Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series

Critical Thinking Quranic Perspective

Teacher's Manual

Laleh Bakhtiar

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Library of Islam

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PREFACE

What is the critical or creative thinking that the Quran taught the Prophet and continues to teach us? Critical or creative thinking is known as discernment (*furqan*) in the Quran. Critical thinking is defined as: The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide to belief and action.

Quranic thinking becomes critical when it evaluates the reasoning of a sign (*ayah*): Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner. The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, (ask questions) and solve problems. In general, our thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought, that is, when there is thinking wedded with wisdom (*hikmah*).[1]

This critical thinking *Teacher's Manual* teaches the process of **how** the Quran teaches us to think. Doing this, studying **how** the Quran teaches us to think, we learn to connect what we do with what we think and believe. In terms of psychology, we could say we learn to connect our behavior to our cognition. This is different from the disconnect that occurs between our behavior and our cognition when we just memorize the Quran without understanding the process behind what the sacred text says which is, unfortunately, the way full time and weekend Islamic schools in the West teach. That is, if we were to study history and its principles, or any secular subject in a mainstream American high school today, our teacher would most probably be teaching us through the process of critical thinking that he or she learned to become a teacher.

However, it needs to be said that learning **how** the Quran teaches us to think in no way questions the eternality of the Quran or in its having been a divine revelation to Prophet Muhammad. Just as a study of history as the "content" of a course in history has to accept the principles of history, so a study of the sacred text has to accept the principles that Quranic "content" teaches.

In addition, even though this sacred text was revealed centuries before there was any formal study of the critical thinking process, all of the later nine standards, eight elements of reasoning and seven moral traits are to be found in the Quran as we hope to show through this course on Quranic Studies. The Quran actually incorporates and teaches these to ones who engage in the process of critical thinking.

What is the Quranic Worldview?

> The Quranic worldview contains a foundation for reform. It should be reflected in a cogent, coherent, critical manner in the structure, applications, and outcomes of Islamic societies. Lack of awareness of the Islamic worldview's structure and content has caused a loss of vitality, resilience, relevance, and intellectual productivity. Islamic

principles, concepts, and values lack influence despite the abundance of writings from Islamic heritage and methodological tools for understanding....

Muslim thought patterns should be reformed through the critical study and examination of Muslim tradition. ... Muslim intellectuals should ... adopt objectivity and constructive criticism to view their own history and culture. The Islamic worldview contains the doctrinal foundation and the intellectual, psychological, and emotional impetus for the Muslim community to recover what it has lost....

The purported conflict between revelation and reason for Muslim communities is an illusion with no foundation in human nature or objective reality. At question are the written texts of revelation and the reality of human nature and the laws of the universe. Reason's job is to verify that revelation describes the reality of human nature and the wider universe. Since revelation and universal laws derive from the same source, there is no discord between the actual meaning and guidance conveyed by divine revelation....

Concern regarding the mind, or reason, relates not to reason or its axioms–which are an unchanging aspect of human nature–but rather with how reason and its capacities are used. The Quran speaks frequently of the processes of comprehending (*al-tadabbur*)–using one's reason (*al-aql/al-taaqqul*), reflection (*al-tafakkur*), and seeing (*al-ibsar*).

The proper understanding of revelation cannot possibly require coercion, compulsion, or a negation of human nature or laws of the cosmos. Divine revelation came to lead us to an understanding of our own true nature and creation as a whole: the only way to build a just, healthy, creative society. This revelation urges and guides human beings to activate and obey their will to do good. For example, the Quran ... guides us to use our human capacity for good, and is motivated by faith, wisdom, and a sense of ethical purposefulness. The Quranic worldview contains no possibility of genuine conflict between revelation and the facts of nature, human and cosmic. All a seeker requires to discover truth is to persevere in weighing and comparing available input....

Over time, the Quran was viewed just as a means to acquire a blessing and a heavenly reward through recitation and memorization while *ijtihad* (attempts to grapple with its meanings in new and creative ways) was lacking.... The Quran remains a constitution, an eternal message, a call, a law, and a worldview valid for all times and places. Its function is not to issue instructions or promulgate laws to manage society in specific times and places; instead, it presents a timeless, divinely inspired worldview....

The Quranic worldview is an ethical, monotheistic, purposeful,

positive perspective on the world and reflects the healthy, well-balanced human nature God created within us. Subsequently, a scientific, law-governed perspective supports responsible stewardship of the earth and its riches. A Muslim who has grasped the Quranic worldview will live in harmony with his or her God-given nature, which is essentially good. We as Muslims are called upon to instill in our children's minds and hearts a vision of love, dignity, and peace....

We can begin to envision the implications of the Quranic worldview for our societal institutions by applying its concepts to various areas of life. Such concepts include mutual consultation, justice, charity, the doing of good, and purification. Opposing concepts are injustice, wrongdoing, aggression, and all that counters reason and human interests. We seek to establish a proper understanding of the Quran as the source of guidance and a constructive spiritual worldview for our lives and society. The Quran serves as a measuring rod for all proposed aims and purposes–as well as a set of criteria for evaluating the content of narratives and other texts....

The Quran is not a discourse of the supernatural and the miraculous, like revelations delivered to humanity in earlier periods of its development. It is the discourse of knowledge, reading, reflection, and contemplation; of reason, argument, and persuasion, and of guidance, brotherhood, justice, and peace....

Sound application of Islamic values and concepts within the context of particular times and places requires wisdom, knowledge, and discernment. The Quran, which is the word of God and His final message to humankind, is also the source of valid guidance in the proper use of nature and the laws of the cosmos in all times and places....

Monotheism is the most fundamental principle of this worldview, since it provides the most intuitively convincing, universal response to human spiritual need. It also represents the 'ceiling' of human logic in understanding the various dimensions of life and existence: *There is not like Him anything. He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (42:11) The Quran's instructions reflect the essential nature of human conscience with its purposeful, ethical, and spiritual inclinations.

The principle of divinely granted stewardship is reflected in God's statement to the angels upon His creation of human beings. On the individual and communal levels, humans possess awareness and understanding. The principle of stewardship, which implies the ability to act in the world, bestows an honored position on human beings. This position entails the right to exercise freedom in the making of life decisions, and duties, responsibilities, and accountability for our actions on earth....

Justice (fair-mindedness) is the central aim of all human action and interaction on all levels: material, spiritual, economic, social, and

political. Without justice and moderation, all dimensions of human existence and stewardship are devoid of meaning and purpose: justice is the measuring rod for sound human conduct. The Quran helps us see the all-inclusiveness of justice in all aspects of life for the individual and the community....

Humans are distinguished from other creatures by their spirit and conscience, and by their desire to seek knowledge. This honor entails a responsibility that in turn requires that humans enjoy freedom to make meaningful choices. However, freedom does not justify chaos or hurting the rights and interests of other individuals, the community, or coming generations. Hence, no one may infringe upon this human right of stewardship in its individual and communal dimensions....

Subjective personal freedom is a freedom of conscience related to an individual's convictions, doctrinal beliefs, and worldview.... (It) is the freedom to act within the social sphere. This freedom impacts society and has corresponding limits determined through mutual consultation. The community determines boundaries and controls and should strive for the proper balance between individual rights and freedoms, and the right of the community to ensure its well-being and survival.

The Quran assures us that God's enduring reward shall be given to those ...*who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them*... (42:38). Consultation's purpose is to provide guidance for the ordering and management of society as a whole without infringing on individual rights and freedoms.

People are led both rationally and intuitively to the conviction that, within the limits of their abilities and circumstances, they are free to make meaningful choices for which they are responsible. The Quranic worldview sees human life as a serious, meaningful venture of fundamental goodness. It sees the fruit of all we accomplish in this life by way of reform, creativity, and service as extending into the spiritual realm of eternity. Our inborn spiritual perception is the foundation for the religious and moral sense. By bringing such aspirations into the center of our awareness, the Quranic worldview becomes our focus and source of inspiration.

One becomes better able to make conscious, well-informed, and responsible decisions about one's direction in life. The worldview intensifies our awareness of our responsibility and moral accountability, which are inseparable parts of our God-given human nature and among the features that qualify us to fulfill the role of God's stewards on earth.

By virtue of their growing knowledge, human beings have been given the ability to make use of the earth's resources and to build cultures and civilizations. They have also been granted freedom, the abil-

ity to choose, and a capacity for spiritual and moral perception that leads them to live purposefully and to seek goodness and rectitude, and an awareness of their accountability before their Maker....

To right the course of Islamic thought and culture today, Muslim thinkers and reformers should reclaim a comprehensive, scientific point of view (of critical thinking). Then, based on the solid foundation of the Quranic worldview, they can reform the Muslim community's approach to culture, education, and child rearing, which form the basis for the community's thought, academic institutions, and training.

The senses serve as tools of reason, which is the measure of human thought. Based on logic and the fundamentals of reason and common sense, we make observations and comparisons that enable us to form judgments about the world. The will serves as the basis for one's choices and decisions, either in pursuit of righteousness, justice, and reform on earth—or in satisfaction of selfish ends. As individuals and as a society, Muslims can repair what is broken in their way of thinking and the thinking of future generations.

The task of reform belongs to Muslim thinkers and pioneers who, in order to overcome cultural restraints and rigid, backward thinking, will need a generous dose of objectivity (non-egocentricity and/or socio-centricity), patience (integrity, confidence in reason, fair-mindedness), and courage.

We need an earnest, objective, critical reexamination of this community's heritage and history so we can distinguish the good from the bad, the useful from the useless. If we purge our intellectual, educational, and social spheres of weaknesses, prejudices, and distortions, we will be able to nurture an objective (non-egocentric), Quranically grounded, global perspective that derives its inspiration from the wisdom embodied in the life of the Prophet and the ways he applied the teachings of the Quran to real-life situations.

Knowledge and understanding are, first and foremost, the craft of thinkers, scholars, academicians, and intellectuals, as well as that of schools and teachers. The parents' tasks are, first and foremost, child-rearing and the education and refinement of their children's spirit and conscience, and guidance in their children developing proper conduct. Thinkers, educators, and reformers need to pay particular attention to writings and institutions that concern themselves with research on education from a cultural, scientific perspective, and then provide such research to parents by whatever means possible, particularly now that we live in the age of electronic communication and the Internet.

Muslim students and researchers need to do the following: free themselves from the habit of imitation (*taqlid*) and mental subordination, arming themselves with a creative, comprehensive, critical, scientific, and analytical way of thinking; develop a good understanding

of the Quranic perspective on human beings and the world around them, with its unchanging values and principles; equip themselves with a thorough knowledge of the scientific (and critical thinking) method of studying human nature and the laws and patterns of the material universe, as well as human societies and their potentials and strengths within the context of their particular temporal and geographic contexts; and benefit from both the Islamic heritage and the scientific achievements of modern Western society.[2]

About This Book

This work is divided into three chapters:

Chapter I: Critical thinkers apply the Nine Standards (clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, importance and fairness) to:

Chapter II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning (point of view, purpose, questions, inferences, concepts, information, implications, assumptions): Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues) in order to develop:

Chapter III: The Seven Moral Traits (belief in One God, God-consciousness, integrity through moral discipline, empowering courage, persevering in goodness, empathic altruism and being fair and just).

As previously noted, critical thinking is a process that analyzes how we think. This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. In English, the words "critical thinking" and "critical judgment" both refer to basically the Quranic concept of discernment (*furqan*). While our first reaction to the word "critical" may be that we think it means something negative such as "to criticize," this is not what critical thinking or critical judgment is about. There are no negative connotations. Critical thinking (judgment, discernment (*furqan*)) refers to analyzing thoughts in order to become better at thinking. In this case, it is analyzing the Quranic text by studying HOW to think.

Students best develop Quranic critical thinking skills through dialogical learning. Dialogic learning is learning that takes place through dialogue. It is typically the result of dialogue where those engaging in dialogue relate to, or believe in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities. In other words, the consequence of a dialogue in which different people provide arguments based on validity claims and not on power claims. Through dialogue with the Quranic text with classmates, with a teacher or mentor, the goal of the students is to achieve ethically rational development, that is, a genuine sense of justice or fair-mindedness.

If critical thinking is taught simply as atomic skills, separate from the empathic practice of entering into points of view that students are fearful of or hostile toward, they will simply find additional means of rationalizing prejudices

and preconceptions, or convincing people that their point of view is the correct one.•

In order for students to develop into Quranic critical thinkers, they have to engage in questioning as the sacred text does through many of its signs (*ayat*). Learning from the Quranic way of questioning deepens students' understanding and strengthens their belief. They are then able to put what they believe into practice in a fair and meaningfully way. As emerging critical thinkers who learn to deeply question what they believe, they bridge any gap that may be present between their beliefs and their practice.

How Do Teachers Ask Questions?

As teachers, we want students to think with us as we lecture or guide a discussion. How do we ask questions that stimulate this kind of intellectual engagement? We can best promote critical thinking by asking open questions that cannot simply be answered 'yes' or 'no' or with a single 'right' answer. Our questions can invite Quranic Studies students to analyze, synthesize or evaluate'course material. 'Why?' and 'How?' can be more profitable for discussion than 'What?'

Ask your students to clarify their comments or answers. You might do this even when the comment is clear to you. This can be helpful for other students in the class:

Are you saying that...?
Could you give me an example?

Ask questions that probe your students' assumptions. They may be unaware of their assumptions until asked to articulate them:

What are you assuming here? What could we assume instead?
Is this always the case?
Why do you think the assumption holds here?

Ask questions that probe reasons, evidence and causes. Lead students to support their arguments:

What are your reasons for saying that?
What other information do we need to know?
Is there good evidence for believing that?
What do you think the cause is?

Ask questions that probe implications and consequences:

When you say___, are you implying that____?
If you do that, what will happen?

How is that connected to the question?
How does that bear on ____?
How does that follow?

Ask questions that help students recognize, and clarify, their own thought processes:

Could you explain further where you're having difficulties?
Could you express that point in another way?
Could you be more specific?
Have you thought of...?
What factors make this a difficult problem?
What would this look like from the point of view of ___?

Ask questions that require students to defend their positions. Play 'devil's advocate,' (a person who expresses a contentious opinion in order to provoke debate or test the strength of the opposing arguments) even with students you agree with or who articulate their points most clearly and persuasively. All students can benefit from this intellectual exercise.

Ask a question with multiple possible answers. Write all options on the board without commenting on the list being produced. Then have the class discuss the options, explaining why some answers are better than others.

When you ask open questions, be sure to allow students time to respond (between 10 and 30 seconds). This time feels longer than it is; try not to rush in too soon to rephrase the question or answer it yourself. If the silence is protracted, however, you might try rephrasing the question or have a student rephrase it for you or give students a few minutes to write about the question or discuss it with a peer.[3]

TACTICS

In addition to placing an emphasis on questions, have students:

Summarize or put into their own words what the Quran has said.
Elaborate on what it has said.
Relate the issue or content to their own knowledge and experience.
Give examples to clarify or support what they have said.
Make connections between related concepts.
State the question at issue.
Describe to what extent their point of view differs.

THIS QURANIC TRANSLATION

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran* unless other-

wise indicated. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of *The Sublime Quran*, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

Universal: The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature.

This opens up the study of who this Prophet actually and adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

Inclusive language: Examples of this would be the translation of the derivatives of *k f r*, literally meaning: To hide, to deny the truth or cover over something. Most English translations use the verb "to disbelieve" or "to be an infidel" making the active participle "one who disbelieves" or "one who is an infidel." In the present translation the more inclusive viable terminology is used, namely, "to be ungrateful," the active participle being "one who is ungrateful" where the context allows. The Quran itself declares its timelessness and universality. Therefore, its understanding or interpretation must also be eternal and for all time, inclusive of all of humanity rather than exclusive to one group of people.

Another example is that when the Quran refers to "the Children of Israel," it is not referring to a geographical area, but to Prophet Jacob who was called "Israel." Therefore, the Children of Jacob is used here.

Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well intentioned a person may be, the use of the word Allah instead of God when speaking English, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (*tawhid*). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, name- ly, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

Thou vs You: In regard to the second person singular (thou) as opposed to the second person plural (you) in English, in the Arabic language is very specific. There are fourteen personal pronouns in Arabic as opposed to six in English. Arabic includes the nominative "thou"; the objective, "thee"; and the possessive, "thy".

It is important to keep the distinction. The distinction between using the second person singular (Thou, Thee, Thy) refers to the Oneness of God, the singular God. Whereas when "you" or second person plural is used for God, we are indicating that there are plural gods. This is the only sin that the Quran says is unforgivable.

In order not to burden the reader with King James' language, wherever the reader sees **you** in bold, this indicates that the original was thou or thee, **your** indicates that the original was thy.

God knows best.

Laleh Bakhtiar
Chicago, 2016

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My gratitude to Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali for his permission to use his excellent essay on "Reading the Signs: A Quranic Perspective on Thinking," as the Introduction to this work. His work gave me the courage to publish what I had learned of critical thinking when translating the Quran into English. I realized that not only did the Quran teach me what to think, but more importantly for critical thinking, it taught me HOW to think and Professor Kamali's essay confirmed my intuitions as I hope it does for the readers of this textbook.

I am also grateful to the Center for Critical Thinking[4] and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (*furqan*), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, *In the Shade of the Quran*, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

My thanks also to Abu Hamid Abu Sulayman for his work entitled, *The Quranic World View*, published by IIIT in Herndon, Virginia and M. M. Sharif and B. A. Dar for their essays: "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," respectively published in *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (1963), now available online. The fruit of these latter two works and their importance for critical thinking are to be found in Chapter III of this work indicated by *.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

PROLOGUE[5]

It is important for students to learn to read well as they develop into Quranic critical thinkers. By doing so, they learn how to engage in a process known as "close reading." Close reading describes, in terms of critical thinking, "the careful, sustained interpretation of a brief passage of text. Such a reading places great emphasis on the single particular over the general, paying close attention to individual words, syntax, and the order in which sentences and ideas unfold as they are read.•

Students in a Quranic Studies program not only need to learn how the sacred text teaches Quranic thinking, but also how to "own" the important Quranic ideas. This is accomplished by students learning the active use of intellectual or cognitive skills. This, in turn, requires the art of close reading by actually learning how to put it into practice in understanding the Quranic message.

The focus here in this prologue is to show some of the basics necessary to develop close reading. What does it mean to think Quranically from a close reading of it?

Reading Needs to Have a Purpose

When we ask questions about the purpose, aim or objective of the Quranic text we are reading, this forces us to develop certain tasks. Readers developing into critical thinkers read for a purpose, a goal, objective or agenda. What this purpose is depends on what they are reading and determines how they read. In the case here, the purpose is to understand the Quranic message. Reading the Quran has a universal purpose: to figure out or understand the logic of what God has to say on a given subject by asking as they read the Quran:

What is the purpose of this sign (*ayah*)?
Is the Quranic purpose in this sign well stated or clearly implied?

The Quran consists of words and when students engage in close reading, they learn to translate the words into meaning. The Quranic message has translated ideas and experiences of the past into words. Now students must take those same Quranic words and re-translate them back into the original meaning that they had with the aid of their own ideas and experiences. By accurately translating Quranic words into intended meanings, critical thinkers have engaged in analytic, evaluative, and creative acts.

Unfortunately, few Quranic readers are skilled at translating the Quranic meanings of words. There are few who are able to accurately mirror the meaning that the Quran intended. They project their own meanings into it. They unintentionally distort or violate the original meaning of the Quran that they read.

In general, then, students should read to figure out what the Quranic signs (*ayat*) mean. Their reading will be influenced by their purpose for reading and by the nature of the Quranic text itself. For example, if students are reading for

spiritual reward, it may not matter if they do not fully understand the Quranic text. This is fine as long as they know that they do not deeply understand it. Some of the various purposes for reading the Quran include:

1. Sheer spiritual reward: requires no particular skill level.
2. To enter, understand, and appreciate the Quranic world-view: requires close reading skills in working through a challenging series of tasks that stretch our minds.
3. To learn how the Quran teaches us to think: requires close reading skills in internalizing and taking ownership of the Quran's organized system of meanings.

With these points in mind, teachers know that in close reading there are certain tools and skills needed to read the sacred text. In addition to being clear about the purpose of students in reading, they must also be clear about God's purpose in the revelation. Both are relevant.

Developing Quranic Knowledge[6]

All knowledge exists in 'systems' of meanings, with interrelated primary ideas, secondary ideas, and peripheral ideas. Imagine a series of circles beginning with a small core circle of primary ideas, surrounded by concentric circles of secondary ideas, moving outward to an outer circle of peripheral ideas. The first ideas, at the core, explain the secondary and peripheral ideas. Whenever we read the Quran to acquire knowledge, we should take ownership, first, of the first ideas. These primary ideas are the key to understanding all of the other ideas. Moreover, when we gain an initial understanding of the primary ideas, we can begin to think within the system as a whole. The sooner we begin to think within a system, the sooner the system becomes meaningful to us.

We should relate the core ideas we learn within Quranic Studies to core ideas in other systems of knowledge, for knowledge exists not only in a system but also in relation to all other systems of knowledge. To do this, we must learn how to read the Quran for its core ideas and for its system-defining function. Mastering any set of foundational ideas makes it easier to learn other foundational ideas. Learning to think within one system of knowledge helps us learn how to think within other systems.

Reading to Understand the Quranic System of Thought

Close reading of the Quran requires disciplined reading in understanding tits systems of thought. This means learning the elements of how our thought process works. Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve is-

sues). Reading in this way, we are able to construct the Quranic systems of thought.

