. It is perhaps the only discipline that critically discusses its own nature. This is one reason that has led philosophers, particularly after the nineteenth century, to distinguish philosophy from such other experimental sciences as physics, biology, or astronomy. When we add to this the nature of subjects discussed in philosophy, as opposed to the issues discussed in those sciences, the sharp distinction between the two becomes decisively clear.

It is our aim to investigate critically the nature of philosophical subjects, which constitutes basically the method of philosophy, in order to arrive at a concept of philosophy that is acceptable to the Qur'anic perspective, which can be taken, as we shall see, as a contribution toward the effort of Islamization. Our discussion requires the development of a clear conception of the term "philosophy." If we are to develop an Islamic concept of philosophy, then we are required in the first instance to clarify what we mean by philosophy. We feel compelled to do this, because in the history of human thought there are more than a score of conceptions about the nature, purpose, and subject matter of philosophy. However, settling this problem alone does not fulfill the task of our paper. We must, moreover, show what the role of philosophy may be in this society (in general) so that we can delineate more effectively its significance in a Muslim community (in particular). Finally, we must try to justify our arguments from the Qur'anic perspective in order to defend the conception of philosophy that is to be developed here as an adequate one.

The discussion, then, will be divided into three main sections. The first section will be devoted to "what philosophy is." In the second, we shall elucidate what we shall term the "Qur'anic conception of or attitude

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towards philosophy" as reflected in the oft-used Qur'anic notion of *ḥikmah*; and finally, in the third section, we shall illustrate the function of philosophy in a Muslim society. Each discussion shall analyze a philosophical problem in order to reach an explicit judgment concerning an issue debated throughout the history of Islamic thought. At the center of this debate lies the doctrine of Islamic Aristotelianism that came into conflict with the Qur'anic text. Instead of working out a philosophical system based on the Qur'an, certain Muslim thinkers (i.e., al Ash'arī and al Ghazālī) attacked not only the Mashshā'ī doctrines, but also any activity that may be characterized as philosophical. When one considers the intellectual effort behind these debates, however, one finds no other description than "philosophy" to characterize their activity, which, ironically, was developed to refute philosophy as such.

Within the context of these three discussions, then, our central concern is to develop what may be called a Qur'anic perspective of philosophy. In order to achieve this, we shall analyze the related Qur'anic term *ḥikmah* rather than going into the cumbersome discussion of social and intellectual conditions that paved the way in Islam for the disparagement of philosophy per se.

On What Philosophy Is

In order to pinpoint the Qur'anic attitude toward philosophy, we must clarify what we mean by it, for there are several conceptions of philosophy that, as we shall show, the Qur'an definitely opposes. This fact reveals that the Qur'an is not antagonistic to philosophy as such, but rather that it has a particular attitude toward certain conceptions of philosophy. This attitude is reflected clearly in several verses, which will be discussed below, as "disapproval" and "discontent." Therefore, in order to determine what kind of a philosophical conception would constitute the Qur'anic term *ḥikmah* used in this sense, we shall present a historical survey of the issue.

For the purposes of this paper, areas of learning can be divided into two broad fields: experimental and experiential. Those areas connected with human experience (i.e., one's existence par excellence, one's existence in the universe, one's social existence) belong to the study of either human sciences or social sciences. Although philosophy has a specific place among these sciences, it differs from all other sciences in that some of its subjects fall under natural sciences and others under social sciences.

We have characterized the areas of learning pertaining to philosophical, human, and social sciences as "experiential." This characterization is chosen to reflect our approach in investigating the nature of philosophy, for we think that in the experiential field, in addition to sense-experience, there is the need for experience of a higher order (which may tentatively

be called "mystical," as we have no other term at our immediate disposal), simply on epistemological grounds. We have also pointed out that there are several conceptions of philosophy. Our historical survey about the nature of philosophy shall further clarify these two points.

Historically speaking, humanity faced the universe as a whole and began by dealing with it in a holistic manner. This ancient approach of acquiring knowledge of the universe is clear from the history of science. There was no clear separation between "experimental" and "experiential" fields, as "scientific" was not yet counterposed to "philosophic." This conception aimed mainly at knowledge in general, and, as human learning at large, it did not distinguish between "science" and "philosophy." In early history, philosophy meant the "love" or "passion" for learning.

This ancient conception of philosophy continued until medieval times, thus putting its impression on the minds of Muslim intellectuals as well. Al Fārābī (d. 950 CE), for instance, classified sciences in his famous work *Iḥṣā' al 'Ulūm* and included therein a classification of such philosophical disciplines as logic, metaphysics, and ethics. Al Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE), however, opposed this classification and did not admit metaphysics as a science (*'ilm*) as such in the Islamic sense. He nevertheless contended that metaphysics was a philosophical discipline. What al Ghazālī was positing was that the human mind tried to reach the sort of certitude in metaphysical subjects that it reached in such formal studies as logic and mathematics. However, the nature of metaphysical problems are such that they evade mathematical exactitude. This fact is observed clearly in the agreement of philosophers upon the solution of a certain mathematical problem. But metaphysics has never succeeded in reaching a conclusion upon which all philosophers agree (Al Ghazālī 1927).

Thus, two major developments in philosophy or science, according to this view, were already on the way to excluding certain fields from the main body of learning and incorporating them into independent branches of knowledge. The first major and rather practical development was the accumulation of knowledge, which resulted in the systematization of and specialization in certain fields. The second was the attack on metaphysical issues, which never seemed to be settled conclusively in philosophy. One crucial attitude that prepared the ground for this attack is known in the history of philosophy as "rationalism." This peculiar attitude of the ancient conception of philosophy vis-à-vis the medieval understanding claimed that the human mind, by itself, is capable of solving both scientific and metaphysical problems. It is this attitude that is so vividly articulated in Ibn Ṭufayl's (d. 1185 CE) famous work *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*.

The main representative of the second major development, which yielded a new concept of philosophy, appeared in the eighteenth century: Immanuel Kant (d. 1804), the founder of critical philosophy. According to him, philosophy as metaphysics cannot be a science, "because all our

knowledge undoubtedly begins with (human) experience" (Kant 1965, 41) and since nothing is given in our experience as regards the metaphysical objects, speculative knowledge about them is not possible. What brought Kant to this conclusion is, no doubt, the empiricist philosophy that claimed knowledge, independent of experience, was impossible. Empiricists did not admit any innate ideas, and Kant considered their attitude correct. But they were wrong in denying any *a priori* concepts and principles to the human mind. That is why such empiricists as David Hume (d. 1776) became a skeptic, while others, among them John Locke (d. 1704), transcended the limits of human reason and became metaphysical realists.

This modern development brought about a new conception of philosophy that, for the first time, sharply distinguished "philosophy as metaphysics" from "philosophy as science." Clearly, this modern conception does not differ from the ancient-medieval stand, in the sense that all fields of human knowledge are still conceived as a unified whole under one discipline: "philosophy." But it differs from the latter in the sense that metaphysical subjects of human learning are excluded from speculative or theoretical science, i.e., philosophy. On the other hand, these subjects, which according to Kant are God, freedom, and immortality, led to a new branch of learning: "practical philosophy." It is crucial for our purpose to note that the modern conception of philosophy did allow the possibility of metaphysics as a practical philosophy although it banned strictly any speculative or theoretical discussion of metaphysical issues.

