

***Tawhīdic* Epistemology: Reclaiming the Unity of Knowledge**

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Abstract

Tawhīdic epistemology, as articulated by Osman Bakar, is an integrated epistemological framework rooted in Islamic metaphysical principles and aimed at addressing the fragmentation of knowledge in the contemporary Islamic intellectual tradition. It is a constructive response to the intellectual and educational challenges confronting Muslim societies in the twenty-first century. Grounded in the metaphysical principle of the unity of reality, Bakar advocates for a comprehensive integration of revelation (*wahy*) and reason (*'aql*), to reconstruct the foundations of knowledge in the Muslim world. Osman Bakar contends that *tawhīd* should not only govern theology but must serve as the foundational principle in all branches of knowledge, including the natural, social, and applied sciences. He reinterpreted the traditional Islamic classification of sciences, advocated for the harmony of revelation and reason, and provided a critique of modern secular epistemologies. This study examines the key intellectual sources informing Bakar's *tawhīdic* epistemology and the practical implications of his framework for contemporary Muslim education and civilization-building. Drawing primarily from *Tawhīd and Science* (1992) and *Classification of Knowledge in Islam* (1998), it argues that Osman Bakar offers a compelling vision for a re-sacralised epistemology that remains faithful to Islamic metaphysical commitments while being critically engaged with modern intellectual challenges.

Keywords: *Tawhīdic* epistemology, Osman Bakar, Islamic education, revelation, reason, unity of knowledge, reform of knowledge

The contemporary Muslim intellectual landscape is marked by a deep epistemological crisis. Muslim societies, faced with the dominance of secular modernity, have witnessed the marginalization of religious knowledge and the compartmentalization of disciplines that were once organically integrated under the overarching principle of *tawhīd* (divine unity). In response, various scholars have proposed frameworks for the Islamization or integration of knowledge, seeking to recast knowledge as it relates to it. Among these efforts, Osman Bakar has articulated a distinctive framework known as *tawhīdic* epistemology, which seeks to revive an authentic Islamic philosophy of knowledge for the modern era.

Osman Bakar emphasises the centrality of *tawhīd* as a metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical principle. For him, *tawhīd* defines not only the nature of God but also prescribes a particular way of understanding reality, knowledge, and the human role within creation. His framework reaffirms the primacy of revelation (*wahy*) and restores the proper place of reason (*'aql*) as a faculty to seek, understand, and apply knowledge within the limits prescribed by revelation. His framework, therefore, represents a call for a radical re-grounding of all knowledge upon a metaphysical vision that acknowledges the unity of all existence under Allāh (SWT).

Osman Bakar is among the contemporary Muslim thinkers dedicated to the revival and articulation of an Islamic worldview rooted in *tawhīd*. His work on *tawhīdic* epistemology offers a comprehensive framework grounded in revelation, metaphysical unity, and the integration of reason and science. This framework harmonizes the spiritual, ethical, and rational dimensions of knowledge, aiming to cultivate individuals and societies guided by truth, justice, and divine purpose. By placing Allāh (SWT) at the center of the epistemic enterprise, *tawhīdic* epistemology restores purpose, moral integrity, and spiritual depth to learning.

Tawhīdic epistemology is essential to reforming Muslim education to overcome the “crisis in the Muslim mind” (AbuSulayman, 2004). As pointed out by Muslim thinkers like Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, this crisis stems from the dominance of secular and materialist culture. This dominance has resulted in the marginalization of revelation as the essential source of knowledge and the alienation of the Muslim self from its metaphysical roots, resulting in identity confusion and inferiority complexes. This study discusses Osman Bakar’s conceptualization of *tawhīdic* epistemology, its metaphysical and epistemological foundations, its critique of modern secular knowledge, and its implications for the Islamization of knowledge and reform of Muslim higher education.