When we come to understand these eight basic elements of thinking or reasoning, we have powerful intellectual tools that enable us to think better. We understand that whenever we reason about anything whatsoever, these parts of thinking are inherent in our mind's operations.•

Thus, when we read, we are reasoning through the Quran; we are reading for a purpose, using concepts or ideas and assumptions of our own, making inferences, thinking within a personal point of view. At the same time, the Quranic text we are reading is the product of Quranic reasoning. We, therefore, recognize that embedded in the Quran is God's purpose, questions, assumptions, concepts and so forth. The better we are at understanding our own reasoning within our own perspective, the better we can understand the reasoning of the Quran. The better we understand Quranic logic, the better we understand our own.•

When we can effectively move back and forth between how we are reading and how we are thinking, we bring how we think to bear upon what we read and what we read to bear upon how we think. We are able to change our thinking when the logic of how we read improves how we think. We are able to withhold accepting new ideas when we cannot reconcile them with our own.•

Understanding the Quranic Systems of Thought

To understand the Quranic point of view, disciplined reading approaches it as systems of thought. The Quranic sacred text is not only based on a system of thought, but it is a system of systems. Quranic content as a large-scale system also contains sub-systems within it: semantics, grammar, rules of recitation, pronunciation, calligraphy, exegeses, and so forth, as well as serving as the basis for the development of many other sciences such as cosmology, metaphysics, physics, biology, psychology, economics and so on. Therefore, the sacred text can be seen as a system of systems.

To understand this system within systems, students have to actively engage in a dialogue with the sacred text, actively seeking the Quranic purpose in its revelation, looking for the systems of meaning within it.

Close reading requires that students form questions and look for answers to those questions while, at the same time, reading the text. Students should learn to connect new ideas they are learning from the sacred text to ideas they have previously learned about the Quran, correcting their errors when it is necessary to do so.

Who is a Strong-Sense Quranic Critical Thinker?

According to research done in this area, the following would describe a strong-sense Quranic critical thinker:

1. An ability to question deeply their own framework of thought;

2. An ability to reconstruct sympathetically and imaginatively the strongest versions of points of view and frameworks of thought opposed to their own;

3. An ability to reason dialectically (multilogically) in such a way as to determine when one's own point of view is at its weakest and when an opposing point of view is at its strongest.

The Quran, for instance, often makes contrasts between believers and non-believers (18:29), between paradise and hell, life and death, angels and satans, manifest and hidden and openness (see 4:123-124 and 92:5-8). It uses phrases such as 'whosoever ... and whosoever; as for one who ... and as for one who; and as for ... and as for (see 3:106-107; 89:25-30).

A Quranic thinker, comfortable thinking about multilogical problems, is comfortable thinking within multiple perspectives, in engaging in dialogical and dialectical thinking, in practicing empathic altruism, in thinking across disciplines and domains. Multilogical thinking is thinking that sympathetically enters, considers, and reasons within multiple points of view.

Strong sense critical thinkers are not routinely blinded by their own points of view. They know they have points of view and therefore recognize on what framework of assumptions and ideas their own thinking is based. They realize the necessity of putting their own assumptions and ideas to the test of the strongest objections that can be leveled against them. Teaching for critical thinking in the strong sense is teaching so that students analyze and develop, understand, and critique their own deepest prejudices, biases, and misconceptions, thereby discovering and contesting their own egocentric and sociocentric tendencies.

Only if we contest our inevitable egocentric and sociocentric habits of thought can we hope to think Quranically in a genuinely fashion. Only dialogical thinking about basic issues that genuinely matter to the individual provides the kind of practice and skill essential to strong sense critical thinking.

Who is a Weak-Sense Quranic Critical Thinker?

Again, based on studies in this area, the following characteristics defines a weak-sense Quranic critical thinker:

1. Those who do not hold themselves or those with whom they ego-identify to the same intellectual standards to which they hold 'opponents' (for example, the early ungrateful Quraysh).

2. Those who have not learned how to reason empathically within points of view or frames of reference with which they disagree (extremists who operate from a scriptural rigid and intensely literal interpretation of the Quranic text).

3. Those who tend to think monologically (within only one point of view; those who have a tribal mentality and deep intolerance).

4. Those who do not genuinely accept, though they may verbally espouse, the values of critical thinking (narrow-minded, inflexible individuals).

5. Those who use the intellectual skills of critical thinking selectively and

self-deceptively to foster and serve their vested interests (at the expense of truth such as hypocrites to whom the Quran describes); able to identify flaws in the reasoning of others and refute them; able to shore up their own beliefs with reasons.

Who is an Uncritical Quranic Thinker?

The following describes the uncritical Quranic thinker based on cognitive research studies:

1. Such a person has undeveloped intellectual skills resulting so that such person is naive, conformist, easily manipulated, dogmatic, easily confused, unclear, closed-minded, careless in word choice, inconsistent, unable to distinguish evidence from interpretation.
2. Does not recognize that he or she is not a critical thinker.

Reading While Thinking About Reading

The human being has been endowed with a reflective mind. It can then use this to reflectively think about how it is reading the Quran. In this case, the mind moves back and forth between thinking and, then, thinking about thinking. It moves forward a bit, then loops back upon itself to check on its own operations. It checks its tracks. It makes good its ground. It rises above itself and exercises oversight on itself.•

For students to learn how to monitor their own thinking while processing what the Quran is teaching is an important ability for them to have. An example would be, if students do not understand what they are reading, they should slow down and put the meaning of each sentence they are reading in their own words.

How to Engage the Sacred Text

In engaging with the sacred text, students should ask themselves:

Can I summarize the meaning of this sacred text in my own words?
Can I give examples from my own experience of what the Quran is saying?
Can I generate metaphors and diagrams to illustrate what the Quran is saying?
What is clear to me from the Quranic signs and what do I need clarified?
Can I connect the core ideas in the Quran to other core ideas I understand?

The Quran is a Teacher

The Quran is a teacher. By close reading of the Quranic text, students learn the essential meaning of how the teacher is teaching. This, then, helps students put the Quranic meanings into practice. When they take the basic, core ideas of the Quranic teachings into their minds through close reading, they can begin to use them productively in their own life.

Questions to Ask Students

Do you know how your mind operates?
Are you aware of your prejudices and preconceptions?
Are you aware of the extent to which your thinking mirrors the thinking of those around you?
Are you aware of the extent to which your thinking has been influenced by the thinking of the culture in which you have been raised and conditioned?
To what extent can you step outside your day-to-day mindset and into the mindset of those who think differently from you?
Are you able to imagine being "wrong" in some of your beliefs?
What criteria would you use to evaluate your personal beliefs?
Are you aware of how to upgrade the quality of your own beliefs?•

The Intellectual Endeavor of Close Reading

Reading is a form of intellectual work. Intellectual work requires willingness to persevere through difficulties. But perhaps even more important, intellectual work requires understanding what such work entails. This is where most students fall short. Consider the challenge of analyzing, evaluating, and repairing an automobile engine. The biggest challenge is in knowing how to do what needs to be done: how to use the tools of auto mechanics in taking the engine apart and how to run tests on specific systems in it. And learning this requires learning how an automobile engine functions, the internal combustion system it represents.•

No one would expect to know how to repair an automobile engine without training, involving both theory and practice. If we learn to 'read' without understanding what good reading involves, we learn to read poorly. That is why reading is a fundamentally passive activity for many students. It is as if their theory of reading was something like this: We let our eye move from left to right, scanning one line at a time, until somehow, in some inexplicable way, meaning automatically and effortlessly happens in our mind.•

Here we have emphasized the fact that close reading, reading that is substantive in nature, requires a particular form of engagement of the mind. It requires intellectual skills that enable the readers to analyze and assess as they read. It requires the ability to question in special ways while reading. Only when students actively engage their minds in a skilled dialog with the texts they read, disciplining their thinking as they read, are they achieving depth of understanding.•

Close reading teaches the following:

Understanding our purpose in reading the Quran
Understanding God's purpose in the revelation of the Quran
Seeing ideas in the Quranic text as being interconnected
Looking for and understanding systems of Quranic meaning

Engaging the sacred text while reading
Going beyond impressionist reading of the Quran
Formulating questions and seeking answers to those questions while reading the Quran

To read the Quran, particularly reading it in translation, in addition to having the above understandings, students must be able to identify the big picture within the Quran, to determine the key ideas within the Quran early on, and to see the scaffolding that connects all the ideas within the Quran. In other words, they need to develop structural reading abilities. Moreover, students need to see that there are generalizable skills they must develop to read signs (*ayat*, singular, *ayah*) and sections (singular, *ruku*) as well as chapters (*suwar*, singular, *surah*). In addition, students must develop reading skills specific to reading the Quran.

What does this sign (*ayah*) tell me about the Quran?
What is the main idea in the Quran?
What are the parts of the Quranic whole, and how does it deal with those parts?
In the light of my structural reading, what questions would I pursue during close reading of the Quran?

Reading Quranic Sentences

Reading a Quranic sentence consists, first of all, in finding a way to state what the sentence says so we can think the thought the sentence expresses. Further ways to make the meaning of a sentence clear are: elaborating the sentence, finding an example, and illustrating its meaning.•

Finding key sentences means finding the sentences that are the driving force within the sacred text. Structural reading is one way by which we locate key paragraphs and boil them down to key sentences, and then to key Quranic ideas and key questions.•

An important part of reading with discipline is to connect sentences to the broader context within which they are located, to see how they fit within the written piece. For every sentence we read, we might ask:•

How does this sentence connect with the other sentences in the sacred text?
How does this Quranic sentence relate to the organizing idea of this text as a whole?

Good readers read sentences in relationship to other sentences, connecting each sentence with the purpose of the sacred text. Taking a sentence out of context can pose problems because sentences read in isolation from the sentences that precede or follow them often overstate a point. The sentences that precede or follow clarify the Quran's true meaning, or bring it in line with supporting facts. Good readers read a text charitably and generously. They look for quali-

fications of points that otherwise might seem false or overstated.•

Reading a Quranic Section (*ruku*)

Carefully reading a Quranic section involves finding the idea or question that is the driving force within it. Finding key Quranic words consists of finding the ideas or questions that are the driving force within the section. Structural reading, we recall, is an important means by which we locate key Quranic ideas.

All sections within the Quran should connect to other sections so that we can see logical connections between Quranic ideas. All Quranic ideas should form a system of meanings. As we move from section to section, ask ourselves:

What is the most important idea in this Quranic section?
How do the ideas in this Quranic section relate to the ideas in previous Quranic sections?
How are the important ideas in the Quran connected?

Connect the Quranic ideas, when possible, to situations and experiences that are meaningful in our life. To actively connect ideas to life situations, ask:

How can I relate this Quranic idea to something I already understand?
Is there an important Quranic idea here that I can use in my thinking?
Have I ever experienced a situation that sheds light on this Quranic idea?

How to Read the Quran for Quranic Studies

The first and most important insight necessary for successfully reading the Quranic text is that it will focus on 'systems' which, when internalized, can help students reason through a specific set of problems. They focus on a special way of thinking about a special set of things.

The reading strategy should not be whole, part, part, part, part, part...but, rather, whole, part, whole, part, whole, part. They should first be grounded in a basic (though introductory) idea of the whole. They then relate each part (each subsequent section) to that whole. They understand the whole through integrating the parts into it. They use the whole as their tool of synthesis. They use their knowledge of the parts as a tool of analysis.

Questions to Ask About Quranic Study

Answer as many of these questions as you can by examining the Quran on the subject. You may need help from your instructor on some of them):

To what extent are there competing schools of thought within Quranic Studies?
To what extent do experts in Quranic Studies disagree about the answers they give to important questions?
What other areas deal with this same Quranic Studies (from a different standpoint, perhaps)?

To what extent are there conflicting views about Quranic Studies in light of these different standpoints?
To what extent, if at all, is Quranic Studies properly called a science?
To what extent can questions asked in Quranic Studies be answered definitively?
To what degree are questions in Quranic Studies matters of (arguable) judgment?
To what extent is there public pressure on professionals in Quranic Studies to compromise their professional practice in light of public prejudice or vested interest?
What does the history of Quranic Studies tell us about the status of knowledge in the field? How old is Quranic Studies?
How common is controversy over fundamental terms, theories, and orientation?
If there are competing schools of thought within Quranic Studies, what is the orientation of the translator?
Do they highlight these competing schools and detail the implications of that debate?
Are there commentaries available that approach this field from a significantly different standpoint?
If there are, how should we understand the orientation or bias of this commentary?
Would other experts in Quranic Studies disagree with any of the answers given in this commentary to important questions?
How would they disagree?
Are there books in other fields that deal with this same subject (from a different standpoint, perhaps)?

Some Questions to Raise About the Logic of the Quran

Most traditional Quranic study programs in the Muslim world take a didactic approach in teaching. They introduce principles or concepts, then provide drills. Specific skills are often torn from their proper contexts and practiced merely for the sake of practice. Yet, without context, skills have little or no meaning. An occasional simple reiteration of basic purposes or ideas is insufficient. Students need to see for themselves when, how, and why each skill is used specifically as it is.

As the students read and come to understand the Quranic content in regard to rules of grammar, they will find examples of grammatical shifts for rhetorical purposes. For example, a change in the person being addressed: *Is not **He** better Who created the heavens and the earth and caused to descend for you from the heavens, water? With it **We** caused joyous, fertile gardens to develop. It had not been for you to cause their trees to develop. Is there any god besides God? Nay! They are a folk who equate others with God.* (27:60); a change in number from singular, dual and plural: *And* I *swear an oath by the reproachful soul.* (75:2)

Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? (75:3) *Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again.* (75:2-4)[11]

Keeping in mind the idea that language and grammar are, on the whole, logical, we should ask questions that help students discover this logic within the sacred text. Students should learn how to use grammatical distinctions, and why. For example, though students 'cover' the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs, they see no reason to make this distinction when they read the Quran. They should learn to supply implied objects of transitive verbs when they read it. They should use grammatical analysis to help them read.

What is a Quranic sentence? How is it different from a group of words?
What is a Quranic section (*ruku*)?
How is it different from a group of Quranic sentences?
What are Quranic words for? What do they do? How?
How are words alike? Different? What kinds of words are there?
How is each used in the Quranic context?
Why are some ways of using a word right and others wrong?
What different kinds of Quranic sentences are there?
When and how should each be used?
Why follow the rules of Quranic grammar?
How does punctuation help the reader?
How does knowing about grammar help me write? Read?
When do I need to know this distinction or concept?
How should I use it? How does knowing this help me as a writer?
A reader? Why and how do different signs of the Quran differ?
What do they have in common?

Some Questions to Raise About the Logic of Persuasive Writing

The persuasive text of the Quran has a straightforward logic. In it, the message attempts to describe some dimension of real life and hopes to persuade us to take it seriously. We, as readers, need to grasp what is being said and judge whether it does make sense or in what way or to what degree it makes sense. For example, see 4:63 where the Prophet is admonished to speak with penetrating words or 2:183-2:187 where believers are told to fast during the month of Ramadan, then, one by one the Quran removes any obstacle that may arise is a believer's mind about it. (See Abdul Haleem, *The Study Quran.*)

What parts of this sacred text do I seem to understand?
What parts don't I understand?
What, exactly, is the Quranic message trying to say? Why?
How does the Quranic message support what is said with reasons, evidence, or experiences?
What examples can I give to further illuminate these ideas?

What counter-examples can I cite?
How could the Quranic message respond to my
counter-examples?
What are the basic parts of this sacred text?
How are the pieces organized?
Which claims or ideas support which other claims or ideas?
What beliefs does this claim presuppose?
What does it imply?
What are the consequences of believing or doing as
the Quranic message says?
How could I check, or better evaluate what the sacred text says?
How are such Quranic questions settled, or such claims evaluated?
What deeper meaning does this sacred text have?
What criticisms can I make? What is left out? Distorted?
How are opponents to the Quran addressed?
Are these opponents represented fairly?
Does the evidence support exactly the Quranic conclusions drawn?
If not, am I sure I understand the conclusions and evidence?
What is the source of the evidence? How should I evaluate it?
What is left unexplained? What would the Quran say about it?
Of all the Quranic ideas or concepts, which is the most fundamental
or basic?
How are these Quranic concepts used?
What other Quranic concepts are they related?
How does the Quran use of concepts relate to mine and
to that of others?
Should other concepts have been used instead?
How can I reconcile what has been said with what others
have said?

Introduction
Reading the Signs: A Quranic Perspective on Thinking
by Mohammad Hashim Kamali

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values (see Chapter III). The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

The Divine Signs (*ayat*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the*

earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that

power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur*; *tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related pressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and reportsed and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on unerstanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah*

is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa galb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth

and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a

view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be Godfearing of your Lord Who created*

you from a single soul. (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique ɜature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harıony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of ſadinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral alues formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen ere expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, uman dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, egel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spirıal took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any imɔt in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between : secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast beeen the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit ıs the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a dispro-

portionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

Obstacles to Correct Reasoning

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.*(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakariya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative im-

pulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may

also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

Conclusion

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between

the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements

is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

Chapter I. Nine Standards

Introduction to the Nine Standards•

1. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: *tabayyana*)
2. Accuracy (to be free from error: *al-rushudu mina l-ghayi*)
3. Precision (exact to the necessary level, to be precise: 'ahkama)
4. Relevance (to make relevant, to relate: qassa)
5. Depth (containing complexities and interrelationships: *'arada*)
6. Breadth (involving multiple viewpoints: *'arada*)
7. Logic (to be reasonable: *'aqala*)
8. Significance (Focusing on the important, not trivial, to be worthy: *ahl*)
9. Fairness (not self-serving or egocentric), to be fair: (hasan)

These nine standards are general rules for thought. Developing them as the basis for our thoughts requires extensive practice and hard intellectual endeavor (*ijtihad*). It requires a great deal of time, time that is well spent when the goal is to learn **how** the Quran teaches us to think in order to confront the irrationality and injustice students face among the people and societies in which they live.

Students are cleverly manipulated by Muslim extremists, among others, to follow a path that goes against both their Quranic long-term and short-term interests. Students are faced with skilled propaganda, political debate, defense of a group's interests and deception of an enemy in the guise of a friend to try to turn them away from developing critical thinking skills in learning and defending fair-minded truth.•

1. Clarity• (understandable, to be clear: *tabayyana*)

The word "clarification" or to be clear (*bayan*) occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarification in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error.

Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

In order to help students clarify their thinking, have them try to figure out

the meaning of what the Quranic message below (4:94) is saying. Have them explain their understanding of an issue mentioned in the following Quranic section (*ruku*) (4:92-4:94) to someone else to help clarify it in their own mind.

Have them practice summarizing in their own words what the Quranic section or sign(s) is saying. Then ask:

Did you understand the sign(s) correctly?
Did you agree or disagree with what your classmate said before you clearly understood what the Quranic text is saying?
Did you feel that you were thinking clearly?
Did you feel your thinking was vague, muddled, deceptive or misleading?

Have them:

Summarize in their own words what they think the Quran said.
Have them give one point at a time, explain it and elaborate on what they mean.
Mention a life experience that illustrates the point in hand.
Use metaphors or analogies to help them connect their ideas to things they have already understood.

Being clear about what they think when they read a sign(s) of the Quran, helps them understand what the analytic, evaluative and creative process is.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—CLARITY

O those who have believed! When you travel in the way of God, then be ***clear*** *and say not to whomever gives you a proposal of peace: You are not one who believes, looking for advantage in this present life. With God is much gain. Thus you had been before like this. Then God showed grace to you so become* ***clear****. Truly God has been Aware of what you do.* (4:94)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 4: WOMEN

Sec. 13

It had not been for the one who believes to kill one who believes unless by error. Whoever killed one who believes by error, the letting go of a believing bondsperson and blood money should be handed over to his family unless that family be charitable. If he had been from the enemy folk of yours and he be one who believes, then, there should be the letting go of a believing bondsperson. If he had been of a folk who between you and between them is a solemn promise, then, blood money should be handed over to the family and the letting go of a believing bondsperson. Then, whoever finds not the means, then, formally fast

for two successive months as a penance from God. God had been Knowing, Wise. (4:92)

Whoever kills one who believes as one who is willful, then, his recompense is hell, one who will dwell in it forever. God was angry with him and cursed him and He prepared for him a tremendous punishment. (4:93)

O those who believed! When you traveled in the way of God, then be clear and say not to whomever gave you a proposal of peace: You are not one who believes, looking for advantage in this present life. With God is much gain. Thus, you had been like that before, then God showed grace to you, so be clear. Truly, God had been Aware of what you do. (4:94)

QURANIC COMMENTARY ON 4:92-4:94

In this section above, the Quran speaks about internal relations among Muslims from the same or different countries. The only fighting or killing allowed among Muslims is for the punishment of certain crimes. Nothing can supersede the relationship that exists between Muslims. No Muslim can kill another Muslim because of the strong tie of faith that exists between them unless it be an accidental killing. An accidental killing requires certain legal provisions.

These signs provides legal provisions for four types of killing, three of which are accidental and occur among Muslims in the same community or different communities. The fourth of which is deliberate murder, according to the Quran, should not happen in the first place.

The signs here begin with the legal provisions for accidental killing. *It had not been for the one who believes to kill one who believes unless by error.* (4:92) This is the only possibility which is acceptable to the Islamic sense and which is possible in reality.

Muslims living together in a community is a great blessing. For a Muslim in this situation to deliberately take a step to remove this great blessing by committing such a terrible crime is difficult to conceive. There are three cases for which legal provisions are made in the case of accidental killing.

The first is when the victim is a Muslim, living in a Muslim country. Here, a believing prisoner-of-war must be set free and an indemnity paid to the victim's family. To set another prisoner-of-war free is to revive another Muslim's soul in exchange for the accidental killing of a Muslim.

The indemnity is paid to the victim's family to help those who are immediately affected by the accidental killing. It helps to compensate them for their loss. However, the victim's family may chose to forego this indemnity. *Whoever killed one who believes by error, the letting go of a believing bondsperson and blood money should be handed over to his family unless that family be charitable.* (4:92)

The second case mentioned here is where the victim is a believer and his family is at war with the Muslim community. Again, another prisoner-of-war must be freed to compensate for the believer who was accidentally killed. There

is no indemnity to be paid in this case as it would only serve to strengthen their ability to fight Muslims.