The conceptions of philosophy discussed so far can be classified conveniently under two heads: the ancient-medieval view, which we shall call the "rationalist conception," and the modern view, which can be called the "critical conception." But we shall distinguish yet another view: the "positivist conception." This third conception of philosophy began to emerge in the nineteenth century but only received its definite form in the twentieth century. As a result, it is more reflected of contemporary trends.

The positivist conception is based on the critical conception in addition to its understanding of the positivist attitude of science. This attitude claimed that

> philosophy was once construed so broadly as to cover any field of theoretical inquiry . . . . However, once a field of study reached the point where some main theory dominated and with it developed standard methods of criticism and confirmation, then the field was cut off from the mother country of philosophy and became independent. (Cornman et al. 1974, 2)

Therefore philosophy exported problems to other sciences. Whatever is left to be studied in philosophy are "questions and problems that resist such exportation by virtue of their general and fundamental character"

(ibid.). As for metaphysical problems, the positivist view regarded them as pseudo-problems. Although the critical conception shows the impossibility of metaphysics, it does this on different grounds. For example, Ayer (1952), a prominent positivist, claims that the positivist conception shows the nonsensical character of metaphysics as a matter of logic. But since the critical conception shows this as a matter of fact, it still allows metaphysics in its practical aspect.

The underlying idea of the positivist conception is what can be called "pure empiricism," according to which any claim that professes to increase our knowledge of reality does not achieve its purpose unless its truth can be tested, in one way or another, by empirical means. Since each experimental science can use such empirical methods, they are truly considered knowledge. But since metaphysics cannot prove its claims in this way, it should not be considered a branch of learning. There remains only philosophy (cut off from metaphysics) and, as such, it analyzes and examines the statements of particular sciences. Therefore, the function of philosophy is reduced to a certain kind of linguistic analysis carried out by a logical method (ibid; Cornman 1974).

Our historical survey shows that there are essentially three views about the nature of philosophy, and that many other views concerning the problem in question can be classified conveniently as belonging to the rationalist, critical, or positivist conception. The conclusion to be drawn from our exposition on these three conceptions is that the subject matter of philosophy is either scientific, with or without the exclusion of metaphysics, or that of linguistic analysis. Certain extreme forms of positivism, in fact, annihilate philosophy altogether as a branch of learning and thus reduce it to the status of a method. Others claim that

> there are indeed many questions which cannot be answered by direct appeal to experiment or firmly established theory. For example, in all fields of inquiry, people seek knowledge. But it is in philosophy that one asks what knowledge is . . . . In some fields people study the causal consequences of certain actions and policies. But in philosophy one asks what general features make actions and policies right or wrong, etc. (Cornman et al. 1974, 3)

In any case, positivism does not offer much for philosophy to be considered as a branch of learning, because neither experimental nor experiential (i.e., metaphysical) areas of learning fall under its subject matter. Thus, it has no subject matter left other than "gossiping" critically(!), so to speak, over the statements of scientists.

So far, we have presented from our (Islamic) point of view the three most significant conceptions of philosophy within their historical perspectives, all of which have come down to us in one form or another. There-

fore, we may say that although the history of philosophy reveals innumerable views of the nature of philosophy, there has remained, nevertheless, at least one characteristic of this discipline that has never changed, giving it a unity to its nature: reflecting and reasoning as such. Of course, philosophers disagree about the mode and method of this "reflecting and reasoning." But at least we can grant this much—that philosophers almost universally would admit the definition of philosophy as a discipline that embodies some sort of reflective reasoning or thinking. We shall, at the same time, grant that this is the common point between the three conceptions of philosophy that have been expounded so far.

The Qur'anic Perspective: *Ḥikmah*

Our aim is to elucidate the term *ḥikmah* in order to see, rather indirectly, what kind of a conception of philosophy the Qur'an would approve. We contend here that the conclusions are based on the worldview derived from the Qur'an as a whole, but that their proofs are provided on the basis of individual verses.[1] Since this exposition is the result of our experiences and understanding, reached via personal study, of the Qur'an, it cannot represent the Qur'anic perspective par excellence, which shall always remain the archetype of all secondary Qur'anic perspectives drawn therefrom by individual Muslims. Thus, we may distinguish two perspectives: the "archetypal," which is embedded within the Qur'anic text alone and is independent of interpreters, and the "derivative" or "secondary," which consists of the understanding based on or derived from the "archetypal" perspective. All perspectives declared to be "Islamic" must belong to the second kind, for the archetypal perspective must remain as an ideal to which every interpreter endeavors to ascend. Our claim in this essay must, therefore, be conceived as an attempt of this second perspective.

Our exposition of the three concepts of philosophy shows implicitly that any understanding of philosophy as a branch of learning is inherently based on a theory of knowledge. Therefore, the Qur'anic attitude to be drawn from the Qur'an shall also embody an implicit theory of knowledge. We call this a "theory" not in the sense that the Qur'an develops such a theory, for the Qur'an reveals the Truth (*ḥaqq*) and not a theory. But since it is an understanding derived from the Qur'an, in the sense of the second perspective as outlined above, it always has the mark of a human character—it can be either true or false, no matter how much

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[1]The method employed here largely has been drawn from Fazlur Rahman's two major works: *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago and Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980) and *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) more specifically the introduction to the latter work.

comes from the Qur'anic text. Therefore it can always be characterized as a "theory." Hence, the derived or secondary Qur'anic perspective is primarily an interpretation that may have the character of a theory. Within this framework, we shall now elucidate a conception of philosophy that can be termed a secondary conception of philosophy within the Qur'anic perspective. Leaving aside this philosophical jargon, we shall now develop a concept of philosophy within the Qur'anic context.

The Qur'an manifests two worlds (*'ālam*) that are subject to human knowledge: the unseen world (*'ālam al ghayb*) and the visible world (*'ālam al shahādah*). That this distinction is made by the Qur'an is evident from the oft-repeated verse *'ālim al ghayb wa al shahādah* (Knower of the Unseen and the Visible: 39:46; 23:92; 6:63; 59:22; and 9:105). Moreover, not only is it clear that the Qur'an makes this distinction, but it is self-evident that the distinction is maintained because of the possibility of human knowledge concerning these two different worlds. Consider the following verses[2]: "Say (O Muhammad): 'I do not tell you that I possess the treasures of God, nor do I know the *ghayb* . . . I only follow what is revealed'" (6:50); "Or that the *ghayb* is in their hands, so that they can write it down?" (68:47); "To God belongs the *ghayb* of the heavens and the earth" (16:77); and "God alone has the keys of the *ghayb*; none but He knows them" (6:59).

It is clear in these verses that man cannot know the unseen world (*ghayb*). It must be pointed out that as a world, the unseen world in this context does not mean prophesizing about the future, for the Qur'an makes it clear that human beings cannot foretell the future. Here, we are concerned with the unseen world that is posed as an ontological world and whether it can be made known to us.

