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PROLEGOMENA
TO THE
METAPHYSICS OF ISLĀM

AN EXPOSITION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL
ELEMENTS OF THE WORLDVIEW OF ISLĀM

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The meaning of religion in Islām, as we have analysed in the first chapter, is expressed by the term dīn, which is not merely a concept, but is something which is translated into reality intimately and profoundly lived in human experience. Its ultimate source of meaning is derived from the Quranic revelation of the covenant (al-mīthāq) which man’s pre-existent soul has sealed with God. The very name of the religion: Islām, is in reality the definition of religion: submission to God. Already in the very idea of submission, feeling, belief, and action are implied; but the fundamental element in man’s act of submission to God is his sense of indebtedness to God for His gift of existence, so that this sense of indebtedness—which involves recognition and acknowledgement of God as the giver of existence—is a prior condition to true submission (islām). Ultimate aim of religion is for man to return to the state in which he was before he existed, and this involves the quest for his identity and transcendent destiny through right conduct. This ‘returning’ is what life is all about, and it involves the pursuit of true knowledge.

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101 See Al-A‘rāf (7):172.
102 By ‘true submission’ (islām, the first letter in lower case) we mean conscious and willing submission for the whole of one's ethical life in the manner indicated and demonstrated by the Prophet and by the prophets sent before him.
103 By ‘true knowledge’ we understand it to mean knowledge that recognizes the limit of truth in its every object. See further below, pp. 134–135.
understanding of God’s signs and symbols in the pages of the book of nature by means of the guiding light of His words and interpreted in the sacred person of His messenger. It also involves the application of the sound senses to the experience of reality, and the application of the sound reason to the apprehension of truth.  

Religion (islām) and belief (īmān) are not identical, but they are mutually inseparable and indispensable. Belief in the sense we mean is to have faith, not quite in the sense faith is understood in English, but in the sense that it involves the becoming true to the trust by which God has confided in one, not by profession of belief with the tongue only, without the assent of the heart and the action of the body in conformity with it; and this is more than knowledge, which is prior to faith, so that it is also verification by deeds in accordance with what is known to be the truth. It is recognition and acknowledgement of the truth necessitating its actualization in one’s self. Recognition of the truth is in this case arrived at simply because it is clear in itself as apprehended by that intuitive faculty we call the heart, that is, by means of guidance (hudā) and not only by rational propositions and logical demonstrations. The truth is at once objective and subjective; and the objective and subjective, like religion and belief, are inseparable aspects of one reality. True religion is then not something that can succumb to the confusion arising from the objective-subjective dichotomy of the Greek philosophical tradition; nor is it that personal, individual, privatized and internalized ‘religion of

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104 On the meaning of religion or dīn in Islām, see chapter I above.
105 The ‘truth’ here means what has come down by way of revelation to the Prophet about the nature and reality of God, of His creation, of human destiny, of the relationship between man and God and man’s individual responsibility and freedom.
humanity' that emerges out of the secularizing process which seeks to abolish the institutionalization of religious belief.

Religion in the sense we mean is not opposed to the desacralization of nature if it means the expulsion from our understanding of a magical or mythical conception of nature; for nature can still be regarded as a manifestation form of the sacred without myth or magic if we understand it to be the evolvement of ideal realities in the Divine consciousness whose effects have become manifest in the realms of sense and sensible experience. Nature in itself is not a divine entity, but a symbolic form which manifests the Divine. Indeed, in the sense we have conveyed, all nature, and not just a tree or a stone, proclaims the sacred to those who see the reality behind the appearance. Religion is only opposed to desacralization if it means the obliteration of all spiritual meaning in our understanding of nature, and the restriction of our way of knowing to the scientific method as advocated by secular philosophy and science.106

God is not a myth, an image, a symbol, that keeps changing with the times. He is Reality itself. Belief has cognitive content; and one of the main points of divergence between true religion and secular philosophy and science is the way in which the sources and methods of knowledge are understood.

Modern philosophy has become the interpreter of science, and organizes the results of the natural and social sciences into a world view. The interpretation in turn determines the direction which science is to take in its study of nature. It is this interpretation of the statements and general conclusions of science and the direction of science along the lines suggested by the interpretation that must be subjected to critical evaluation, as they pose for us today the most pro-

106 See further my İslâm and Secularism, (op. cit.) chapters I and II.
found problems that have confronted us generally in the course of our religious and intellectual history. Our evaluation must entail a critical examination of the methods of modern science; its concepts, presuppositions, and symbols; its empirical and rational aspects, and those impinging upon values and ethics; its interpretation of origins; its theory of knowledge; its presuppositions on the existence of an external world, of the uniformity of nature, and of the rationality of natural processes; its theory of the universe; its classification of the sciences; its limitations and inter-relations with one another of the sciences, and its social relations.

A gist of their basic assumptions is that science is the sole authentic knowledge; that this knowledge pertains only to phenomena; that this knowledge, including the basic statements and general conclusions of the science and philosophy derived from it, is peculiar to a particular age and may change in another age; that scientific statements must affirm only what is observed and confirmed by scientists; that what should be accepted are theories only that can be reduced to sensational elements, even though such theories might involve ideas pertaining to domains beyond the empirical spheres of experience; that universality should not be attributed to scientific formulas, nor should objects defined by universality be described as reality beyond what is observed; that the content of knowledge is a combination of realism, idealism, and pragmatism; that these three aspects of cognition together represent the foundation of the philosophy of science; that cognition is subjective, arbitrary, and conventional, and that in the relationship between the logical structure of knowledge and the empirical content of knowledge, the primacy of logic is affirmed; that mathematical theory is not a descriptive science making statements about the structure and processes of nature, and that it is in fact a logical theory; that since logic is indispensable to science, the role of language and logical systems in describing the structure and processes of nature is paramount; that truth and falsehood are properties of belief (i.e. belief in the
sense of intellectual acceptance as true or existing of any statement or proposition) dependent upon the relations of belief to facts; that facts are neutral as far as truth and falsehood are concerned—they just are.