The third example is where the victim is part of a group that has a treaty with the Muslims. Here the victim is again a believer. *If he had been of a folk who between you and between them is a solemn promise, then, blood money should be handed over to the family and the letting go of a believing bondsperson.* (4:92)

In all three cases, the victim is a believer. The believer's family may be believers nor living in a Muslim community or a believer belonging to a hostile group at war with Muslims or a people at peace with Islam who have a treaty with the believers.

In the case of a deliberate murder of a believer, it cannot be compensated for by any indemnity or setting free of prisoners-of-war. The punishment for this crime is exacted by God Himself: *Whoever kills one who believes as one who is willful, then, his recompense is hell, one who will dwell in it forever. God was angry with him and cursed him and He prepared for him a tremendous punishment.* (4:93)

In order to guard against any accidental killing and to make sure that the purity of those who fight for God's cause be totally dedicated to Islam, the Quran says that Muslims should not fight with anyone or kill anyone if they are not sure of the identity of the person. If the person claims to be a Muslim, the Muslims must accept this. *O those who believed! When you traveled in the way of God, then be clear and say not to whomever gave you a proposal of peace: You are not one who believes, looking for advantage in this present life. With God is much gain. Thus, you had been like that before, then God showed grace to you, so be clear. Truly, God had been Aware of what you do.* (4:94)

Questions that focus on clarity in thinking include:•

Let me state in my own words what I think you just said.
Am I clear about your meaning?
I hear you saying "____."
Am I hearing you correctly, or have I misunderstood you?
What is the main point of this Quranic section?
Can you explain further its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
Can you give an example of its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
To give you an analogy...(give an illustration of tyrants who kill believers because they say that they believe in God)
To give you an analogy ... (give an illustration of Muslim tyrants who kill other Muslims because they have determined that these people are not Muslim. They are not Muslim because the only Muslims are the ones who follow their ideology.)
Does such a view go against the Quranic sign? Explain.

To clarify students' thinking, consider asking the following:•

Can you restate the points of the Quranic sign 4:92 in your own words?
I didn't understand you.
Can you give an example?
Let me tell you what I understand you to be saying.
Did I understand you correctly?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 4:92-4:94. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them). After that, they should show how that sign or those signs fit into the entire section. The above questions should help them do that.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.
When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.
I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words).
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had.
4. I used analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant. In other words, I frequently **stated, elaborated, illustrated** and **exemplified** my points.

2. ACCURACY• (TO BE CLEAR FROM ERROR: *AL-RUSHUDU MINA L-GHAYI*)

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when students concern themselves with accuracy and truth. They should ask themselves:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand,?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—
ACCURATE, CLEAR FROM ERROR

*There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely right judgment has become **clear from error**.* (2:256)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)
CHAPTER 2 THE COW
Sec. 34

O those who believed! Spend of what We provided you, before a Day approaches when there is neither trading in it nor friendship nor intercession. The ones who are ungrateful, they are the ones who are unjust. (2:254)

God! There is no god but He, The Living, The Eternal. Neither slumber takes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. Who will intercede with Him but with His permission? He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them. And they will not comprehend anything of His knowledge, but what He willed. His Seat encom-

passed the heavens and the earth, and He is not hampered by their safe-keeping. He is The Lofty, The Sublime. (2:255)

There is no compulsion in the way of life (din). *Surely, right judgment became clear from error. So whoever disbelieves in false deities* (singular, *taghut*) *and believes in God, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. It is not breakable. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* (2:256)

God is The Protector of those who believed. He brings them out from the shadows into the light. Those who were ungrateful, their protectors are false deities. They bring them out from the light into the shadows. Those will be the Companions of the Fire. They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (2:257)

QURANIC COMMENTARY ON 2:254-2:257

Here, the Quranic section addresses believers directly. It encourages them to give of their wealth that God has blessed them with, to give for the cause of God. (2:254)

The section then describes God with the famous sign known as the Throne Verse (*ayat al-kursi*). (2:255) Each of the three attributes shows a basic and fundamental aspect of the Islamic worldview. *There is no compulsion in the way of life* (din). *Surely, right judgment became clear from error. So whoever disbelieves in false deities and believes in God, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. It is not breakable. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* (2:256)

Faith or belief in the Islamic view is a matter of personal conviction once the basic facts have been given and explained. Belief is never a matter of compulsion or coercion. This personal conviction is developed through our mind and intellect, through our common sense, emotions and feeling, through our innermost human nature and our conscious self. There are no coercive tactics or physical miracles to confound our mind or anything beyond our ability to understand. Islam does not seek personal conviction to arise through compulsion or threats or pressures of any kind. It establishes a universal principle, namely: *There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely, right judgment became clear from error.* (2:256)

The Quranic style is beautiful and at the same time articulate in the original Arabic syntax when it describes belief in the singular as light and ingratitude as darkness in the plural. The forms of darkness come from the abandoning of God's guidance. Leaving God's light tends to put the human being into darkness and despondency: (2:257)

Questions to Ask the Students•

Questions of accuracy force you to evaluate and test for truth and correctness.

How does right judgment become clear from error?
How is this an example of accuracy?

How could we verify or test it?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the accuracy (clear from error) they find in the Quranic Signs 2:254-2:257. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically.
(Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

3. PRECISION• (EXACT TO THE NECESSARY LEVEL, TO BE PRECISE: *'AHKAMA*)

Precision indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is precision a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (AYAH)—PRECISE

It is He who has sent forth to you the Book. In it are signs, ones that are ***precise.*** (3:7)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 3 THE FAMILY OF IMRAN
In the Name of God, The Merciful, The Compassionate
Sec. 1

Alif Lam Mim. (3:1)

God! There is no god but He, The Living, The Eternal. (3:2)

He sent down to ***you*** *the Book with The Truth, that which establishes as true what was before it. He caused to descend the Torah and the Gospel* (3:3) *before this as a guidance for humanity. He caused to descend the Criterion between right and wrong. Truly, those who were ungrateful for the signs of God, for them is a severe punishment. God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital.* (3:4)

Truly, God, nothing is hidden from Him in or on the earth nor in heaven. (3:5) *It is He Who forms you in the wombs how He wills. There is no god but He, Almighty, Wise.* (3:6)

It is He who caused the Book to descend to ***you****. In it are signs, ones that are* <u>*precise*</u>*. They are the essence of the Book and others, ones that are unspecific. Then, those whose hearts are swerving, they follow what was unspecific in it, looking for dissent and looking for an interpretation, but none knows its interpretation but God. The ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: We believed in it as all is from our Lord. None recollects, but those imbued with intuition.* (3:7)

Our Lord! Cause our hearts not to swerve after ***You*** *had guided us. Bestow on us mercy from that which proceeds from* ***Your*** *Presence. Truly,* ***You, You*** *alone are The Giver.* (3:8) *Our Lord! Truly,* ***You*** *are One Who Gathers humanity on a Day in which there is no doubt in it. Truly, God breaks not His solemn declaration.* (3:9)

QURANIC COMMENTARY ON 3:1-3:9

Alif Lam Mim (3:1) have been explained in multiple ways over the cen-

turies. Their meanings remain unclear and are considered by most Muslims to be divine secrets. They are also known as "openers" as they form the opening sign of their respective chapters.

God! There is no god but He, The Living, The Eternal. (3:2) This sign stresses the absolute Oneness of God in a most emphatic way. God has no partner in His divinity.

The section then speaks to the People of the Book, a Quranic term used to denote people of earlier divine revelation, especially the Jews and Christians. (3:3-3:6)

The Quran is revealed as the criterion (*furqan*) by which previous scriptures should be understood. It implies that there can be no reason for people of earlier revelations to not accept this as well. It has also been revealed to a human messenger and it confirms the previous scriptures.

It is He who caused the Book to descend to you. In it are signs, ones that are precise. They are the essence of the Book and others, ones that are unspecific. Then, those whose hearts are swerving, they follow what was unspecific in it, looking for dissent and looking for an interpretation, but none knows its interpretation but God. The ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: We believed in it as all is from our Lord. None recollects, but those imbued with intuition. (3:7)

In this brief passage, the section mentions the fact that there is precision and absolute clarity in some of the signs and others that have more than one explanation. However, *ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge* accept everything that they receive from Him whether it be the precise signs that are the essence of the Quranic message or the signs that are beyond human perception.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Could you be more specific in explaining what these signs mean to you?
Could you give more details about your understanding?
Could you be more precise?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 3:1-3:9. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that the Quranic message contains some signs that are precise.

I looked for interconnections between these various Quranic signs.
I realized the interconnectness of ideas in these signs.
I did not memorize the signs and repeat them like a parrot does,
but I studied them as a detective would, relating new things
I learned to things that I previously knew.

4. RELEVANCE• (TO MAKE RELEVANT, TO RELATE: *QASSA*)

Relevance means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The relevance of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that a student puts into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of their learning. Quranic relevance connects to its teaching students **how** to think. Once students have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, their thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete and relevant arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge relevance is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating relevance and by arguing for and against the relevance of facts.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—RELEVANCE

Say: I am with a clear portent from my Lord and you have denied it. I have not of that which you seek to hasten. The determination is from God. He makes The Truth relevant. He is the best of the ones who distinguish truth from falsehood. (6:57)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 6 THE FLOCKS

In the Name of God The Merciful, The Compassionate

Sec. 7

Say: I was prohibited that I worship those whom you call to other than God. Say: I will not follow your desires, for, then, I would have gone astray. I would not be of the ones who are truly guided. (6:56)

Say: I am with a clear portent from my Lord and you denied it. I have not of that which you seek to hasten. The determination is with God. He makes The Truth relevant. And He is Best of the ones who distinguish truth from falsehood. (6:57)

Say: Truly, if with me was what you seek to hasten, the command would be decided between me and between you. And God is greater in knowledge of the ones who are unjust. (6:58)

With Him are the keys of the unseen. None knows them but He. He knows whatever is on dry land and in the sea. Not a leaf descends but He knows it, nor a grain in the shadows of the earth, nor fresh nor dry thing, but it is in a clear Book. (6:59)

It is He Who gathers you to Himself by nighttime and He knows what you were busy with by daytime. Again, He raises you up in it so that the term, that which is determined, is decided. Again, to Him is your return. Again, He will tell you of what you had been doing. (6:60)

Quranic Commentary on 6:56-6:60

It is God who makes the determination and makes The Truth relevant. (6:56-6:57) The Prophet's belief is not lessened by the attitude of the ungrateful who deny the relevance of the Quranic message for their lives. (6:58-6:59)

Whatever good or evil we do, and whatever our hands take or leave, is known to God. None of our movements are left out. (6:60)

Questions to Ask the Students•

Is the Quranic message in a position to know?
What subjects or perspectives, what kinds of details, what sorts of analyses would someone need knowledge of in order to develop a complete and fair-minded view of the Quran?
How is what you are saying relevant to the Quranic signs here?
How does what you are saying bear on the question?
How does what you are saying help us with the issue of relevance?
I don't see how what you said bears on the question. Could you show me how it is relevant?
Could you explain the connection between your question and the question we are addressing?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 6:56-6:60. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood how to relate what I was saying to the question at hand.
I did not have a problem sticking to the issue of relevance.
I was able to distinguish information that related to the problem of relevance from information that did not relate to it.

5. DEPTH• (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: *'ARADA*)

The sections (*ruku*) and signs (*ayat*) in the Quran contain a depth of complexities and interrelationships. They require students to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. The classroom experience exploring the Quranic message depends on the quality of the students' commitment to develop their ability to discern the depth of what they are studying.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—INTERRELATIONSHIPS

The males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe, some are protectors of some other. They command to that which is honorable and they prohibit that which is unlawful and they perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and obey God and His Messenger. Those, God will have mercy on them. Truly, God is Almighty, Wise. (9:71)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE

SEC. 9

The ones who are male hypocrites and the ones who are female hypocrites, some are of some other. They command that which is unlawful and prohibit that which is honorable and close their hands. They forgot God so He forgot them. Truly, the ones who are hypocrites, they are the ones who disobey. (9:67)

God promised the males, ones who hypocrites and the females, ones who are hypocrites and the ones who are ungrateful, the fire of hell, ones who will dwell in it forever! It will be enough for them. God cursed them. For them is an abiding punishment. (9:68)

Like those before you who had been with more strength than you and more wealth and children, they enjoyed their apportionment so you enjoyed your apportionment as enjoyed those who were before you their apportionment. You engaged in idle talk as they engaged in idle talk. As to those, their actions were fruitless in the present and are such in the world to come. Those, they are the ones who are losers. (9:69)

Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud, and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian, and that which are cities overthrown? Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents. So it had not been God who did wrong to them, rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (9:70)

The males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe, some are protectors of some other. They command to that which is honorable and they prohibit that which is unlawful and they perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and obey God and His Messenger. Those, God will have mercy on them. Truly, God is Almighty, Wise. (9:71)

God promised males, the ones who believe and the females, the ones who

believe, Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever and good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. The greater contentment is with God. That, it is the winning of the sublime triumph. (9:72)

Commentary on 9:67-9:72

The first three signs (9:67-70) deal with the interrelationship between male and female hypocrites. Both males and females are described equally as wrongdoers and both have the same nature and the same characteristics. They are both ill intentioned towards others, with a sickness in their hearts, because they feel themselves to be weak and cowardly. They encourage others to do what they know is wrong and discourage them from doing what they know is right. They are misers and only give to show off. They conceal their motives and notions. They ridicule and slander people due to their inner insecurity.

In contrast to the interrelationships of the hypocrites are the interrelationship among believers who have a different nature, show different behavior and have a different destiny. (9:71-9:72)

While the hypocrites have the same characteristics, the believers are interrelated such that they engage in mutual consultation to achieve what is right for their community. (9:71)

Believers are described as having four characteristics: Enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, worshipping together in formal prayer and paying the purifying alms. These are contrasted with four characteristics of the hypocrites who: Enjoin what is wrong, forbid what is right, forget God and tighten their fists. God's mercy which He bestows on the believers is shown here in contrast to His rejection of the hypocrites: (9:72) Awaiting them is *the winning of the sublime triumph.* (9:72)

Questions to Ask the Students•

Why does the text tell you about interrelationships among the hypocrites and among the believers?
Why does the Quranic message think this interrelationship is worth knowing?
What factors make the interrelationship among hypocrites a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 9:67-9:72. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in these signs.

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

I now know the four points of how a hypocrite acts and how a believer acts.

6. BREADTH• (INVOLVING MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: *'ARADA*)

In the Quranic context, there are the many viewpoints presented: those of the ones who are believers, the ones who are ungrateful, the ones who are doers of good, the ones who are wrongdoers, and so forth. The Quran presents multiple viewpoints and indicates a wide-ranging and broad-minded perspective. Its reasoning is clear, accurate precise, relevant and deep along with a breadth of multiple points of view. Thinking in terms of multiple viewpoints requires insightful thinking.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

*Truly, those who believed, **those who became Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whoever believed in God and the Last Day and did as one in accord with morality**, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.*(5:69)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)
CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD
Sec. 10

O Messenger! State what was caused to descend to you from your Lord, for if you have not accomplished it, then, you will not have stated His message. And God will save you from the harm of humanity. Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful. (5:67)

Say: O People of the Book! You are not based on anything until you adhere to the Torah and the Gospel and what was caused to descend to you from your Lord. Certainly, many of them increase by what was caused to descend to you from your Lord in defiance and ingratitude. So grieve not for folk, the ones who are ungrateful. (5:68)

Truly, those who believed, <u>those who became Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whoever believed in God and the Last Day and did as one in accord with morality</u>, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse. (5:69)

Certainly, We took a solemn promise from the Children of Jacob and We sent Messengers to them. Whenever a Messenger drew near them with what they themselves yearn not for, a group of people denied them and a group of people kill them. (5:70)

They assumed there would be no test. They were in darkness and became unhearing. Again, God turned to them in forgiveness. Again, in darkness and became unhearing many of them. God is Seeing of what they do. (5:71)

Certainly, were ungrateful those who said: Truly, God is He, the Messiah, son of Mary, but the Messiah said: O Children of Jacob! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord. Truly, whoever ascribes partners with God, then, surely, God forbade the Garden to him. And his place of shelter will be the fire. For the ones who are unjust, there are no helpers. (5:72)

Certainly, ungrateful were those who said: Truly, God is the third of three. There is no god but One God. If they refrain not themselves from what they say, there will afflict those who were ungrateful among them a painful punishment. (5:73)

Will they not, then, turn to God for forgiveness and ask for His forgiveness? God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (5:74)

The Messiah son of Mary was not but a Messenger. Surely, Messengers passed away before him. His mother was a just person (f). They both had been eating food. Look on how We make manifest the signs to them. Again, look on how they are misled! (5:75)

Say: Worship you other than God what controls neither hurt nor profit for you? God, He is The Hearing, The Knowing.(5:76)

Say: O People of the Book! Go not beyond limits in your way of life but with The Truth and follow not the desires of the folk who, surely, went astray before. They caused many to go astray. They themselves went astray from the right way. (5:77)

COMMENTARY ON 5:67-5:77

The Quranic revelation in the first three signs here (5:67-69) gives clear instructions of groups of multiple viewpoints. It is well-received by people of multiple viewpoints who accept the faith as it is stated clearly and precisely and contains wisdom and good advice. The method it uses is not the use of ambiguous language to conceal the truth or to avoid committing itself, but rather it states the full truth about faith. Neither does the Quran nor the Prophet compromise with those who are ungrateful. (5:71)

Those who denied the Quranic message: *those who became Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whoever believed in God and the Last Day and did as one in accord with morality,* and its Messenger in the past as well as those extremists who deny this today, only accept their own viewpoint in regard to belief instead of accepting the Quranic view expressed here. (5:72-5:73)

Questions to Ask the Students•

What are some of the multiple viewpoints presented in these signs?
What relevant points of view have been ignored thus far?
Have you considered this issue from an opposing perspective?
Are you not open to changing your view?
Have you entered the opposing views in good faith, or only enough to find flaws in them?
Do you need to look at this from another perspective?
Do you need to consider another point of view?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 90:1-

90:20. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I considered class time as a time in which I practiced
thinking (within the subject) using the fundamental concepts
and principles of the course.
I did not sit back passively, waiting for knowledge to fall into my head.

7. Logic• (reasonable: *'aqala*)

The Quranic signs have their own logic. Events did not just happen. Events described in the sacred text make sense within their meanings. Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life.

As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With this method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

> The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....[1]

Being Reasonable Leads to Unity (*tawhid*)

> The prevailing reading of the Quran on being reasonable consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason.[2]

Principle•

To be reasonable is to realize that our own interests and those of humanity at large will best be served in this way. It comes about by encouraging people to come to their own conclusions by using independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) in developing their rational faculties.

It is to reject the use of force or tricks to change another person's mind. It is to accept that with the proper encouragement, people can begin to think for themselves, to form reasonable points of view and to draw reasonable conclusions, to think clearly and logically, to persuade each other by reason and, ultimately, become reasonable persons, despite the deep-seated obstacles in the natural character of our mind and in society as it has developed.

It should be noted that the act of faith being recommended is not blind faith.

> The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading.[3]

It is tested in everyday experiences. In other words, students should have confidence in reason because reason works. Confidence in reason does not deny the reality of intuition. Rather, it provides a way of distinguishing intuition from prejudice. When they know the source of their thinking and keep their minds open to new reason and evidence, they will be more likely to correct their prejudiced thought.

The rational person recognizes the power of reason and the value of disciplining thinking in accordance with rational standards. Virtually all of the progress that has been made in science and human knowledge testifies to this power, and so to the reasonability of having confidence in reason. To develop this faith is to come to see that ultimately one's own higher interests and those of humankind at large will be served best by giving the freest play to reason, by encouraging people to come to their own conclusions through a process of developing their own faculties of understanding. The Quran speaks of the irrational:

So remind! (O Ungrateful!) ***You** are not, by the divine blessing of **your** Lord, a soothsayer nor one who is possessed.* (52:29) *Or command their faculties of understanding to this? Or are they a folk, ones who are defiant?* (52:32) *Or say they: He fabricated it? Nay! They believe not.* (52:33) *Then, let them bring a*

discourse like it, if they had been ones who are sincere. (52:34) *Or were they created out of nothing? Or are they ones who are creators of themselves?* (52:35) *Or created they the heavens and the earth? Nay! They are not certain.* (52:36) *Or are the treasures of your Lord with them? Or are they ones who are registrars?* (52:37) *Or have they a ladder by means of which they listen? Then, let ones who are listening bring a clear authority.* (52:38)

It is to believe that, with proper encouragement and cultivation, people can develop the ability to think for themselves, to form reasonable points of view, draw reasonable conclusions, think coherently and logically, persuade each other by reason and, ultimately, become reasonable persons, despite the deep-seated obstacles in the natural character of the human mind and in society as we know it.

Application•

As a teacher, you can model confidence in reason in many ways. Every time you show your students that you can make rules, assignments, and classroom activities intelligible to them so that they can see that you are doing things for well-thought-out reasons, you help them to understand why confidence in reason is justified. Every time you help them solve a problem with the use of their own thinking or 'think aloud' through a difficult problem in front of them, you encourage them to develop confidence in reason. Every time you encourage them to question the reasons behind rules, activities, and procedures, you help them to recognize that they should expect reasonability to be at the foundation of their lives. Every time you display a patient willingness to hear their reasons for their beliefs and actions you encourage confidence in reason. Every time you clarify a standard of good reasoning, helping them to grasp why this standard makes sense, you help them to develop confidence in reason.

One reason students have little faith in reason is that they don't see reason being used in their everyday lives. Power, authority, prestige, strength, intimidation, and pressure are often used instead of reason. Students develop a natural cynicism about reason which educators should help them to overcome.

Give students multiple opportunities to try to persuade each other and you. Insist that students who disagree reason with each other, rather than using ridicule, intimidation, peer pressure, etc.