Although it is clearly stated that the unseen world cannot be known by human beings, it is never implied in the Qur'an that we cannot know the visible world. On the contrary, humanity is encouraged to inquire and reflect upon the visible universe:

> In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day there are indeed signs for men of understanding. (3:190)

> There is no lack of proportion in the creation of God. So turn your eyes (and look around). Do you see any defect? Again, turn your sight (and examine) a second time. But your eyes will come back to you dull and frustrated in a state worn out. (67:3-4)

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[2]All of the Qur'anic citations in this article are based on A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Brentwood, MD: Amana, 1983) and A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: Macmillan, 1976).

> And who other than God created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you water from the sky, whereby we cause to grow lush orchards. For it is not up to you to cause their trees to grow! Is there, then, a god beside God? Yet these are the people who ascribe partners to Him! And who other than Him made the earth a firm abode (for you), and set rivers traversing through it, and put firm mountains therein and sealed off one sea from the other? Is there, then, a god beside God? Indeed, most of them do not know! And who other than Him responds to the distressed one when he calls Him and relieves him of the distress; and Who has made you His vicegerents on earth? Is there then, a god beside God? Little do you reflect! And who other than Him guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea? And who sends forth winds announcing His mercy (i.e., rain)? Is there, then, a god beside God? Far exalted be He above what they associate with Him! And who other than Him brings forth His creation and then re-creates it? And who gives you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? Is there, a god beside God? (27:60-4)

These verses make it clear that the visible world can be known by human beings through reflective thinking. It is clear, however, that the study of this world falls under the experimental areas of learning and that, as such, it is the subject matter of natural sciences. But since the unseen world cannot be known in the same manner, it cannot be the subject matter of the natural or experimental sciences.

Although the unseen world cannot be known, the Qur'an does point out that it can be made understandable or intelligible to humanity by revelation. In fact, the Qur'an's purpose is to teach human beings about the unseen world: "God alone knows the unseen world, and He does not disclose it to anyone except a messenger whom He has chosen" (72:26-7) and "These are the tidings of the unseen world which We have revealed unto you. Before this neither you nor your people knew them" (11:49).

What is this unseen world that cannot be known yet can be made intelligible (i.e., comprehensible by the mind) only via revelation? To find the Qur'an's answer, we need only the following explanation: "None except God knows the unseen world in the heavens and on earth; nor can they perceive when they shall be resurrected. Still less can their knowledge comprehend the Hereafter" (27:65-6); "This is the Book, wherein is no doubt, a guidance to those who fear God, and believe in the unseen world" (2:2-3); and "As to those who know their Lord from the unseen world, there awaits them forgiveness and a great reward" (2:97).

The conclusion one can draw from these verses is that the unseen world includes such concepts as God, the Hereafter, and revelation. If so, then we already know that these concepts are subjected to the study of

metaphysics in philosophy. Since the Qur'an states that these cannot be known by the human mind, as the mind can only comprehend them after they are taught by the Qur'an, we can infer that the rationalist concept of philosophy, which claims that metaphysical subjects can be discovered and conceived by unaided reason and, more specifically, unaided by revelation, is unacceptable to the Qur'anic perspective.

Why does the Qur'an declare that the unseen world cannot be known except through revelation? We shall try to answer this question within the context of a philosophical theory (of knowledge): It cannot be known by unaided reason because it has no effect upon our sense organs. But we know the visible world directly, thanks to the fact that it affects our sense organs, to which the mind adds its capacity of knowing to produce knowledge about the visible universe (*'ālam al shahādah*). Therefore, we may assume that, according to the Qur'an, no human knowledge is possible unless there is some sort of experience preceding the mind's cognitive operation. This is definitely true insofar as knowledge of the visible world is concerned. But we think that the Qur'an's statement is general and, therefore, the same inference is also true insofar as knowledge of the unseen world is concerned. In that case, logic dictates that we ask how the experience of the unseen world is produced before the cognitive operation of the mind to yield the knowledge of this world. When we examine the verses that bear upon this problem, we find that, according to the Qur'an, human beings have certain internal faculties by which they can receive the effects of the unseen world. In other words, every person can experience it provided that he/she pays sincere attention to the guidance of the revelation, for the experiencing of the unseen world may not be direct and, hence, not immediate. Therefore, we need revelation to mediate that experience. The center of this inner experience can be called the "inner perceptive faculty," which clearly refers to the heart (*qalb*) (Qur'an: 26:88-9; 50:37; 7:179; 13:28; and 22:46).

It is interesting and even crucial for the Qur'anic doctrine of the unseen world that the terms "heart" and "mind" are juxtaposed as *qulūbun ya'qilūna bi hā* (hearts to think with) (Qur'an 22:46), which signifies that the "heart" (*qalb*) is a faculty of reflective thinking—"intellect" or "mind." But we know that the mind is the faculty of conceptual thinking, and that the heart cannot perform that function. Why, then, does the Qur'an represent the heart as a faculty of reflective thinking? To answer this, we need the help of other verses from which we can gather more information about the nature of the heart. In verse 50:37, it is implied that the heart is the center of experience, while revelation projects the Truth of the unseen world. We can interpret the heart here as a faculty of experience, because it is compared with the ear, which is a faculty of sense-experience. In fact we see that in several more verses the heart is likened to the faculties of experience:

> Have you seen the one who has taken his own vain desire as his god? Knowing that, Allah left him astray and sealed his hearing and his heart, and put a cover on his sight. Now who will guide him after Allah (has withdrawn His guidance)? (45:23)

> Is it not a guidance to those who inherit the earth after those who inhabited it that if we willed We could punish them because of their sins, and seal their hearts so that they could no longer hear? (7:100-101; 2:7; 24:37; 16:108; 17:46; and 18:57)

Verse 7:100, in particular, represents the heart as a "faculty to hear with," for it is not the physical faculty of hearing that can hear and thus experience the Truth of the unseen world. From this, we can conclude that for the Qur'an, as the center of inner experience, the heart and all of its lower faculties is the only faculty that can receive representations from the unseen world. Therefore it cannot be a faculty of thinking, but rather a center that receives from its lower faculties (i.e., desire, guilt, fear) the affections of the unseen world. In that case, *qulūbun ya'qilūna bi hā* and such similar expressions as *qulūbun yafqahūna bi hā* (7:179)[3] may be rendered as "hearts that furnish representations from the unseen world upon which the mind is to reflect."

Based on this, the Qur'an states that there are two realms of knowledge into which humanity can inquire: the visible world and the unseen world. The former is experienced with the sense organs (external faculties), and the latter with the heart (internal faculties). The experience of both worlds is then handed down to the faculty of reflective thinking, which, in turn, produces knowledge based on these representations. It must be pointed out, however, that the visible world's representation in the sense-experience faculties is direct and immediate, while the unseen world's representation in the faculties of inner perception is through the mediation of revelation and, therefore, indirect. Since this mediation is possible only through some reflection, there is a reciprocal relationship between the heart and the mind. This means that the experience of the unseen world requires some reflection upon revelation. But even here, the mind must be guided by revelation, since the subject of learning belongs not to the visible universe but to the unseen world.[4]

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[3]Although in this verse the statement is negative, we have converted it to affirmative in order to make a parallel between the two verses (i.e., 22:46 and 7:169), which does not alter my interpretation of the Qur'anic term "heart."