Contemporary science has evolved and developed out of a philosophy that since its earliest periods affirmed the coming into being of things out of each other. Everything existent is a progression, a development or evolution of what lies in latency in eternal matter. The world seen from this perspective is an independent, eternal universe; a selfsubsistent system evolving according to its own laws. The denial of the reality and existence of God is already implied in this philosophy. Its methods are chiefly philosophic rationalism, which tends to depend on reason alone without the aid of sense perception or experience; secular rationalism, which while accepting reason tends to rely more on sense experience, and denies authority and intuition and rejects Revelation and religion as sources of true knowledge; and philosophic empiricism or logical empiricism which bases all knowledge on observable facts, logical constructions and linguistic analysis. The vision of reality as seen according to the perspectives of both forms of rationalism and empiricism is based upon the restriction of reality to the natural world which is considered as the only level of reality. Such restriction follows from the reduction of the operational powers and capacities of the cognitive faculties and senses to the sphere of physical reality. In this system knowledge is valid only as it pertains to the natural order of events and their relationships; and the purpose of inquiry is to describe and to systematize what happens in nature, by which is meant the totality of objects and events in space and time. The world of nature is described in plain naturalistic and rational terms divested of spiritual significance or of symbolic interpretation, reducing its origin and reality solely to mere natural forces.

Rationalism, both the philosophic and the secular kind, and empiricism tend to deny authority and intuition as
legitimate sources and methods of knowledge. Not that they
deny the existence of authority and of intuition, but that they
reduce authority and intuition to reason and experience. It
is true that at the original instance in the case of both
authority and intuition, there is always someone who expe-
riences and who reasons; but it does not follow that because
of this, authority and intuition should be reduced to reason
and experience. If it is admitted that there are levels of rea-
son and experience at the level of normal, human con-
sciousness whose limitations are recognized, there is no rea-
son to suppose that there are no higher levels of human
experience and consciousness beyond the limits of normal
reason and experience in which there are levels of intellec-
tual and spiritual cognition and transcendental experience
whose limits are known only to God.

As to intuition, most rationalist, secularist and empiri-
cist thinkers and psychologists have reduced it to sensory
observations and logical inferences that have long been
brooded over by the mind, whose meaning becomes sud-
denly apprehended, or to latent sensory and emotional
build-ups which are released all of a sudden in a burst of
apprehension. But this is conjecture on their part, for there
is no proof that the sudden flash of apprehension comes
from sense experience; moreover, their denial of an intuitive
faculty such as the heart, implied in their contention regard-
ing intuition, is also conjectural.

Since it is man that perceives and conceives the world
of objects and events external to him, the study of nature
includes man himself. But the study of man, of mind, and of
the self is also restricted to the methods of new sciences such
as psychology, biology, and anthropology, which regard man
only as a further development of the animal species, and
which are none other than methodological extensions of the
restriction of reason and experience to the level of physical
reality. Moreover, in order to verify hypotheses and theories
science, according to them, requires correspondence with
observable fact, and yet since hypotheses and theories that
contradict one another can correspond with observable fact, and since the preference for one as against the other of them is not dictated by any criterion of objective truth—because truth itself is made to conform with fact—such preference is then dictated simply by subjective and arbitrary considerations dependent upon convention. This dependence upon convention has created the tendency to regard society, rather than the individual man, as ultimate, real, and authoritative. Conventionalism reduces all institutional forms as creations of the so-called 'collective mind' of society. Knowledge itself, and even human language, are nothing but expressions and instruments of the collective mind of this unspeakable god called Society.

Finally, doubt is elevated as an epistemological method by means of which the rationalist and the secularist believe that truth is arrived at. But there is no proof that it is doubt and not something else other than doubt that enables one to arrive at truth. The arrival at truth is in reality the result of guidance, not of doubt. Doubt is a wavering between two opposites without preponderating over either one of them; it is a condition of being stationary in the midst of the two opposites without the heart inclining toward the one or the other. If the heart inclines more toward the one and not toward the other while yet not rejecting the other, it is conjecture; if the heart rejects the other, then it has entered the station of certainty. The heart's rejecting the other is a sign not of doubt as to its truth, but of positive recognition of its error or falsity. This is guidance. Doubt, whether it be definitive or provisional, leads either to conjecture or to another position of uncertainty, never to the truth—"and conjecture avails naught against truth." (Qur'ān 10:36)

Based upon the position established by our philosophical and scientific tradition as integrated into a coherent metaphysical system, we maintain that many important similarities are found between our position and that of modern, contemporary philosophy and science with regard to
the sources and methods of knowledge; the unity of the rational and empirical ways of knowing; the combination of realism, idealism, and pragmatism as the cognitive foundation of a philosophy of science; the philosophy and science of process. But these similarities are apparent and pertain only to their external aspects, and they do not negate the profound differences that arise from our divergent worldviews and beliefs about the ultimate nature of Reality. Our affirmation of Revelation as the source of knowledge of ultimate reality and truth pertaining both to created things as well as to their Creator provides us with the foundation for a metaphysical framework in which to elaborate our philosophy of science as an integrated system descriptive of that reality and truth in a way which is not open to the methods of the secular philosophic rationalism and philosophic empiricism of modern philosophy and science.

In contrast to modern philosophy and science with regard to the sources and methods of knowledge, we maintain that knowledge comes from God and is acquired through the channels of the sound senses, true report based on authority, sound reason, and intuition. The meaning underlying the expression 'sound senses' points to perception and observation, and these comprise the five external senses of touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing which perform the function of perception of particulars in the external world. Corresponding to these are five internal senses which perceive internally the sensual images and their meanings, combine or separate them, conceive notions of them, preserve the conceptions thus conceived, and perform intellection of them. These are the common sense, the representation, the estimation, the retention and recollection, and the imagination. In the act of perception, the perceiver perceives the form of the external object, i.e. a representation of the external reality, and not the reality itself. What is perceived by the senses is then not the external reality as it is in itself, but its like as represented in the senses. The external reality is that from which the senses abstract its
form. Similarly with regard to the *meaning*, the intelligibles are representations of realities that are imprinted upon the soul, because the intellect has already abstracted them from the accidental attachments that are foreign to their natures, such as quantity, quality, space and position. The difference between the form and the meaning of the sensual object is that the form is what is first perceived by the external sense, and then by the internal sense; the meaning is what the internal sense perceives of the sensual object without its having been previously perceived by the external sense.

