

FIVE KEY TERMS IN AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S CHILD-EDUCATIONAL THEORY: AN EXAMPLE OF ISLAMIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY KNOWLEDGE:#

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The process of Islamization of contemporary knowledge, which Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas originally conceptualized and developed, involved two inter-related aspects, namely, the isolation of key concepts and elements that constitute the substance, the spirit, character and personality of alien culture and civilization,¹ and the formulation and integration that refers to the infusion of Islāmic elements and key concepts in every branch of relevant contemporary knowledge. It includes the infusion of some fundamental key concepts of Islām such as the concept of religion (*dīn*), of man (*insān*), of knowledge (*'ilm* and *ma'rifah*), of justice (*'adl*), of right action (*'amal* as *adab*), etc.²

This article is a revised version of a chapter from my M.A. thesis: *Ethical Dimension of Child Education of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali: An Early Example of Islamization of Contemporary Knowledge*. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Wan Mohd. Nor for his supervision of the thesis and revision of this article.

¹ See al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, reprint 1978 (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993), 137 cited hereafter as *IS*; Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1998), 313 cited hereafter as *EPS*. The isolation of foreign elements refers mainly to the human sciences besides the natural and applied sciences particularly where they deal with the interpretations of facts and formulations of theories. It is used by al-Attas with reference to the:

- i) reliance upon human reason alone to guide man through life
- ii) adherence to the validity of the dualistic vision of reality and truth
- iii) affirmation to the reality of the evanescent-aspect of existence projecting a secular worldview
- iv) espousal of the doctrine of humanism
- v) emulation of the allegedly universal reality of drama and tragedy in the spiritual, or transcendental, or inner life of man, making drama and tragedy real and dominant elements in human nature and existence.

Wan Daud further explains that the process of Islamization of contemporary knowledge itself occurred with the very first revelation when God revealed the first five verses of *Sūrat al-'Alaq* to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).³ This process, or the "epistemological revolution,"⁴ as al-Attas calls it, reached its culmination in the writings of al-Ghazālī (d.1111), the reviver (*mujaddid*) of the fifth century, who systematically studied, reported and refuted the philosophers,⁵ and integrated some of their ideas into the teachings of Islām, especially as understood by the Ṣūfis. This intellectual tradition was continued by his successors such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, 'Adūd al-Dīn 'Abd Al-Rahman al-Ījī, Ibn Khaldūn, etc. It declined during the subsequent centuries due to many reasons, and worsened with the arrival of the modern secular western worldview ideas and key concepts until it was later revived and conceptually articulated in this century by al-Attas who understands the challenge of secularism at the philosophical level. It might be of interest to note here that there are indeed methodological similarities between al-Ghazālī and al-Attas since the latter is very much influenced and inspired by the former. One of the most distinctive aspects commonly shared by the two scholars is their concern about the proper usage of key terms in their writings. Al-Ghazālī for instance, criticized the limitation of the usage of terms like *fiqh*, *dhikr*, *ḥikmah*, etc. In addition he did not use any philosophical terms⁶ (which were

² See *IS*, 163–164. For deliberate and systematic discussion on these concepts, see Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, *EPS*, 35–67, 225–227.

³ A brief historical account on the process of Islamization of knowledge is elucidated by Wan Daud in *EPS*, 316–330.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 371 citing "The Corruption of Knowledge," unpublished lecture in Istanbul, 1985. The term "epistemological revolution" was introduced by al-Attas in his lecture in Istanbul, 1985.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 323.

⁶ To my mind it is more accurate to state that al-Ghazālī did not use any 'metaphysical terms' like *al-fā'il*, *al-'aql al-awwal* as highlighted by Hava Lazarus-Yafeh herself, except for the purpose of refuting the philosophers. As far as the philosophical terms are concerned, he did use some of the terms in relation to ethics, such as *ḥikmah*, *shajā'ah*, *'iffah*, *'adālah*, etc,