[4]There seems to be a sort of circularity here; in order to acquire the true knowledge of the unseen, one needs the guidance of revelation. But in order for this guidance to yield the true knowledge of the unseen in the mind, one needs to examine revelation by reflective thinking. In this case, we are led from the mind to the revelation and from the revelation back to the mind. Although theoretically there is a vicious circle here, in prac-

What we understand from this conclusion is that although the Qur'an encourages humanity to inquire into and reflect upon the visible world in order to acquire its knowledge, in the case of acquiring knowledge about the unseen world, it wishes to guide the individual during his/her inquiry. Thus, we can say that any philosophy that is not so guided will commit great errors when dealing with this metaphysical realm. As the unseen world is the realm that transcends our sense-experience, its direct intuition or experience is not possible. On the other hand, any philosophy that is guided by revelation when dealing with the metaphysical realm is approved by the Qur'an. The guidance provided by the Qur'an consists of the establishment of a finely balanced and reciprocal relationship between the heart and the mind. In order to clarify what we mean by this finely balanced, or harmonious, relationship, we need to elucidate what is meant by the "metaphysical realm."

The philosophical issues included in the metaphysical realm are not only the problem of God, immortality and revelation, but also such abstract problems as what is knowledge, being, freedom, and truth. Ethical problems are also a part of the metaphysical realm. What the attitude of a natural scientist ought to be, how he/she should regard science as such, and with what intention he/she should study the universe—all of these fall within the area of the transcendent realm. Therefore philosophy, in the sense of metaphysics, needs the guidance of revelation. Furthermore, it is possible only as a science, for its findings can be verified through what we shall term "experiential means." We must, nevertheless, emphasize the need for reflective thinking, which is guided by revelation, in order to extract the transcendent truth—the knowledge of the unseen world—from revelation. In other words, the mind needs the guidance of revelation in order to elicit the Truth of the unseen world.

Guidance in this respect consists of the inquirer's attitude, which we shall call the "subjective mood" and which underlies the "experiential means" referred to above. Since we have interpreted "heart" as the inner faculty of experience that receives representations, via the guidance of revelation, from the unseen world, we can conveniently entitle all areas of learning that can be placed in this world as "experiential," as opposed to directly "experimental," subjects. Experiential inquiries, although perceived indirectly, belong directly to the inquirer. In other words, our inner faculty of representation needs to be awakened by, and to use the mediation of, revelation. Just as our faculty of outer experience sometimes needs the mediation of a particular device to see or hear things that are not close by, but are nevertheless perceivable directly, our inner faculty

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tice we may eliminate it by assigning to the revelation the priority it deserves over reason, since the subject of inquiry is the useen world. Moreover, all circular arguments are not necessarily vicious.

needs a finer and more subtle mediation—the guidance provided by the Qur'an. This type of mediation, known as *hidāyah*, is reflected in the mental state—the "subjective mood"—of the inquirer.

It is important to understand this subjective mood to have an accurate picture of the Qur'anic idea of philosophy. In the subjective mood, as a mental state, that which revelation wants to reveal is coalesced harmoniously with the faculty of reflective thinking and the faculty of inner perception: the heart. To achieve this, the Qur'an refers to subjective states that are connected intimately with the heart. In these states and moods, a person's whole existence is brought into sight, crucial questions are asked about life and death, and certain violent and terrifying phenomena are described vividly. In these instances, the Qur'an seeks, in the first place, to help the subject clear his/her own mental states from any prejudice or preconceptions about the subject of study. Secondly, this undertaking allows the Qur'an to establish a certain relationship between the inquirer and the subject of discourse. This relationship liberates the inquirer from feelings of indifference toward the subject of study, which is a dangerous attitude. Once this is accomplished the inquirer, as a student of revelation, becomes sincere and willing to understand and receive the message projected. Thirdly, by analyzing the inquirer's subjective states, the Qur'an invites the individual to analyze his/her being and consciousness. This self-analysis, or self-meditation, prepares the inquirer for the message of revelation. In pursuit of this goal, the Qur'an sometimes uses moral concepts and ethical consciousness that are engraved deeply in each individual's whole being (*fiṭrah*). We shall cite the following verses to illustrate how the Qur'an executes its operation so carefully and masterfully with regard to the subjective mood:

> Woe to the stinters who take full measure when they measure against the people; but when they measure for them or weigh for them they skimp. Do those not think that they shall be raised up unto a Mighty Day; a day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of all Being? (83:1-6)

> Verily We created man from a drop of mingled sperm in order to test him. So We gave him hearing and seeing. We showed him the (right) way; whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will). We have surely prepared for the unbelievers chains, fetters and a blazing fire. As to the (morally) virtuous, they shall drink of a cup whose mixture is camphor, a fountain where God's servants drink making it to gush forth abundantly. They fulfill their promises and fear a Day whose evil is far-reaching. And they feed the poor, the orphan and the captive for only the love of God. (76:2-8)

So he gave nothing in charity, nor did he pray! But on the contrary, he rejected the Truth and turned away. Then he returned to his family with arrogance. Woe to you (o man)! Woe to you! Does man think that he will be left uncontrolled (without purpose)? Was he not a drop of sperm emitted (in lowly form)? Then he became a leech-like clot. Then God made and fashioned him in due proportion. And of him He made two sexes, male and female. Does He not then have the power to give life to the dead? (75:31-40)

Read in the name of your Lord, Who created mankind from congealed blood. Read! For your Lord is most generous, Who taught by the Pen; He taught mankind what they did not know. Nay! Mankind is indeed rebellious, for they think to be self-sufficient. Surely unto your Lord is the Return. (96:1-8)

As to those who reject Faith (i.e., the Transcendent Truth) it is the same to them whether you warn them (i.e., explain to them the Truth) or not, they will not believe (i.e., they will not even try to understand the Truth you are communicating). (Therefore) God has sealed their hearts and hearing (i.e., their perceptive faculties); and on their eyes is a veil . . . . They would (try to) deceive God and the believers; but they deceive only themselves and yet do not realize (this). In their hearts is a disease and God has increased their disease. There is a grievous penalty for them because they cry lies (even to themselves). When it is said to them: "Do not make corruption on the earth," they say: "Why, we only want to establish order." They are truly the ones who cause corruption, but they do not realize (this) . . . . Their similitude is that of a man who kindled a fire, and when it lighted all around them, God took away their light and left them in utter darkness, unseeing, deaf, dumb and blind; they will not return (to the Truth). Or (another similitude) is that of a rain-laden cloud from the sky; in it are zones of darkness, and thunder and lightning. They press their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunderclap, trembling from the fear of death. But God is ever encompassing the rejecters of Faith (i.e., Truth)! . . . If God willed He could take away their faculty of hearing and seeing. For God has power over all things. (2:6-20)

Man is by nature unstable; when misfortune touches him he panics and when good things come his way, he prevents them from reaching others. (70:19-21)

> Human personality has been permeated with greed or selfishness (hence be attentive against this nature of your personality). (4:128)
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> He who makes his personality pure, shall be successful, while he who corrupts it shall be in the loss. (91:9-10)
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> The successful are those who can save themselves from their own selfish personality. (59:9)

By stating clearly in 96:4-5 that "He taught mankind that which they did not know," the Qur'an declares itself to be humanity's guide in the transcendent realm. Although the Qur'an refers to the visible realm and gives certain information about it, this is only done in a secondary manner, for its main goal is to serve as a guide to knowledge of the transcendent realm. Therefore, both realms cannot be detached from each other, for one points to the other, and the latter is the consequence of the former. In other words, the visible realm points to its consequence, and all the laws of nature are placed into it in such an intelligible manner that they also point to the transcendent realm. This "pointing" can be discovered and conceived only through the guidance of revelation.