As regards 'sound reason', we mean to understand reason not simply in the sense restricted to sensational elements; to that mental faculty that systematizes and interprets the facts of sensible experience in logical order, or that renders intelligible and manageable to the understanding the data of sensible experience, or that performs the abstraction of facts and sensible data and their relationships, and orders them in a law-giving operation that renders the world of nature understandable. Indeed, to be sure, reason is all this, but we maintain further that it is one of the aspects of the intellect and functions in conformity with it, not in opposition to it; and the intellect is a spiritual substance inherent in that spiritual organ of cognition we call the heart, which is the seat of intuition. In this way and through the mediacy of the intellect we have connected reason with intuition.

In the same way that we do not confine reason to sensational elements, we do not restrict intuition to the direct and immediate apprehension, by the knowing subject, of itself, of its conscious states, of other selves like itself, of an external world, of universals, of values or of rational truths. We understand by intuition also the direct and immediate apprehension of religious truths, of the reality and existence of God, of the reality of existences as opposed to essences—indeed, in its higher levels intuition is the intuition of existence itself. With reference to intuition at the higher levels of truth, intuition does not just come to anyone, but to one who has lived his life in the experience of religious truth by
sincere, practical devotion to God, who has by means of intellectual attainment understood the nature of the oneness of God and what this oneness implies in an integrated metaphysical system, who has constantly meditated upon the nature of this reality, and who then, during deep contemplation and by God's will, is made to pass away from consciousness of his self and his subjective states and to enter into the state of higher selfhood, subsisting in God. When he returns to his human, subjective condition, he loses what he has found, but the knowledge of it remains with him. It is in the duration of subsistence in God, when he gains his higher selfhood, that the direct and immediate apprehension takes place. He has been given a glimpse of the nature of reality in that duration of coincidence with the Truth. In his case the cognitive content of his intuition of existence reveals to him the integrated system of reality as a whole.

With regard to intuition, and at the normal level of human consciousness, the higher levels to which great men of science and learning attain, in the moments of their decisive discoveries of laws and principles that govern the world of nature, are levels commensurate with the training, discipline, and development of their powers of reasoning and experiential capacities, and with the specific problems that confront them to which reason and experience are unable to give coherent meaning. The arrival at the meaning is through intuition, for it is intuition that synthesizes what reason and experience each sees separately without being able to combine into a coherent whole. Intuition comes to a man when he is prepared for it; when his reason and experience are trained and disciplined to receive and to interpret it. But whereas the levels of intuition to which rational and empirical methods might lead refer only to specific aspects of the nature of reality, and not to the whole of it, the levels of intuition at the higher levels of human consciousness to which prophets and saints attain give direct insight into the nature of reality as a whole. The prophet and the saint also require preparation to receive and to be able to interpret it; and

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their preparation does not consist only of the training, discipline, and development of their powers of reasoning and their capacities for sense experience, but also the training, discipline, and the development of their inner selves and the faculties of self concerned with the apprehension of truth-reality.

As to true report as a channel through which knowledge is acquired, it is of two kinds: that which is in sequence and continuity established by the tongues of people of whom reason cannot conceive that they would purpose together on a falsehood; and that which is brought by the Messenger of God. Authority, which is invested by general agreement in the first kind of true report, which includes that of scholars, scientists, and men of knowledge generally, may be questioned by the methods of reason and experience. But authority of the second kind of true report, which is also affirmed by general assent, is absolute. Authority is grounded ultimately upon intuitive experience, by which we mean both in the order of sense and sensible reality, and in the order of transcendental reality, such as intuition at the higher levels.

In contrast to the position of modern science and philosophy with regard to the sources and methods of knowledge, we maintain that just as there are levels of reason and experience, so are there levels of authority and intuition. Apart from the authority of men of science and learning generally, the highest level of authority in our view is the Holy Qur’ân and the Tradition including the sacred person of the Holy Prophet. They represent authority not only in the sense that they communicate the truth, but in the sense also that they constitute the truth. They represent authority that is established upon the higher levels of intellectual and spiritual cognition and transcendental experience that cannot simply be reduced to the normal level of reason and experience.

We define man as a ‘rational animal’ where the term ‘rational’ is signified by the term ṇāliq, which points to an
innate faculty of knowing that apprehends the meaning of the universals and that formulates meaning. This formulation of meaning, which involves judgement, discrimination, and clarification, is what constitutes his rationality. The terms 'rational' (nātiq) and 'having the power to formulate meaning' (dhū nutq) are derived from the same root that conveys the basic meaning of 'speech', in the sense of human speech, so that they both signify a certain power and capacity innate in man to articulate words or symbolic forms in meaningful patterns. From the same root (nutq) is also derived the name for the science of discourse known as al-mantiq (i.e. logic), developed for the construction of arguments, the formulation of methods of disputation, the discovery of fallacies, the theory of classification and definition, the basic notion of the syllogism, the conception of proof and demonstration, the general outlines of an intellectual method in the pursuit of truth. Man is, as it were, a 'language animal' or a 'speaking animal' (al-hayawan al-nātiq); and the articulation of linguistic symbols into meaningful patterns is no other than the outward, visible and audible expression of the inner, unseen reality which we call the intellect (al-'aql). The term 'aql itself basically signifies a kind of 'binding' or 'withholding', so that in this respect it signifies an active, conscious entity that binds and withholds objects of knowledge by means of words or symbolic forms; and it indicates the same reality that is denoted by the terms 'heart' (qalb), 'spirit' (rūh), and 'self' (nafs). This conscious, active entity or reality has many names such as identified by the four terms above because of its many modes in its relations with the various levels of existence. The intellect is then a spiritual substance by which the rational soul recognizes truth and distinguishes truth from falsity. It is the reality that underlies the definition of man, and is indicated by everyone when he says "I".