Osman Bakar: A Brief Introduction

Profesor Emeritus Dato Dr Osman Bakar is Distinguished Professor and Al-Ghazzali Chair of Epistemology and Civilizational Studies and Renewal at ISTAC, International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM). He previously served as Director of the Sultan Omar ‘Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS), Universiti Brunei Darussalam, and as Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Malaya (1995-2000). Additionally, he was a member of C-100 (Council of 100 Leaders), of The West-Islamic World Initiative for Dialogue, established by the World Economic Forum based in Switzerland. He is concurrently Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Science at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. He has served as an advisor and consultant to a variety of international academic and professional organizations and institutions, including UNESCO and the Qatar Foundation. He was a recipient of a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Harvard University in 1992. In 1994, he was commissioned to establish the Malaysian Chair of Islam in Southeast Asia at George Town University. He has also been a member of the Pertubuhan Bangsa-Bangsa Group of Experts (United Nations Group of Experts) and was responsible for drafting the 1995 World Summit on Social Development Declaration in Copenhagen, Denmark. In 2009, Dato Dr Osman Bakar was included in Malaysia’s twenty leading intellectuals and the 500 most influential Muslims globally. He is currently serving as the 7th Rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia.

Osman Bakar’s academic background spans both mathematics and philosophy of science. After initial studies in algebra in London, he pursued Islamic philosophy at Temple University in the United States. With such a background, he has always stressed the necessity of balancing modern knowledge with Islam’s metaphysical underpinnings. During his studies, he interacted seriously with Seyyed Hossein Nasr and benefited from such interaction. Others influenced Osman Bakar, including Syed Naquib Al-Attas. Osman Bakar also benefited from the writings of thinkers like Al-Farabi (872-950), Ibn Sina (980-1037), Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998), and Ismail al-Faruqi (1921-1986). However, he has not hesitated to critically engage with classical and modern thinkers, challenging aspects of both classical and contemporary thought. He critiqued, for instance, the bifurcation of knowledge into “religious” and “secular” as an alienation from the holistic Qur’anic worldview and questioned the uncritical adoption of Western epistemologies in Muslim universities. He also diverges from earlier scholars by advocating engagement with

contemporary sciences through reform guided by *tawhīd*. Notably, he also critiques aspects of al-Ghazālī's distinction between religious and intellectual sciences, suggesting that al-Ghazālī was not always consistent in delineating the boundaries between the two. He found Al-Ghazzali's view of revelation and reason as problematic. "Insofar as al-Ghazali was committed to this view, he appears not to be consistent in his position as to where the line should be drawn between the religious and intellectual sciences" (Bakar, 1998: 267).

Osman Bakar has made major contributions in popularising "Islamic science" and the intellectual discourse of "religion and science", and has contributed to advancing cross-cultural studies, history and philosophy of science. He has authored and edited 40 books and over 300 articles on Islamic thought and civilization, particularly on Islamic philosophy and science. He also writes on contemporary Islam and inter-religious and inter-civilizational dialogue. His writings have been translated into Persian, Turkish, Indonesian, Albanian, and others. His seminal writings, such as *Islam and the Integration of Knowledge* and *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, have led to reform of higher education in the Muslim world using a *tawhīdic* framework. He advocates for reforming contemporary Muslim thought and education through a *tawhīdic* epistemological framework to overcome the crisis of fragmented and secularized knowledge. It is a call to revive the intellectual spirit of Islam by restoring the centrality of *tawhīd* in knowledge production, curriculum design, and institutional reform. The aim is to produce graduates who are spiritually grounded and ethically committed to serve the ummah.