Just as both realms are thus delicately conjoined, their corresponding faculties in human beings are also conjoined. Therefore, the heart and the mind must also be united in that subtle way. The result of this unity is a knowledge of the transcendent and the visible realms, which yields a unity that forms a Qur'anic worldview, known in the Qur'an as *ḥikmah*. When both elements are separated, consequential results—knowledge—are yielded about the visible (i.e., scientific) and the transcendent (i.e., philosophical and metaphysical) realms. When the unity (*tawḥīd*) in both realms and in their corresponding faculties of human knowledge is established so harmoniously and delicately, the end result is what the Qur'an calls the "straight path" (*ṣirāṭ mustaqīm*) in thinking. Therefore, the Qur'anic *ḥikmah* leads to the straight path in human thought.

In the first section, we presented the historical concepts of philosophy and, in the second section, the Qur'anic attitude of these concepts, which is based on the Qur'anic worldview. We will now develop a concept of philosophy, one which is adequate in the historical sense and in Qur'anic sense, by using the derived conclusions to formulate a concept of philosophy in the Qur'anic context.

Philosophy as a Science in the Qur'anic Context

We have defined philosophy as reflective thinking in order to avoid the complicated problems surrounding the three historical conceptions of

it. But is it possible to offer a conception that is devoid of these complications? Since human knowledge increases and thus perfects itself in a trial-and-error manner, we may use the previous conceptions to formulate a less problematic definition of philosophy. To achieve this, we shall begin with the most outstanding feature of reflective thinking or reasoning, which is, in Kantian terms, *architectonic* (Kant 1965). In other words, the human mind operates within the framework of a certain worldview and, as such, it can understand concepts, ideas, and notions only in connection with a system. Otherwise, when ideas or concepts are isolated from their own worldview (or system), reflective reasoning cannot comprehend them, or it merely misinterprets them.

We shall go even further and assert that all human conduct is traceable ultimately to a worldview. This conclusion is sufficient in itself to show the significance of a worldview in individual and social life, which of course includes philosophical and scientific activities. Along with this, we also emphasize the crucial role a worldview plays in our actions. We have no intention of undermining the significance of such other factors in human behavior or action as the individual's psychology and the effect of both physical and social surroundings. But above all, from the epistemological perspective, a worldview is much more significant than any other element of human behavior, because it is the only framework within which the human mind can operate fully in its quest to attain knowledge. We may delineate this not as a full-fledged theory of knowledge, but rather as the foundation for such a theory. Since this view gives us two separate issues, we shall elucidate the concept of worldview under two headings: the *nature* of worldviews and their *function* in society and, above all, as a knowledge-acquiring operation in both philosophical and scientific activities.

The Nature of Worldviews. Our exposition of this concept shall utilize the knowledge available to us, aside from the Qur'anic sources. For instance, using Kantian terminology, we can say that we are already in possession of certain *a priori* knowledge, although we prefer to express this as follows: the human mind is created in such a way that it is capable of acquiring knowledge of the universe in which it exists. In addition, we must remind ourselves that the world is also created in such a manner that it can be comprehended by the human mind. The first step in acquiring knowledge is through the initiation of representations, which, in turn, is initiated via our sense perception of the world to our mind. Using Kantian terminology again, we are capable of possessing *a posteriori* knowledge as well. The continual combination of *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge gradually forms a framework in the mind—a worldview. From the first inception of *a posteriori* knowledge, the mind begins to work within that framework and to enlarge it through various combinations of knowl-

edge that are acquired later. The worldview thus becomes the *environment* within which the mind operates and without which it cannot function.

The nature of the human mind, therefore, cannot but perceive a certain problem within a "scheme of constructive unity," which we shall call "system." If we call that mode of philosophizing that is concerned only with certain problems in a discrete manner "problematic philosophy," then the mode of philosophizing that seeks to capture that scheme in which such problems are articulated can be conveniently termed "systematic philosophy" or rather "philosophy of systems." But it must be pointed out that a system is always assumed, or already preconceived, when an attempt has been made to articulate a particular problem. Hence, *problematic philosophy* inevitably presupposes a *systematic philosophy*, for the human mind can deal with a problem only within a system that it has already built for itself. Recognizing this, Kant says that "human reason is by nature architectonic" (ibid., 429) and that "systematic unity. . . is indispensable to reason" (ibid., 556). In that case, since the concept of system is a notion that has far more implications than one might expect, we shall try to explicate this concept in somewhat full detail.

Since the nature of a human being, as a conscious individual, is to think and reflect upon one's self and surroundings, it is plausible to hold that, although one naturally forms a conception of the universe as a whole, from the very beginning such questions are dealt with in a discrete and isolated manner. This is proven by the history of philosophy, as well as by the fact that as soon as such reflection grew into a discipline, named "philosophy" (i.e. love of wisdom) by the ancient Greeks, such problems were unified into a coherent body of knowledge: a system. This development was natural, for the human faculty of knowledge is such that it can operate only within a "categoreal scheme," to use Whitehead's term, when it deals with such theoretical problems. Thus, problems led inevitably to systems.

We shall, therefore, defend a concept of philosophy to be formulated as a science of systems, by which we mean "systematic philosophy" as defined above. But my use of the term "system," in the plural, should not indicate that there is actually more than one system. There is, indeed, only one universal system in the objective sense, but its conceptual exposition varies from philosopher to philosopher. Hence, there may be many systems in the conceptual sense. For this reason, philosophy can be represented as the science that attempts to capture the conceptual scheme of that objective, universal system.

Our concept of system, in this context, shall refer to the conceptual totality as an attempt to grasp the pattern of the universe. "System" is thus used in its philosophical signification and, in the most general sense, can be taken to be a worldview. But, philosophically speaking, these two

concepts are not synonymous; A system is a systematic organization of ideas into an architectonic whole, while a worldview is an architectonic whole in which ideas are not so systematically interconnected. As a result, some ideas remain vague, unclear, and unorganized. A system, then, is a well-knit organization of ideas and doctrines, a coherent unity that has no gaps or any inconsistency. As such, it is "a coherent, logical, necessary [unity] of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted" (Whitehead 1979, 3). In order to elucidate this point, let us begin to show how a worldview is formed and then how a system is built.