In defining man as a 'rational animal', where we mean by rational the intelligential capacity for apprehending the meaning of the universals, the power of linguistic expres-
sion, the power responsible for the formulation of meaning—which involve acts of judgement, discrimination, distinction and clarification, and the articulation of symbolic forms in meaningful patterns—the meaning of ‘meaning’ (ma'na) is the recognition of the place of anything in a system. Recognition occurs when the relation a thing has with others in the system becomes clarified and understood. The relation describes a certain order in terms of priority and posteriority as well as in terms of space and position. Meaning is an intelligible form with regard to which a word, an expression, or a symbol is applied to denote it. When that word, expression, or symbol becomes a notion in the mind (‘aql: nultiq) it is called the ‘understood’ (mashūm). As an intelligible form that is formed in answer to the question “what is it?” it is called ‘essence’ (mahiyyah). Considered as something that exists outside the mind, or objectively, it is called ‘reality’ (haqiqa). Seen as a specific reality distinguished from the others, it is called ‘individuality’ or ‘individual existence’ (huwiyyah). Thus what constitutes meaning, or the definition of meaning, is recognition of the place of anything in a system, which occurs when the relation a thing has with others in the system becomes clarified and understood.107

We said that the relation describes a certain order. If everything in any system were in the same place, then there could be no recognition, there could be no meaning since there would be no relational criteria to judge, discriminate, distinguish and clarify. Indeed, there would be no system. For recognition to be possible there must be specific difference in things, there must be essential relation between things and, moreover, these must remain as such; for if the difference and the relation were not abiding but were in a state of constant change specifically and essentially, then recognition of

107 See my The Concept of Education. in Islām, (op. cit.); p. 15.
things would be impossible and meaning would perish.

Thus in this we see that the intrinsic connection between meaning and knowledge has now become manifest, in that knowledge consists of units of meaning which are coherently related to other such units thereby forming notions, ideas, concepts, conceptions and judgements. Thought (al-fikr) is the soul's movement towards meaning, and this needs imagination (al-khayāl). Intuition, that is, either in the sense of sagacity (al-hads), or in the sense of illuminative experience (al-wijdān), is the arrival of the soul at meaning, or the arrival in the soul of meaning, either by acquisition through proof as in the former case, or it comes by itself as in the latter case.

The definition of man as a rational animal is a definition that sets a precise or concise limit (hadd) specifying the distinctive characteristic of what is being defined as man. The same kind of definition cannot obtain for knowledge because knowledge by nature defies the sort of limitation that defines categories within the divisions of genus and specific difference. Knowledge is limitless and its definition can only amount to a description of its nature (rasm). We have already defined it thus as consisting of units of meaning coherently related to other such units thereby forming ideas, concepts, conceptions and judgements. Since we have defined meaning to be the recognition of the place of anything in a system, we now add that by 'place' we refer to 'proper place' in the various levels of human existence. Human existence may be considered as having different levels corresponding to the various spheres of operation of the external and internal senses. These are real (haqiqi) existence, which is existence at the level of objective reality such as the external world; sensible (hissi) existence, which is confined to the faculties of sense and sensible experience including dreams, visions, illusions; imaginary (khayāli) existence, which is the existence of objects of sensible existence in the imagination when they are absent from human perception; intellectual ('aqli) existence, which consists of
abstract concepts in the human mind; analogous (ṣibḥī) existence, which is constituted by things which do not exist in any of the levels above, but which do exist as something else resembling the things in a certain respect, or analogous to them. This level may also be considered as corresponding to that which is the sphere of operation of the discursive or cogitative (ṣikrī) faculty of the soul. At every one of these levels human perception of the objects of perception is not the same. In addition to these levels we affirm the existence of another level than rational truth; a suprarational or transcendental level of existence experienced by prophets and saints of God and men of discernment who are deeply rooted in knowledge. This last is the level of holy existence, in which things are apprehended as they really are. The concept of 'proper place', then, pertains to all these levels of human existence, which encompass the ontological, cosmological, and psychological domains, and which include man himself and the world of empirical things as well as the religious and ethical aspects of human existence. ‘Proper’ place means ‘real’ and ‘true’ place as denoted by the term ḥaqq. Ḥaqq signifies both reality and truth. As reality it denotes an ontological condition; as truth a logical condition; and it denotes a judgement or ḥukm conforming with the reality or the real situation.

One of the fundamental differences between our position and that of modern philosophy and science impinging upon the problem of formulating a philosophy of science revolves around the understanding of the meaning of reality and truth and their relation to fact. The understanding of what these terms designate has a profound bearing upon the understanding of the meaning of knowledge and the epistemological process and of values, and ultimately upon the understanding of the nature of man himself.

We use one word to mean generally both reality and truth, and this fact is in itself significant in conveying our understanding of the meaning of truth not merely as a property of statements, beliefs and judgements, but also as a

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property of the nature of reality. The word *haqq* stands for both reality and truth. Its opposite is *bāṭil*, meaning non-reality or falsity. *Haqq* means a suitableness to the requirements of wisdom, justice, righteousness, truth, reality, propriety. It is a state, quality or property of being wise, just, right, true, real, proper; it is a state of being necessary, unavoidable, obligatory, due; it is a state of existence and encompasses everything. There is another word, *ṣidq*, meaning truth, whose opposite is *kidhb* meaning untruth or falsehood, that designates only truth pertaining to statements or uttered words; whereas the word *haqq* not only refers to statements, but also to actions, feelings, beliefs, judgements, and the things and events in existence. The things and events in existence which *haqq* designates pertain not only to their present condition, but also to their past as well as future condition. With regards to future condition *haqq* means verification, realization, actualization. Indeed, that the meaning of *haqq* is understood to encompass both reality and truth pertaining to the state of existence is due to the fact that it is one of the names of God describing Him as the absolute existence which is the *reality* and not the *concept* of existence.

