

Editorial

Our first contributor is Anwar Ibrahim, the Malaysian Minister of Education. He has described in very convincing style the need to differentiate between science and non-science. The values, politics, ideology, power, prestige and polemics of science play an important role in it. In shaping a contemporary philosophy of science, Anwar Ibrahim emphasizes the need to infuse the entire system of science, its method, its processes, and its goals with the ethical and value concerns of the world-view of Islam. Our study of the history of science in Islam should help us to understand what was original and Islamic about Islamic science and how the Muslim scientists infused their work with Islamic ethics and values and interpreted their task through Muslim eyes.

The purpose of developing a contemporary philosophy of Islamic science, according to Anwar Ibrahim, is to help our scientists to construct a global foundation for contemporary Islamic knowledge and science. This would allow the development of a pragmatic philosophy which takes the ethical concerns of Islam into the laboratory. This kind of theory should help prioritize certain research, and formulate science policies for Muslim societies.

This theory should be able to demonstrate to both Muslims and non-Muslims alike that science not only helps in meeting the intellectual and physical challenges of modern times but can also solve contemporary problems of mankind in more satisfying and ethically sound ways.

In his opening remarks at the Seminar on "Paradigms in Political Science: Muslim Perspectives," organized by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and The Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) in *Jumādā al Awwal 1410/Dec. 1989*, Dr. Ṭāhā Jabir Al 'Alwānī, President of IIIT, traced political science in classical Islamic heritage. Al 'Alwānī acknowledges that we do not have specialized studies in our classical legacy that may be described today as political thought. Issues related to subjects like international relations, systems of government, history of diplomacy, political development, or methods of political planning, however, were treated through the medium of *fiqh*. There were no well-defined divisions between all other aspects of life and the political issues as there are in contemporary social sciences. Al 'Alwānī argues that the *fiqh* of contemporary politics and government must turn to the goals and purposes of Islam, to its general principles and to its precepts. This will build a complete system of political thought that will interact with contemporary realities for the realization of Islam's greater purposes. Al 'Alwānī, however, warns that theories will have to be erected upon the basis of accepted Shari'ah source-evidence, while drawing from the experience of historical and contemporary humanity.

Mona Abul-Fadl carries the debate in the disciplines to its epistemic foundations and this makes it possible to postulate alternative valid conceptions of social sciences compatible with different intellectual traditions. The different epistemes, or ways of knowing about reality, lead to their corresponding systems of belief and action which structure society and history and come to be filtered through modulating optics of lifestyles and civilizations. She identifies one optic as 'Oscillating Culture' based on a secular paradigm of knowledge and being. The other optic is the 'Median Culture' distinguished by a center that is known and knowable, an acknowledged core which constitutes a model reference point for the operational social/historical dynamic. For Muslim social scientists, their access to Median Culture is both intimate and detached because of their access to this culture. She argues that the *Tawhīdī* episteme has a liberating influence on the psyche of the social scientist because it creates a climate of creativity. Abul-Fadl singles out the specific characteristics of a sociology developed in a *tawhīdic* perspective as a discipline which is grounded in an ethical matrix understood as a realistic sociological proposition and not as an idealization or an abstraction of social reality. The *Tawhīdic* episteme can provide an opportunity not only for reconstructing social theory but society and polity as well. This is due to its bridging the gap between theory and practice or normative and empirical.

Once again we have an engaging paper from Muhammad Hashim Kamali on the Varieties of *Ra'y* (personal opinion) in Islam. His research paper outlines the parameters of personal opinion and looks into the evidence in support of and against an emphasis on rational enquiry, exercise of personal opinion and judgment pointing to the need for compliance with the directives of the Qur'an and Sunnah. He discusses the methodology and criteria for evaluating the acceptability of *ra'y*. His enquiry into the detailed classification of *ra'y* by the 'ulama shows how they tried to balance their concern for latitude and tolerance on the one hand with their respect for recognized authority and Islamic values on the other.

There has been a recent upsurge of interest in Muslim-American political activity demonstrated by important events such as the Muslim-American Political Awareness Conference held *Muḥarram 3-5, 1410/Aug. 4-6, 1989* in Washington, D.C. This and other events have sparked the interest of Muslims and non-Muslims for differing reasons. One area of political activity to which Kathleen Moore calls our special attention is judicial lobbying. The importance of courts as policymakers and as vehicles of social and political change she urges, should not be overlooked. Those who wish to promote an Islamic political agenda may find it useful and even necessary to lobby the courts. At the outset this article suggests ways in which Muslims can participate in the judicial level of American politics and develop litigation strategy. Then it reviews Muslim current involvement in the judicial process and the impact

of that involvement. Moore argues that limiting one's activity to the litigation process risks missing a crucial part of constitutional interpretative activity. Thus an alternative—which involves filing “friend of the court” briefs—is offered.

Our review article this time is on Leonard Binder's book *Islamic Liberalism*. Binder, considered one of the most original Western writers analyzing the Middle East and Islam today, began his intellectual career with the now classical work on the interaction of Islam and politics, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan*, followed by writings on Iran, Lebanon, Egypt and North Africa. In each of his contributions, Binder has effectively woven together a broad array of conceptual tools, theoretical perspectives and socio-historical data. What has distinguished him most is his sensibility to the issues of normative theory, both Islamic and Western. In his latest work, *Islamic Liberalism*, Binder engages in a bold and lively discourse on liberalism in contemporary Islam. Given the importance of the work, Parvez Manzoor of Stockholm University was requested to review it for *AJISS*. As expected, Manzoor's review was a serious dialogue with Binder. An advance copy of this review was sent to Binder who responded to questions raised in the review and offered a counter critique. The response follows the review.

This issue includes two book reviews, four conference reports and two responses to earlier articles under the views and comments section.

As we are venturing into the 1990s, a lot of research on Islam and Muslims is accumulating. Scores of Muslim and non-Muslim scholars are completing their doctoral dissertations in social sciences involving issues related to Islam and Muslim society. In order to make these researches and the researchers known to our readership we will be dedicating a good portion of our journal to the reproduction of the abstracts of their dissertations. In this way we hope to identify significant social scientists and to introduce them to the forum that *AJISS* provides.

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