The Human Intellect, Divine Revelation and Knowledge Based on Al-Qaraḍowi’s Work: al-ʿAql wa al-ʿIlm fi al-Qurʾān al-Karīm

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Abstract
While reaffirming the supremacy of Divine revelation, al-Qaraḍawi explains that the sound human intellect has been entrusted by Divine revelation to play crucial roles in the confirmation of revealed truths and the development of all fields of human knowledge necessary for effective and wholesome human vicegerency on earth. There should not be, however, any conflict between revelation and reason. A fuller exposition of this epistemological dimension of the Islamic worldview is given in his book al-ʿAql wa al-ʿIlm fi al-Qurʾān al-Karīm which was published in 1996. The importance of the use of the human intellect for thinking, reflection, understanding, knowing, pondering and contemplation is reflected by the Qurʿānic use of several verbs which convey the aforementioned functions. The verb ʿaqala (to use one’s intelligence, to comprehend, to understand, to think) is used in its present tense (second person plural, masculine and third person plural masculine) – taʿqilūn and yaʿqilūn – 46 times in the Qurʾān while the verbs ʿaqala, naʿqilū and yaʿqilū occur once each. The expression “ʿafalā taʿqilūn” (Will you not understand? Or Have you then no sense?) occurs 13 times. The expression is used to convey Allāh’s exhortation or admonishment to human beings for having double standards (Q. Al-Baqarah 2: 44); for neglecting the Hereafter and being deceived by worldly pleasures despite knowing God’s Scripture (Q. Al-Anʿām 6: 32, Q. Al-ʿAʿraf 7: 169, Q. Yūsuf 12: 109); for ignoring the message of the Qurʾān (Q. Al-anbiyāʾ 21: 10); for not understanding the powers of Allāh (S.W.T) in giving life and causing death (Q. Al-Muʾminūn 23: 80); for not realizing that the false gods worshipped by human beings could not bring benefit nor harm them (Q. Al-Anbiyāʾ 21: 63-67). In these verses the Qurʾān reprimands human failure to use the God-given intellect to strengthen true religious faith.

Abstrak
Introduction

Al-Qaraḍāwī begins by extolling the special position as Allah’s most honoured creature destined to construct a holistic civilization by managing and developing the world’s resources based on the guidance and knowledge from Divine revelation (al-wahy al-Ilāhī) as well as the exertions of the human intellect (al-‘aql al-insānī) and will. While reaffirming the supremacy of Divine revelation, al-Qaraḍāwī explains that the sound human intellect has been entrusted by Divine revelation to play crucial roles in the confirmation of revealed truths and the development of all fields of human knowledge necessary for effective and wholesome human vicegerency on earth. There should not be, however, any conflict between revelation and reason. A fuller exposition of this epistemological dimension of the Islamic worldview is given in his book al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm fi al-Qur’ān al-Karīm which was published in 1996.

The importance of the use of the human intellect for thinking, reflection, understanding, knowing, pondering and contemplation is reflected by the Qur’ānic use of several verbs which convey the aforementioned functions. The verb ‘aqala (to use one’s intelligence, to comprehend, to understand, to think) is used in its present tense (second person plural, masculine and third person plural masculine) – ta‘qilūn and ya‘qilūn – 46 times in the Qur’ān while the verbs ‘aqala, na‘qilu and ya‘qilu occur once each. The expression “afalā ta‘qilūn” (Will you not understand? Or Have you then no sense?) occurs 13 times. The expression is used to convey Allah’s exhortation or admonishment to human beings for having double standards (Q. Al-Baqarah 2: 44); for neglecting the Hereafter and being deceived by worldly pleasures despite knowing God’s Scripture (Q. Al-An‘ām 6: 32, Q. Al-Aḥrāf 7: 169, Q. Yūsuf 12: 109); for ignoring the message of the Qur’ān (Q. Al-Anbiyā’ 21: 10); for not understanding the powers of Allah (S.W.T) in giving life and causing death (Q. Al-Mu‘minūn 23: 80); for not realizing that the false gods worshipped by human beings could not bring benefit nor harm them (Q. Al-Anbiyā’ 21: 63-67). In these verses the Qur’ān reprimands human failure to use the God-given intellect to strengthen true religious faith.

The verb ta‘qilūn “you understand” is used in the Qur’ān mainly in connection with the “signs” (āyāt) or “symbols” of Allāh (S.W.T) as represented by the verses of the Qur’ān or as can be witnessed in nature. The intellect is supposed to help human beings understand that the signs of Allāh (S.W.T) in the Qur’ān as well as in the universe are meant to point to the existence and presence of Allāh (S.W.T) as well as His absolute power, wisdom and will.

The verb ya‘qilūn (“they understand”) occurs 22 times, while its negative form là ya‘qilūn (“they do not understand”) is used as a disparagement of those who do not use their intellect, which is Allāh’s gift to them, to understand and to accept the wisdom behind the injunctions of Allāh (S.W.T) and the truths in the message of the Prophet (S.A.W.). In its positive form ya‘qilūn (“they understand”) it is used mostly to describe a community, a people (qawm) “who understand” or “who use their intellect” to confirm the existence and supremacy of Allāh (S.W.T) and acknowledge His purpose pervading the universe through the variety of natural processes which serve the interest and welfare of mankind. One such verse is the following:

“Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and the succession of night and day; and in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man; and in the waters which God sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon; and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth: [in all these] there are signs for people who use their intelligence.”