To the generality of people, the nature of existence and its relation to separate, similar yet diverse realities which we call ‘things’ is that existence is a general, abstract concept common to all existences, that is, to everything and to anything without exception. The mind, when regarding external realities we call ‘things’, can first abstract them from existence and then predicate existence of them. The mind therefore attributes to the things what it considers to be their property of existence. Existence is then regarded as something superadded to, accidental to, and subsisting in things. In this mental process, the single, general, abstract concept becomes multiple and is rationally divided into portions corresponding to things. The existences of things are these portions, and these portions, along with the general, abstract concept of existence, are external to the ‘essences’ of things and are only mentally superadded to them.
According to this perspective, existence is something purely conceptual, whereas essences are real; essences are realities actualized extramentally. But we say further that in addition to the concept of existence there is another entity which is the reality of existence, by which existence as a pure concept comes to inhere in the mind as one of its effects. Existence as reality, unlike its conceptual counterpart, is not something static; it perpetually involves itself in a dynamic movement of ontological self-expression, articulating its infinite inner possibilities in gradations from the less determinate to the more determinate until it appears at the level of concrete forms, such that the particular existences which we regard as multiple and diverse 'things' having separate, individual 'essences' are nothing but the modes and aspects of the reality of existence. From this perspective, the essence of a thing is nothing more than an entity in concept only, whereas the existence of a thing is real. Indeed, the real and true essence of a thing is existence as individuated into a particular mode. It is this reality of existence that we have identified above as the all-encompassing Reality or Truth (al-haqq), by which God as the absolute in all the forms of manifestation is called.

Since modern philosophy and science have come to realize that the fundamental nature of phenomena is process, the descriptive names that philosophers and scientists have applied to correspond with process must also reflect the dynamism involved in the very idea of process. They have applied such names as 'life' or 'vital impulse', or 'energy', implying the movement, the change, the becoming that are productive of the events in space-time. That they have chosen these names as descriptive of the reality manifested as process is itself an indication that they consider existence, unlike life, vital impulse, or energy, as a mere concept; and as a mere concept existence is indeed something static, clearly disqualifying it as corresponding with process. In this sense, their formulation of a philosophy of science, in contradiction with their position that the reality underlying
phenomena is process, still revolves within the sphere of an essentialistic worldview, a worldview preoccupied with ‘things’ having independent and self subsistent ‘essences’, and of events, relations, and concepts pertaining to the things, making things point to themselves as the sole reality, and not to any other Reality beyond them that both includes as well as excludes them. Our position is that what is truly descriptive of the fundamental nature of phenomena as process is ‘existence’ because existence alone, both understood as a concept as well as a reality, is the most basic and universal entity known to us. It is true that existence understood as a concept is static and does not correspond with process. But we maintain that existence is not merely a concept, it is also a reality: it is not merely posited in the mind, but is also a real and actual entity independent of the mind. It is dynamic, active, creative and pregnant with infinite possibilities of ontological self-expression; it is an aspect of God that arises from the intrinsic nature of His names and attributes, and is therefore a ‘conscious’ entity acting in accordance with God’s customary way of acting (sunnat Allāh). The so-called “laws of nature” are in reality God’s customary way of acting, and understood as such, these “laws” are no longer seen as rigid because they are now open to infinite possibilities. Existence is then the primary, ultimate stuff of reality, whereas life, vital impulse, or energy and other such terms applied by philosophers and scientists to describe that fundamental entity, which is the reality underlying the nature of things, are all secondary to existence for they all are like properties or attributes of existence.

When we say that ḥaqq denotes both what is real as well as what is true, we are saying that ḥaqq has an aspect pertaining to the real and an aspect pertaining to the true in the sense that the real refers to the ontological and the true to the logical orders of existence. Ḥaqq as meaning the ‘real’ designates the reality of existence as well as its modes and aspects which we understand as ‘events’ and ‘process’; as meaning the ‘true’ it designates a judgement conforming
with the external realities that arise as ‘things’ out of the events or the process. This conformity involves a certain correspondence and coherence between the intellectual act of judgement and the external reality that is being perceived. As we said before in connection with perception, the realities that comprise the external world are not immediately or directly given in experience, but are abstractions of them in varying degrees performed by the external and internal senses, and transformed into knowledge of the external world by means of intellectual construction. Our conceptual knowledge then corresponds to the information conveyed to our consciousness or soul by the senses; and our conception of the external realities stand in a relation of coherence within a system of conceptual relations already imprinted upon the soul that convey to us our vision of the nature of Reality. Our position is that the correspondence and coherence that is of the nature of truth must satisfy the condition of coincidence with the requirements of wisdom and justice. Wisdom is the knowledge given by God that enables the recipient to know the right place, or to render correct judgement as to the right place of a thing or an object of knowledge. Justice is the condition whereby things or objects of knowledge are in their right places. Thus for it to be true, correspondence and coherence must coincide with right place. The notion of right or proper place involves necessity for every thing in the order of creation to be in that condition—that is, to be deployed in a certain order in terms of priority and posteriority as well as in terms of space and position and arranged according to various levels and degrees. Ontologically, created things are already so arranged, but man, out of ignorance of the just order pervading all creation, makes alterations and confuses the places of things such that injustice occurs. Injustice is the putting a thing not in its proper place; it is to fall short of or to exceed the limits of the proper place so that in the general order of things it is disharmony. Indeed, the very meaning of ‘proper’ is also included in that of haqq, for it points to that which belongs
to one, to one's own; it is the exact or the specific part that befits one's natural or essential constitution, to one's self; it is something inherent, a property, an essential attribute. The place of a person, a thing, an object of knowledge then does not merely refer to the location or the specific space occupied by the person, the thing, the object of knowledge; it is also the natural position, the position that conforms to the nature, both in the external world as well as in the imagination and in the mind, of the person, the thing, the object of knowledge. We do not agree, therefore, that knowledge pertains only to phenomena; that truth is only a property of statements or declarative sentences, or of beliefs and judgments from which statements are derived and which are dependent upon the relation of the belief or the judgement to some fact; that fact is neutral in its relation to truth and falsity. We maintain that truth is also a property of the nature of things in as much as they conform with a suitableness to the requirements of wisdom and justice, that is, to the requirements of the condition of being in their right or proper places. And this does not mean that truth is merely a correspondence of statement or judgement to fact, as that would make fact equivalent to truth. Even though a sentence may be true if it designates the fact, the mere existence of the fact does not necessarily make the fact into a truth. Truth is not simply conformity with fact because facts can be created by man and can therefore be not in their proper places, meaning that facts can be false. That facts can be created by man confirms the truth of our denial that facts are neutral in their relation to truth and falsity, for the very existence itself of such facts is dependent upon values belonging to the particular worldview of their creators. By truth involving a certain correspondence and coherence then we do not mean simply a correspondence of thought, idea, or belief with fact, unless the fact were in its proper place, that is, unless the fact coheres within an integrated system of interrelated truths as apprehended by the soul. The proper place of man, for example, is that he is to be
considered as both spiritual and physical; that he is a living being possessing that inner faculty of knowing that apprehends the meaning of the universals; that has the power and capacity to articulate words or symbolic forms in meaningful patterns; he is spirit, soul, heart and intellect manifested in bodily form, and his spirit, soul, heart and intellect point to one and the same reality being named by many names because of its many modes in its relations with the various levels of existence encompassing the spiritual and physical domains. His reality and truth (haqq) applies to both these domains. But if he were utterly secularized, if he were considered merely as something physical, an animal different from other animals only in degree and not in kind, then he would not in reality be considered to be in his proper place. And certain scientific propositions pertaining to him thus considered, such as those arising from the statements and general conclusions of genetic engineering, for example, even though supported by empirical evidence, are yet false because they serve premisses based upon a false interpretation of the nature of man, which in turn is dependent upon a false system purporting to describe the true order of reality.