A worldview usually arises in everyday life out of a natural process, so to speak, although the process itself is not governed by natural means. On the contrary, it is for the most part regulated by education and society. Therefore, the major factors that shape a worldview are mainly cultural environment and education. Other dominant factors in the disclosure process of a worldview are the individual's psychology, language, natural environment, and other social conditions. The individual does not make any conscious effort to construct a systematically organized worldview, but only looks for answers to certain questions that either come to his/her mind or are encountered accidentally during daily life. Hence, a worldview is not constructed, but rather is formed by the individual in a casual manner. It is in this sense that we shall claim its disclosure to be a natural process as opposed to a conscious effort to build an architectonically whole perspective. As a worldview is, in fact, a perspective from which an individual views everything, no one can evaluate a question or a problem without first assuming a worldview. In fact, the human mind works only within the context of such an architectonic whole. It is this point that Kant (1965, 556) raised specifically:

> Human reason is by nature architectonic. That is to say, it regards all our knowledge as belonging to a possible system . . . . Systematic unity . . . is indispensable to reason . . . . By an architectonic we understand the art of constructing systems. As systematic unity is what first raises ordinary knowledge to the rank of science [*wissenschaft*], that is, makes a system out of a mere aggregate of knowledge, architectonic is the doctrine of the scientific in our knowledge . . . . By a system we understand the unity of the manifold modes of knowledge under one idea. This idea is the concept provided by reason . . . . The whole is thus an organized unity, and not an aggregate. It may grow from within, but not by external addition. It is thus like an animal body, the growth of which is not by the addition of a new member, but by rendering of each member, without change of proportion, stronger and more effective for its purposes.

If this point is accepted simply on epistemological grounds, then it must be concluded that science must be based upon an epistemological perspective—a worldview. A worldview without a concept of science or any other related concepts would be unable to produce any scientific knowledge. The result would not differ significantly from that of a worldview that already has all these concepts. But, as they remain buried under the debris of history without any clarification, no significant scientific activity can be expected. We shall try to explain our position by summarizing the main differences between a system and a worldview, since it also shows the significance of worldviews:

1. A system is an orderly unity, whereas a worldview is a natural (i.e., unintentional) unity of the mind reached through culture and education.

2. Based on the above difference, we can say that via baby milk, family, community, value, and even natural environment, as well as by birth, language, manners, behavior, a *weltanschauungen* is formed in an accidental manner. A system, however, is built within an orderly conceptual manner intentionally, methodologically, and scientifically, so that its construction can be a science.

3. The science of constructing systems is philosophy. However, there cannot be a science of "worldview formation," although it can be investigated by a science, for the formation of a worldview is dominated unconsciously (i.e., unintentionally) by cultural and educational elements. For example, a child learns its native language "naturally" (i.e., unintentionally), but the knowledge of that language, its grammar and syntax must be acquired through a science (i.e., intentionally).

When we consider these features of systems counterposed to the above characteristics of worldviews, we can elucidate further the nature of systems. Although a system is a well-knit unity, it is possible to divide it into certain subsystems or "parts" that are not merely attached to the main system, but rather are all deduced from it. Therefore, in most systems architectonic unity is a discursive unity. While there may be systems that are not deductive, the most systematic systems are deductive, and the most outstanding of these are the systems of Spinoza, Hegel, and al Fārābī.[5]

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[5]This is clearly exhibited in Spinoza's *Ethics*, Hegel's *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, and al Fārābī's *al Madīnat al Fāḍilah*, which was translated and edited by Richard Walzer as *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

A philosophical system is an orderly unity. The unity's order is arranged according to certain principles and rules developed by the system builder. Since they may change from philosopher to philosopher, we will not discuss them except in relation to a system. A system's structure may change according to these principles or rules (i.e., methodology). In other words, every system is constructed on a theoretical foundation, usually a general metaphysics, and thus can be called a basic system. This basic system, to which we shall refer as "general metaphysics," consists of doctrines, rules, and principles that determine all of the system's other parts and includes, and usually outlines, the methodology of the philosopher as well. However, we cannot pass on any general conclusion about the part of the system that comes right after the general metaphysics, as this may change from philosopher to philosopher. Thus, all of the system's other parts that come after the general metaphysics may be called subsystems. Each part of the system can be conveniently classified into supersystems and subsystems, according to the position it occupies in the system. The part of the system that is prior is a subsystem in relation to the ones that come later, which are supersystems in relation to the former one(s). It must also be clear that a part of the system can be both a subsystem and a supersystem.

In addition to a general metaphysics, subsystems and supersystems, a system is constructed by certain theories and doctrines. As a theory is a formulation given as a solution to a certain problem, it usually involves only one particular problem. A doctrine, however, may involve more than one problem and thus is constructed out of a number of theories. In that case, a doctrine is a formulation of how we understand a certain state of affairs, or a more complex problem, that may involve other problems as well. Accordingly, we may distinguish five basic elements of a possible system: theories, doctrines, general metaphysics (or the basic system), subsystems, and supersystems.

A system is usually constructed out of these five elements. The simplest element in a given system is a theory and, after that, a doctrine. These two elements can be considered as parts of a system, since they do not constitute a subsystem within the general scale of the whole system. Theories and doctrines are united so harmoniously that they form one part of a system. As we have seen, there are three elements to a system: general metaphysics, subsystems, and supersystems. If we are to illustrate this structure of a given system with reference to specific systems, then we can say that the general metaphysics of systems is usually either an epistemology or an ontology that delineates the method of its construction. In Islamic thought, essentialist systems are based mainly on epistemology, as in the case of Ibn Sīnā'. If we consider his books (i.e., *Al Ishārāt wa al Tanbiḥāt* and *Al Shifā'*) in which he constructs his system, we will see that he begins with logic, which, in fact, delineates his theory

of knowledge. The existentialist systems, such as those of Ibn 'Arabī and Mullā Sadra, are based on ontology.

Regardless of the manner and content of the development of this general metaphysics, one thing is certain: it is the beginning point of the whole system and, as such, its very foundation. The other parts of a given system usually follow with an order that varies from philosopher to philosopher. Each subsystem or supersystem that follows the general metaphysics constitutes a branch of knowledge (a "discipline"): logic, ethics, religion, aesthetics, politics, the philosophy of nature, sociology, or psychology. These parts can be defined as "individual sciences," each of which may be an independent part within the system or a doctrine within a part of the system. When taken altogether taxonomically, they constitute a classification of sciences. If they are taken along with the body of knowledge contained in the system, then they constitute, in their totality, a cosmology, for cosmology, as the science of cosmos (i.e., the system posed objectively), is the very project of any system (i.e., the cosmos posed subjectively [conceptually]). Hence, although some previous systems may have cosmology as one of their parts, we view this as untenable, as the whole system itself projects a cosmology. This is why some philosophers use the term "cosmology" as an equivalent for "system."[6]

The Functions of Worldviews. Historically speaking, systems seem to function as general schemes that embody a systematic unity of contemporary knowledge. In this respect, their function is to systematize the accumulation of available knowledge and, therefore, usually open a new era in the history of philosophy. This intellectual function of systematic philosophy is within the realm of historical thought and, as such, can be called the "historical function." In this sense, a system becomes an independent movement of thought or a philosophical school such as Platonism, Neo-Platonism, Peripateticism, Mashshā'ī (Islamic Peripateticism), Ishrāqī, Kantianism, Hegelianism, or Whitehead's Process School.

But systems have another function: Whenever we philosophize or construct a theory, even in isolation of an explicit system, the very nature of our mind causes us to presuppose, inevitably and necessarily, a system of ideas that is not manifested in an orderly manner. This function of systems has to do with the nature of our faculty of knowledge, and hence, its role can be designated as the epistemological function. In addition to the historical and epistemological functions, a system, as the essence of

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[6]Whitehead uses several terms that are used in close signification to the concept of system: "categoreal scheme," "pattern," "cosmology," "scheme" or "general scheme," and "worldview." See his *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1938), and *Process and Reality*, ed. by David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

the idea of philosophy, plays a different role in the society. We shall refer to this role, in the following section, as the social function of systems in worldview formation.