[The Qur’ān, 2: 164]

The above verse together with Q. Al-Jāthiyah 45: 5, Q. Al-Ra’d 13: 4, S. Al-Nahl 16: 12, 66-67 clearly indicate Allāh’s desire that human beings should use the intellect to understand the laws of nature and the benefits it brings as Allāh’s generous provision to mankind. The intellect is also to be used to draw moral lessons from the history of nations or civilizations
which were destroyed by Allāh (S.W.T) because of their injustices and iniquities. Those who do not use their God-given intellect to derive such lessons and consequently turned their backs against the Messengers of Allāh are described as people who have “hearts by which they could comprehend” (qulībun yā qilūna bihihā),4 but instead they refused to learn from historical events because their hearts, rather than their eyes, were blind:

*Have they not travelled in the land, and have they hearts by which they could comprehend (and gain wisdom), and ears by which they could hear (the truth)? For indeed it is not the eyes that have become blind, but it is the hearts, which are within their bosoms, that grow blind.*

[The Qur’an , 22: 46]

**The Úlū al-Albāb**

Allāh (S.W.T) designates those who use their intellect in the way He intended it to be with the special appellation of “úlū al-albāb”55 and “úlū al-nuhā” – those who possess or are endowed with “intellects” (albāb, sing. lubb or ‘uqūl, sing. ‘aql or nūhā, sing. nuhyah) which are unadulterated (ṣāfīah) and understandings which are luminous and pure (al-āfkhām al-nayyirah al-khālisah).56 The appellation úlū al-albāb occurs in sixteen places in the Qur’ān, nine in Meccan verses and seven in Madinan verses.

In the verses Q. Al-Baqarah 2: 169, Q. Al-Baqarah 2: 197, Q. Al-Mā’idah 5: 100, the úlū al-albāb are urged to be God-Fearing in comprehending Allāh’s laws as the mindfulness of Allāh’s pleasure and displeasure is the best of attitudes to be allotted by the possessors of sound intellect. In the verses of Q. Al-Talāq 65: 10-11, they are called upon to appreciate the purpose of Allāh’s sending His Message and the Messenger to them. In Q. Al-Baqarah 2: 269, the they are being praised by Allāh (S.W.T) for being able to grasp His message and the wisdom in it. In the verses of Q. Al ‘Imrān 3: 7, they are being commended for having the attitude of “those who are firmly grounded in knowledge” (al-rāsīkhūna fī al-‘ilm) who believe in the whole of the Qur’ān and do not try to delve into the mysteries or hidden meanings of the metaphorical or allegorical verses (mūtashābihāt). In verses of Al ‘Imrān, 3: 190-191, they are pointed out as people who, upon reflecting on the creation of the universe and the marvels that it contains, remember Allāh (S.W.T) in every situation they may be in. Their keen intellects then acknowledge the Divine purpose behind the creation, they praise Allāh (S.W.T) and seek His protection from the punishment of Hell in the Hereafter. In Q. Yūsuf 12: 111, they are highlighted for their sensitivity to the lessons of human history and their ability to interpret correctly the Qur’ānic stories and historical events. In Q. Al-Ra’d 13: 19, they are praised by Allāh (S.W.T) for recognizing that what has been revealed to the Prophet was the truth, while others refused to acknowledge it. In other verses of the Qur’ān, they are described as possessors of elevated moral virtues which blend together “intellectual perfection” (al-kamāl al-‘aqlī) and “moral perfection” (al-kamāl al-khuluqī). In verses of Q. Ibrāhīm 14: 52 and Q. Sād 38: 29, they are singled out for their faith in the Qur’ān, their conviction, derived from their faith in the Qur’ān, in the absolute oneness of Allāh (S.W.T) and their attribute of always taking heed and receiving admonition from the Qur’ān.

The úlū al-albāb use their intellects to understand the “signs of Allāh’s action” in the creation of the universe through the methods of rational discernment (ta’aqqul) and reflection (tafakkur), while in understanding the “signs of Allāh’s words” in the Qur’ān, they use the methods of deep pondering or contemplation (tafakkur) and seriously taking heed of Allāh’s message or warnings (tafadhakkur)5. In Q. Al-Zumar 39: 17-18, they are described as people who eschew false gods or deities and who, after reverently listening to the words of Allāh (S.W.T), try to follow the best course of conduct. In Q. Al-Zumar 39: 21, Allāh (S.W.T) mentions how verdant vegetation finally ends as useless rubble as a reminder (dhikrā) to the ûlû al-albāb, while in Q. Ghāfīr 40: 53-54, they are reminded that just as the original Torah contained Allāh’s guidance (hudā) to Moses and the Israelites, so does the Qur’ān join together all the revelations and the Messengers of Allāh (S.W.T) thereby guiding the ûlû al-albāb to the Straight Path.

As for the expression úlû al-nuhā, also meaning “possessors of intellects” (āshāb al-‘uqīl), al-Qaraḍāwī explains that nūhā is the plural form of nuhyah, another name for the intellect, because “it prevents (yanhā) its owner from doing anything which is not proper for human beings to do”, just as the intellect is called “‘aql” in Arabic because “it restrains its owner (ya gihluh) and holds him back (yahjuzuhu) from what is undesirable or improper.” The expression is used twice in the Qur’ān, both of
them in Sūrah Tāhā, 20: 53-54 and 128. In Tāhā, 20: 53-54, Allāh (S.W.T) says that He is responsible for making the earth liveable and that He brings down rain to produce all kinds of vegetation and life in order for mankind to consume and utilize. In all these the ʿūlū al-nuḥā would surely recognize them as signs of Allāh (S.W.T) in the world of nature. In Tāhā, 20: 128, Allāh (S.W.T) reminds His servants of the destructions He meted out to evil-doing communities of the past and says that the ʿūlū al-nuḥā would surely acknowledge the signs of Allāh (S.W.T) in those catastrophic historical events.10