As for the meaning of haqq as reality, the proper term used to denote reality is haqiqah, which is derived from haqq. The distinction between haqq and haqiqah is that the former refers to ontological condition, order, or system as known by way of intuition; whereas the latter refers to ontological structure, to the very nature, being or self of a thing. Haqiqah or reality is that by which a thing is what it is. Now that by which a thing is what it is has a twofold aspect; on the one hand since every thing that is partakes of reality, reality is then something that is common to everything. This something common to everything is existence. Thus one of the twofold aspect of that by which a thing is what it is is the 'being existent' of the thing. The other aspect of that by which a thing is what it is is its 'being-distinct' from any other. 'Being-existent' is common to all existents in the var-
ious levels of existence, and although existence is the stuff of reality, it is, strictly speaking, not the commonness that makes a thing to be what it is; it is rather the ‘being-distinct’ from any other that makes a thing to be what it is, for it is only by virtue of distinction that realities have come into existence. Therefore the fundamental nature of reality is difference.

Existence (wujūd, from wujīda the passive form of wajada) denotes something found, discovered, perceived, known, sensed—by means of the external and internal senses, or of the intellect, or of the heart. Since existence as reality is the creative stuff of which things come to be, another form of the word (ijād) denotes something existentiated, created, originated. Since the reality that is existence pervades everything, it is self-sufficient in its eternal plenitude, and this meaning of not being in want, or need, is denoted by yet another form (wājīd). When by means of higher intuition one comes to find the reality that exists, this ‘finding’ of existence is called wijdān, which we said earlier refers to the intuition of existence. So when we refer above to an aspect of that by which a thing is what it is as its ‘being-existent’, the ‘being-existent’ of a thing should not be interpreted as denoting something existing merely actually or currently in the external world; but as denoting also that category of existence in the interior condition of the reality of existence that is continually unfolding itself in gradations becoming the things that we see and behold. Existence means to have a place in the order of reality. Since existence particularized as the ‘being existent’ of a thing is one of the twofold aspect of reality, the referent of ‘place’, when we say that existence means to have a place in the order of reality, is then the ‘being distinct’ of a thing. The order of reality, according to us and in the aforementioned sense, cannot be restricted to the phenomenal world, or the world of empirical things in the realms of sense and sensible experience.

When we define knowledge as consisting of units of meaning that are coherently related to other such units
thereby forming ideas, conceptions, and judgements; and we define meaning as the recognition of the place of anything in a system which occurs when the relation a thing has with others in the system becomes clarified and understood, we understand that it is such relation or network of relations that determines our recognition of the thing’s proper place in the system. By ‘the system’ we are referring of course not only to the initial, partial system within a network of interrelated systems, but finally also to the ultimate, grandscale ontological system as a whole. We are in concerted agreement that all knowledge comes from God, and that the manner of its arrival and the senses and faculties that receive and interpret it are distinctly not the same. Since all knowledge comes from God, and is interpreted by the soul through its physical and spiritual or intellectual faculties, it follows that the epistemological definition would be that knowledge, with reference to God as being its source of origin, is the arrival of meaning in the soul; and with reference to the soul as being its active recipient and interpreter, knowledge is the arrival of the soul at meaning. The world of nature as depicted in the Holy Qur’ān is composed of symbolic forms (āyāt), like words in a book. Indeed, the world of nature is another form of the Divine Revelation analogous to the Holy Qur’ān itself, only that the great, open book of nature is something created; it presents itself in multiple and diverse forms that partake of symbolic existence by virtue of being continually articulated by the creative word of God. Now a word as it really is is a symbol, and to know it as it really is is to know what it stands for, what it symbolizes, what it means. If we were to regard a word as if it has an independent reality of its own, then it would no longer be a sign or a symbol as it is being made to point to itself, which is not what it really is. So in like manner the study of nature, of anything, any object of knowledge in the world of created things, if the expression ‘as it really is’ is taken to mean its alleged independent reality, essentially and existentially, as if it were something ultimate and selfsubsistent, then such study is devoid of real
purpose and the pursuit of knowledge becomes a deviation from the truth, which necessarily puts into question the validity of such knowledge. For as it really is a thing is other than what it is, and that 'other' is what it means. Thus in the same manner that the study of words as words leads to deviation from the truth underlying them, the preoccupation in philosophy and physics with things as things leads to the erroneous, common sense belief in their existence outside the mind as aggregations of particles persisting through a certain period of time and moving in space, as if these particles were the ultimate material of the world. Whereas in reality the stuff of 'matter' consists of a series of events (a’rād, sing. ‘arad), and physical phenomena are processes whose every detail is discontinuous. A thing like a word is then in reality ultimately a sign or a symbol, and a sign or a symbol is something that is apparent and is inseparable from something else not equally apparent, in such wise that when the former is perceived, the other, which cannot be perceived and which is of one predicament as the former, is known. That is why we have defined knowledge epistemologically as the arrival in the soul of the meaning of a thing, or the arrival of the soul at the meaning of a thing. The 'meaning of a thing' means the right meaning of it, and what we consider to be the 'right' meaning is in our view determined by the Islamic vision of reality and truth as projected by the Quranic conceptual system. Thus the phrases that we used previously, such as the 'true order of reality', the 'just order pervading all creation', the 'levels and degrees', and the 'general order of created things' in our reference to the 'system' of conceptual relations in which the 'proper places' of things are recognized, point to no other than the Quranic conceptual system. Correspondence and coherence as we understand them in connection with reality and truth refer to proper place in the former case and to the Quranic system in the latter case.