The Foundations of *Tawhīdic* Epistemology

The Muslim Ummah is suffering from an identity crisis mainly because of the loss of *tawhīdic* epistemology, which was nurtured by scholars of the past who helped elevate the identity of the Ummah as an information society (Bakar, 2019:280). The *tawhīdic* epistemology approaches knowledge with a categorical position that "since everything is ontologically related to the divine beginning, then all human knowledge is ultimately related to the oneness of Allāh" (Bakar, 2019:288). "*Tawhīd* is the principle that binds together the various domains of knowledge and makes them parts of a unified whole." It is "the supreme governing principle that provides coherence to all knowledge" (Bakar, 1992:3). *Tawhīd* asserts that all existence is fundamentally one because it is sustained by the One God. This ontological unity must be mirrored in epistemology: knowledge is not fragmented or compartmentalized, as often seen

in modern secular epistemologies, but must be seen as an integrated, cohesive system that reflects the unity inherent in the cosmos.

The classical Muslim scholars, especially during the Golden Age of Islamic civilization, saw no essential division between the religious and the scientific, the sacred and the mundane. All knowledge on the spiritual or the physical world was seen as signs (*āyāt*) pointing toward the Creator (Bakar, 1992:11). Thus, to study nature was itself an act of worship when pursued with the right intention and understanding. However, modern secular epistemologies fragment knowledge into autonomous disciplines devoid of metaphysical grounding. This fragmentation, Bakar argues, is a direct result of the abandonment of a *tawhīdic* worldview, leading to a disenchanted, materialist understanding of reality (Bakar, 1998:23).

Osman Bakar defines *tawhīdic* epistemology as a framework of knowledge firmly based on the principle of *tawhīd* (Oneness of God), which functions as a metaphysical truth as well as a cognitive and ontological foundation. To him, *tawhīd* implies the integration and unification of various branches of knowledge under a single metaphysical principle (Bakar, 1992:25). “*Tawhīd* is the ultimate ontological and epistemological foundation of the Islamic worldview... all truths emanate from and return to the One Truth which is God” (Bakar, 1991:23).

Ontologically, *tawhīd* affirms the unity of all existence as a creation of a single Divine Source. As stated in the Qur'an 39:62, “*Allāh is the Creator of all things, and He is, over all things, Disposer of affairs.*” The ontological structure is predicated on the principle of *tawhīd*. It is a metaphysical principle that shapes the reality (*wujūd*). Al-Ghazālī affirms that God alone is *al-Ḥaqq al-Mubīn*, the Absolute Reality. Everything else is dependent (*mumkin al-wujūd*) upon His will and sustaining power (Al-Ghazālī, 2004, 4: 220). Similarly, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī constructs a philosophical argument for the unity and necessity of God as the sole ontological ground of the cosmos (Rāzī, 1987, 1: 53–58). What this implies is that the universe reflects the oneness of its Creator, and that all created entities depend on Allāh (SWT) as stated in Qur'an 35:15: “*O mankind, you are those in need of Allāh, while Allāh is Free of need, the Praiseworthy.*” Thus, there exists no metaphysical dualism and human beings as vicegerents (*khalīfah*) of Allāh (SWT) are bound to recognize, reflect upon, and respond to the signs of His oneness.

Epistemologically, *tawhīd* affirms that all true knowledge emanates from only one source, Allāh (SWT). Osman Bakar (1991:13) emphasizes that *tawhīd* is a comprehensive epistemic

framework that shapes the understanding of knowledge. *Tawhīd* constitutes the metaphysical and epistemological principle of unity in Islamic thought. It is the ultimate ground of coherence in the Islamic conception of knowledge.” In this framework, *‘ilm* (knowledge) is not secular or value-neutral but hierarchically structured and teleologically oriented. There are several sources of knowledge including:

wahy (revelation),

‘aql (intellect),

ḥiss (sense perception), and

kashf (intuition)

All these leads to attain *ḥikmah* (wisdom) and *yaqīn* (certainty), leading to firm faith (*īmān*) and righteous action (*‘amal ṣāliḥ*).