The Qur’ān also uses the word al-ṣuʿād for the intellect, in singular and plural forms, as one of the three basic means of attaining knowledge – hearing (al-samā‘), sight (al-basar) and heart (al-ṣuʿād).11 In many verses, the word qulūb (hearts) is mentioned instead of ʿuṣād. The verses show that “hearts” have the faculty of intellect (qulūbun yaʿqīlūna biḥā) and understanding (qulūbun ʿāya ʿafqīhīna biḥā) which is the function of the intellect (al-aql), although the word ʿaql itself is not used in the Qur’ān.12

The Obligation of Reflective Thinking (al-tafakkur) and Bearing in Mind or Recollecting (al-tadhakkur) Allāh’s Messages

The Qur’ān urges human beings in a variety of ways to engage in thinking and rational reflection on all matters, with the exception of the essence of Allāh (S.W.T). “People who think or reflect” (qawm yatafakkarūn) are mentioned favourably by Allāh (S.W.T) in connection with self-understanding and efforts to understand the laws of nature and its innumerable bounties as signs of Allāh (S.W.T).13 The whole of the universe, from the smallest to the biggest objects, according to the Qur’ān, are to be subjected to human thought, reflection, meditation and contemplation. But thinking and reflection are to be applied as well to non-material, moral, spiritual and eschatological matters, in addition to the wisdom behind Allah’s revelation and injunctions.14 Such sincere thoughts and reflections, freed from base desires, should lead to the recognition of Allāh (S.W.T) as The Creator, The One and Only God and The Master and Sustainer of all that exists, and the recognition of Prophet Muḥammad as the true Messenger of Allāh (S.W.T).

To emphasize the highly regarded value of deep and sincere reflection, al-Qaraḍāwī quotes from the book of Ibn al-Qayyim, Miftāh Dīr al-Saʿādāh (The Key to the Abode of Happiness) what one of the Pious Ancestors once said: “A reflection (tafakkur) for a certain period of time is better than sixty years of worship (ʿibādah) [without reflection].” It is also said that “A reflection for a certain period of time is better than one night vigil.” ʿUmar b. ʿĀbd al-ʿAzīz is reported to have said that “Thinking about the bounties of Allāh is one of the best forms of worship” (al-fikrah fī niʿām Allāh min afḍal al-ʿibādah). Ibn al-Qayyim, reflecting upon what Imām al-Ghazālī wrote on al-tafakkur in his Iḥyāʿ Ulūm al-Dīn (Revivification of Sciences of Religion) explains that “thinking or reflection is the action of the heart (ʿamal al-qalb), while ʿibādah [in the narrow sense of the word] is the action of the physical organs, and since the heart is the noblest of the organs, therefore its action is nobler than the action of the organs.”15 Thinking, says Ibn al-Qayyim, generates knowledge which in turn generates the will and from the will action is produced.16 Therefore “useful thoughts” (afkār nāfīʿah) from the seed-bed of the heart would give rise to good actions, while “bad thoughts” (afkār radīʿah), which are induced by Satan in the heart which is empty or not used in the way it is meant to be, would lead to undesirable actions.17

In addition to its exhortation of reflective thinking, the Qur’ān also urges human beings to take heed of, to keep in mind and to recollect (tadhakkur) the Divine messages and lessons which they learn from Allāh’s revelations and signs in the Qur’ān or in the universe. While tafakkur functions as a means of “acquiring new knowledge” (li taḥṣīl maʿrīfah jādīdah), tadhakkur brings about “old knowledge” (maʿrīfah qadīmah) which may be neglected or concealed through negligence (ghafīlah) and forgetfulness (nisyān). The Qur’ān denounces “people who are negligent” (al-ghafīlūn) of the revealed truths or of the Hereafter in several verses.18 Those who “forget Allāh” in this worldly life are regarded as sinners. Consequently Allāh (S.W.T) would forget them on the Day of Judgement.19 Therefore one of the roles of the Messenger of Allāh (S.W.T) was to remind people while the Qur’ān was also described as “a reminder” (tadhkira) for human beings. The benefit of tadhakkur is that it brings back knowledge to the heart, while the benefit of tafakkur is that it procures and increases knowledge. Al-Qaraḍāwī recalls the insightful saying of Imām al-Ghazālī: “Every reflective thinker (mutaṭafakkir) is a recollector (muṭadhakkir), but not very recollector is a reflective thinker.”20 Nevertheless, the Qur’ān stresses the importance of tadhakkur by associating it...
as principle attitude of the ʿulū al-albāb and by the question “Will you not then keep this in mind?” (“afālā tatadhakkārūn”, “aflatā tadhakkārūn”), after conveying Divine teachings, transcendental truths or spiritual lessons to mankind. The Qurʾān confirms that despite Allāh’s guidance and repeated reminders, human beings tend to be negligent and forgetful. “How seldom do you keep this in mind” (“qalīlān mā tadhakkārūn”), says the Qurʾān, regarding man’s attitude towards Divine revelation, the absolute oneness of Allāh (S.W.T) and the authenticity of the Prophet’s message.22

True Knowledge and Right Faith
From the viewpoint of the Qurʾān, true knowledge (al-ʿilm al-haqiqi) and right faith are linked together. As the verse “Read! In the name of your Lord who created” indicates, knowledge acquired through the means of reading is to be nurtured in the bosom of faith and manifests itself through the humility of the heart. True knowledge in fact leads to right faith.