By beginning study of a new topic by discussing what they know about it, students can begin to realize that their initial knowledge is worthwhile. By allowing students to tackle problems and tasks on their own before explaining what to do, teachers help students experience the power of their own minds. By then showing them a better way that scholars have developed, students can see its superior power for themselves. Thus, as they learn, they can feel their minds grow.

Dealing with Egocentrism•

While students may have some egocentric thinking, it is referred to in the Quran as thinking exemplified by Iblis and Pharaoh, among others. Pharaoh told Moses that he, Pharaoh, was the Lord to be worshipped.

Then, Pharaoh said: I am your lofty lord. (79:24)

It is found in the disposition in human nature to think with an automatic subconscious bias in favor of oneself. On a daily basis, students can begin to observe their egocentric thinking in action.

Once they identify egocentric thinking in operation, students can then work to replace it with more rational thought through systematic self-reflection.

If students find that they continually conclude that a rational person would behave just as they behaved, they are probably engaging in self-deception.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—REASON

Thus, We explain precisely the signs to a folk who are ***reasonable.*** (30:28)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 30 THE ROMANS

Sec. 4

He propounds a parable for you from yourselves. Among those whom your right hands possessed, you do not ascribe them as associates in what We provided you. You do not share with them as equals. You do not fear them like your awe for each other [so why would you share what God has given you with other creatures, jinn, gods beside God]. *Thus, We explain distinctly the signs to a folk who are reasonable.* (30:28)

Nay! Those who did wrong [by ascribing other creatures as their partners giving them a share of what God has given you] *followed their own desires without knowledge. Then, who will guide whom God caused to go astray? They will not have ones who help.* (30:29)

So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not. (30:30)

QURANIC COMMENTARY ON 30:28-30:30

The ungrateful create partners with God when God alone is the Creator and the Provider for all. When they do not allow what their right hands possess to be partners with them, why would they choose idols, jinn and others to be so? *He propounds a parable for you from yourselves.* You do not need to travel or make an effort to contemplate it. *Have you—among those whom your right hands possessed—ascribed them as associates in what We provided you so that you share as equals?* (30:28)

The Quran gives the reason for this. The ungrateful follow their own desires without reasonable basis or thinking. *Nay! Those who did wrong followed their own desires without knowledge. Then, who will guide whom God caused to go astray? They will not have ones who help.* (30:29)

This directive then follows: *So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not.* (30:30) Consider living your life as one who believes in the Oneness of God who created the human being.

Questions to Ask the Students•

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 30:28-30:30. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

STUDENT ASSESSMENT TO BE GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.
I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what these signs say.

8. SIGNIFICANCE• (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE WORTHY: *AHL*)

Significance is the quality of being worthy.

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—WORTHINESS

God sent forth His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had better right to it and were more ***worthy*** *of it.* (48:26)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 48: THE VICTORY

Sec. 3

God was well-pleased with the ones who believe (f) when they take the pledge of allegiance to ***you*** *beneath the tree for He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* (48:18) *They will take much gain. And God had been Almighty, Wise.* (48:19)

God promised you much gain that you will take and He quickened this for you. He limited the hands of humanity from you so that perhaps it will be a sign to the ones who believe and that He guide you to a straight path (48:20) *and other gains which are not yet within your power. Surely, God enclosed them. God had been over everything Powerful.* (48:21)

If those who were ungrateful fought you, they would have turned their backs. Again, they would not have found a protector or a helper. (48:22) *This is the way of God which was, surely, in force before.* ***You*** *will never find in the way of God any substitution.* (48:23)

He it is who limited their hands from you and your hands from them in the hollow of Makkah after He made you victors over them. God had been Seeing of what you do. (48:24)

They were ungrateful, and they barred you from the Masjid al-Haram, and were ones who detained the sacrificial gift from reaching its place of sacrifice. If it had not been for men, ones who believe, and for women, ones who believe, whom you know not that you tread on them and guilt should light on you without your knowledge. This was so that God may cause to enter into His mercy whomever He wills. If they were clearly apart, separated, We would have punished those who were ungrateful among them with a painful punishment. (48:25)

Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it. And God had been Knowing. (48:26)

COMMENTARY ON 48:18-48:26

This section addresses the believers, their attitudes and their thoughts giving them the good news of the result of their allegiance, praising their firm belief and preparing them for God's cause. They fall directly under God's care as He bore witness to their allegiance under the tree. Pleased with them, He ensures them of victory. (48:18-23)

The signs remind the believers of God's grace. It was He who prevented their enemies who wanted to fight them from doing so. He denounced those who prevented the believers from entering the Sacred Mosque.

This was all according to God's design and by His will. (48:24-48:25)

Among them were believing men and women unknown to the believers who may have been killed for which the believers would have been responsible.

God knew them and the believers did not. *Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it. And God had been Knowing.* (48:26)

Questions to Ask the Students•

Why were the believers rewarded with victory?

What is the central idea in these signs?

Which of the facts in these signs are most important?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 92:1-92:21. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

STUDENT ASSESSMENT TO BE GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain this to someone.

I know that if I cannot explain these signs to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

9. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC, TO BE FAIR: *IIASAN*)

Having a sense fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that students learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness, described as wisdom in the Quranic perspective, is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairnesss when weighing two views or opinions helps students overcome any lingering egocentricity. They may have thought that they knew the truth only to find that they were wrong. They also learn not to judge any ideas until they are familiar with them and they have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, students are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. They learn to put themselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. They learn to overcome their self-centered point of view of identifying truth with their immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. They gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. They reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not their own. They can recall times when they were wrong but convinced that they were right. Students begin to realize that their behavior and judgments affect others so that they learn to see things from another's point of view.

Realize that their classmate may see things differently then they do, teachers may ask:

What is your classmate angry about?
Why does that make him/her mad?
So-and-so, is that right?

Teachers can encourage students to consider the reasons for positions that they disagree with, for example, that of their parents or siblings.

Why doesn't your mother want you to such-and-such?
Why does she think it's bad for you (wrong, etc.)?
What does she think will happen?

Teachers can ask students who have not yet expressed themselves:

What makes sense about what each side said?

What seems wrong?
What aren't you sure about?

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF A SIGN (*AYAH*)—FAIRNESS

And those who avoided false deities so that they worship them not and were penitent to God, for them are good tidings. So give good tidings to My servants, those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-18)

QURANIC EXAMPLE OF THE SIGN WITHIN ITS SECTION (*RUKU*)

CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS

Sec. 2

Say [God says]*: O My servants who believed! Be Godfearing of your Lord. For those who did good in the present, there is benevolence, and the earth of God is that which is extensive. Only ones who remain steadfast will have their compensation without reckoning.* (39:10)

Say: Truly, I was commanded to worship God, one who is sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. (39:11) *And I was commanded that I be the first of the ones who submit to God.* (39:12)

Say: Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord the punishment of a tremendous Day. (39:13)

Say: God alone I worship as one sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. (39:14) *So worship what you would other than Him.*

Say: Truly, the ones who are losers are those who lost themselves and their people on the Day of Resurrection. Truly, that is a clear loss. (39:15) *They will have overshadowings above from the fire and beneath them, overshadowings. With that, God frightens His servants. O my servants! Be Godfearing of Me!* (39:16)

And those who avoided false deities so that they worship them not and were penitent to God, for them are good tidings. So give good tidings to My servants [God says]. (39:17) *those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:18)

Against whom was realized the word of punishment? Will you be saving him from the fire? (39:19)

But those who were Godfearing of their Lord, for them are the highest chambers with the highest chambers built above them, beneath which rivers run. This is the solemn declaration of God. God never breaks His promise. (39:20)

Have you not considered that God caused to descend water from heaven and threaded fountains in the earth, again, brings out crops by it of hues, ones that are at variance? Again, they wither so you see them as ones that are grow-

ing yellow. Again, He makes them chaff. Truly, in this is a reminder for those imbued with intuition. (39:21)

Commentary on 39:10-39:21

It is important to note here how the Arabic text is phrased. The words between brackets, [God says], are not in the text. They are added to remove confusion. The text should originally read: "Say to My servants," but the Prophet is made to address them, because an address alerts the addressees and makes them more aware of what is to come. When the Prophet addresses them, he does not call them as his servants, because they are God's servants, not his. This means that he is addressing them in God's name, making the address from God directly to them. The Prophet is merely the means by which the address is given.

To be Godfearing means to have a heart that is sensitive and aware of God and to look to God with a sense of humility. (39:10)

The two concepts of the divinity and servanthood are clarified here. There is no confusion between the two. (39:11-39:13)

The Prophet once again is told to say that he will remain with God's way, leaving the idolaters to their way. (39:14-39:15)

Then the Quranic sign expresses the extent of the loss of the ungrateful. (39:15-39:16) As to those who are safe: (39:17-39:18)

The word *taghut* implies an excessive sense of going beyond the bounds. Those who refuse to worship those who exceed the bounds are those who reject the worship of anyone other than God in any form whatsoever.

One of the qualities of those who believe in the Oneness of God alone and who refuse to bow down to anyone who exceeds the limits set by God are those who listen to what is being said. They choose the fairest of it: *those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:18)

The next sign states that those who worshipped the *taghut* have had the punishment realized against them. (39:19)

As for those who are Godfearing: (39:20)

The Quran then draws attention to the natural phenomena that encompass the earth. (39:21)

Questions to Ask the Students•

Do I have any vested interest in judging this issue?

Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 93:1-93:11. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

Chapter II. Eight Elements of Reasoning

Introduction

1. Embody Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: *tadhakkur*)
2. Generate Purpose, Aim, goal, Objective: (consider: *ra'a*)
3. Raise Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: *tafakkara*)
4. Use Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: *basirah*)
5. Make Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: *tabassur*)
6. Utilize Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: *idhdhakara*)
7. Make Assumptions, Prepositions, Taking for Granted (opinions: *zunun*)
8. Generate Implications, Consequences (ponder, evaluate: *tadabbur*)

As you have students read the Quranic signs in the text, you ask them to critique them. (That is, critique: discerning judgment (*furqan*), an objective judging, analysis, or evaluation of something. The purpose of critique here is to critique the Quranic message in order to understand the Quranic way of **how** to think.)

This means to think about the Quranic signs for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** that lead to **implications** and **consequences.** You use **concepts, ideas** and **theories** to **interpret data, facts** and **experiences** in order to answer **questions, solve problems,** and **resolve issues.** We begin with purpose (aim, goal, objective).

Students learn from the Quran **how** to think, not what to think by:

- Analyzing their thinking
- Assessing their thinking
- Reconstructing their thinking

1. Embody Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart: *tadhakkur*)

The point of view or frame of reference for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

This leads into a second purpose of the Quran. It is to give guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom.

This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought hu-

manity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise. (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses says:

Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one. (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness in the plural, while light is in the singular refering to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

As the revealed Word of God, the Quran presents arguments from various points of view depending on who is speaking. This will become clear as we move forward.

In this section three strategies are presented. They are:

A. Thinking Independently
B. Developing Insight into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
C. Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts

A. Thinking Independently

Principle•

The Quran teaches students to think for themselves when they read sign 2:256 that says that there is no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely, right judgment became clear from error. (2:256)

With this sign from God's point of view, students learn that it is up to each one of them to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, students learn how right judgment is clear from error. They come to realize that those that know are not on the same level as those who do not know. If they develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, they will enhance their sense of intuition and insight. They will enhance their ability to reflect on their beliefs and actions.

Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for oneself.

Many of the beliefs of students are acquired at an early age, when they have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because they want to believe, because they are rewarded for believing). Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them.

Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

Application•

An education in Quranic Studies respects the autonomy of the student. Students should be encouraged to discover information and use their knowledge, skills and insights to think for themselves. Merely giving students 'facts' or telling them 'the right way' to answer a question is a way of compelling them to believe. Accepting beliefs through compulsion does not lead to being able to discern right judgment. They believe because they have been told what to believe. They have not been taught how to think to then believe. They learn that developing "discernment," deciding something for themselves, leads to "right judgment becoming clear from error."

In other words, the Quran teaches **how** to think to then believe, not **what** to believe without knowing **how** to think. The Quranic process of teaching **how** to think—by thinking independently without being compelled to think—leads to right judgment in belief. Being compelled to believe through social pressure or due to a teaching method that solely relies on memorization results in a thought-less belief, an un-discerning belief. This type of belief results in egocentric or socio-centric belief as we shall see with the next strategy.

Say: Are those who know on the same level as those who know not? Only those imbued with intuition recollect. (39:9)

When different students have used different sets of categories to form groups, the teacher can ask such questions as:

Questions to Ask Students•

From whose point of view is 39:9 presented?
What does the sign (39:9) mean by "those who know"?
Does "knowing" require thinking before believing something?
How does "knowing" require thinking independently?

The sacred text should be examined in depth.

Why does the sacred text tell you about the importance of knowledge?
Why does the Quranic message think this (concept, skill, procedure, step) is worth knowing?
Why does the sacred text tell you to do this?
What would happen if you didn't?

When giving written assignments, those assignments should provide many opportunities for the student to exercise independent judgment: in gathering and assembling information, in analyzing and synthesizing it, and in formulating and evaluating conclusions. Have students discuss how to organize their points in essays.

The teacher could routinely ask students as a beginning of discussion: What are the most important points covered in the sign(s). The class could brainstorm about what they learned when studying a sign or signs. Only after they have exhausted their experiences can the teacher try to elicit any crucial points neglected.•

B. Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity Principle•

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the Salafists as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of himself or herself without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the Salafis today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continueto be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right

about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricty? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the sociocentric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in the Salafi ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how

to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community, they find that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Know Ourself

The best way to develop insight into ego-centeredness or society-centeredness is through knowing our self.

According to al-Ghazzali, the establishment of any of the relationships begins with gaining knowledge of our self.

> Know that the key to knowledge of God is knowledge of one's self. That is why it has been said: One who knows one's own 'self,'

knows one's Lord. That is also why God said: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth. Suffices not thy Lord that, truly, He is Witness over all things?* (41:53)

In short, nothing is closer to you than you. If you do not know your 'self,' how will you know others? Moreover, you may think that you know your 'self' and be mistaken, for this kind of knowing is not the key to the knowledge of the Real. The beasts know this much of themselves—since of your 'self' you know no more than the outward head, face, hands, feet, flesh, and skin. Of the inward dimension you know that when you are hungry, you eat bread, and when you are angry, you fall on the other person, and when 'attraction to pleasure' dominates, you make for the marriage act. All the beasts know that much. Hence you must seek your own reality. What thing are you? From whence have you come? Where will you go? For what work have you come to this dwelling place? Why were you created? What and where is your felicity? What and from where lies your misery?

If you want to know your 'self,' you should know that when you were created, two things were created: one is this outward frame, which is called the body. It can be seen with the outward eye. The second is the inward meaning that is called the self (or the soul), the spirit, and the heart. It can be recognized through inward insight but cannot be seen with the outward eye. Your reality is that inward meaning. Everything else follows upon it.

When reason or thinking positively predominates, positive feelings or desires and actions result. As an example, when we come to realize through our reason that our happiness lies in keeping our instinct to preserve the species (attraction to pleasure) and to preserve the individual (avoidance of harm/pain) in moderation, then we no longer go against or objects to the commands of reason. It often happens that one may have strong powers of reason thinks of some desirable worldly or religious objective. At that point, no matter how much one's avoidance of harm may dislike certain aspects of it, and even though one's attraction to pleasure function finds pleasures slipping through one's hands, still one's 'self' obeys reason.

These characteristics are like natural, physical needs. It is impossible to totally eradicate them. They may be temporarily concealed while severe spiritual exercises are being performed but no sooner are these spiritual exercises discontinued than they reappear once more. In fact the moral healing of these characteristics can only consist in this: that one uses them in their proper place, contenting oneself with what is necessary and avoiding excess. That is, that one learn to exercise justice towards the self as critical thinkers.

Knowing our self is to improve our self, a value of critical thinkers

who compare and contrast ideals with practice or ideals with facts on their way to developing intellectual good faith.

Beginning with our self and moving towards centering ourselves by completing the perfection of nature in its mode of operation is to submit to God's Will, thereby attaining happiness and well-being. It is an arduous task in which many who have attempted have not succeeded.[7]

Application•

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
I have a right to have everything I want.
Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

Teachers can also have students point out the contradictions of egocentric attitudes:

When I use something of yours without permission, it is borrowing.
When you use something of mine, it is stealing.
Taking something without asking is okay. Taking something without asking is wrong.
Persons like Pharaoh or Korah illustrate ego-centricity.

The most real and immediate form of socio-centricity students experience is in the mini-society of their peers. Student attitudes present a microcosm of the patterns which exist on a larger scale in societies. Most students share some attitudes which are sociocentric. Furthermore, students divide themselves into 'subcultures' or cliques, each of which is narrower than the school-wide 'cul-

ture'. Honest and realistic exploration of these phenomena allows students to clarify and evaluate the ways in which 'group think' limits them.

The Quranic text often attempts to discourage socio-centricity by encouraging tolerance—asking students to agree that people whose ways are different are not necessarily wrong. Yet, if teachers keep the discussion general and do not introduce specific advantages of different ways, students are left with a vague sense that they should be tolerant, rather than a clear Quranic sense that others have ways worth knowing about and learning from. The teacher could encourage students to recognize sociocentric bias, reconstruct and consider other views of current and historical issues, and discuss how to avoid thinking socio-centrically.

Assume not those who are misers that what God has given them of His grace is better for them. Nay! It is worse for them. To be hung around their necks will be what they were misers with on the Day of Resurrection. To God is the heritage of the heavens and the earth. God is Aware of what you do. (3:180)

Questions to Ask Students•

What are these people like?
What do you think of when you think of them?
How have you seen them portrayed in movies and on T.V.?

After study, students could evaluate their ideas in light of what they have learned, and why they had them.

Those who were ungrateful should not assume that the indulgence We grant to them is better for them. We only grant indulgence to them so that they add sin! For them is a despised punishment. (3:178)

Questions to Ask Students•

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

C. Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts

Principle•

In order to better analyze themselves, students need to separate their sense of reason from their emotions, their *nafs al-natiqah* from their *nafs al-ammarah* as if they were two opposing parts of their mind. Yet, they are closely connected.

Their reason is based on some level of their emotions and their emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who they are, they need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way. The Quran cautions:

So follow not your feelings that you become unbalanced. (4:135)

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says:

Had you thought about him who took to himself his own feelings as his god? (25:43)

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question:

Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

Questions to Ask Students•

Why do I feel this way? How do I view the situation?
What is my evidence or proof for feeling this way in this situation?
What am I assuming?
Do the conclusions I come to make sense?
Are there other ways that I could use to interpret this situation?

Once students begin to see a pattern in the assumptions that they make in situations, they begin to understand their emotions (within their *nafs-i ammarah* or animal soul). This is the first step towards self-control and self-improvement. In order for this to happen, students need to understand their feelings in relation to their thoughts.

Although it is common to separate thought and feeling as though they were independent opposing forces in the human mind, the truth is that virtually all human feelings are based on some level of thought (*nafs-i natiqah* or rational soul) and virtually all thought generate some level of feeling (*nafs-i ammarah* or animal soul). To think with self-understanding and insight, students must come to terms with the intimate connections between thought and feeling, rea-

son and emotion, these two aspects of themselves—their animal soul and their rational soul.

Critical thinkers realize that their feelings are their response (but not the only possible, or even necessarily the most reasonable response) to a situation. They know that their feelings would be different if they had a different understanding or interpretation of that situation. They recognize that thoughts and feelings, far from being different kinds of things are two aspects of their responses.

Uncritical thinkers see little or no relationship between their feelings and their thoughts, and so escape responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Their own feelings often seem unintelligible to them.

When students feel sad or depressed, it is often because they are interpreting their situation in an overly negative or pessimistic light. They may be forgetting to consider positive aspects of their life. They can better understand their feelings and thereby learn to discern fairly by listening to this Quranic sign:

Give judgment fairly among humanity and follow not your feelings, for it will cause you to go astray from the way of God. (38:26)

Questions Students Ask Themselves•

How have I come to feel this way?
How am I looking at the situation?
To what conclusion have I come?
What is my evidence?
What assumptions am I making?
What inferences am I making?
Are they sound inferences?
Are there other possible ways to interpret this situation?

Students can learn to seek patterns in their assumptions and so begin to see their separate emotions. Understanding themselves is the first step toward self-control and self-improvement. This self-understanding requires that they understand their feelings and emotions in relation to their thoughts, ideas, and interpretations of the world.

Application•

Whenever a class discusses someone's feelings, the teacher can ask students to consider what the person might be thinking to have that feeling in that situation:

Whenever there was sent forth a chapter of the Quran, they look on some saying: Is anyone seeing you? Moreover, they turned away. God has turned from their hearts because they are a folk who do not use their reason. (9:127)

Questions for Classroom Discussion•

Why does the "one who turns away" feel this way?
How is he interpreting his situation?
What led him to that conclusion?
Would you have felt the same if you had been in his circumstances?
Why or why not?
What accounts for the difference?
What could he have thought instead?
Then how might he have felt?

This strategy can be used in the service of developing a sense of justice and courage by exploring their thoughts that underlie their feelings. Students can discuss the thoughts underlying passionate commitment to personal or social change.

Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. (8:53)

Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•

Why was she willing to do this?
Was she scared?
What else did she feel that helped her ignore her fears?
Why? How did she look at things that helped her endure
and stick with it?

Students can discuss reasons for greed, fear, apathy, and other negative or hampering feelings.

and you consume the inheritance, a greedy consuming. (89:19)

Classroom Questions to Trigger Discussion About Negative Behaviors•

Why are people greedy?
What thoughts underlie greed?
Why do people feel they need more money?
What does less money mean to them? Why?
What assumptions underlie these attitudes?
To what further thoughts do these attitudes lead?

When discussing a case of mixed feelings, the Quranic sign says:

Feel not remorse over them, nor be you troubled about what they plan. (16:127)

Classroom Discussion to Understand Mixed Feelings•

What was he feeling?
What else? (Encourage multiple responses.)
What led to this feeling? That one?
Are these beliefs consistent or contradictory?
How could someone have contradictory responses to one situation?
Is there a way he could reconcile these contradictions?