Osman Bakar (2012: 44) identifies three key principles that underpin tawhīdic epistemology: These are:

1. Unity of Knowledge. It means that all knowledge ultimately originates from Allāh (SWT) and is united under His Oneness. This eliminates the sacred-secular dichotomy.
2. Order and Harmony: meaning knowledge reflects the order of the cosmos and is categorized meaningfully. Disciplines are interconnected, not isolated.
3. Hierarchy of Knowledge stating that knowledge is not equal in status. Spiritual and metaphysical knowledge occupies the highest place, followed by rational and empirical knowledge.

First, the unity of knowledge is rooted in *tawhīd*, which implies that all knowledge ultimately originates from a single, divine source Allāh (SWT). It ensures that all branches of learning are integrated within the framework of *tawhīd*. Second, order and harmony reflect the interconnectedness and balance in the intellectual and cosmic order. Finally, the hierarchy of knowledge prioritizes spiritual and metaphysical knowledge while affirming the value of rational and empirical inquiry, each with its rightful place. Epistemologically, *tawhīd* requires that all knowledge must ultimately point to, be interpreted through, and remain accountable to

this Divine unity (Bakar, 1999:12). Evidently, *tawhīdic* epistemology differs from modern epistemologies, which are grounded in secularism, materialism, and epistemic dualism.

In *tawhīdic* epistemology, knowledge is not neutral or value-free. It must serve a higher moral and spiritual purpose, aligning human understanding with divine truth. Knowledge in this context is a trust (*amānah*) from God and must be pursued in accordance with divine guidance. The Qur'an (96:1, 3) instructs believers to "Recite in the name of your Lord Who created" and "Recite: and your Lord is Most Generous." *Tawhīd* is the ontological and epistemological axis around which all knowledge revolves. "The principle of *tawhīd* must serve as the central organizing element in the classification, pursuit, and application of knowledge" (Bakar, 1991: 29). Drawing from Qur'anic concepts such as *ilm*, *hikmah*, and *'aql*, Bakar emphasizes that knowledge acquisition must begin with ontological recognition of Allāh (SWT) as the ultimate source of truth.

Revelation and Reason: A Harmonious Relationship

A defining characteristic of *tawhīdic* epistemology is the harmonious relationship between revelation (*wahy*) and reason (*'aql*). Revelation is the ultimate source of all knowledge, providing the metaphysical and ethical framework within which reason operates. Reason, in turn, serves as an instrument to understand, elaborate, and apply the truths revealed through *wahy*. The Qur'an 3:190–191; 38:29, frequently invites believers to reflect and understand, affirming the legitimacy of reason. However, reason must operate within the bounds of revelation, not independently of it. "Islamic intellectual tradition upholds the primacy of revelation but does not negate the instrumental and interpretive value of reason" (Bakar, 1999: 28).

In *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, Bakar highlights the traditional Islamic sciences' division of knowledge into the transmitted sciences (*al-'ulūm al-naqliyyah*) based directly on revelation, and the intellectual sciences (*al-'ulūm al-'aqliyyah*) developed through the exercise of reason (Bakar, 1998:47–50). This division was hierarchical rather than oppositional. Revealed knowledge was at the apex because of its absolute certainty, while allowing for the rational sciences to flourish under its guidance (Bakar, 1998:47–49). By contrast, modern science has become disenchanted and desacralized, operating within a materialistic and mechanistic worldview that disconnects nature from its Creator (Bakar, 1998:45). What is needed, therefore, is not secularization but the "sacralization of science" grounded in the

Islamic worldview. It means reason must recognize its dependence upon divine revelation for its ultimate grounding.

Bakar draws upon historical examples from Muslim civilization to demonstrate the flourishing of rational inquiry under the guidance of revelation. He highlights how scholars such as Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Rushd integrated Aristotelian logic, Neoplatonic metaphysics, and Islamic theology into a coherent intellectual tradition that did not sacrifice the primacy of divine truth (Bakar, 1998:76). Today, Bakar contends, Muslim societies must reclaim this integrated vision. The neglect of either reason or revelation leads to epistemological imbalance: blind fideism on one hand, or secular rationalism on the other (Bakar, 1992:29).