Knowledge is limitless because the objects of knowledge are without limit. But there is a limit of truth in every
object of knowledge, so that the pursuit of true knowledge is not an endless search. Were its quest to be without end, then it would be impossible to attain to knowledge in the span of time to which there is a beginning and an end, and it would render knowledge itself to be meaningless. Knowledge of the truth about the world of empirical things can indeed be achieved and increased through inquiry made by generations of mankind. But true knowledge has an immediate bearing on the individual man as it pertains to his identity and destiny, and he cannot afford to suspend his judgement concerning its truth as it is not meant to be something that can be discovered eventually by future generations. That is why the crisis of truth occurring in every generation pertains to true knowledge, and the crisis of truth has perhaps never been so acute as in our age. Modern philosophy and science are unable to give a conclusive answer to the permanent question about truth. Their representatives attempt to clarify only the 'truth perspective' of the age in which the crisis of truth occurs, thus divesting truth of its objectivity. One can neither change, add to, nor embellish the truth so that it can become more true, nor can one fall short of it; in either of the cases it will not be the truth, but what is false. The truth is precisely itself, and nothing more or less. For every truth there is a limit that is true to that truth; the knowledge of that limit is wisdom. By it every truth is assigned its proper meaning which neither curtails nor transgresses it. There is a limit of truth in every object of knowledge, and every object of knowledge has a different limit of truth, some more recondite and difficult to discover than others, so that in our perpetual attempt to discover them there is no question of restricting inquiry, whose purpose, guided by wisdom, is to know such limits. True knowledge is therefore knowledge that recognizes the limit of truth in its every object.

The Holy Qur'ān itself speaks of its signs and symbols as consisting partly of those that are clear and established (al-muḥkamāt), and partly of those that are obscure and
ambiguous (al-mutashābihāt). In correspondence with the signs and symbols of the Holy Qur'ān, the world of phenomena also consists of signs and symbols which we call 'things' that are clear and established in their meanings, and those that are obscure and ambiguous. The detecting, discovery and revealing of the concealed meanings of the ambiguous signs and symbols in the Holy Qur'ān is called allegorical interpretation (ta'wil), and this is based upon the interpretation of those that are apparent (tafsīr). Thus, in the same manner that the interpretation of the obscure and ambiguous texts is to be based upon those that are clear and established, so the interpretation or the study and explanation of the obscure and ambiguous aspects of the things of the empirical world must be grounded upon what is already known and established. Although we said that some of the things that constitute the empirical world, the world of sense and sensible experience, are symbols whose meanings are clear and established, their being clear and established is understood by virtue of their being considered in their apparent meanings as arrived at by way of common sense. But since they are also physical in nature, they all are generally ambiguous because they appear to our consciousness to point to themselves, as if they each have independent, individual and self-subsistent reality. As symbols they are, to be sure, not something unreal, not merely appearance of the nature of illusion; but only provided they are understood to be something in profound and dependent connection with what they symbolize. Otherwise, considered as things in themselves, they are unreal, in the sense that they exist as such only in the mind, having no corresponding reality in the external world. What are existent in the external world and independent of the mind are realities in the process of actualization in particular and individual forms, which are modes and aspects of a single and dynamic all-encompassing Reality.

Supposing we are travelling in a car on a dark and stormy night heading for a place we have heard of but have
never been to. Then we arrive at a main junction with many different roads leading to different places. At the centre of the junction there is a signpost with many arms of varying lengths pointing to the various directions signifying the way to the different places. The signpost and its arms are simply made and painted white, and along the pointed planks which serve as arms are engraved in bold, black letters the place names and their relative distances from that spot. As our car approaches and its headlights illumine the signpost and its many arms, we soon notice one of the arms bearing the name of the place of our destination. What we do next, if we are to pursue the object of our destination, would surely be to turn away from the signpost without much hesitation, and follow the road towards which the sign is pointing. We would be doing this because the sign is clear. But now supposing the signpost were made of marble finely wrought, and the pointing arms were sculptured into forms wondrous and beautiful, the place names and their relative distances from the spot chiselled into letters of pure gold and embellished with rare gems — would we then be able to seek out, without much hesitation and tarrying, the pointing arm that would show us the way to our destination; and would we then simply turn away from the signpost to follow the road directed? Indeed, what would most certainly happen in this case would be that we would stop the car and even get out into the rain with a torchlight to get a closer look at the marvelous sight before us. And we might even spend the night in the car to await the day for a more satisfying look. The sign in this case is not clear; it is ambiguous, and it points to itself more than it points to the object on which its very existence depends.

What we have said above should make it clear to us that science according to Islām is ultimately a kind of ta‘wil or allegorical interpretation of the empirical things that constitute the world of nature. As such science must base itself firmly upon the tafsir or interpretation of the apparent or obvious meanings of the things in nature. Their apparent
and obvious meanings have to do with their respective places within the system of relations; and their places become apparent to our understanding when the limits of their significance are recognized. Ta'wil basically means getting to the ultimate, primordial meaning of something through a process of intellection. But even in this case, there are things whose ultimate meanings cannot be grasped by intellect; and those deeply rooted in knowledge accept them as they are through true belief which we call imān. This is the position of truth: in that there are limits to the meaning of things, and their places are profoundly bound up with the limits of their significance.