There is, therefore, no intrinsic conflict between knowledge and faith or between true science and true religion in the Islamic worldview, unlike the experience of medieval Europe. “Knowledge strengthens faith and faith blesses knowledge, for truth does not contradict truth,” says al-Qaraḍāwī. To him “Knowledge is a religion, and religion to us is a (form of) knowledge.” He explains in the following way:

Knowledge for us is a religion because the Book of our Lord and the sunnah of our Prophet both invite us to knowledge and consider its pursuit a form of worship and a religious obligation, regardless whether it is ‘knowledge of religion’ (ʿilm al-dīn) or ‘knowledge of this world’ (ʿilm al-dunyā), be it knowledge whose source is Divine revelation or knowledge whose source is the universe. After all, revelation is the decree of Allāh and the universe is His creation, and there cannot be a contradiction between His creation and His decree, as He says: ‘Verily to Him belong all creation and all commandments. Blessed be Allāh, the Sustainer of all the worlds!’23

Religion is to us a (form of) knowledge, because it is not based on blind adherence, or simply following the tradition set by the forefathers, chieftains or influential leaders – in fact, the Qurʾān wages war against blind imitation and absolute subordination to others. It calls upon everyone who subscribes to a religious creed that such creed is built upon proofs and conviction, not upon mere assumption or conjecture.24

Knowledge which is connected with right faith does not lead to egocentrism unlike the case of Qārūn who said that “This [wealth] has been given to me only by virtue of the knowledge that is in me!” (Q. Al-ʿQaṣāṣ 28: 78); rather it brings forth the spirit of humility as showed by Prophet Solomon when he said, “This [favour] is [an outcome] of my Sustainer’s bounty, to test me as to whether I am grateful or ungrateful [to Allāh (S.W.T)]” (Q. Al-Naml 27: 40), or by Dhū al-Qarnain when he said with humility “This [building] is a mercy from my Sustainer…” [The Qurʾan, 18: 98]

This is in contrast to the secularised knowledge prevailing in the West today, which has become “an implement of destruction and a tool which is menacing to mankind.” Al-Qaraḍāwī says further, “It is true that this knowledge has enabled man to reach the moon… but, in spite of that, he is unable to secure for himself happiness and tranquility on the surface of the earth.”25

While the Qurʾān shows in many verses that true knowledge leads to right faith, truth and the right path, the question may be asked as to why there are people who know the truth but do not follow it. What are the factors which prevent some people from having faith after they have gained knowledge or from following the truth after having discovered it? To answer this question, al-Qaraḍāwī refers to the views of Ibn al-Qayyim contained in his book, Miftāḥ Dār al-Saʿādah. The scholars are divided on this issue; there are those who believe that knowledge must necessarily lead to guidance (al-hidāyah) and those who do not agree with that view. Among the verses adduced by the first group in support of their view are “But those among them who are well-grounded in knowledge (al-rāsikhūn fī al-ʿilm) and the believers, believe in what has been revealed…” (Q. Al-Nisāʾ 4: 162), and “Of all His servants, only those who are endowed with knowledge (ʿulūmāʾ) fear Allāh…” (Q. Fāṭir 35: 28). The group subscribing to the opposite view argues that Iblis knew Allāh (S.W.T) and had no doubts about His absolute oneness, the reality of the resurrection, Paradise and Hell. Yet he preferred to be condemned to Hell and bear the wrath of Allāh (S.W.T) for refusing to bow down to Adam when ordered to do so.
by Allâh (S.W.T). Similarly many of the People of the Book (ahl al-kitâb) – Jews and Christians – during the time of the Prophet knew the truth of the Qur‘ân recited to them and recognized the authenticity of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). In spite of that knowledge, they decided to reject the Qur‘ân and the prophethood of Muhammad (S.A.W). Thus they were judged as Kâfirin (rejectors, disbelievers) in the Qur‘ân, not on account of ignorance or being led astray, but on account of their jealousy and determination to oppose the truth.

Ibn al-Qayyim says that both sides have adduced strong arguments to justify their respective stands, but in his opinion, if knowledge is seen as absolutely and necessarily productive of right guidance then the second group is right. But if knowledge is seen as causing and requiring right guidance, but due to some obstacles it fails to fulfil the requirement then the first group is right. To Ibn al-Qayyim there are several reasons why knowledge falls short of guiding the servants of Allâh (S.W.T) to the truth. Some of these reasons include: a) weakness in one’s knowledge of the above matter; b) the heart has become hardened due to lack of purification; c) the presence of pride and jealousy in the heart as was the case of Iblis; d) obstruction from powerful rulers or oppressive authorities; e) obstruction due to one’s base desires or self-centred wealth considerations; f) love of or attachment to one’s family, relatives and tribes; g) love of one’s dwellings or country; h) perception that believing in Islam or following the Prophet means rejection or insult to parents of forefathers; i) the people that one hates have embraced Islam, thus giving rise to the attitude of not wanting to be associated with the hated people though one knows the truth of Islam. This was the case of the Jews and the Anshâr who embraced Islam earlier than other people in Madinah; j) obstruction due to the strong influence of tradition or customs which are deeply entrenched in the life and personality of a person.