The Classification of Knowledge: Restoring Hierarchy and Unity

A pivotal element of Osman Bakar's framework is his elaboration of the traditional Islamic classification of sciences. Drawing upon classical scholars such as al-Fārābī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Khaldūn, Bakar contends that Muslim scholars developed sophisticated schemes that ordered the sciences according to their proximity to divine knowledge and their function in human life (Bakar, 1998:60). Religious sciences including Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), *ḥadīth* studies, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) were situated at the top because they directly concerned knowledge of God's will. Intellectual sciences, including logic, mathematics, and natural philosophy, were ranked according to their ability to support religious understanding and societal well-being. Both categories ultimately serve to deepen human understanding of God's creation and law (Bakar, 1998:70).

Osman Bakar identifies three categories of knowledge:

- Revealed knowledge (*al- 'ulūm al-naqliyyah*),
- Rational knowledge (*al- 'ulūm al- 'aqliyyah*), and
- Applied knowledge (*al- 'ulūm al-taṭbīqiyyah*).

This tripartite schema is central to his tawhīdic epistemological framework and reflects both the traditional Islamic understanding of the hierarchy of sciences and a response to the modern fragmentation of knowledge (Bakar, 1991). Each category corresponds to a different source, method, and purpose of knowing, but all are ultimately unified under the principle of *tawhīd*.

The Revealed Knowledge category includes knowledge transmitted through divine revelation, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It includes such disciplines as:

- *Tafsīr* (Qur'anic exegesis),
- *Ḥadīth* (Prophetic traditions),
- *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence),
- *Kalām* (theology),
- and other sciences developed to preserve, interpret, and apply the revealed texts.

To Osman Bakar, this knowledge occupies the highest rank because it comes directly from Allāh (SWT), the all-knowing (al-‘Alīm), and provides the metaphysical foundation and ethical compass for all other forms of knowledge. It offers information, wisdom and guidance about ultimate realities, human purpose, and moral responsibility.

Rational Knowledge includes disciplines based on reasoning and intellectual inquiry, such as:

- Logic,
- Philosophy,
- Mathematics,
- Natural sciences (physics, biology, astronomy),
- and social sciences.

This category of knowledge is acquired through *‘aql* (intellect) and *naẓar* (reflection). It helps believers to reflect on the signs of Allāh (SWT) in the universe (*āyāt fī al-āfāq*), as required by the Qur'an. It helps Muslims to appreciate the unity, order, and wisdom of creation, reinforcing the principle of *tawḥīd* (Bakar, 1999). However, Osman Bakar insists that this knowledge must be guided by revelation.

Applied Knowledge refers to practical and technical disciplines, such as:

- Engineering,
- Architecture,
- Agriculture,
- Medicine,
- Information technology,
- Artisanal and craft-based skills.

These fields are essential for the advancement of civilization and the material well-being of humanity. This knowledge, while “lower” in the ontological hierarchy, has moral significance if pursued within the ethical parameters set by revelation. Applied knowledge must be ethically governed and oriented toward the common good.

The three-fold categorization of knowledge serves to restructure the entire landscape of modern knowledge so that it reflects the unity of truth and the centrality of Allāh (SWT) in all domains. By assigning proper epistemic weight to each category and ensuring their integration within a Tawhīdic worldview, Osman Bakar reconciles the sacred and the rational, the theoretical and the practical, the spiritual and the empirical. Thus, in this model, all forms of knowledge contribute to fulfilling the assigned role of believers as the *khalīfatullāhi fī al-arḍ*, the vicegerent of Allāh (SWT) on earth (Nasr, 1981).