Limitation is not a shortcoming. Our external and internal senses and faculties of imagination and cognition all have limited powers and potentials, each created to convey and conserve information concerning that for which it was appointed. There is pragmatic purpose in limitation, for by it we are able to perceive and conceive objects of knowledge and ideas about them and their relations so that we may put the knowledge of things to beneficial use. If we had senses whose powers are less limited, like the senses possessed by certain animals, our perception of things in everyday life would be different; for not only would the form, texture, colour and other characteristics of things be different from what they are as we normally perceive them, but also that some of them would not exist for us, and some of them would not exist at all, thereby affecting the very existence of human culture and civilization. Then again, if we had eyes whose powers are even more less limited than that of certain animals; eyes that could penetrate the veils of phenomena such that they could see the events and process underlying the phenomenal world, then the forms of things would vanish from our sight and we would not be able to derive from them the knowledge of particulars that lead to universals, and the very meaning of things would perish. The setting of limits to the channels and sources by which we obtain knowledge is therefore a blessing and a mercy from God in order
that we may be able to understand the meanings of the objects of knowledge as well as to recognize their Creator.

Since the role of science is to be descriptive of facts, and facts undergo continual change by virtue of their underlying reality which is process, the secular aspect of modern philosophy and science considers change to be the ultimate nature of reality. That is why secularization as a philosophical program, in its attempt to correspond with the reality that is considered as absolute change, advocates change in all aspects of life, denies finality in worldview and propagates the belief in an open future. By 'change', which is movement involving space and time and presupposes diversity, philosophers and scientists usually mean either change of place or position, or qualitative and quantitative change which involves perpetual transformation or becoming. Some maintain that all motion is relative and there is no absolute motion; and some believe that change is merely due to psychological perception. The belief that knowledge pertains only to phenomena entails the belief that reality is change. We do not agree that change is merely psychological or 'subjective' since we affirm that movement is real. Our position that change is a reality should be understood without thereby implying that change is absolute; for we maintain that reality is at once both permanence and change, not in the sense that change is permanent, but in the sense that there is something permanent whereby change occurs. The implication underlying the concept of change is that the diverse things that constitute the world of phenomena somehow persist in existence and undergo movement or transformation. We maintain that phenomenal things do not persist in existence, but perish upon coming into existence, being continually replaced by new similars in a perpetual process. The perishing of things is called, after the Quranic expression, 'hālik or fanā'; and the perpetual process of renewal, again after the Quranic expression, is called khalq jadid—a new creation. The world is then ever new (muḥdath), it is novelty. Change, we say, occurs not at the
level of phenomenal things, for they are ever-perishing, but at the level of their realities which contain within themselves all their future states. In this sense change is the actualization of potentialities inherent in the realities of things which, as they unfold their contents, preserve their complete identities through time. The world of phenomena, we said earlier, are processes whose every detail is discontinuous. The discontinuance of existence in its every detail is due to the ever-perishing nature of phenomena that are being replaced by new similars. Discontinuance in existence also involves the realities underlying all phenomena; but whereas the world of phenomena is ever-new, the realities change and yet remain the same. Their change is their unfolding of their potential states involving existential discontinuity at every state of actualization; their remaining the same is their regaining their identities. Thus the realities are ever-regaining continuance in existence, while their phenomenal modes and aspects perish upon actualization. This ever-regaining continuance in existence is called, to use another Quranic expression, baqā'. The dual aspect of the realities—permanence and change—presupposes a third metaphysical category between existence and non-existence, and this is the realm of the permanent entities (al-a'yān al-thābitah) which are aspects of the names and attributes of God. As to the Ultimate Reality that is God, even though He describes Himself in terms explicit of absolute dynamism, He is far too exalted to be conceived as being immersed in process descriptive of becoming or transformation.

In this chapter we have conveyed brief statements outlining our position on the meaning of religion and belief; on the nature of God; on secularization and the nature of modern, contemporary philosophy and science, and presented a gist of their basic assumptions and presuppositions. We pointed out that there are similarities between our position and that of modern philosophy and science regarding the nature of phenomena and of empirical reality as well as of the sources and methods of knowledge, while at the same
time we maintained that there are profound differences in our respective understanding of them due ultimately to our affirmation of Revelation—and the Tradition deriving from it—as the source of true knowledge of ultimate reality. We have briefly outlined the contrast between our position and that of modern philosophy and science regarding perception, reason, intuition, and authority as sources and methods of knowledge. In this connection we maintained adherence to faculty psychology because it is aligned to the affirmation of existence of the soul, or intelligent spirit, as the ultimate reality of man and as the source of origin of human language. We stressed our concept of place beginning with our definition of meaning as the recognition of place within a system, showing also the conceptual connection between meaning and knowledge by defining the latter as coherent units of the former; we defined wisdom as knowledge of right place; justice as the condition of being in the right place; truth as conformity with right place; realities as permanent and separately placed entities; and existence as place in the order of reality. We explained the meanings of reality and truth, showing their relations of correspondence and coherence with fact. We distinguished the reality from the concept of existence, and maintained that the former is the truth underlying the nature of process. We defined true knowledge as recognition of the limit of truth in its every object. We referred to the Qur'anic system of conceptual interrelations and its methods of interpretation, saying that Islamic science must interpret the facts of existence in correspondence with that system, and not interpret that system in correspondence with the facts. We touched upon the problem of change or movement, and affirmed change and permanence together; and we maintained change and permanence only in the realities of things, and not in the things themselves as they are ever-perishing in their nature. We affirmed permanence also in God, neither implying by 'permanence' staticity, nor movement nor dynamicity that involves transformation or becoming; whereas in the reali-
ties change refers to actualization of their potentialities, while the real entities that establish their identities remain the same. What we have stated above in brief outline already implies, among other things, the primacy of the reality of existence; the dynamic nature of this reality that is continually unfolding itself in systematic gradation from the degrees of absoluteness to those of manifestation, determination, and individuation; the perpetual process of the new creation; the absence of a necessary relation between cause and effect, and its explanation in the Divine causality; the third metaphysical category between existence and nonexistence, which is the realm of the permanent entities; and the metaphysics of change and permanence pertaining to the realities. These constitute the fundamental bases of Islamic metaphysics, and it is within the framework of this metaphysics that our philosophy of science must be formulated.