**True Knowledge is the Way to Certainty (yaqîn)**

Just as true knowledge is a guide to right faith – as indicated in the Qur‘ân – it is also a path to certainty which is the opposite of conjecture (zann) and doubt (shakk). The certitude of faith in Allâh (S.W.T), His signs, and meeting Him in the Hereafter is what the believer strives to attain. He or she can arrive at this stage of faith through sound knowledge and deep engagement in it to the point that it removes all traces of ignorance, conjecture and doubt. The Qur‘ân describes “the people endowed with certainty” (gawm yaqînîn, al-mûqînîn, hum yûqînîn) as those who clearly recognize the signs of Allâh (S.W.T) as manifested in the physical world and in the human selves, and who believe with absolute certainty in Allâh’s revelations, in the existence of that which is beyond human perception (al-ghayb) and in the Hereafter. They are praised in the Qur‘ân as being on true guidance (hudan) from their Sustainer and as “those who will prosper” (al-maftihîn).27

It is well-known, explains al-Qaraqâwî, that Satan fights against the believing human being using two principal armies, “the army of carnal desires” (jund al-shahawât) and “the army of doubts” (jund al-shubuhât). Through carnal desires, Satan corrupts man’s character and deeds, while through doubts he corrupts man’s faith and thought. The believer has to oppose these Satanic invasions by using two fundamental weapons – the weapon (silâh) of self-restraint or self-control (al-ṣabr) to overcome desires and the weapon of certainty (silâh al-yaqîn) to overcome doubts.28 Drawing upon the insights of Ibn al-Qayyim and Sufi masters, as laid out in his book Madârij al-Sâlikîn (The Ways of Those Who Follow the Spiritual Path), it is made clear that certainty is to faith what the spirit is to the body, and as one of the fruits of knowledge, certainty is “the greatest life of the heart” (a’ zam hayât al-qaîb). When the heart is engulfed in certainty, it will be filled with light, gratitude to Allâh (S.W.T), and love of Allâh (S.W.T). Certainty and love are the pillars of faith, from which all good deeds flow. When both become weak, then the deeds become weak, but when both are strong then the deeds would become strong.

Certainty, as revealed in the Qur‘ân, consists of three levels – the knowledge of certainty (’ilm al-yaqîn),29 the eye of certainty (’ayn al-yaqîn)30 and the truth of certainty (haqq al-yaqîn).31

a. The knowledge of certainty is a deep knowledge that is not filled with doubts, forgetfulness or negligence. It is the believer’s knowledge or the knowledge-laden faith of the God-fearing servants who are praised by Allâh (S.W.T) in the Qur‘ân. Although its grades vary, it can be increased and strengthened by efforts, proofs and acts of obedience to Allâh (S.W.T).

b. This degree of ’ayn al-yaqîn is higher than the first and the difference between the two is the difference between seeing and hearing a true report. This is the degree of certainty in which Prophet Abraham (‘A.S) aspired to achieve when he
requested Allâh (S.W.T) to show him how Allâh (S.W.T) would revive the dead.\textsuperscript{32} It was also in this degree of certainty that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was able to witness the realities of the realm beyond the reach of human perception, including seeing Angel Jibrîl during his Ascension (mi’râj) experience.\textsuperscript{33}

c. The degree of \textit{haqq al-yaqîn} which is above the other two mentioned above. If the first degree is associated with listening or receiving “true information” (\textit{khabar sâdiq}) and the second is associated with witnessing (\textit{mushâhadah}) and seeing (\textit{’iyân}), then the third degree is comparable to actual touching (\textit{lams}) and tasting (\textit{dhawaq}). Ibn al-Qayyîm compares the three degrees to man’s knowledge of Paradise and Hell. Knowing or being told about both of them belongs to \textit{’ilm al-yaqîn}. When both places are being shown to human beings who can see what is inside both of them, that belongs to the degree of \textit{’ayn al-yaqîn}. But when the people of Paradise are brought into Paradise and the people of Hell are brought into it, that experience represents \textit{haqq al-yaqîn}.

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\textbf{The Censure Against Ignorance (al-\textit{Jâhiliyyah})}
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As a logical consequence of the preeminent position bestowed by the Qur’ân upon knowledge and people endowed with knowledge, the Qur’ân views ignorance with approbation and censure. Four types of ignorance are highlighted in the Qur’ân. The first is the ignorance of the correct religious belief (\textit{jâhiliyyat al-’aqîdah}),\textsuperscript{34} the second is the ignorance manifested in behaviour (\textit{jâhiliyyat al-sulûk}),\textsuperscript{35} the third is the ignorance of correct morality (\textit{jâhiliyyat al-akhlâq}),\textsuperscript{36} and the fourth is the ignorance of the true law and governance (\textit{jâhiliyyat al-ḥukm wa al-siyâsah}).\textsuperscript{37}

The Qur’ân strongly urges that the people of ignorance (al-\textit{Jâhila}) be shunned for the above reasons and for a) making fun of fundamental religious issues as shown in the attitude of the ignorant Jews toward Moses’ commands;\textsuperscript{38} b) deliberating crucial matters based on emotional considerations rather than based on sound knowledge and objective analysis;\textsuperscript{39} c) clinging stubbornly to false beliefs and deviant practices despite being told the truth and reminded repeatedly by the Prophets and Messengers of Allâh (S.W.T);\textsuperscript{40} d) committing acts of disobedience, opposition and defiance against Allâh (S.W.T).\textsuperscript{41} Those who have achieved the perfection of knowledge (\textit{kamâl al-’ilm}), according to Ibn al-Qayyim, do not commit acts of disobedience against Allâh (S.W.T) because they know that Allâh (S.W.T) sees them and are fully aware of the consequences of their sins and the negligence of their hearts.\textsuperscript{42}

The worst form of ignorance is the compounded ignorance (al-\textit{jâhîl al- murakkab}), whereby the ignorant person is not aware that he is ignorant and therefore is not keen to learn because he believes that he is knowledgeable. According to al-Khalîl b. Ahmad human beings are of four types.