The highest form of knowledge is *maʿrifah* (knowledge of God), while other sciences derive their value in proportion to their service to this higher purpose (Bakar, 2014:53). Contrary to modern egalitarian or fragmented views of disciplines, *tawhīdic* epistemology asserts a purposeful and metaphysically grounded hierarchy of knowledge. (Bakar, 1992: 31–35).

Significantly, Bakar notes that the natural sciences were traditionally not seen as "profane" or "secular" but rather as noble pursuits when undertaken in recognition of the metaphysical significance of the cosmos as God's creation (Bakar, 1992:35). Studying nature, in this context, becomes an act of deciphering the divine signs embedded throughout the universe (Al-Qur'an 41:53).

In contrast, the modern Western classification of sciences is based largely on utilitarian or technical considerations, devoid of metaphysical orientation. Bakar advocates a return to an Islamic model that acknowledges both the intrinsic and instrumental value of knowledge, thereby restoring a hierarchy grounded in ultimate truth rather than pragmatic usefulness.

Implications for Educational Reform and Intellectual Renewal

Osman Bakar argues that Muslim universities, modeled largely on secular Western institutions, have failed to cultivate *tawhīdic* consciousness among students and scholars. The result has been the production of fragmented individuals incapable of integrating their scientific or professional expertise with their religious and moral commitments (Bakar, 1998:120). This crisis is not merely academic but civilizational. Without a unified epistemology, Muslim societies cannot hope to achieve genuine progress that is both materially beneficial and spiritually uplifting. Bakar warns that the continued imitation of secular Western models will only deepen the epistemological and moral crises plaguing the ummah (Bakar, 1992: 42). Thus, the revival of *tawhīdic* epistemology is not an optional intellectual exercise but an urgent necessity for the survival and flourishing of Islamic civilization.

To address this crisis, Osman Bakar proposes curricular reforms that integrate religious and rational sciences, enabling students to see the interconnections between different forms of knowledge (Bakar, 1998:140). At the practical level, these reforms would entail:

- Reintegrating metaphysical principles into the teaching of natural and social sciences.
- Encouraging interdisciplinary research that transcends the artificial boundaries between "religious" and "secular" disciplines.
- Training scholars who are both deeply rooted in the Islamic intellectual tradition and proficient in modern scientific methods.
- Emphasizing ethics, aesthetics, and spirituality as integral components of all fields of study.

Such reforms would contribute to the emergence of a new generation of Muslim scholars and professionals capable of contributing meaningfully to the Islamic intellectual and the broader global academic landscape.

Comparative Reflections: Bakar and Other Muslim Thinkers

Bakar's tawhīdic epistemology may be fruitfully compared to other contemporary Muslim efforts at epistemological reconstruction. Thinkers such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have also emphasized the need to re-sacralize knowledge.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas never used the term *tawhīdic* epistemology. However, to him, knowledge must be rooted in *tawhīd*, which functions as the metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological foundation of his entire worldview. His theory of knowledge or what he calls the *Islamic concept of knowledge*, is shaped by a commitment to integrating all branches of knowledge under *tawhīd*, which is the ultimate criterion for distinguishing true from false knowledge (1978). Knowledge to be valid must acknowledge the unity and sovereignty of Allāh (SWT) and the finality of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). As such, knowledge is not value-free; it is infused with meaning and directed toward the recognition of Allāh (SWT) and one's place in the cosmos. Thus, al-Attas fully subscribes to the core ideas associated with *tawhīdic* epistemology, such as the unity of knowledge, the integration of reason and revelation, and the metaphysical grounding of epistemology in *tawhīd*. Al-Attas further argues that Islamic education must begin with the inculcation of the correct worldview, one that is metaphysically and ethically grounded in *tawhīd*. This worldview, or *ru'yat al-islām li al-wujūd*, encompasses the totality of existence, human purpose, knowledge, and ethics. It stands in contrast to the secular worldview, which divorces knowledge from its metaphysical and moral sources. Al-Attas's "Islamization of knowledge" project is essentially a process of restoring knowledge to its rightful place within the unified structure of reality defined by *tawhīd*. He emphasizes the integration of reason (*‘aql*) and revelation (*wahy*), rejecting the separation between reason and revelation often found in modern secular epistemologies. In al-Attas's conception, the intellect is a God-given faculty that must be guided by revelation and *adab* to lead to certain knowledge (*‘ilm*). He defines the "Islamization of knowledge" as a process of "liberating knowledge from secular interpretations and restoring its Islamic meaning" (al-Attas, 1995: 43). This involves isolating knowledge from Western influences and then integrating Islamic elements. This view resonates with the fundamental aim of a *tawhīdic* epistemology, which is to maintain the harmony between divine guidance and human reasoning, so that knowledge leads to wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and proximity to God (*ma‘rifah*).