Students can also generalize about thoughts behind various emotions:
behind anger, for instance:

*Guide us on the straight path, the path of those to whom **You** were gracious, not the ones against whom **You** are angry, nor the ones who go astray.* (1:6-1:7)

Questions to Generate Various Emotions•

Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.
Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.
Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.
Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now.
This won't bother me anymore.

D. Developing Intellectual Curiosity

Principle•

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment. They need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

So journey they not through the earth and look on how had been the Ultimate End of those who were before them? (12:109)

The following questions may help the students in understanding point of view, frame of reference, perspective.

Questions to Ask the Students

Whenever we think, we think within a point of view.
What is the Quranic point of view in these signs?
Does the Quran follow the nine standards in these signs?

We see things from an angle, form a position, from a sense of place, a frame of reference.
What is it to look at things Quranically?
You seem to be approaching this issue from x perspective.
Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
How would other groups/types of people respond? Why?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 113:1-113:5 and write them in their own words.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing mes negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).
Sometimes Ie worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

2. Generate Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective (Consider: *ra'a*)

One of the goals of the Quran is to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

Students begin developing their reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, they learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

In this section, four strategies specific to this element of reasoning are developed. Each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions that can be asked of the students at each point along the way.

The four strategies are:•

A. Clarifying Issues, Conclusions or Beliefs;
B. Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases;
C. Reading Critically: Clarifying or Critiquing Texts; and
D. Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue

A. Clarifying Issues or Conclusions

Principle•

When there is a clear statement given about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before students can agree with or disagree with a statement, they must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

Application•

Teachers should encourage students to slow down and reflect on the Quranic signs before coming to conclusions.

Have you not considered those who were given a share of the Book? They are called to the Book of God to give judgment between them. Again, a group of people among them turn away and they, they are ones who turn aside. (3:23)

Questions to Ask Students•

The sign 3:23 asks: *Have you not considered those who were given a share of the Book?*

Is the purpose of this sign clear?

What do we know about them:

They are called to the Book of God to give judgment between them.
What would someone who disagreed with this do?
Again, a group of people among them turn away and they, they are ones who turn aside.
The sign 2:80 says: *They* [the ungrateful] *said: The fire will never touch us, but for numbered days.*
Is the purpose of this sign clear?
The Quran tells the Prophet to ask how they know this:
Say: Took you to yourselves a compact from God?
The response from God: *If so, God never breaks His compact or say you about God what you know not?*
Does this rhetorical question clarify the issue?

Students should be encouraged to continually reformulate the Quranic purpose in light of new signs. Other Quranic examples to explore in learning to clarify issues, conclusions and beliefs:

Or ascribe they associates who laid down the law of the way of life for them for which God gives not permission? Were it not for a decisive word, it would be decided among them. Truly, the ones who are unjust, for them is a painful punishment. (42:21)

Questions to Ask Students•
Has the above Quranic stated its purpose in this sign (42:21) fairly?
Does our understanding assume one answer is correct?
Would everyone involved accept this as a fair and accurate statement of the Quranic statement?
Are the Quranic words clear? Do we have to analyze any concepts?
Do we know when the key Quranic words and phrases apply and don't apply?

Thus, We revealed to you the Spirit of Our command. You had not been informed what the Book is nor what is belief, but We made it a light by which We guide whomever We will of Our servants. Truly, you, you have been guided to a straight path—the path of God, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. Truly, will not all affairs come home to God? (42:53-42:53)

Questions to Ask Students•
How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect? (45:23)

Questions to Ask Students•

Does this description stick to the facts?
Or, is reasoning or response included?
Is this something that can be directly seen?
Or would you have to interpret what you saw to arrive at this statement?
Is this how anyone would describe the situation?
Or would someone else see it differently?
What alternative descriptions or explanations are there?

Is he who had been on a clear portent from his Lord like him for whom his wrong actions were made to appear pleasing to him and to those who followed their own desires? (47:14)

Students could then examine the assumptions and inferences underlying the alternatives.

Questions to Ask Students

What does 47:14 assume?
What does it imply?
What does its opposite imply?
Is there a clearer way to say this?
Is there a more accurate way to say this?
Can it be rephrased?
Do the different ways of putting it say the same thing?
Why would someone agree? Disagree?

B. Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases

Principle•

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept.

On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

Application•

Teachers can use a number of techniques to help students learn to analyze concepts. Instead of just asking for a definition of a word or asking them what a certain word means, the teacher can paraphrase the word or concept to something that the students already understand. The teacher can also supply examples asking students to add to the list.

The class should clarify and analyse the purpose of the words and concepts in the following Quranic signs:

What will there be as a reminder for them? A clear Messenger drew near them. (44:13)

Questions to Ask Students•

Does the Quran see itself as the "reminder"?
What does the concept of "reminder" tell us?
What other reminders do we have in our daily lives?

> God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjusted off the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.[5]

It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you so that they may meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition may recollect. (38:29)

Questions Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of the Words•

Give examples of a recollection and the opposite of it.
What does 'imbued with intuition' mean?
Why would this expression be used?
Why would the Quranic message want to bring it to our attention?
What are the practical consequences of saying this?
How do we feel about it? Why?

When giving examples and discussing them, teachers should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once the class has dis-

cussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

Meditate they not, then, on the Quran (the Recitation) *or are there locks on their hearts*? (47:24)

Questions to Ask Students•

What other words could be used in place of "meditate"?
Could "reflect," "ponder," "consider," or "take seriously" be used instead?
What does "locks on their hearts" mean?

When clarifying a concept expressed by a phrase rather than a single word, discuss cases in which the phrase applies, instead of merely discussing the individual words. For example, when clarifying the concept of "locks on their hearts" though a general discussion of "heart" may be helpful, the more specific idea "locks on their hearts" should be discussed and contrasted with its opposite, i.e. "open hearts".

Ask the students if they can think of a way to use the term for situations lacking this or that listed idea. Students may see that many of their associations are not part of the concept. They are left with a clearer understanding of what is relevant to the concept and will be less tempted to confuse mere association with it.

When a text confuses two distinct concepts such as "locked" and "unlocked" hearts, students can clarify them. Students can distinguish concepts by discussing the different applications and implications of the concepts. Can you think of an example of "locked" when its opposite is "unlocked"? What's the difference?

Students could rewrite passages, making them clearer. For example, a Quranic passage that explains how "heart at rest" means that one is at peace about something.

*When Abraham said? My Lord! Cause me to see how **You** shall give life to the dead.*

*He said: Shall **you** (Abraham) not believe?*

He (Abraham) said: Yea, but so my heart may be at rest.

He (God) *said: Then take four birds and twist them to **yourself**. Moreover, lay a part of them on every mountain. Call to them. They will approach **you** coming eagerly. Know that God is Almighty, Wise.* (2:260)

Questions to Ask Students•

What did the Quranic text imply by "heart at rest"?
What example does it give?
Is this an example of everyone having to agree?
What is the difference? How could the example be changed to illustrate the term?

C. Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text

Principle•

Critical thinkers have a healthy skepticism. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error*:

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake —his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the

senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.

Then I said: My reliance on sense-data has also become untenable. Perhaps, therefore, I can rely only on those rational data which belong to the category of primary truths, such as our asserting that: Ten is more than three, and one and the same thing cannot be simultaneously affirmed and denied, and one and the same thing cannot be incipient and eternal, existent and nonexistent, necessary and impossible.

Then sense-data spoke up: What assurance have you that your reliance on rational data is not like your reliance on sense-data? Indeed, you used to have confidence in me. Then the reason-judge came along and gave me the lie. But were it not for the reason-judge, you would still accept me as true. So there may be, beyond the perception of reason, another judge. And if the latter revealed itself, it would give the lie to the judgments of reason, just as the reason-judge revealed itself and gave the lie to the judgments of sense. The mere fact of the nonappearance of that further perception does not prove the impossibility of its existence.

For a brief space my soul hesitated about the answer to that objection, and sense-data reinforced their difficulty by an appeal to dreaming, saying: Don't you see that when you are asleep you believe certain things and imagine certain circumstances and believe they are fixed and lasting and entertain no doubts about that being their status? Then you wake up and know that all your imaginings and beliefs were groundless and unsubstantial. So while everything you believe through sensation or intellection in your waking state may be true in relation to that state, what assurance have you that you may not suddenly experience a state which would have the same relation to your waking state as the latter has to your dreaming, and your waking state would be dreaming in relation to that new and further state? If you found yourself in such a state, you would be sure that all your rational beliefs were unsubstantial fancies.

I knew, of course, that undertaking to refute their doctrine before comprehending it and knowing it in depth would be a shot in the dark. So I girded myself for the task of learning that science by the mere perusal of their writings without seeking the help of a master and teacher.

I devoted myself to that in the moments I had free from writing and lecturing on the legal sciences—and I was then burdened with the teaching and instruction of three hundred students in Baghdad.

As it turned out, through mere reading in those embezzled moments, God Most High gave me an insight into the farthest reaches of the philosophers' sciences in less than two years. Then, having understood their doctrine, I continued to reflect assiduously on it for nearly a year, coming back to it constantly and repeatedly reexamining its intricacies and profundities. Finally I became so familiar with the measure of its deceit and deception, and its precision and delusion, that I had no doubt about my thorough grasp of it.[6]

As can be seen from the writings of al-Ghazzali here, critical thinkers do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect understanding from what they read so they check and double-check their understanding. They ask themselves questions, wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn. They learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.•

Application•

Students should feel free to raise questions about the meaning of the Quranic signs they read. Students can discuss their interpretations of what they read. Small groups of students can compare their paraphrases and interpretations and write better ones.

Assumed you that We created you in amusement and that to Us you would not be returned? (23:115)

Questions to Ask Students•

What does this passage say?
What does it imply?
Assume? Is it clear? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?
Does this fit in with your experience? In what way?

D. Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue

Principle•

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether students are listening to the Quran in a language they understand or listening to their teacher's lesson. They know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another

person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into their own.

When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar.

Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, students have to take the words they are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. They have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. They have to be attentive to what the other person is saying.

All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions. Practice questions are such as:

Questions to Ask Students•

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is .... Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying.

They [the ungrateful] *said: The fire will never touch us, but for numbered days. Say: Took you to yourselves a compact from God? If so, God never breaks His compact or say you about God what you know not?* (2:80)

Questions to Ask Students•

Why does an ungrateful person say this?
What examples could I give to illustrate that point?
What is the main point?
How does this detail relate to the main point?
Is the ungrateful using this concept as I would, or somewhat differently?

Application•

Critical thinking is best taught by a teachers who model it, who themselves are active listeners who show students the patience and skill required. Being patient as students learn means taking them seriously as they try to express their thoughts by asking them relevant questions.

We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth. (41:53)

Questions to Ask Students•

What did you understand from this Quranic sign?
So-and-so, did you follow what your classmate said?
Could you put what she said in your own words?
Or: So-and-so, could you give us an example from your own experience of what your classmate has said?
Do you recall when seeing an outward sign reflected a sign within yourself?

It often happens that students do not understand an assignment. It is an opportunity for teachers to make their assignment an example of critical listening.

On the earth are signs for the ones who are certain and in yourselves. Will you not then perceive? (51:20-51:21)

Questions to Ask Students•

Is the Quranic purpose clear? Write a paragraph, or do a research project, or give an oral report, about the purpose as you understand it?
Is the purpose significant or trivial or somewhere in between?
Is the Quranic purpose realistic?
Is it an achievable purpose?
Does the overall goal change, or is it consistent?
Does it have contradictory purposes?

When the Quran is recited, it is to be listened to and pay heed so that perhaps you would find mercy. (7:204)

Questions for a Class Discussion•

So-and-so, did you listen to what your classmate said?
Could you put what she said in your own words?
Or we can say: Could you give us an example from your own experience of what your classmate has said?
Has anything like that ever happened to you?

Those are they whom God knows what is in their hearts. So turn aside from them and admonish them and say to them concerning themselves penetrating sayings. (4:63)

Questions to Ask Students•

What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs?
Are there multiple points of view?
What do you mean by?
What is your main point?

When your Lord proclaimed to Moses saying that: Approach the unjust folk, a folk of Pharaoh saying: Will they not be Godfearing? (26:10-26:11)

He said: My Lord! Truly, I fear that they will deny me (26:12) *and my breast be narrowed and my tongue will not be loosened. So send for Aaron.* (26:13) *They charge an impiety against me. I fear that they will kill me.* (26:14)

He said: No indeed! Both of you go with Our signs. Truly, We will be with you, ones who are listening. (26:15)

Questions for a Class Discussion•

I'm not sure I understand you when you explained the Quranic signs.
Could you explain it further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of the signs?
Would you also say ...?'
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is... Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection? Why does she say that?
What examples could I give to illustrate that point?
What is the main point? How does this detail relate to the main point?
That one? Is he using this word as I would, or somewhat differently?

These highly skilled and activated processes are crucial to learning.

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should summarize a sign from this section. Then, they should analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills.

3. RAISE QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

(REFLECT: *TAFAKKARA*)

The Quranic text asks hundreds of questions in reasoning something out. There are many issues that end with a question, many rhetorical, the answer to which the Quranic message itself implies. One of the best ways to become critical thinkers is to understand how the Quran raises questions.

In addition to understanding how to raise questions, four strategies have been included in this part that are specific to raising questions. As previously stated above with the element of purpose, each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions for the students and classroom discussion.

The four strategies are:•

A. Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
B. Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
C. Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations
D. Questioning Deeply: Raising and Pursuing Significant Questions

Assessing skills of mastery of raising questions test the ability of students:

How to Raise Questions•

Formulate a question in a clear and relevant way
Choose from among alternative expressions
Discuss the advantages of different types of the question at issue
Recognize key common elements in statements of different questions
Structure the articulation of problems so as to make a possible solution more apparent.

Had you considered one who denies this way of life? That is he who drives away with force the orphan and urges not to give food to the needy. So woe to ones who formally pray, ones who are inattentive to their formal prayers, those who make display, yet they repulse giving the assistance. (107:1-107:7)

Students Ask Themselves

What is the key question in this Quranic message?
How does the Quranic message reply to its own question?
Details are very important. Who are ones who deny this way of life?

Critical thinkers learn to be skilled at analyzing questions to determine what, precisely, it is asking and how to go about rationally responding to it.

Have you yourself considered he who prohibits a servant when he invoked blessings? Have you considered if he had been on guidance or commanded

God-consciousness? Have you considered if he denied and turned away? Knows he not that God sees? (96:9-96:14)

Reminder to Students Regarding Questioning the Above Sign•

What are the questions we are asked?
What are the questions we are not asked?
What questions did you ask?
Should you have asked?

A. Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations

Principle•

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

Questions Help Students Learn:•

How to think
How to expand their ideas before they are evaluated
How to confront new ideas
How to relate new ideas to their own experience
How to determine the implications of their ideas and their consequences

Another important point to note for students is that Quranic critical thinkers are not made uncomfortable by questions. They do not consider someone asking them questions to be offensive or even intimidating. They actually welcome questions.

Ways for Students to Learn to Question•

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what they are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what they are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.
Question themselves and others.

For Classroom Discussion•

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.
Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.
Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a

way to get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.

Do not negate or embarrass the students.

Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.

Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Assumes he that none has power over him? (90:5)

He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. (90:6)

Assumes he that none sees him? (90:7) *Make we not two eyes for him* (90:8) *and a tongue and two lips* (90:9) *and guided him to the two open highways?* (90:10) *Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent.* (90:11)

What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? (90:12)

It is the liberating of a bondsperson (90:13) *or feeding on a day possessing famine* (90:14) *an orphan, possessor of kinship,* (90:15) *or a needy, possessor of misery.* (90:16)

Any thought-provoking questions can start a discussion. To follow up responses, use questions like the following:

Questions for a Classroom Discussion•

Why does he assume "We have no power over him"?

If that is so, what follows?

Are you assuming that...?

How do you know that? Is the point that you are making that... or, ...?

For example?

Is this an example of what you mean..., or this?

Can I summarize your point as ...?

What is your reason for saying that?

What do you mean when using this word?

Is it possible that...?

Are there other ways of looking at it?

How else could we view this matter?

Will they not, then, look on the camel, how it was created? (88:17) *Of the heaven, how it was lifted up?* (88:18) *The mountains, how they were hoisted up?* (88:19) *The earth, how it was stretched out?* (88:20) *Then, remind, for you are only one who reminds.* (88:21)

Right after a classroom discussion, have the students write a 5-minute summary of the key points, raising new questions and adding examples or clarifying points mentioned. Or, divide the students into pairs and have them practice questioning each other about the points raised. It helps if the teacher summarizes and rephrases the main points from time to time during the classroom discussion.

But he who would say to ones who are his parents a word of disrespect to both of them: Do you promise me that I will be brought out when generations before me passed away? They will both cry to God for help: Woe unto you! Believe! Truly, the promise of God is true. But he said: This is only the fables of the ancient ones. (46:17)

Ask the Students•

Why would one say this to his parents?
How would you follow up?
What would that tell you about your question?

If you want to teach them how to ask a question of clarification, explain to them that whenever they are dealing with a complex problem, they should form the question in several different ways until they find the most precise question to ask. Or whenever the class is going to discuss a Quranic sign, write out beforehand the most significant questions. Be prepared to change the question if the discussion moves in another direction. Lead the discussion in such a way that the dialogue among the students moves towards an answer that makes sense.

B. Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations

Principle•

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example below shows. Have the students deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. They should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where they study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as they move between multiple points of view. Students should engage in an inward dialogue with themselves or an outward one with other students. They need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with their dialogue.

Application•

Quranic Studies teachers who often raise root questions and ideas in a classroom discussion express may raise questions from varying points of view. Students should be continuously asked how one point relates to other points that are being made in the discussion as well as how the points relate to their own experience.

Consider they not the birds above them ones standing in ranks and closing their wings? Nothing holds them back but The Merciful. Truly, He is Seeing of everything. (67:19)

Who is this who would be an army for you to help you other than The Mer-

ciful? Truly, ones who are ungrateful are not but in delusion. (67:20)

Or who is this who will provide for you if He held back His provision? Nay! They were resolute, turning in disdain and aversion. (67:21)

Then is whoever walks as one who is prone on his face better guided, or he who walks without fault on a straight path? (67:22) *Say: It is He who caused you to grow and assigned you the ability to hear, sight, and minds. But you give little thanks!* (67:23) *Say: It is He who made you numerous on the earth and to Him you will be assembled.* (67:24)

They say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere? (67:25)

Say: The knowledge of this is only with God and I am only a clear warner. (67:26)

Questions to Ask Students•

What would someone who disagreed say?

Why? How could the first respond? Why?

Students could list points from multiple perspectives for reference, then write dialogues of people arguing about the issues as the dialogue between Pharaoh and Moses:

*Pharaoh said: Did we not raise **you** up among us as a child? Had **you** not lingered in expectation with us for many years of **your** lifetime?* (26:18) *And **you** had accomplished **your** accomplishment that **you** had accomplished and **you** are among the ones who are ungrateful.* (26:19)

Moses said: I accomplished it when I was of the ones who go astray. (26:20) *So I ran away from you when I feared you. Then, my Lord bestowed on me critical judgment and made me among the ones who are sent.* (26:21) *Beyond this past favor with which **you** reproach me, **you** enslaved the Children of Jacob (Israel).* (26:22)

Pharaoh said: What is the Lord of the worlds? (26:23)

Moses said: The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two of them if you had been ones who are certain. (26:24)

Pharaoh said to whoever was around him: Listen you not! (26:25)

Moses said: Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers, the ancient ones. (26:26)

Pharaoh said: Truly, your Messenger who was sent to you is one who is possessed! (26:27)

Moses said: The Lord of the East and the West and whatever is between the two of them if you had been reasonable! (26:28)

*Pharaoh said: If **you** took to **yourself** a god other than me. I will, certainly, assign **you** to be imprisoned!* (26:29)

*Moses said: What if I drew near **you** with something that makes it clear?* (26:30)

Pharaoh said: Bring it, if you are among the ones who are sincere. (26:31) *So he cast his staff; that is when it was a clear serpent.* (26:32) *He drew out his hand and that is when it was shimmering white to the ones who look.* (26:33)

Questions About Other Views (Pharaoh and Moses)•

What did the other (group of people) think? Why? (Take specific statements from the Quranic signs here.)
Would others see it this way?
Would they use these words?
How would they describe this? Why?
What exactly do they disagree about? Why?
What does X think is the cause? Y?
Why do they differ?

Class Discussion

The above signs teach dialogical thinking. Have students discuss perspectives in this Quranic message. Such discussion should be integrated with other Quranic signs so that the ideas are synthesized. Rather than separate activities or discussions about different perspectives, you can have students move back and forth between the points of view of Pharaoh and Moses.

C. Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations

Principle•

As opposed to dialogical thinking, dialectical thinking is such that it tests the strengths and weaknesses of differing points of view. It puts idea against idea or reasoning against counter-reasoning. The goal is to reach the truth of an issue under discussion. Ideas that are inconsistent with one another are eliminated and reconciled.

In order for students to develop integrative thinking, they need to learn to evaluate conflicting ideas and determine which are strong and which are weak. As students develop dialectical reasoning skills, their thinking easily moves between different points of view.

Quranic Examples

If you are in doubt, ... then,[7]
Do they say ... ? Rather,[8]
Bring forward your witnesses[9]
Bring your proof[10]
Have they not considered?[11]
Let the human being consider ...[12]
Clear Proof (*bayyinatun*, *nazar*)...[13]

Application•

Dialectical thinking is practiced whenever two conflicting points of view,

arguments, or conclusions are being discussed as in the case of Pharaoh and Moses above. The teacher could have students who are proponents of conflicting views argue their positions and have others evaluate them.