The first is the one who knows and knows that he knows. This is a person of knowledge, therefore follow him. The second is the one who knows, and does not know that he knows. This person is asleep, so wake him up. The third is the one who does not know, and he knows that he does not know. This person is ignorant, so teach him. The fourth is the one who does not know, and he does not know that he does not know. This person is lost, so leave him.\textsuperscript{43}

The Qur’ân associates the hypocrites (\textit{munaffîqîn}) with the last type of ignorance for they believe that they are doing good deeds whereas, in fact, they are causing a lot of destruction.\textsuperscript{44} Similarly some of the disbelievers (\textit{kuffâr}) contend that they are doing good when, in actual fact, their deeds are leading people astray.\textsuperscript{45} This is why the one who brings about unlawful innovation (\textit{bid’ah}) is worse than the one who merely commits sins or disobeys Allâh (S.W.T). For the sinner or the disobedient person (\textit{’âsî}) knows that he or she is disobeying Allâh (S.W.T) and one can expect he or she to repent to Allâh (S.W.T). As for the unlawful innovator who thinks that he or she is getting closer to Allâh (S.W.T) through the acts of unlawful innovation, it is inconceivable that he or she would repent.\textsuperscript{46}

\begin{center}
\textbf{The Types of Knowledge Censured in the Qur’ân}
\end{center}

1. The first type of knowledge which is censured by the Qur’ân is “harmful knowledge” (\textit{al-’ilm al-dârr}). This is the opposite of “useful knowledge” (\textit{al-’ilm al-nâfî’} or \textit{al-ma’rifah al-mufidah}) which is urged by the Qur’ân for man to acquire. Among the harmful knowledge rejected in the Qur’ân are black magic or witchcraft and astrology, the former being used for evil purposes while the latter makes the false claim of knowing or foretelling the future which rightly belongs to the realm of Divine knowledge.\textsuperscript{47} This censure does not include, says al-Qaradawî, the scientific method of weather forecasting which is based on the study of
“the conventions of Allâh in the universe” (sunan Allâh fi al-kawn) and the laws of cause and effect. Astronomy, which is useful for mankind, is not censured as it is a scientific discipline in which Islamic civilization excelled. 48

2. The act of hiding or concealing true knowledge as was done by the Jews and Christians who knew about the forthcoming advent of Muhammad (S. ‘A.W) and the truth of the Qur’ân, and decided to conceal that knowledge out of envy or selfishness. 49

3. Knowledge of the signs of Allâh (S.W.T) or revelation which is not practiced of followed by the one who is given such knowledge who decides to follow, instead, what is dictated by base desires or insinuated by Satan is compared to a dog which lolls outs his tongue, whether or not he is being attacked or left alone. 50

4. Materialistic knowledge (al-‘ilm al-maddî) which dazzles the knowers and veils them from believing in Allâh’s revelations and from following the Messengers of Allâh (S.W.T). The Qur’ân says that “….. they exulted in such knowledge (and skill) as they had,” 51 and scoffed at the clear signs of Allâh (S.W.T) brought by the Messengers. Their exultation in their materialistic knowledge blinded them to the Prophetic knowledge (‘ilm al-nubuwwah) and the wisdom of Divine revelation.

5. Knowledge of the exterior and visible dimension of the life of this world resulting in forgetting or neglecting the Hereafter and all that it demands. When the Qur’ân says that “They know (ya’lamûn) but the exterior and visible dimension (zâhiran) of this worldly life (min al-ḥayât al-dunyâî) but are heedless of the (end of things in the) Hereafter”, 52 it means that such people do not really know, for it precedes the statement with “but most people do not know” (walâkinna akthara al-nâs lâ ya’lamûn). 53

6. Knowledge which deludes the one possessing it with worldly fortune and authority, making him or her to forget that it is Allâh’s grace and generosity which make such bounty available to him or her. This egocentric attitude is expressed in the following words of the Qur’ân: “Qâla innamâ âttâthûhî ‘alâ ‘ilmîn ‘indî” (He said: ‘This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge which I have.’) 54

The Comprehensiveness and Variety of Knowledge in the Language of the Qur’ân

The knowledge which is alluded to in the Qur’ân includes a wide variety of knowledge with subject matters ranging from transcendental realities, man, the universe, nature, the Hereafter, history, etc., and the means to attaining such knowledge include the senses, empirical methods, the intellect and rational proofs, Divine revelation, intuition and Prophethood.

Just as it is not true that knowledge, as assumed by many people in the West, is confined to what can be established by scientific observation and experimentation, so it is also incorrect to think, as some pious Muslims do, that “knowledge” in the Qur’ân implies only “religious knowledge” (al ‘ilm al-dînî). There are several instances in which the word ‘ilm or its derivatives refers to non-religious knowledge, i.e. knowledge of the workings of the physical universe (al-‘ilm al-kawnî) as well as knowledge regarding man and his culture (‘ulûm al-insânî). For example, the verse which ends with the statement, “innamâ yakhsha Allâhâ min ‘ibadîhî al-‘ulamâ’” (verily only the learned among His servants fear Allâh) is preceded by a long description dealing with natural processes and the wonderful variety of living things surrounded by the myriad of colours in their natural mountainous settings:

“Do you not see that Allâh sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring produce of various colours. And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of colour, and black intense in hue. As so among men and crawling creatures and cattle are they of various colours. Truly only the learned (‘ulamâ’) among His servants fear Allâh.”