To Ismail al-Faruqi, to Islamize knowledge is “to recast knowledge as Islam relates to it.” This requires “to redefine, and reorder the data, to rethink the reasoning and relating of the data, to reevaluate the conclusions, to re-project the goals and to so in such a way as to make the disciplines enrich the vision and serve the cause of Islam (al-Faruqi, 1982:15). Ismail al-Faruqi (d. 1986) made a significant contribution to the articulation of *tawhīdic epistemology*. His approach was explicitly rooted in the centrality of *tawhīd*. In his words: “The unity of God implies the unity of truth, the unity of knowledge, and the unity of life.” (al-Faruqi, 1982: 5). — *Al-Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, 1982. This unity demands the integration of all fields of knowledge—natural, human, and revealed—within a single cohesive framework inspired by divine revelation. He diagnosed a deep epistemological crisis in the Muslim world, caused by the bifurcation of knowledge into secular and religious spheres, and the marginalization of Islamic metaphysics and ethics in modern disciplines. His remedy was a re-unification of knowledge through *tawhīd*, where divine revelation provides the ultimate criterion for truth. According to al-Faruqi, knowledge is not value-neutral. It is meant to fulfill man's role as *khalīfat Allāh fī al-ard* (vicegerent of God on earth) and is tied to moral accountability and the higher objectives of the Sharī‘ah. While affirming the utility of human reason and empirical inquiry, al-Faruqi emphasized that reason must operate within the boundaries of divine revelation. This approach resonates with scholars like al-Ghazālī, Al-Attas and Osman Bakar.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who, according to Osman Bakar (2008:28) is “the pioneer who has done most to articulate the metaphysical and epistemological foundations of the Islamic view of science in modern times...” Nasr views *tawhīd* as the metaphysical principle that governs all levels of reality. In his view, knowledge (‘*ilm*) must reflect the hierarchical structure of being, wherein divine and sacred knowledge is at the apex, followed by intellectual, rational, and empirical forms. He criticizes modern science for desacralizing nature and replacing wisdom with utility. Nasr’s solution is the restoration of a *sacred science* that recognizes the symbolic and metaphysical dimensions of nature and human existence (Nasr, 1993). Nasr’s vision of *tawhīd* is epistemological, ontological, and esoteric, seeking to reintegrate the fragmented disciplines of modernity into a sacred order of knowing that leads to the Ultimate Reality (*al-haqq*).

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, meanwhile, champions the concept of "sacred science" (*scientia sacra*) to comprehend the world and its relationship to the divine. He argues that modern science is