Remember Abraham in the Book. Truly, he had been a just person, a Prophet. (19:41) *That is when he said to his father: O my father! Why will you worship what hears not, and perceives not, and avails you not anything?* (19:42) *O my father! Truly, I, there drew near me of the knowledge of what approaches you not. So follow me and I will guide you to a path without fault.* (19:43) *O my father! Worship not Satan. Truly, Satan had been rebellious towards The Merciful!* (19:44) *O my father! Truly, I fear that a punishment should afflict you from The Merciful so that you become a protector of Satan.* (19:45)

He said: Are you one who shrinks from my gods, O Abraham? If you will not refrain thyself, certainly, I will stone you, so abandon me for some while. (19:46)

He [Abraham] *said: Peace be to you. I will ask for forgiveness from my Lord for you. Truly, He had been One Who is Gracious to me.* (19:47) *I will withdraw from you and what you call to other than God and I will call to my Lord. Perhaps I will not be disappointed in my supplication to my Lord.* (19:48)

So he withdrew from them and what they worship other than God. We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them We made a Prophet. (19:49) *We bestowed on them from Our mercy and We assigned them the tongue of lofty sincerity.* (19:50)

Questions to Ask Students

What was Abraham's argument to his father?
Is there another view one could have to object to his reasoning?
What?And the answer to that objection?
Does Abraham use language appropriately and consistently as he dialogues within his father?
Is the evidence he gives from both sides relevant?
Is it questionable, or acceptable?
Which argument is more trustworthy?
How can we know which of these conflicting assumptions is best?
Is there a way of reconciling these views? The evidence?
What is this side right about? The other side?
Which of these views is strongest? Why?

D. QUESTIONING DEEPLY: RAISING AND PURSUING SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS

Principle•

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the

basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

Knowledge

According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge.[9]

Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.

> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.
>
> The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[14]

Wisdom

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought. This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The Quranic usage of wisdom (*hikmah*) reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa galb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[15]

Wisdom* as a human ideal stands for the human being's search for knowledge or truth. It is something which is distinguished from conjecture or imperfect knowledge: *There is no knowledge with them about it but they are pursuing an opinion.* (4:157)

Different stories are related in the Quran,[16] several similitudes[17] and signs pointing to reality are detailed[18] and explained,[19] so that people may reflect and ponder over things. It is the characteristic of the God-conscious that they not only celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, but also contemplate and ponder over the different phenomena of nature. *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of night-time and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this*

in vain. Glory be to Thee! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:190-3:191) The people are, therefore, advised repeatedly to look at and observe the phenomena of nature, pondering over everything in creation to arrive at the truth.

None can grasp the message of revelation except people of understanding and those firmly grounded in knowledge. *And none recollects, but those imbued with intuition.* (3:7)[20] Lack of true knowledge leads people to revile the true God: *And offend not those who call to other than God so that they not offend God out of spite without knowledge.* (6:108) invent lies against Him, and worship other gods besides Him.[21] The only safety lies in following the revelation which is replete with the knowledge of God: *Know that it was only caused to descend by the knowledge of God*(11:14)

Whosoever has been given knowledge has indeed been given abundant good: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269) Those who dispute wrongly about God are the ones who are without knowledge, without guidance, and without a book of enlightenment.[22] Only those people will be promoted to suitable ranks and degrees who have faith and are possessed of knowledge,[23] and only those who have knowledge really fear God and tread the path of God-consciousness.[24]

When Solomon asked the people of his Court who would be able to bring the throne of the Queen of Sheba, it was only the one possessed of knowledge who offered himself to bring it and later actually did bring it.[25]

The Quran advises the Prophet to pray for advance in knowledge. *And say: My Lord! Increase me in knowledge!* (20:114) The mysterious teacher of Moses who tried to help him have a glimpse of the working of the unseen had knowledge proceeding from God, i.e., *ilm al-ladunni. Then, they found a servant among Our servants to whom We gave mercy from Us and We taught him knowledge which proceeds from Our Presence* (ilm al-ladunni). (18:65) Saul (Jalut) was appointed king of the Jacobites because he was gifted by God abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess.[26] Noah, David, and Solomon possessed knowledge[27] and judgment.[28] Jacob had a lot of knowledge and experience[29]; Joseph possessed abundant power and knowledge,[30] and so also was Moses given wisdom and knowledge.[31] It was through knowledge and reflection on the phenomena of nature, the heaven and the earth, that Abraham was able to arrive at the ultimate truth.[32] It was through his personal experience and knowledge that Joseph refused to follow the path of the unbelievers and adopted the path of Abraham.[33]

Application•

This Quranic Studies program has been developed to clarify and settle questions peculiar to itself. Teachers should use such questions to organize and unify details covered in Quranic studies. The basic questions everyone faces include the nature of right and wrong, how we know things, and so on. In order

to develop a framework for organizing details, both general and specific Quranic ideas should be continuously raised.

Allow students to have extended discussions on thought-provoking ideas. Maintain a focus in the discussion so that multiple issues are discussed. Help students be clear about their objectives and made to feel that they are moving towards them in an affective way.

The class can begin exploration of an important topic in the Quranic sign below. Help them divide up the task of reading and taking notes on the references. The class can then discuss the Quranic signs, and ask questions to guide further understandings. They should then share their research with each other or each student could write an essay putting all of the ideas together.

Say: Journey through the earth; again, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny. (6:11) *Say: To whom is whatever is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To God. He prescribed mercy for Himself. He will, certainly, gather you on the Day of Resurrection. There is no doubt in it. Those who lost themselves that Day, then, they will not believe.* (6:12)

Helpful Hints About Questioning•

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Help students discover the structure of their own thought.
Help students develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Help students arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Help students note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

For whatever sign We nullify or cause it to be forgotten, We bring better than it, or similar to it. Have you not known that God is Powerful over everything? (2:106)

To Participate Effectively in Questioning, One Must:•

Listen carefully to what the Quranic sign is saying.
Take it seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence in it.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.
Discover implications and consequences.

Then, after that succeeded successors who inherited the Book. They take advantage of this nearer world, and they say: We will be forgiven. If an advantage approaches them like it, they will take it. Is not a solemn promise taken from them with the Book that they would say about God only The Truth? Did

they not study what is in it, and know that the Last Abode is better for those who are Godfearing? Will you not, then, be reasonable? (7:169)

Questions for Classroom Discussion

Seek Quranic examples and analogies to these signs.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of those who are unjust to themselves.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.

Truly, those whom the angels gathered to themselves—ones who are unjust to themselves—they [the angels] *will ask: In what condition had you been?*

They [those where were unjust to themselves] *will say: We had been ones taken advantage on the earth due to our weakness.*

They [the angels] *will say: Be not the earth of God that which is extensive enough to emigrate in it?*

Then, for those, their place of shelter will be hell. How evil a Homecoming! (4:97)

Questions to Ask Students

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*) and analyze it or them.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I routinely ask questions to fill in the missing pieces in my learning.
I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.

I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

4. Use Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments• (Evidence: *basirah*)

Any questions students ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. Thinking has a goal, agenda, purpose.
2. Questions being asked either explicitly or implicitly.
3. Information is being used.

If students have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers students must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions they draw from them.•

O those who believed! If you are Godfearing of God, He will assign you a Criterion between right and wrong and will absolve you of your evil deeds and will forgive you. (8:29)

Four strategies are pertinent here, each of which will begin with a principle followed by its practical application with students and in the classroom along with Quranic examples and suggested questions relative to the text under discussion.•

The four strategies are:

A. Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
B. Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
C. Distinguishing Relevant from Irrelevant Facts
D. Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence

A. Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards

Principle•

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence

to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

The Criteria Include

Clear evidence[34]
Meditation, pondering, considering[35]
Recollection[36]
Reflection (*tafakkur*)[37]
Taking to heart, taking for granted (*tadhakkur*)[38]
Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises[39]
Bringing your proof, showing your evidence[40]
People of intellect and reflection[41]
Explaining distinctly[42]
Being reasonable[43]
Being just and fair[44]

Application•

Whenever students are evaluating the Quranic signs, the teacher can ask students what they are evaluating, the purpose of the evaluation, and the criteria they used. With practice, students can see the importance of developing clear criteria and applying them consistently. When discussing criteria as a class or in groups, rational discussion, clarity, and fair-mindedness are usually more important than reaching consensus.

Is there a sickness in their hearts? Or were they in doubt? Or be they fearful that God and His Messenger will be unjust to them? Nay! Those, they are the ones who are unjust. (24:50)

Questions to Ask Students•

What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?
Can we describe what to look for when judging an unjust person?
What features does an unjust person need to have? Why?

B. Analyzing or Evaluating Actions

Principle•

In order for Quranic critical thinkers to develop their own point of view on an issue, they have to analyze their actions and then evaluate them. Practice develops into good judgment—judging behavior, explaining and justifying those judgments, hearing alternative judgments and their justifications, and assessing judgments.

When Quranic critical thinkers evaluate the behavior of themselves or that of others, they are aware of the criteria that they use so that the criteria themselves become part of the evaluation. They look at the consequences of their actions and see them as basic to the criteria for assessing behavior and policy. They base their evaluations of behavior on assumptions that have been reasoned through. This allows them to articulate and rationally apply principles.

Application•

The teacher can encourage students to raise ethical questions about actions and policies of themselves and others. Students can become more comfortable with the process of evaluating if they are given a number of opportunities to make and assess moral judgments.

So, then, is he who followed the contentment of God like he who drew the burden of the displeasure of God and whose place of shelter will be hell? Miserable will be the Homecoming! They have degrees with God. God is Seeing of what they do. (3:162-3:163)

Questions to Ask Students•

What comparison is the sign making?
Was this the real reason? Why do you think so?
What are the probable consequences of 'most of them who know not'?
What reasons were your evaluations based on?
Might someone else use a different standard to evaluate? Why?
Do you think the action was fair, smart, etc.? Why or why not?

Who shrinks from the creed of Abraham, but he who fooled himself? And, certainly, We favored him in the present. Truly, in the world to come he will be among the ones in accord with morality. (2:130)

Questions to Ask Students•

Why would you say "shrinks from the creed of Abraham"?
What would such a person do?
What results would they achieve?
Who was helped? Hurt?
Why? Is the stated reason consistent with that behavior?

Was the reason they gave their real reason? Why do you think so?

Students should evaluate the behavior of important people of the past. Such evaluation can be enhanced by having interested students report on the long-term consequences of past actions and policies. Students should also be called upon to generalize, to formulate principles of judgment.

Certainly, We gave Moses the Book and We sent Messengers following after him. We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear portents, and confirmed him with the hallowed Spirit. Is it that whenever a Messenger drew near you with what you yourselves yearn not for, you grew arrogant, and you denied a group of people, and you kill a group of people? (2:87 *)*

Questions to Ask Students•

What makes some actions right, others wrong?
What rights do people have?
How can I know when someones rights are being violated?
Why respect people's rights?
Why be good?
Should I live according to rules?
If so, what rules?
If not, how should I decide what to do?
What policies should be established and why?

C. DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT FACTS

Principle•

Students should learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. Students should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

Application•

Students may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. They need to be shown how to limit their responses with only the relevant facts.

Say: Is it other than God that I should desire as a lord while He is Lord of everything? Each soul will earn only for itself. No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load. Again, to your Lord will you return. Then, He will tell you about what you had been at variance in it. (6:164)

Questions to Ask Students•

How would you answer the Quranic question?
What are the implications of the fact that no burdened soul will bear

another's heavy load?
What issues are the sign addressing?
Are you addressing this same issue or raising a new one?

Students could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. Students could then share and discuss their lists. Students can then discover that sometimes they must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue.

Another technique for developing students' sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and have students compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second.

*He said: O Iblis! What prevented **you** from prostrating **yourself** to what I created with My two hands? Had **you** grown arrogant? Or had **you** been among the ones who exalt themselves?* (38:75)

*Iblis said: I am better than he. **You** had created me from fire while **You** had created him from clay.* (38:76)

*He said: Then, go **you** forth from here for, truly, **you** are accursed.* (38:77) *Truly, on **you** is My curse until the Day of Judgment.* (38:78)

Questions to Ask Students•

Why did Iblis not carry out God's command?
Did Iblis do this? versus Should Iblis have done it?
Which one is best? versus Which do people think is best?
Is this right? versus: Is this convenient?

Students who disagree about the relevance of a particular point to the issue discussed, should be encouraged to argue its potential relevance, and probe the beliefs underlying their disagreement.

When it was said to them to believe in what God caused to descend, they said: We believe in what was caused to descend to us. They are ungrateful for what is beyond it, while it is The Truth, that which establishes as true what is with them. Say: Why, then, kill you the Prophets of God before if you had been ones who believe? (2:91)

Questions to Ask Students•

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using? Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Who does greater wrong than those who prevented access to the places of

prostration to God so that His Name not be remembered in them, and endeavored for their devastation? It had not been for those to enter them, but as ones who are fearful. For them is degradation in the present, and for them is a tremendous punishment in the world to come. (2:114)

Questions for Class Discussion•

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above sign?
Is the information given in 2:114 relevant to the question that is being asked?
What the assumption of those who prevent access to places of worship?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

D. Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence

Principle•

Quranic critical thinkers have learned to examine their reasoning by taking it apart and evaluating the components of the signs. They have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. Evidence and factual claims should be scrutinized and evaluated.

Application•

Teachers should ask students for their reasons when their students come to conclusions.

Every soul is a pledge for what it earned. The Companions of the Right will be in Gardens and will demand of one another about the ones who sin: What thrust you into Saqar?

They would say: We be not among the ones who formally pray and we were not those who feed the needy. We had been ones who engage in idle talk along with the ones who engage in idle talk. We had been denying the Day of Judgment until the certainty of the Hour approached us.

Then, intercession will not profit them from the ones who are intercessors. Then, what is the matter with them that they are ones who turn aside from the admonition, as though they had been frightened donkeys that ran away from a lion? Nay! Every man among them wants to be given unrolled scrolls. No indeed! Nay! They fear not the world to come. No indeed! Truly, it is an admonition. So let whoever willed, remember it. But they will not remember unless God wills. He is Worthy of God-consciousness and He is Worthy of granting The Forgiveness. (74:38-74:56)

Questions to Ask Students•

What evidence do the above signs give?
Why would the facts be true?
What assumptions are you making?

Do you have reason to think your assumptions are true?

O those who believed! Why say you what you accomplish not? It was most troublesome, repugnant to God that you say what you accomplish not. (61:2-61:3)

Questions to Ask Students•

Do you talk about what you have not yet done?
Why do you do so?
What evidence do you have?

If the reasons that students give as evidence are incomplete, the teacher should ask some exploring questions in order for the student to give a fuller explanation of how they reasoned an issue. When given written material to evaluate and interpret, students should reference specific Quranic signs that they have used on which to base their interpretation. In this way, students will be able to better clarify their understanding of a sign(s) and their interpretation better understood.

Did they look on for nothing but its interpretation? The Day its interpretation approaches, those who forgot it before will say: Surely, Messengers of our Lord drew near us with The Truth. Have we any intercessors who will intercede for us? Or will we be returned so we do other than what we had been doing before? Surely, they lost themselves. Went astray from them what they had been devising. (7:53)

Questions to Ask Students•

On what evidence is this conclusion based?
Where did we get the evidence?
How could we find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do we need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

O those who believed! Be helpers of God as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said: We are the helpers for God. Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob and a section were ungrateful. So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies. They became ones who are masters. (61:14)

Questions that Explore Reasons and Evidence (Information)•

What example do you have in the disciples?

How do you know?
Why do you think that is true?
Do you have any evidence for that?
What difference does that make?
What are your reasons for saying that?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs in this section. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.
I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.
I realized that fundamental ideas are the basis for all others.

5. Make Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions• (Understanding: *tabassur*)

We further develop our reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding how to make interpretations, inferences (a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning) and/or conclusions based on the Quranic message.

Thinking differs from reasoning. Thinking is simply a succession of thoughts that are not necessarily related to one another. Reasoning, on the other hand is where one thought leads directly to another. When students actively engage in reasoning, it is called 'to infer' or to make inferences.

When students infer something from a Quranic sign from something else that it says, they move from the second thought back to the first thought because they infer that the second thought makes it reasonable for them to believe in the truth of the first thought.

Is he who had been lifeless and We gave him life and We made a light for him by which he walks among humanity (first thoughts) *like he who is in the shadows and is not one who goes forth from them?* (second thoughts) *Thus, it was made to appear pleasing to ones who are ungrateful what they had been doing* (conclusion). (6:122)

Words that indicate that one thought supports another thought are called "inference indicators'. Some examples are: Since, thus, implies, consequently, because, it follows that or given that. Inference indicators may or may not be present in the Quranic signs.

When students express a thought, they do so by making a statement. A statement is a sentence that they use to make a claim that can then be evaluated as being true or false. It is clear from this definition of a statement that questions and commands are not statement.

Statements are the foundation for argument or discussion. An argument is a series of statements that claim that one or more of their statements (called premises) support another statement (particular one) which is called the conclusion.

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, students infer the conclusion.

The following are four strategies that are specific to this element of reasoning, that is, making interpretations, inferences and conclusions. Each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions that can be asked of the students at each point along the way.

The four strategies are:

A. Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
B. Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
C. Recognizing Contradictions
D. Noting Significant Similarities and Differences

Students in Quranic Studies learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs they are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As they study the Quranic signs, they should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

Then, when We decreed death for Solomon, nothing pointed out his death to the jinn, but a moving creature of the earth that consumes his scepter. So when he fell down, it became clear to the jinn that if they had been knowing the unseen, then they would not have lingered in expectation in the despised punishment. (34:14)

To reach a conclusion, students respond with their own conception of what they are studying. They place it in the context of their own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, a student may conclude from the silence of another person towards him or her as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on their own patterns of motivation and behavior that he or she has projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

*They ask **you** about intoxicants and gambling. Say: In both of them there is deplorable sin and profits for humanity. Their sin is more deplorable than what is profitable.* (2:219)

Here, the reasonable conclusion, *their sin is more deplorable than what is profitable,* is arrived at from the premises pros and cons of intoxicants and gambling: *Say: In both of them there is deplorable sin and profits for humanity.*

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever students learn they must integrate into their own thinking and action. What they learn must be given a meaning by them, must be meaningful to them, and therefore involves interpretive acts on their part.

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a

silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing their conclusions as such, they revise and refine them. They do not simply accept or reject; they work to make ideas their own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit their new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

Conclusions are inferences and, in a sense, an inference can be considered a conclusion. An inference is a step of the mind, an intellectual act by which one concludes that something is so in light of something else's being so, or seeming to be so. If someone comes at me with a knife in his or her hand, I would probably infer that the person mean to do me harm. Inferences can be strong or weak, justified or unjustified. Inferences are based upon assumptions.

With inferences, reasoning proceeds by steps in which students logically reason as follows: Because this is so, that also is so (or probably so), or: Since this, therefore that. Any 'defect' in such inferences is a possible problem in our reasoning.

All reasoning contains inferences or interpretations by which:

Students Making Inferences Should:•

Draw conclusions
Give meaning to data
Infer only what the evidence implies
Check inferences for their consistency with each other
Identify assumptions underlying your inferences.

After reasoning (discerning) the main points, students can decide what the best answer or conclusion to the question is.

Say: Will we call to other than God what can neither hurt nor profit us? Are we repelled on our heels after God guided us like one whom the satans lured, bewildered in and on the earth although he has companions who call him to the guidance saying: Approach us? Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance. We were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds. (6:71)

Questions to Ask Students•

What inferences, judgments or conclusions does this sign make?
What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based

on this Quranic sign?
Here is the information.
How are you interpreting it?
What is it telling you?
What meaning would you give to it?

A. Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations

Principle•

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views.

They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth.

When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

Application•

Instead of simply stating why they agree or disagree with a line of reasoning, students should be encouraged to place competing arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another.

They swear by God the most earnest sworn oaths that if a sign would draw near them, they would, certainly, believe in it. Say: The signs are only with God. What will cause you to realize that even if the signs were to draw near, they would not believe? (6:109)

He said: Worship you what you yourselves carve out while God created you and what you do? (37:95-96)

Questions to Ask Students•

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?

Students should then be encouraged to argue back and forth, and modify their positions in light of the strengths of others' positions. Students can become

better able to evaluate reasoning by familiarizing themselves with, and practicing:

Evaluating Reasoning by:•

Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
Developing criteria for evaluation
Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts
Evaluating evidence
Exploring implications.

After extended discussion, have students state their final positions. Encourage them to qualify their claims appropriately.

Have you yourself considered he who prohibits a servant when he invoked blessings? Have you considered if he had been on guidance or commanded God-consciousness? Have you considered if he denied and turned away? Does he not know that God sees? (96:9-96:14)

Questions to Ask Students•

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What is it talking about? What do I want to say about it?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

B. Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations

Principle•

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. Students learn to distinguish between what they observe from the Quranic signs and what they conclude. They delve into the facts given in the signs so find the implications as well as the concepts. They separate guessing from clear conclusions. Students normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce their own egocentric or sociocentric world views. They learn to evaluate inferences that are made when their own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. They should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that they interpret every situation in which they find themselves.

Application•

Teachers can have students give examples, from their experience, of making bad inferences, and encourage them to recognize situations in which they

are most susceptible to uncritical thought. The class can discuss ways in which they can successfully minimize the effects of irrationality in their thought by making plausible inferences and interpretations from Quranic signs.

*Had **you*** (Iblis, Satan) *grown arrogant? Or had **you** been among the ones who exalt themselves?* (38:75)

*Iblis said: I am better than he. **You** had created me from fire while **You** had created him from clay.* (38:76)

*He said: Then, go **you** forth from here* (Paradise) *for, truly, **you** are accursed.* (38:77) *Truly, on **you*** (Iblis, Satan) *is My curse until the Day of Judgment.* (38:78)

Iblis said: My Lord! Then, give me respite until the Day to be raised up. (38:79)

*He said: Truly, **you** are among the ones who are given respite* (38:80) *until the Day of the known time.* (38:81)

*Iblis said: By **Your** Great Glory, then, I will certainly lead them one and all into error,* (38:82) *but **Your** devoted servants among them.* (38:83)

He said: This is The Truth and The Truth I say (38:84) *that I will fill hell with **you** and with one and all of whoever heeded **you**.* (38:85)

Questions to Ask Students•

What happened with Iblis?
What does that mean?
Are there other ways to interpret our results? What?
How can we tell which is best?