[The Qur’ân, 35: 67-68]

The word ‘ulamâ’ in the above verse, asserts al-Qaraḍâwî, does not refer only to the scholars of religion (‘ulamâ’ al-dînî) or the jurists of Divine law, with due respect to their noble status. They are the people who know the signs of Allâh (S.W.T) and discover His laws as operating in the sky, vegetation, mountains, human beings, cattle and other animals. They are those who know the greatness of Allâh (S.W.T) through the various physical, natural and human sciences. Through the knowledge of these sciences they come to know the power and wisdom of Allâh (S.W.T) which leads them to the state of awe and utter dependency on the mercy and compassion of their Sustainer. 55 In many instances the use of the
verb “ya’lamūn” (“they [plural] know”) or “ta’lamūn” (“you [plural] know”) in the Qur’ān refers to a general quality of human intellectual cognition which is conscious and heedful of wider implications and a rightly guided comprehension of things. It does not mean that they have attained a specific kind of sciences of religion (‘ulūm al-dīn) or sciences of the world (‘ulūm al-dunyā).56

However, The Qur’ānic statement “But most of the people do not know” or “But most of them do not know” or “No, most of them do not know” refers to the people’s lack of “the true knowledge “ (al-‘ilm al-haqiqī) of the matters or issues referred to by the Qur’ān in the particular verse. Most of these issues have to do with man’s conception of Divine power, Divine knowledge of the Last Day, the true “friends” of Allāh (S.W.T), the nature of Allāh’s promises, and the true nature of transcendent realities.57

It should be noted that knowledge may be divided into three levels: highest, middle-most and lowest. The lowest level knowledge (al-‘ilm al-asfāl) involves the use of bodily organs in physical activities such as horse riding, touring, tailoring, etc. The highest level knowledge (al-‘ilm al-‘allā) is the knowledge of religious truths which can only be obtained through what Allāh (S.W.T) has revealed in His scriptures, whose authenticity is preserved, and to His Prophets. The middle-most level knowledge (al-‘ilm al-awsāt) refers to sciences of the world or of religion which are considered as obligatory upon some members of the Muslim community (fard kifāyah), otherwise the whole community will be committing a sin of omission. Imām Al-Ghazālī and others like him among the religious scholars of the community have maintained that the acquisition of knowledge of various technologies or industries which are required or necessary for the wellbeing or progress of the community as a whole is fard kifāyah.

Many Qur’ānic verses point and makes references to several types of industry involving the use of iron for military and civil purposes,58 fruits for consumption and commercial purposes,59 animal skins and hairs for a variety of purposes,60 ship building61 and ornamental business,62 construction of buildings63 and construction of great dams.64 Al-Qaraḍāwī says that in this era of technological, biological, communication and information revolutions, it is incumbent upon the Muslim Ummah to play its roles in these revolutions, particularly when Islam makes it a duty for the Ummah to be leading the caravan (ji muqaddimah al-qāhilah) and not to be at the tail end of it.65

Of the obligatory knowledge which every Muslim is required to know, the most important of them all is the knowledge of Allāh (S.W.T) and His attributes. The Qur’ān is replete with verses enjoining human beings to have that knowledge which is linked with the knowledge of the message and the mission of the Messenger as they constitute the most important foundations of the Islamic creed. Included in the message brought by the Messenger is the knowledge of man’s ultimate destination being the Hereafter. The way human beings conduct their life in this world will determine how they will fare in the eternal life of the Hereafter. Human beings therefore need to know the consequences of human life which is oriented solely to this fleeting world so that they will not fall into the worldly traps which will bring misery to them in the final destination. Thus the Qur’ān repeatedly warns and reminds human beings of the allures and deceptive attractions accompanying a secular-oriented way of life, which is contrary to the life of the true servants and vicegerents of Allāh (S.W.T). One of those warnings reads as follows:

Know you (all), that the this-worldly life is but a play and a passing delight, and a beautiful show and a deceitful delusion.66

The knowledge of Divine Laws comes after the knowledge of the religious creed, just as the fundamental principles precede the subsidiary details. Likewise the rules governing life in the Hereafter are given precedence over the rules of this world. Al-Qaraḍāwī laments the tendency of Muslims nowadays to be more concerned with detailed juristic rules in their practical life vis-à-vis the more important and more urgent general issues.67

As for branches of knowledge which are not to be pursued by the believers, these include things or matters which are beyond the capability of human senses or reason to know such as the “world of the unseen” (‘ālam al-ghayb) the true nature of the
Divine Essence (haqiqa al-dhâ al-ilahiyyah), the Hour of the Last Day, the true nature of the spirit (al-ruh) and the future fate of humans.\(^8\)

The Formation of Scientific Mentality (al-‘aqliyyah al-ilmiyyah) in the Qur‘an

In rejecting “the superstitious mentality” (al-‘aqliyyah al-khurafiyyah), “the blind-imitation mentality” (al-‘aqliyyah al-muqallidah) and “the desire-heeding mentality” (al-‘aqliyyah al-muttabi‘ah li-al-hawâ), the Qur‘an strongly urges the formation of “the scientific mentality” as can be deduced from the following principles:

a. The rejection of conjecture (zann) in matters which require certainty, such as the fundamental beliefs upon which man’s worldview (naza‘rat al-insan ilâ al-wujûd) is built. For this reason the Qur‘an considers the beliefs of the polytheists as founded upon conjecture, not true knowledge.\(^69\) The Qur‘an regards conjecture and surmise as the factors responsible for most people going astray from the right path,\(^70\) and for the belief that Jesus (on whom be peace) was crucified.\(^71\)

b. The rejection of base desire and emotionalism as bases for grounding religious belief or making sound judgement or for arriving at knowledge.\(^72\) The influence of desires emotions or sentimentality undermines the value of objectivity and neutrality required in pursuing scientific enquiry and judgements.