"profane" and neglects the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of reality. Nasr's emphasis on the "sacred science" resonates with Bakar's insistence on metaphysical foundations. However, Bakar's approach is distinctive for its detailed analysis of the traditional classification of sciences, and its nuanced discussion of how the natural sciences can be reclaimed within a *tawhīdic* framework without rejecting scientific rationality itself. Rather than advocating a wholesale rejection of modern science, Bakar calls for its critical reformulation considering Islamic metaphysical principles (Bakar, 1992:55). His work is marked by a greater systematicity in ontology, a deeper engagement with contemporary scientific epistemology, and a more practical vision for the integration of science and revelation.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Osman Bakar share several foundational commitments. Both uphold the idea that knowledge must reflect the unity, order, and purpose embedded in the Qur'ānic worldview. Both believe that the crisis of Muslim thought cannot be overcome without returning to the metaphysical and epistemological roots of *tawhīd*. And both reject the secular bifurcation between sacred and profane knowledge, advocating instead for an integrated, hierarchical, and purposeful approach to learning. Where Nasr speaks more to the inner life of the intellect and spirit, Bakar addresses the external structures of thought and education.

The epistemological crisis in the Muslim world cannot be addressed without a comprehensive rearticulation of *tawhīd* as the foundation of knowledge. Naquib al-Attas, Ismail al-Faruqi, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Osman Bakar represent four critical pillars in this endeavor. They have adopted four converging yet distinct approaches to the epistemological crisis of the Muslim world. All of them affirm that no true knowledge is possible without recognizing the unity of the Creator and the coherence of His creation. They affirm *tawhīd* as the central epistemological and metaphysical principle of Islam, but with varying emphases. Yet they differ in how this affirmation translates into educational and epistemological reform. Al-Attas focuses on conceptual purification, metaphysical grounding, and the restoration of *adab*. Al-Faruqi's emphasis is on strategic restructuring of academic disciplines through Islamization. Seyyed Hossein Nasr advocates for a return to sacred metaphysics, rooted in the perennial philosophy. Osman Bakar offers a systematic classification, practical reform strategy, and direct engagement with modern science. Together, these thinkers provide the Muslim ummah with a rich spectrum of resources to restore the integrity, purpose, and transcendence of knowledge in a fragmented world (See Table 1).

Table 1: Similarities and Differences among Muslim Thinkers

Category	Thinkers			
	Osman Bakar	Ismail al-Faruqi	Naquib al-Attas	Syed Hossein Nasr
Foundation	<i>Tawḥīd</i>	<i>Tawḥīd</i>	<i>Tawḥīd</i> coupled with <i>adab</i>	<i>Tawḥīd</i> as metaphysical core.
Methodology	Integration of revelation, reason, and science	Restructuring modern disciplines as Islam relates to it	Islamization of key concepts; cultivation of <i>adab</i>	Reviving traditional sciences; critique of modern science via perennial philosophy
Critique of Modernity	Modern science is reductionist and fragmented	Secular disciplines fragment knowledge, weaken unity	Modernity causes loss of <i>adab</i> , confusion of knowledge	Modern science desacralizes nature; alienates man from God and cosmos
Goal	Holistic Tawḥīdic epistemology	Unified Islamic intellectual tradition	Restoring <i>adab</i> in individuals and institutions	Re-establish sacred knowledge and cosmology

Source: Author's synthesis from the works of Osman Bakar, Ismail al-Faruqi, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

Conclusion

Osman Bakar's *tawhīdic* epistemology presents a coherent and systematic framework for the reconstruction of Islamic intellectual life. Grounded in the metaphysical principle of *tawhīd*, it seeks to restore the unity of knowledge, reaffirms the harmony between revelation and reason, and provide a critique of the fragmentation and secularization of modern epistemologies.

By calling for a re-sacralization of reason and a reintegration of the sciences under the guidance of divine revelation, Bakar articulates a path forward for Muslim societies in pursuit of authentic intellectual and civilizational renewal. His thought constitutes an essential resource for scholars, educators, and policymakers committed to rebuilding Islamic civilization on firm metaphysical and intellectual foundations.

In an era marked by a profound global epistemological crises, Bakar's *tawhīdic* vision stands as a beacon, reminding scholars and students alike that true knowledge must ultimately manifest the unity, wisdom, and mercy of the One who is the source of all being, and mercy to people of the whole world (*raḥmatan lil 'alamīn*).

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