A system tends to give a certain dynamism to its society, which allows it to flourish. The most important dynamism provided is a systematic worldview. If this process takes place properly, the worldview of the individuals in that society develops *scientifically* rather than naturally (i.e., unintentionally). In fact, one may claim reasonably that it is the system developed by a thinker or thinkers (i.e., the ulama) that dominates a society's major worldview. Whitehead (1979, vii) expresses this fact very clearly when he says that "the mentality of an epoch springs from the view of the world which is, in fact, dominant in the educated sections of the communities in question."

In our opinion, contemporary Muslims seem to be developing a worldview in a haphazard, as opposed to scientific (the inculcation of its major components [concepts, ideas and doctrines], to individual members through clear and transparent definitions and a systematically organized body of knowledge) manner. This is achieved at three successive stages:

1. The "abstract level," which is that of worldview formation. As the world is formed by abstract thinking, it is called "system" in the philosophical sense. The ulama are supposed to assume this duty of forming (or rather constructing) the system.

2. The "concretized level," that of intellectuals, men/women of literature, artists, architects, teachers, and educators. As these people can understand the abstract system developed or constructed by the ulama, they will (or ought to) reflect it in their works. Since the works of the intellectuals are usually of a concrete nature, their activity will concretize the system and pass it on to the general masses in easier-to-understand concrete ideas. At this stage, the system becomes a worldview.

3. The massive dissemination of this worldview through the educational institutions and mass media. This movement of ideas from the first to the last stage results in the shaping of the masses' worldview according to the ulama's well-defined and systematically developed concepts, ideas, and doctrines. Such a process of worldview formation can be classified as scientific. To clarify this further, we shall show how a worldview is (or can be) situated within a given society.

Ideally speaking, there should be only one dominant worldview in the society. This worldview, held by at least 80 percent of the people, is termed the "dominant worldview." Of course, the remaining 20 percent

will have other worldviews, but this will not affect social unity. Such a situation also allows the dominant worldview to be checked and corrected via the debates and mutual discussions that will be generated by the ideas and doctrines of these differing worldviews. As such social unity is intellectual in nature, there is still room left for cultural diversity.

We must also be clear about our notion of dominant worldview. As it is the majority's worldview, it is identical in all the individuals who share in it. However, it is impossible for two persons to have an identical worldview in every respect. Therefore, by "common" worldview, we mean all the worldviews, including the basic notions, assumptions, and ideas, that are similar in at least 80 percent of their contents." Hence, in our terminology "same," "common," or "dominant" worldviews refer to only those worldviews characterized by having at least 80 percent similar contents. We refer to those having 20 percent or less of their contents in common as "different" worldviews. Of course, it is not possible to measure the percentage of a worldview; we only want to give an idea about the amount of similarities and differences between worldviews. In other words, just as there are no identical worldviews, there are no worldviews that do not share at least some concepts, ideas, and maybe even doctrines.

As stated earlier, a worldview is a system of answers given by an individual to the questions he/she encounters in life. Of course, his/her answers are affected by many factors, among them education, religion, and even one's natural environment. The study of a worldview is, then, the study of answers to the most basic questions: the human being and its place in the universe. Thus, a worldview is mainly philosophical, for the questions with which it deals fall, in almost every case, within the boundaries of philosophy. As we have pointed out, just as the environment of any human activity is the worldview within which that activity is carried out, since our scientific activities cannot be without an environment, this very environment is also a part of the worldview. We conclude from this that all human activities can be traced back ultimately to a worldview, just as a philosopher's doctrines and theories can be traced back ultimately to a system.

That human conduct is ultimately reducible to a worldview is sufficient in itself to show the significance of a worldview in individual and social life, including, of course, philosophical and scientific activities. We have stated this conclusion to emphasize the crucial role of a worldview in our actions. We do not wish to undermine the significance of other factors in human behavior or the performance of an action, such as the psychology of an individual and the effect of both physical and social surroundings. From the epistemological perspective, however, a worldview is far more significant than any other element of human behavior, for it is the only framework within which the human mind can operate in order to attain knowledge. We have tried to prove this point here.

Worldviews are, as stated previously, architectonic unities expressed in chaotic categoreal schemes, whereas systems are expressed in unified and orderly categoreal schemes. Since concepts, terms, and problems are well-defined, they are clearly and distinctly expressed in systems. A worldview can be made systematic by philosophical expression and may be presented as a system. But as this is reflected in individual minds within a society, it will always remain a worldview—it can never become a system. When a worldview is thus influenced by a system, its concepts, views, ideas, and outlook acquire a certain degree of clarity and distinctness. This characteristic is possible for a worldview in the mind of an individual (i.e., an intellectual who is not a system builder). Although it can never acquire a system's systematic unity, it can serve to draw individuals toward its concepts, terms, ideas, and insights, which may be ethical, political, economic, or otherwise in nature.

This dynamic interaction of individuals and the process of implementing these abstract ideas is vital for a society's progress, whether in the sciences or any other crucial human affair. The resulting progressive development of a society's intellectual life is what we call the "social function of systems." Civilizations rise as a result of this progressive advancement in speculative thought, for, as Rosenthal (1970, 1) acknowledges "civilizations tend to revolve around meaningful concepts of an abstract nature which more than anything else give them their distinctive character. Such concepts are to be found at the very beginning of a rising civilization." Thus, we are led to conclude that philosophy has a crucial role to play in a society and, more particularly if developed within the Qur'anic context, in Muslim society as well.

A system's abstract dynamism comes from its originality, which is invigorating, fascinating, and enlivening—like the land's reawakening after winter. This dynamism is reflected in the society, which then embarks upon a process of development, provided that there are no impediments blocking mutual companionship between the speculative system and its community. Whitehead (1938, 2, 3) points to this phenomenon:

> In all systematic thought, there is a tinge of pedantry. There is a putting aside of notions, of experiences, and of suggestions, with the prime excuse that of course we are not thinking of such things. System is important. It is necessary for the handling, for the utilization, and for the criticism of the thoughts which throng into our experience . . . . Such a habit of mind is the very essence of civilization. It is civilization.

He concludes that "if my view of the function of philosophy is correct, it is the most effective of all the intellectual pursuits" (Whitehead 1967, viii). We believe that this is clear from the function of systems, as

outlined above, in a society. Although this is stated emphatically by Whitehead, he does not discuss the process of interaction between philosophy and society. It is usually taken for granted that society, as the cultural environment of philosophy, has a considerable affect upon it. The reverse direction of this interaction, however, has not received much attention. The way systems function as such is very complex, and we have tried to elucidate this point in our discussion of the social function of systems in relation to the concept of society's worldview.

As we have seen, every worldview is not systematic and clear. On the contrary, most individuals of a given society have a vague and unsystematic worldview. Sometimes almost no one has a specific, clear, and systematic worldview. If this is the case, then the society as a whole lacks a clear and systematic worldview. Such a situation marks the beginning of that society's downfall and decline, for it will never be able to establish its own identity or to manifest itself. What is more acute and devastating is the ambiguity, which is caused by intellectual poverty, that begins to overwhelm ethical concepts and judgments.