c. The rejection of blind following or imitation of the false beliefs or practices of ancestors as clearly demonstrated in the objections of the Messengers of Allah (S.W.T) against the claims of their people that they were following what their ancestors had laid down for them.\(^73\) Rejection of subordination to unjust, disbeliefing and authoritarian power-holders as shown in the case of Moses (on whom be peace) and the wicked Pharaoh is also included by the Qur‘an because those disbeliefing tyrants had used their power and authority to prevent people from knowing and following the true religion and the true knowledge contained in it.\(^74\)

d. Rational observation (al-nazar al-‘aqli) as one of the means of arriving at the knowledge of Allah (S.W.T) and faith in Him is emphasized in many verses of the Qur‘an. The Qur‘an exhorts the exercise of rational observation through such expressions as “Do you not observe...”, “Did they not observe...”, “Let man observe...”, “Then observe how...” thus making the human being, the life and variety of animals, the workings of the universe, human history, and the conventions of Allah (S.W.T) in nature and history as the objects of man’s rational observation. Parallel to rational observation is the exhortation for human beings to exercise the “seeing” of things rationally (al-ru‘yah al-‘aqliyyah), not the seeing with the physical eye (ru‘yat al-‘ayn), to those objects as well as the natural wonders in the universe. The expressions used in the Qur‘an for this rational or intellectual vision are “Do they not look at...”, “Do you not see that...”, “See they not that...” with the implication that the sound rational vision or intellectual consideration would lead the rational human beings – without the negative influence of base desires or subjective emotional impulses – to the recognition of the transcendent power, will and wisdom of the One True God and Sustainer.\(^75\) As for proofs (barahin) that human beings should consider in evaluating the truth claims of Divine revelation, the Qur‘an refers to the following types – the sensible or tangible proof (al-burhan al-hissi) obtained through the senses, the proof obtained by listening to or producing the revealed text (al-burhan al-sam‘i), the proof of historical fact (al-burhan al-ta‘rikhi) and the rational proof (al-burhan al-nazar).\(^76\)

e. Due regard for the rules or conventions (sunan) of Allah (S.W.T) in nature, human history and society which are, by nature, unchangeable is an indispensable feature of the scientific mentality which the Qur‘an values very highly.\(^77\) The verses of the Qur‘an which speak of the “sunnat Allah” not only affirm the immutability of those Divine rules but also emphasize the importance of recognizing moral causes in the fate of nations or communities and the reality of natural causes or forces behind what are normally regarded by some polytheists or superstitious people as supernatural phenomena resulting from the displeasure or caprices of some gods deities or evil spirits which need to be assuaged by special offerings or rituals. The early Muslims who rejected these superstitious beliefs and gave due regard to the scientific study of the laws of cause and effort were able to develop the natural and mathematical sciences which led to the growth of a flourishing knowledge–based civilization.\(^78\)

Muslim scholars in the natural and physical sciences may consider giving due attention to the advice of Professor Dr. ‘Abd al-Haﬁz Hilmi, a professor of biological sciences, which is quoted at length by al-Qaraḍawî. Dr. Hilmi says that believing Muslim scientists are commanded to study the signs
of Allâh (S.W.T) in the universe. He agrees with Imâm al-Ghazâlî that specialization in these sciences is fard kifâyah. However what may be regarded in the old days as meritorious may today be regarded as a duty. The believing scientists are also obliged to enlighten others with their knowledge while those who are capable should use the modern sciences in commenting some of the verses of the Qur’ân. But knowledge by itself is not enough to bring about faith. It should be accompanied by a strong and sincere desire to know the Truth.

Relating the story of the Russian astronaut who was in outer space, Dr. Hilmi notes that the atheistic looking out from his space ship, said that he did not find God in the sky. However, when the Christian American astronaut saw the awe-inspiring phenomenon in outer space, he exclaimed that he was never as close to God as he was at that moment. Dr. Hilmi urges the natural scientists, especially if they are academics, to present their knowledge as springing from their Tawhîdic faith and sense of moral responsibility to their countries and their environments. He believes that there are several topics and subject matters which, through their lectures and classes, could be communicated with humanistic or ethical nuances that can be captivating to both the mind and the heart of the students without falsifying or altering the nature of scientific data or knowledge. This is better than merely presenting them as “pages or chapters imported from the knowledge of the West” which may sound strange to the ears of their listeners in Muslim societies. This can be done, says Dr. Hilmi, without in any way reducing the scientific integrity of the disciplines.79

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1Paper for the International Conference on Islamization in Modern Science and Scientification of Islamic Studies: Prospects and Bridges, 7-8 December, 2011, organized by Kulliyah of Science, IIUM
4 “The word for ‘heart’ in Arabic speech imports both the seat of intelligent faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions… If their faculties of understanding were active, would they not see the Signs of Allâh’s Providence and Allâh’s Wrath in nature around them and in the cities and ruins if they travel intelligently.” Abdullah Yûsuf ‘Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Qur’ân, note 2825, 834.
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7 Al-Qaradâwî, al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm, p. 25.
Ibid., p. 29. See Q. Al-No‘l 17: 36; Q. Al-Nahl 16: 78.
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16 Ibid., p. 50.
17 Ibid., p. 51.
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31 Q. Al-Wâqî‘ah 56: 95.
34 See Q. Al-‘Imrân 3: 154.
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37 See Q. Al-Mâ‘idah 5: 50.
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39 See Q. Hûd 11: 45-47.
41 See Q. Al-An‘âm 6: 54; Q. Al-Nahl 16: 119.
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16 Ibid., p. 50.
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