This evil state of affairs can be remedied only by establishing a clear and systematic worldview for the society thus afflicted. In other words, it must undertake the process of forming a scientific worldview,[7] for only this will allow one to acquire a clear outline of the program and procedure for one's life. The sole way to achieve this is through reflective thinking: philosophy. Society creates a new *scientifically formed* worldview through philosophical thought, while individuals, having clear and distinct concepts and ideas within a systematic unity, become morally and intellectually dynamic. This in turn yields a progressive and knowledge-oriented society, as was the case with early Islamic civilization.

The crucial aspect of original reflective thinking is also exhibited in the fact that no society is static or stable, as there is always some social change that results in the change of individuals. The worldview of a society must renew itself in parallel with social change, otherwise it will no longer satisfy the individual members of that society. Again, this task belongs to philosophy.

Thus far, we have tried to outline only the most significant role of philosophy per se in a society in general. When we consider Muslim communities, this significance increases, for it becomes the most important task of a Muslim to answer such philosophical questions as: What is science and knowledge in Islam? What is Islam's attitude toward modern science? What do the Qur'anic terms *ḥikmah* and *'ilm* have to offer contemporary humanity? How does Islam provide a solution(s) to the predic-

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[7]In this context, I am using the terms "clear" and "systematic" in the same sense, for if a worldview is systematic, then it is clear as well. If, on the other hand, it is clear, then the clarity expresses the systematic mode.

ament of modern humanity? What is life for a Muslim? What is the individual human being and his/her place in the universe? All of these questions, and more, must be answered systematically within a unified Islamic worldview, which can be established by a discipline defined as the "science of constructing systems." Since a worldview endows our ideas with unity (*tawḥīd*), the unique Islamic goal of unity can be accomplished in the most perfect way as described in the Qur'an.

We have now reached a general concept of philosophy through a historical analysis of philosophical activities. This general concept has been expressed as "the science of constructing systems." In the conclusion, we will apply these results to our analysis of the Qur'anic context in order to reach what may be called an Islamic concept of philosophy.

Conclusion

At this point in time, Muslims are in need of an Islamic system, in the philosophical sense, that has been developed by the ulama. There is, however, a difference between such a system and a scientifically formed worldview. First of all, a worldview that is not formed within a scientific context is a natural worldview. This is not what we had in mind, for natural worldviews are not dynamic: they resist any progress, or rather, they do not give the individual the kind of dynamism required for progress. Secondly, a scientific worldview is dynamic, for it gives the individual the stamina required for the rise of scientific activities. But since this worldview derives from a system developed by the abstract thoughts of thinkers, it still does not, in itself, constitute a system. Hence, the scientific worldview is called "scientific" only figuratively—in the sense that it derives largely from a scientifically constructed system whose basic notions, ideas, values, and doctrines can become transparent in one's mind. As they are still not organized systematically according to a certain procedure that can be called a method, they do not constitute a system.

Our analysis of the Qur'an as a whole reveals, as we have seen, primarily two modes of knowledge in the Islamic worldview: knowledge of the absolute realm and knowledge of the physical realm. The latter mode of knowledge is the one investigated by various physical sciences. Knowledge of the absolute realm, on the other hand, presents two aspects as necessary consequences of the Qur'anic outcome; for if, according to the Qur'an, we are responsible for our actions related to the absolute realm, then we must be held by it as capable of acquiring knowledge of that realm: "Those before them (also) rejected (revelation), and so the punishment came to them from directions they did not perceive" (39:25); and "Because of their sins they were drowned and put into the Fire. They found, in lieu of God, none to help themselves. So Noah said: 'O my Lord! Do not leave a single unbeliever on earth.'" (71:25-6)

These and many other verses make it clear that belief (*īmān*) is an obligation on upon humanity, who is also held accountable for its unbelief (*kufr*). Such obligation and accountability are intelligible only if the knowledge of their related realm is accessible to the mind. In the case of the absolute realm, while the realm itself is not accessible, certain knowledge of it is given via revelation, which is then comprehended and attained by the mind through an experiential movement: the subjective mood. We call this aspect of the absolute realm, attained experientially with the aid of revelation, the "experiential absolute," as distinguished from its other, and unattainable, aspect: the "transcendent absolute." We are thus accountable only for the *īmān*—the Islamic worldview. Knowledge of the second realm, which is also known as the "absolute unseen world," on the other hand, is not obligatory for humanity, although its instruction and learning, which has already been given via revelation, is.

The absolute realm thus presents two spheres of knowledge: the transcendent absolute (God in Himself, the nature of resurrection, freedom, and paradise), which can only be studied by revealed theology (*kalām*), and the experiential absolute (i.e., metaphysics in the sense of philosophical or rational theology [speculative *kalām*]). But the method of this science differs from the methods of those that investigate the physical realm, for their experiences are of a different order.

As regards these two spheres of knowledge in the absolute realm, we can distinguish two general sciences: a) revealed theology, which simply organizes and presents systematically this realm's subject matter (i.e., the nature of God, resurrection, paradise, and hell), and b) speculative theology, which uses the subjective mood to present the knowledge of the experiential realm (i.e., the existence of God, the intelligibility of life after death, freedom, and related theological issues). Since this science represents the experiential realm, as opposed to revealed theology, which represents the absolute realm, speculative theology is the first human science that uses rational procedure in the acquisition of knowledge. Thus, it provides a passageway from the realm of the transcendent to the realm of the visible. And because of this, there will be sciences that stand between the transcendent and the physical realms.

In this second group of sciences are those that study humanity, society, religion, and the nature of science. As they stand between the transcendent and the physical sciences, they must use their methods—in addition to using the subjective mood as a procedure and the Islamic sources as their ground, they must use the experimental-observational method and rational procedures whenever possible. The classification of sciences in the physical realm requires a more rigorous attempt. To give an idea about what we mean by these sciences, we cite in this respect physics, astronomy, biology and such abstract sciences as mathematics and logic.

We may now summarize our three topics in a conclusion: The Qur'an does not oppose human thinking as such, for it is neither against the acquisition of scientific knowledge nor the building of a systematic worldview based on revelation in philosophy. Moreover, in both of these human endeavors, the Qur'an wants to guide and impart knowledge of the transcendent realm to the inquirer. As for the visible realm, however, it only wants to clarify and purge the scientist's intention and attitude rather than impart knowledge of this realm, because one can acquire this knowledge directly on his/her own.

Lastly, since we have shown that philosophy is decisive for both society and the individual within society as well, the Muslim thinker is in a position to determine more precisely the borderline between philosophy as *ḥikmah* and revelation as the Qur'an. On the other hand, we can say now, by way of propaedeutic, that in metaphysical issues we must trust the guidance of the Qur'an. By metaphysical issues we mean the unseen world. We understand that there are certain other metaphysical problems (i.e., knowledge, causality, freedom, and truth) that can be solved on the basis of strict adherence to what we know of the unseen world through revelation. The role of (Islamic!) philosophy within such a scheme is to clearly outline a worldview—to construct a system— which we have tried to define with the Qur'anic term *ḥikmah*. This is, we believe, the most urgent need of the contemporary Muslim world.

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