C. Recognizing Contradictions

Principle•

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fairminded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them.

Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

Application•

When discussing conflicting lines of reasoning, inconsistent versions of the same story, or egocentric reasoning or behavior, the teacher can encourage students to bring out both views and practice recognizing contradictions.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message and Islam, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The students can discuss their views on the two different versions and if they interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, ***The Study Quran***)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, ***The Sublime Quran***)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, ***The Study Quran***)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be Godfearing of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, ***The Sublime Quran***)

Questions to Ask the Students•

What do the different signs say?

Are the two consistent or contradictory?

Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other?

When arguing opposing views, students should be encouraged to find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

Questions to Ask the Students•

What does each sign (4:23 and 2:231) say? Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agreer?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?

The class can explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.

Questions to Ask the Students

Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

D. NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Principle•

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases.

They hesitate before they accept this or that analogy or comparison between 4:34 and 2:231. They recognize the purposes of the comparisons they make. They recognize that purposes govern the act of comparing and determine its scope and limits.

Application•

Quranic signs often call on students to compare and contrast two or more things—objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. For students to merely list similarities

and differences has little value in itself. Rather than encouraging students to make such lists, these activities should be proposed in a context which narrows the range of pertinent comparisons and requires some use be made of them in pursuit of some specific goal. For example, if comparing and contrasting two social practices (marriage and divorce), students should use their understanding to illuminate the relationship between them. Thus, only those points which shed light on the particular problem need be mentioned, and each point has implications to be drawn out and integrated into a broader picture.

Here are two examples of different translations of two Quranic signs for students to compare and discuss in relationship to the Quranic views on marriage and divorce:

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, *The Study Quran*)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He

admonishes you with it. Be Godfearing of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

Questions to Ask Students•

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the translations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic? How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

Students can compare various Quranic translations as to what they represent, and so evaluate them. When comparing situations mentioned in the Quran, rather than simply listing differences, students should analyze and use their comparisons.

Students should not over-generalize from differences. The differences in situations may not reflect difference in character as much as differences in situation as the Quranic signs below show. Students should relate differences in feelings and behavior to differences in what the situations are.

He frowned and turned away (80:1) *that the blind man drew near him.* (80:2) *What will cause **you** to recognize so that perhaps he will purify himself* (80:3) *or yet recollect and a reminder profit him?* (80:4)

But as for he who was self-complacent, (80:5) *then, **you** have attended to him* (80:6) *and not upon **you** is any blame if he purifies not himself.* (80:7) *Yet as for him who drew near to **you**, coming eagerly for knowledge* (80:8) *and he dreads God,* (80:9) *then, **you** have paid no heed to him?* (80:10)
No indeed! Truly, this is a reminder. (80:11)

So let whoever willed, remember it (80:12) *in scrolls to be held in esteem,* (80:13) *ones that are exalted and ones that are purified* (80:14) *by the hands of generous writers* (80:15) *and ones who are kindly, generous.* (80:16)

Note: There is disagreement among the scholars in relation to the first signs of this chapter. Some say that it was in reference to the Prophet who frowned and turned away. Others say that the Quran always addresses the Prophet in the second person singular, thou (**you**), and here the Quran says "he." Therefore, it relates to the Quraysh leader who was in discussion with the Prophet who frowned and turned away when the blind man drew near him and not the Prophet. Then the signs say to the Prophet: *And what will cause **you** to recognize so that perhaps he* (the Quraysh leader) *will purify himself or yet recollect and a reminder profit him* (the Quraysh leader)? *But as for he who was self-complacent* (the Quraysh leader), *then, **you*** (Muhammad) *attend to him and not upon **you*** (Muhammad) *is any blame if he purifies not himself* (the Quraysh leader).

Yet as for him (the blind man) *who drew near to **you*** (Muhammad)

coming eagerly for knowledge and he dreads God, then, you (Muhammad) *have paid no heed to him* (the blind man)*? No indeed! Truly, this is a reminder.*

Questions to Ask the Students•

What conclusions am I coming to?
Is my inference logical?
Are there other conclusions I should consider?
Does this interpretation make sense?
Does our solution necessarily follow from the facts?
How did you reach that conclusion?
What are you basing your reasoning on?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs 80:1-80:16. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself: What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it? If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

6. UTILIZE CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY• (RECALL: *IDHDHAKARA*)

Quranic thinking offers students concepts and principles that help them analyze, assess and improve their thinking when they better understand the meanings of the Quranic signs.

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them.

Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

What are principles? Principles express the relationship between concepts. A basic Quranic principle is the Oneness of God (*tawhid*). A second principle is submission to the Will of God. Those who, by choice, submit to the Will of God are Muslims.

Quranic thinkers begin developing their reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what it means to utilize concepts, definitions, principles, models and vocabulary.

The following are five strategies specific to this element of reasoning. Each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions that can be asked of the students at each point along the way. The five strategies are:

A. Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframe Insights to New Contexts
B. Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments
C. Making Interdisciplinary Connections
D. Comparing and Contrasting Ideals with Actual Practice
E. Thinking Precisely About Thinking: Using Critical Vocabulary

A. COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAME INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

Principle•

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability students have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Application•

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. Students are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

The Prophet would preserve the form, the container of a custom or idea which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method that he used in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society that apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: He maintained the container of a social tradition, but changed the contents.

He used this method in reconciling social phenomena. He adopted a process and method that is a model for all problem solving. This method can be applied to two problems or two phenomena that in no way resemble each other. Recognizing how important this method is, we cannot fully explore it here. We can only clarify it by a few examples.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders

opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the divine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.[45]

Questions to Ask Students•

Was Prophet Muhammad in a position to know?
What would someone need to be in a position to know?
Could the Prophet have directly seen or heard, or would he have to have reasoned to what he knew?
What do we know about the Prophet's expertise and experience?
What experience would you need to have to be an expert?
What must you have studied?
What does he claim about this issue?
Where did he get his information?
Is there reason to doubt him?
Has he been reliable in the past?
Does he have anything to gain by convincing others?

B. Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments

Quranic Example

Thus, We cause Abraham to see the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he would be of the ones who are certain in belief.

So when night outspread over him, he saw a star. He said: This is my Lord. Then, when it set, he said: I love not that which sets.

Then, when he saw the moon, that which rises, he said: This is my Lord. Then, when it set, he said: If my Lord guides me not, certainly, I would have been among the folk, the ones gone astray.

Then, when he saw the sun, that which rises, he said: This is my Lord. This is greater. Then, when it set, he said: O my folk! Truly, I am free from the partners you ascribe with Him. Truly, I turned my face to He Who Originated the heavens and the earth—as a monotheist and I am not of the ones who are polytheists.

His folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect? How should I fear what you ascribed as partners with Him while you fear not that you ascribe as partners with God? He sends not down to you any authority for it.

Then, which of the two groups of people has better right to a place of sanctuary if you had been knowing? Those who believed and confuse not their belief with injustice, those, to them belongs the place of sanctuary. They are ones who are truly guided. (6:75-6:82)

Questions to Ask Students•

What thing is most important in life to Prophet Abraham?
What is the difference between important and trivial?
What are his people like? What kinds of people are there?
What is the difference between right and wrong?

Principle•

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the people around Prophet Abraham tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers like Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

Students who learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully, try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic as Prophet Abraham did.

Application•

The perspectives of students are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. Students who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. Students who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what they think, or reflect on new situations or problems. Students can compare what they say they believe with how they act. Teachers can raise basic and important questions about what students learn, having them discover and discuss underlying principles in their thought.

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for students who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.

Students could explain how what they have learned from the Quranic signs has changed their thinking in some way. A written assignment could be used as an opportunity for a student to explore an idea in depth, and either come to conclusions, or clarify issues and concepts.

During classroom discussions, teachers should raise points made during study. Students should relate their general ideas to specifics they have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

C. Making Interdisciplinary Connections

Principle•

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Students who understand the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that they are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science. Quranic thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[46]

Application•

Teachers may ask students questions that make connections to other subjects. This way they show the importance of the students learning to bring in-

sights from many other disciplines as they learn Quranic studies.

Examples of Interdisciplinary Connections

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as *you differ in what you say.* (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Detailed Example of Interdisciplinary Connections

Numbers and Geometry

(God) comprehends whatever is with them and He counts everything with numbers. (72:28)

Have the students use the insights they have from this Quranic sign to inform their understanding of the traditional concept of numbers and geometry that developed over time from this sign.

Numbers

Traditional Perspective: Beginning with numbers, they are important in the traditional perspective because through numbers Quranic thinkers are able to relate multiplicity to Unity and bring to light the harmony which pervades the Universe, developing what has been called "Abrahamic Pythagoreanism" because of the emphasis upon unity and oneness (Abrahamic) and the qualitative as well as the quantitative aspect of numbers (Pythagoreanism). This concept serves as the basis for the creation of Islamic art and architecture.

Comparing the relation of God to the world as that of One to other numbers, the Brethren of Purity (10th century) say in regard to the science of numbers that it is "the way leading to the grasp of Unity as a science which stands above Nature and is the principle of beings...."[47]

It is important to note,

Numbers in Abrahamic Pythagoreanism being both qualitative and quantitative cannot be identified as modern numbers with simply di-

vision and multiplication because numbers are a projection of unity, never separated from their Source. They integrate the entity that they symbolize or with which they are identified with Unity, the Source of all existence.[48]

The Brethren of Purity say,

All that has by nature and with systematic method been arranged in the Universe seems both in part and as a whole to have been determined and ordered in accordance with number by the forethought and mind of Him that created all things; for the pattern was fixed, like a preliminary sketch, by the domination of number pre-existing in the mind of the world-creating God, number conceptual only and immaterial in every way so that with reference to it, as to an artistic plan, should be created all these things, times, motion, the heavens, the stars and all sorts of revolution.[49]

Numbers as the fundamental ordering principles of nature have both a qualitative and quantitative significance. Their qualitative significance is their psychological aspect, the aspect involved in the processes of nature. Traditional numerology is synchronistic, non-linear and non-logical. Numbers are part of the Signs 'upon the horizons and within themselves'. Reading numbers in this sense becomes equivalent to a kind of language.

A traditional scholar writes,

Know that the wise Pythagoras was the first to discourse on the nature of number. He said beings come into existence in conformity with the nature of number. Consequently, he who understand the nature of number, its species and properties, is in a position to know the various genera and species of beings. Necessarily, things are one with respect to Matter and multiple with respect to Form. There must be dyads (matter and form, the subtle and the gross, the luminous and the dark, etc.); triads (surface, line and volume; past, future and present, etc.); tetrads (the four natures, the four elements, the four pillars of the cosmic tent); there must be pentads, hexads, heptads, decads, etc. ....Pythagoras and his followers...dispensed justice where justice was due. They saw very clearly that the One is the cause of number and that all numbers, small or big, even or odd, are constituted by the One. The One gives its name to every number; number persists because the One persists; number grows and augments by the repetition of the One. It is because a dyad is a dyadic unity, for example, that it is different from a triadic unity, and so on.[505]

Geometry

The science of numbers generate the science of Geometry that expresses the personality of numbers permitting the human being a further exploration into the processes of nature.

> ...the triangle and the square are 'personalities' and not qualities. They are essentials and not accidents. While one obtains ordinary numbers by addition, qualitative number results, on the contrary, from an internal or intrinsic differentiation of principal unity; it is not added to anything and does not depart from unity. Geometrical figures are so many images of unity; they exclude one another or rather, they denote different principal quantities; the triangle is harmony, the square stability; these are 'concentric' and not 'serial' numbers.'[51]

Al-Biruni expresses the harmony of nature and the role of numbers and geometry in this harmony:

> ...Among the peculiarities of the flowers there is one really astonishing fact, viz., the number of their leaves, the tops of which form a circle when they begin to open, is in most cases conformable to the laws of geometry. In most cases they agree with the chords that have been found by the laws of geometry, not with conic sections. You scarcely ever find a flower of 7 or 9 leaves, for you cannot construct them according to the laws of geometry in a circle as isosceles (triangles). The number of their leaves is always 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 18. This is a matter of frequent occurrence. Possibly one may find among the species hitherto known such a number of leaves, but, on the whole, one must say Nature preserves its genera and species such as they are. For if you would, for example, count the number of seeds of one of the many pomegranates of a tree, you would find that all the other pomegranates contain the same number of seeds as that one the seeds of which you have counted first. So, too, Nature proceeds in all other matters.[52]

Truly, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alteration of the nighttime and the daytime and the boats that run on the sea with what profits humanity, and what God caused to descend from heaven of water, and gave life to the earth after its death, and disseminated on it all moving creatures, and diversified the winds and the clouds, ones caused to be subservient between heaven and earth, are the signs for a folk who are reasonable. (2:164)

Questions to Ask Students•

Are the above signs evocative? To the point?

How does it illustrate or enhance the point made?

Students can evaluate the psychological, sociological, or historical accuracy of the sign.

D. COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Principle•

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

Application•

Teachers can prepare for a classroom discussion on the importance of attaining consistency of thought and action.

When you have not approached them with a sign, they said: Why had you not improvised one? Say: I follow only what is revealed to me from my Lord. This [the Quran] *is clear evidence from your Lord and guidance and mercy for a community who believes.* (7:203)

Questions to Ask Students•

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency. (90:5-90:17)

The gap between ideals with actual practice arises at times by asking students questions that they tend to answer with a yes or no. Instead, teachers should try to ask examples of the following:

Questions to Ask Students•

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?

Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

The more realistic students ideals are, the closer they can get to achieving them. As an example, rather than assuming the ideal that everyone should always do everything they can for everyone anytime, give students the opportunity to express a spectrum on moral qualities such as generosity.

Consider they the earth, how much We caused to develop in and on it of every generous pair? (26:7)

Questions to Ask Students•

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

E. Thinking Precisely About Thinking: Using Critical Vocabulary

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking. God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of 'Say" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of night-*

*time and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! **You** had not created this in vain. Glory be to **You**! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to **you**, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Barriers or Obstacles to Quranic Thinking

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, **your** Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If **you** have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause **you** to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be **you** harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God*

will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper. (9:73-9:74)[53]

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

And when the division is attended by those imbued with kinship and the orphans and the needy, then, provide for them from it and say honorable sayings to them. (4:8)

Just think about the Signs:

Thus, The Truth came to pass and proved false what they had been doing. (7:118)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

There are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21 same as 7:175)

Application•

When conducting discussions, participating students could be encouraged to explain the role of their remarks in the discussion:

Supporting a point
Raising an objection
Answering an objection
Distinguishing concepts or issues
Questioning relevance, etc:
    Why were you raising that point here?
    Are you supporting your classmates's point or ... ?

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of God's signs in the universe functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the

universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth.

By the winnowing winds of ones that winnow by the burden-bearers, the ones who carry a heavy burden and the ones that run with ease and the ones who distribute the command, truly, what you are promised is that which is sincere. Truly, the judgment is that which falls. By the heaven that is full of tracks, you are ones who are at variance in your sayings. He is misled there by he who was misled. Perdition to those who guess, ones who are inattentive because of obstinacy. They ask: When will the Day of Judgment be? A Day when they are tried over the fire: Experience your test. This is that for which you had been seeking to hasten.

Truly, the ones who are Godfearing will be in the Garden and springs, ones who take what their Lord gave them. Truly, they had been before this—ones who are doers of good. They had been slumbering little during the night. At the breaking of the day, they ask for forgiveness. There is an obligation from their wealth for the one who begs and the one who is deprived. On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? In the heaven is your provision as you are promised by the Lord of the heaven and the earth. It is, truly, The Truth just as you yourselves speak. (51:1-51:23)

The following questions may help the students in utilizing concepts, theories, definitions, axioms, laws, principles, models and/or vocabulary.

Questions to Ask the Students•

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are. . . ?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs in this section. Then, they should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.
I know that I think within a vocabulary.
I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

7. MAKE ASSUMPTIONS, PRESUPPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: *ZUNUN*)

Principle•

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability

to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)

In understanding their own assumptions as they try to exercise Quranic thinking, students begin to realize that they can't figure out everything simultaneously. They have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. They know that they can always question assumptions as they move forward in their thought process. At the same time, students should think about the assumptions that they are making. They should try to make them with some awareness by asking themselves: Do they make sense?

Students are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. They base both their reasoning and their behavior on beliefs they take for granted. They are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that they can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know. *Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

Application•

Teachers should encourage students to make assumptions explicit as often as possible—assumptions made in what they read or hear and assumptions they make. Teachers should ask questions that elicit the implicit elements of students' claims. Although it is valuable practice to have students make good assumptions

explicit, it is especially important when assumptions are questionable.

Those who refuse God's message are ones who follow assumptions, conjecture and opinion without examining or evaluating them. The assumption that is questioned here is the accusation made by those ungrateful for God's blessings, the same accusation made by Satan when he refused to bow down to Adam, namely, that it is the fault of God's Will that they ascribed partners with God (or, as in the case of Satan, it was God Who willed that Satan not bow down to Adam). The Quran asks the ungrateful: *Is there any knowledge with you that you bring out to Us*? (6:148)

God's revelation clearly states not to associate partners with God, but the ungrateful refuse to believe and prefer, instead to make excuses for their behavior rather than admit to their error. This sign teaches critical thinkers to question and distinguish between that which is conjecture and opinion and that which is the truth.

Have students analyze group influences on their life: Closely analyze the behavior that is encouraged, and discouraged, in the groups to which they belong. For any given group, what are they 'required' to believe? What are they 'forbidden' to do? Every group enforces some level of conformity. Most people live much too much within the view of themselves projected by others. Discover what pressure they are bowing to and think explicitly about whether or not to reject that pressure.

Next consider how they could integrate analyzing group influences on their life into their practice. One of the main things that groups do is control us by controlling the definitions they are allowed to operate with. When a group defines some things as 'cool' and some as 'dumb', the members of the group try to appear 'cool' and not appear 'dumb'. When the boss of a business says: 'That makes a lot of sense,' his subordinates know they are not to say: 'No, it is ridiculous.' They know this because defining someone as the 'boss' gives him/her special privileges to define situations and relationships.

Assumed you that We created you in amusement and that to Us you would not be returned? (23:115)

In this sign, the Quran itself challenges assumptions.

Questions to Ask Students•

Have you assumed that God created us in order to amuse Himself
(much as the ancient Greek concept of the gods)?
Or that there was something else behind our creation?

Have you assumed that all the favors and comfort that we enjoy means
we have been successful in providing for ourselves
without considering any grace from God? Or that it is all
temporary and it is to God that we will return?

This sign (23:115) reminds us that critical thinkers examine and evaluate their assumptions as well.

There are no rules for determining when to have students evaluate assumptions. Students should feel free to question and discuss any assumptions they suspect are questionable or false. Students should also evaluate good assumptions. Doing so gives them a contrast with poor assumptions.

The following are some of the probing questions teachers may use when a class discusses the worth of an assumption.

Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while approaches you not the likeness of those who passed away before you? Desolation and tribulation afflicted them. They are so convulsed that even the Messenger says, and those who believed with him: When will there be help from God? No doubt, truly, the help of God is Near. (2:214)

Questions to Ask Students•

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express
and determine whether they show a sense of justice.
Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?

Those who ascribed partners with God will say: If God willed, neither would we have ascribed partners with God, nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything. Thus, denied those who were before them until they experienced Our might. Say [on God's behalf]*: Is there any knowledge with you that you bring out to Us? You follow not but opinion and, then, you only guess.* (6:148)

The following questions may help the students in making assumptions, presuppositions, taking for granted.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are....?
What you are taking for granted.
What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning?
What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic
revelation?
What are you assuming?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs in this section. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

8. Generate Implications, Consequences (ponder, evaluate: *tadabbur*)

Principle•

Implications follow from our thoughts. Consequences follow from our actions.

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

When students spell out the implications of their reasoning:

Have they succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?
Have they confined themselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?
Have they enunciated the implications of their views clearly and precisely enough to permit their thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?
Can they trace the implications and consequences that come from their reasoning?

An example is the dream of Abraham and the implications it had for Abraham and his son and the consequences:

So We gave [Abraham] *the good tidings of a forbearing boy. When he reached maturity endeavoring with him,* [Abraham] *said: O my son! Truly, I see while slumbering that I am sacrificing* ***you****. So what do you think?*

[His son] *said: O my father! Accomplish whatever* ***you*** *are commanded.* ***You*** *will find me, if God willed, of the ones who remain steadfast.*

Then, when they both submitted themselves to God and he flung him on his brow, We cried out to him: O Abraham! Surely, ***you*** *established the dream as true! Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are doers of good. Truly, that was, certainly, the clear trial. Then, We redeemed* [Abraham] *with a sublime slaughter and We left for him a good name with the later ones: Peace be on Abraham! Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are doers of good. Truly, he is one of Our believing servants.*(37:101-37:111)

Questions to Ask Students•

If Abraham decides to act on the implications of his dream, what would happen?
If Abraham decides not to act on the implications of his dream, what would happen?
What is Abraham implying from his words to his son?
What is likely to happen if Abraham does this as opposed to not doing it?
Is Abraham's dream implying that he should sacrifice his son?

How significant are the implications of Abraham's decision?

Following this general discussion of implications, two strategies specific to this element of reasoning, namely, generating implications and consequences are presented. Each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions that can be asked of the students at each point along the way.

The two strategies are:

A. Generating or Assessing Solutions
B. Exploring Implications and Consequences

A. Generating or Assessing Solutions

Principle•

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length.

Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found.

As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

Application•

When presenting problem-solving lessons or activities, the Quranic text tends to provide lists of problem-solving steps that do not limit the process. For example, it encourages students to consider how the Quranic message solved or tried to solve the same or a similar problem. It does not generally begin by solving the problem, but first analyzes the causes.

The best way to develop insight into problem-solving is to solve problems. If the first attempt fails or causes other problems, students should consider why and try again. Thus, they can learn the practical difficulties involved in discovering and implementing a workable solution.

It is recommended that the teacher first have students state the problem. If that has not been done, students should explore the causes at length, exploring

and evaluating multiple perspectives. Encourage them to integrate the strong points within each view. As the process of exploring solutions proceeds, students may find it useful to reformulate the description of the problem.

Students can evaluate the Quranic text's statement of the problem and its causes, evaluate the solution tried, and propose and evaluate alternatives. Students should be encouraged to explore the beliefs underlying various choices of solutions.•

Truly, you and what you worship other than God are fuel material for hell. If these had been gods, they would never have gone down to [hell]. (21:98-21:99)

One of the implications stated in 21:98-21:99 is that those who worship gods besides God are both fuel for hell, the ones who worship them and what they worship. However, in regard to the gods that they worship, the implication is: *If they had been gods*. The consequence of the implication is: *they would not have gone down to hell.* Therefore, one can conclude that what those who worship gods besides God themselves go to hell and what they worship are not gods, otherwise they would not have been fuel for the fire.

Questions to Ask Students•

What is the best solution for someone who does not want to be fuel for the fire?

What is the proof that what is worshipped besides God are not gods?

Reflect they not? There is no madness in their companion. He is but a clear warner. (7:184)

With the clear portents and the ancient scrolls, We caused to descend the Remembrance to you that you will make manifest to humanity what was sent down to them and so that perhaps they will reflect. (16:44)

Rather than simply asking students if a given solution is good, the teacher could encourage an extended discussion of such questions as:

Questions to Ask Students•

What solution does 16:44 offer?

What are the effects?

Who is affected?

Did it have the desired effects?

Undesirable effects?

What should be done differently?

What should we do now to rectify the problems that action caused?

B. Exploring Implications and Consequences

Principle•

Quranic thinkers learn to recognize the implications of Quranic signs that are made and what follows from them. In this way they develop a more complete understanding of the meaning of a sign. Quranic thinkers recognize that if they are to accept the statement in a Quranic sign, they also have to accept its implications. There is no limit to the extent of this process.

When taking beliefs into consideration, beliefs that relate to actions or behavior, they consider the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

Application•

The teacher can ask students to state the implications of Quranic signs. The process can help students better understand the meaning of a sign.

That is the Book —there is no doubt in it, a guidance for the ones who are Godfearing: Those who believe in the unseen and perform the formal prayer, and they spend out of what We provided them, and those who believe in what was caused to descend to you, and what was caused to descend before you, and they are certain of the world to come. Those are on a guidance from their Lord and those, they are the ones who prosper. (2:2-2:5)

Questions to Ask Students•

What does this imply? mean? If this is true, what else must be true?
What were, or would be, the consequences of this action?
How do you know? Why wouldn't this happen instead?
Are the consequences desirable? Why or why not?

Teachers can have students explore the implications and consequences of their own beliefs. During dialogical exchanges, students can compare the implications of ideas from different perspectives and the consequences of accepting each perspective:

How would someone who believes this act?
What result would that have?

By time through the ages, truly, the human being is, surely, in a loss except those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, and counseled one another to The Truth, and counseled one another to having patience. (103:1-103:3)

Questions to Ask Students•

What is the Quran implying by that?

What effect would that have?
Would that necessarily happen or only probably happen?
If this and this are the case, when what else must also be true?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should explore the implications and consequences in the Quranic signs 103:1-103:3. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

How would you evaluate yourself at this point? I am at:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)
Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking
Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice
Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice
Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice
Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of an author using an analytical tool called SOAPS?
S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)
O = occasion: What is going on at the time?
A = audience: To whom is it addressed?
P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?
S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

Chapter III. Seven Quranic Moral Traits

Seven essential Quranic moral traits that are included in critical thinking methodology are:

1. Belief in One God (*TAWHID*)
2. God-Consciousness (*TAQWA*)
3. Integrity through Moral Discipline (morally obligated: *QANATA*)
4. Empowering Courage (*BATASHA*)
5. Persevering in Goodness (steadfast: *SABARA*)
6. Empathic Altruism (love, mercy, compassion: *IHSAN*)
7. Being Fair and Just (*ADL*, right-minded: *RASHAD*)

Moral traits are interdependent affective strategies. They are described as having:

The traits of mind and character necessary for right action and thinking;
The traits of mind and character essential for fair-minded rationality;
The traits that distinguish the narrow-minded, self-serving critical thinker from the open-minded, truth-seeking critical thinker.

Each moral trait is best developed while developing the others as well. They cannot be imposed from without; they must be cultivated by encouragement and example. People can come to deeply understand and accept these principles by analyzing their experiences of them: learning from an unfamiliar perspective, discovering they don't know as much as you thought, and so on.

To teach for the moral traits, one must recognize the significant differences between the higher order critical thinking of a fair-minded critical thinker (believer) and that of a self-serving critical thinker (ungrateful, hypocrite and so forth). Though both share a certain command of the skills of critical thinking, they are not equally good at tasks, which presuppose the moral traits. The self-serving (weak sense) critical thinker would lack the insights that underlie and support these traits.

Insight refers to the ability to see and clearly and deeply understand the inner nature of things. In the Islamic perspective, this is something that extremists would disagree with whereas instruction for Quranic critical thinking fosters insight rather than mere performance; it cultivates the achievement of deeper knowledge and understanding through insight. Thinking one's way into and through a sign (*ayah*) leads to insights as one synthesizes what one is learning, relating one sign to other signs and all signs to personal experience.

Only when one gains analyzed experiences of working and reasoning one's way out of prejudice can one gain the higher order abilities of a fair-minded Quranic critical thinker. What one gains is somewhat 'procedural' or sequential

in that there is a process one must go through; but one also sees that the process cannot be followed out based on a formula or an algorithm, it depends on principles. The somewhat abstract articulation of the moral traits will take on concrete meaning in the light of analyzed experiences. Their true meaning to us will be given in and by these experiences. We will often return to them to recapture and rekindle the insights upon which the moral traits depend.

Generally, to develop moral traits, students must create a collection of analyzed experiences that represent to them intuitive models, not only of the pitfalls of their own previous thinking and experiencing but also processes for reasoning their way out of or around them. These model experiences must be charged with meaning for them. They cannot be indifferent to them. They must sustain them in their minds by their sense of their importance as they sustain and guide them in their thinking.

Intuition can be defined as the direct knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning. Students sometimes seem to know or learn things without recognizing how they came to that knowledge. When this occurs, they experience an inner sense that what they believe is true. The problem is that sometimes they are correct (and have genuinely experienced an intuition) and sometimes they are incorrect (having fallen victim to one of their prejudices or their imagination). A critical thinker does not blindly accept that what one thinks or believes but cannot account for is necessarily true. A critical thinker realizes how easily they confuse intuitions and prejudices. Critical thinkers may follow their inner sense that something is so, but only with a healthy sense of humility.

What does this imply for teaching? It implies a somewhat different content or material focus. Our own minds and experiences must become the subject of our study and learning. Indeed, only to the extent that the content of our own experiences becomes an essential part of study will the usual subject matter truly be learned. By the same token, the experiences of others must become part of what they study. But experiences of any kind should always be critically analyzed, and students must do their own analyses and clearly recognize what they are doing.

This entails that students become explicitly aware of the logic of experience. All experiences have three elements, each of which may require some special scrutiny in the analytic process:

1. Something to be experienced (some actual situation or other);
2. An experiencing subject (with a point of view, framework of beliefs, attitudes, desires, and values); and
3. Some interpretation or conceptualization of the situation.

To take any experience apart, then, students must be sensitive to three distinctive sets of questions:

1. What are the raw facts? What is the most neutral description of the sit-

uation? If I describes the experience this way, and another disagrees, on what description can we agree?

2. What interests, attitudes, desires, or concerns do I bring to the situation? Am I always aware of them? Why or why not?

3. How am I conceptualizing or interpreting the situation in light of my point of view? How else might it be interpreted?

Students must also explore the interrelationships of these parts:

How did my point of view, values, desires, etc., affect what I noticed about the situation?
How did they prevent me from noticing other things?
How would I have interpreted the situation had I noticed those other things?
How did my point of view, desires, etc., affect my interpretation?
How should I interpret the situation?

If students have many assignments that require them to analyze their experiences and the experiences of others along these lines, with ample opportunity to dialogue among themselves about which interpretations make the most sense and why, then they will begin to amass a catalogue of critically analyzed experiences. If the experiences illuminate the pitfalls of thought, the analysis and the models of thinking they suggest will be the foundation for their moral traits and character.

They will develop moral traits because they had thought their way to them and internalized them as concrete understandings and insights, not because they took them up as slogans. Their basic moral traits or values and their thinking processes will be in a symbiotic relationship to each other. Their intellectual and affective lives will become more integrated. Their standards for thinking will be implicit in their own thinking, rather than from teachers, or the authority of a peer group.[54]

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)[55]*

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief in the divine causality and the presence of moral order in the universe where people are judged according to the merit of their deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

They are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Alter a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first alter what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to*

his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds. (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. Be Godfearing of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)[56]

How does one reach belief through reason?

> The human reception of the Quranic signs depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable either of comprehending the signs or of responding to their message....
>
> The connection or nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect (cognition) and emotions (affect) are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth.
>
> The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)[23]

PROOF OF BELIEF IN THE ONE GOD IS THROUGH PERFORMING GOOD DEEDS

Oneness or Unity in Our Inner Self*

Unity, as one of the human ideals, implies unity in our internal self. That is, a co-ordination of our reason, will, and action. It requires disciplining our passions and lust. It also stands for the unity of profession and practice. Belief in God is the necessary prerequisite of moral life, but it should not be mere verbal acceptance: *Truly, We caused the Torah to descend wherein is guidance and light. The Prophets give judgment with it, those who submitted to God, for those who became Jews and the rabbis and learned Jewish scholars who committed to memory the Book of God and they had been witnesses to it.* (5:44)

It must be accompanied by good deeds: *But for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We place no burden on any soul beyond its capacity. Those will be the Companions of the Garden. They are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (7:42)[58]

Performing good deeds implies an attitude of mind which is motivated by a complete submission to God's will: *When his Lord said to him: Submit! He said: I submitted to the Lord of the worlds.* (2:131)[59]

Performing Good Deeds Indicates Unity in Our Society*

The ideal of unity in our society demands that people should develop a healthy social organization which traverses the middle path of moderation, integrity, goodness and morality, avoiding all forms of extreme: *Thus ,We made you a middle community that you be witnesses to humanity, and that the Messenger be a witness to you.* (2:143)

The God-conscious (*muttaqi*) are advised to get together and strive so that tumult, oppression, and mischief are removed from the face of the earth. *If you accomplish not allying with other believers, there will be persecution on the earth and the hateful sin of corruption.* (8:73)

Unity also implies that members of a national or ideological group should develop ties of intimate relationship among themselves so that the ideal of an organic whole may be realized in a broader context. The Quran says that all Muslims are brothers: *Only the ones who believe are brothers/sisters, so make things right between your two brothers/sisters. Be Godfearing of God so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (49:10)

Have great love and affection among themselves: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves.* (48:29) No excuse should be allowed to stand in the way of doing good or making peace between different persons: *Make God not an obstacle with your sworn oaths to your being good, and being Godfearing, and making things right among humanity.* (2:224)

Every effort should be made to bring about conciliation between people: *No good is there in most of their conspiring secretly, but for him who commanded charity or one who is honorable or makes things right between humanity. And whoever accomplishes that—looking for the goodwill of God—then, We will give him a sublime compensation.* (4:114) Yet we should co-operate in God-consciousness, not in sin and rancor.[26] We should be kind to those in need, to neighbors, and to the wayfarers.[27]

It is to see our society through reasoned judgment. That is, any belief or conclusion reached on the basis of careful thought and reflection, distinguished from mere or unreasoned opinion on the one hand, and from sheer fact on the other. Few people have a clear sense of which of their beliefs are based on reasoned judgment and which on mere opinion.•

Family Unity*

This ideal of unity also implies peace and harmony among members of a family. A woman is a mate for man so that both may dwell in tranquillity with an attitude of mutual love and kindness;[28] Each is like a garment for the other.[29] For mutual support, mutual comfort, and mutual protection. It is the duty of a man and woman to live with each other on a footing of kindness and equity.

Unity with People of Other Faiths*

This attitude of toleration is to be cultivated in our relation to people of other

faiths. The Quran aims at establishing a peaceful social atmosphere where people belonging to other faiths can enjoy freedom of conscience and worship: *There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely, right judgment became clear from error. So whoever disbelieves in false deities and believes in God, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. It is not breakable.* (2:256)

The believers are urged to purposefully rise and fight against the oppressors so that monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure may not be pulled down. *Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged. Truly, Powerful is God to help them, those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God! If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him.* (22:39-22:40)

It unreservedly praises some of the people of the Book for their faith: *You had been the best community that was brought out for humanity. You command to that which is honorable and prohibit that which is unlawful and believe in God. If the People of the Book believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are the ones who believe....* (3:110)

It is as a consequence of this attitude of tolerance that according to the Quran all those who believe in God and the Last Day and practice God-consciousness, whether they are Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians or Sabaeans, shall get their reward from their Lord: *Truly those who have believed and those who have become Jews and the Christians and the Sabeans, whoever has believed in God and the Last Day and is one who acted in accord with morality, then for them, their compensation is with their Lord. And there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:62) And, *Truly, those who believed and those who became Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Zoroastrians and those who ascribed partners—truly, God will distinguish between them on the Day of Resurrection.* (22:17)[30]

The Quran gives an open invitation to the people of the Book to come together and work conjointly for the establishment of peace and social harmony based on the idea of the unity of God. *Say: O People of the Book! Approach now to a word common between us and between you that we worship none but God and ascribe nothing as partners with Him, that none of us take others to ourselves as lords besides God.* (3:64)

Unity of Humanity*

Above all, this ideal of unity leads to the conception of unity of the whole of humanity. Humanity was created from a single pair of a male and a female[31] and from a single breath of life. [32] All people are equal members of the human community.[33] The only distinction recognized by the Quran is based on the degree of God-consciousness possessed by people: *O humanity! Truly, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and types that you*

recognize one another. Truly, the most generous of you with God is the most devout. Truly, God is Knowing, Aware. (49:13)

Questions to Ask Students

What is your understanding of inner Unity?
Of Social Unity?
Of Family Unity?
Of Unity with People of Other Faiths?
Of the Unity of Humanity?
What are the Quranic arguments for each kind of unity?
Have any of you experienced this sense of Unity for yourselves?

Obstacle to Unity: Irrationality

Irrationality is defined as:

1. Lacking the power to reason.
2. Contrary to reason or logic.
3. Senseless, absurd.

Irrational, uncritical thinkers have failed to develop the ability or power to reason well. Their beliefs and practices, then, are often contrary to reason and logic, and are sometimes senseless or absurd.

If you find that you continually conclude that a rational person would behave just as you behaved you are probably engaging in self-deception.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Under what circumstances do you think with a bias in favor of yourself?
Did you ever become irritable over small things?
Did you do or say anything "irrational" to get your way?
Did you try to impose your will upon others?
Did you ever fail to speak your mind when you felt strongly about something and then later feel resentment?
What would a rational person feel in this or that situation?
What would a rational person do?
How does that compare with what I want to do?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT TO BE GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each les-

son, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational'
to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind
when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS *(*TAQWA*)

God-consciousness is the whole pursuit of a person's principles or standards of behavior, judgment of what is important in life, moral code, code of behavior and avoidance of the unethical in general. It is designated by the Quran as *taqwa*. It is dependent on and is the result of faith in God: *O humanity! Worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you so that perhaps you will be God-conscious.* (2:21)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be Godfearing.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction[68] and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life,[69] in sacrifice,[70] in different aspects of social life,[71] and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations.[72]

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) is to believe in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Books, and the messengers. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms (*zakat*); to fulfil the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

Principle•

Critical thinkers recognize that there is a limit of their knowledge. They are sensitive to their being self-centered and egocentric as they know that this will only increase their self-deception. They are aware of bias and prejudice in their views. The basis of humility is to be able to avoid claiming to know more than they actually know.

The presence of humility implies a lack of arrogance, conceit or pretentious-

ness as well as implying that we have insight into the basis for our beliefs. Students learn to know what evidence they have, how they came to believe something and what additional evidence they would need. This indicates that as Quranic critical thinkers they know what they know as well as what they do not know.

It had not been for a mortal that God should give him the Book and critical judgment and the prophethood and, again, he say to humanity: Be you servants of me instead of God! Rather, he would say: Be you masters because you had been teaching the Book and because you had been studying it. (3:79)

They bring about humility by continually asking themselves: How could I know whether or not this is true? To suspend judgment until they find out more about a situation does not make them uncomfortable.

Humility, therefore, is suspending judgment and having a consciousness of the limits of one's knowledge, including a sensitivity to circumstances in which one's native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively; sensitivity to bias, prejudice, and limitations of one's viewpoint. Humility depends on recognizing that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness or submissiveness. It implies the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, combined with insight into the logical foundations, or lack of such foundations, of one's beliefs.

And of the servants of God the most gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, 'Peace'; those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord prostrating and standing; those who, when they spend, are not extravagant nor miserly, but hold a just balance between these two extremes; those who invoke not, with God, any other god, nor slay such life as God has made sacred, except for just cause, nor commit fornication; those who witness no falsehood, and, if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honorable avoidance; those who, when they are admonished with the signs of their Lord, do not show indifference to them like the deaf or the blind; and those who pray: Our Lord! give us the grace to lead the God-conscious.[73]

If this insight and this humility is part of our goal, as the Quran encourages it, the extent and nature of Quranic coverage for most grade levels and subjects does not imply that bits and pieces of knowledge be easily attained, without any significant consideration of the basis for the knowledge claimed in the sacred text.

The speed with which content is covered should not contradict the notion that students must think in an extended way about content before giving assent to what is claimed. As the Quran fosters critical thinking, it does not foster intellectual arrogance in students.

In the Quranic context, humility is fostered through the concept of repentance. Though the human being is by nature after the pattern of God's nature[74]

and, therefore, capable of approximating to the ideal embodied in the most beautiful names,[41] yet being prone to different weaknesses[42] he is often led to wrong his soul in spite of his best efforts to follow moral discipline.[43]

Application•

Teachers can take advantage of any situation in which students are not in a position to know the Quranic signs, to encourage the habit of exploring the basis for their beliefs. The teacher might first ask for the Quranic evidence or reasons for the claim and have students probe its strength. Students can be encouraged to explain what they would need to learn in order to be more certain.

In exposing students to concepts within the Quranic field, it can help students to see how all concepts depend on other, more basic concepts and how each field of knowledge is based on fundamental assumptions which need to be examined, understood, and justified. Teachers can help students to discover experiences in their own lives which help support or justify what the sacred text says. Teachers should always be willing to entertain student doubts about what they understand from the sacred text.

Teachers can model humility by demonstrating repentance and a willingness to admit limits in their own knowledge and in human knowledge generally. Routinely qualify statements by saying:

I believe; I'm pretty sure that;
I doubt, I suspect, perhaps, I'm told, it seems, etc.

This trait can be encouraged by frequent discussion in which Quranic ideas new to the students are explored for evidence and support.

Students should discuss such experiences as:

Getting a bad first impression, then learning they were wrong;
Feeling certain of something, then later changing their minds;
Thinking they knew something, then realizing they didn't understand it;
Thinking they had the best or only answer or solution,
then hearing a better one.

The teacher can have students brainstorm questions they have after study of a Quranic sign or section. Students could keep question logs during the course of research projects, periodically recording their unanswered questions. Thus, they can come to see for themselves that even when they have learned what is always expected of them, there is more to learn.

A good practice for students is to think of a question each day. At the beginning of each day (perhaps driving to work or going to school) they should choose a question to work on when they have free moments. They need to figure out the logic of the question by identifying its elements. In other words, systematically think through the questions:

Questions to Ask Students•

What exactly is the question I am trying to ask?
How does it relate to my goals, purposes, and needs?

1. Wherever possible take questions one by one. State the question as clearly and precisely as they can.

2. Study the question to make clear the kind of question they are dealing with. Figure out, for example, what sorts of things they are going to have to do to answer it. Distinguish questions over which they have some control from questions over which they have no control. Set aside the questions over which they have no control, concentrating their efforts on those questions they can potentially answer.

3. Figure out the information they need and actively seek that information.

4. Carefully analyze and interpret the information they collect, drawing what reasonable inferences they can.

5. Figure out their options for action. What can they do in the short term? In the long term? Distinguish questions under their control from questions beyond their control. Recognize explicitly their limitations as far as money, time, and power.

6. Evaluate their options, taking into account their advantages and disadvantages in the situation they are in.

7. Adopt a strategic approach to the question and follow through on that strategy. This may involve direct action or a carefully thought-through wait-and-see strategy.

8. When they act, monitor the implications of their action as they begin to emerge. Be ready at a moment's notice to revise their strategy if the situation requires it. Be prepared to shift their strategy or their analysis or question, or all three, as more information about the question becomes available to them.

Questions to Ask Students•

What am I sure of?
What questions do I have?
What must I qualify?
How can I divide my ideas into intelligible parts?
What are the relationships between the parts?
How can I show those relationships?
How does this detail fit in?
How does that claim illuminate my main point?
What form of expression best gets this idea across?
Would the reader accept this?
What questions would the reader have?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to come up with questions and state each one clearly.
I figured out what things I had to do to answer it.
I was able to distinguish between questions over which I had control and ones over which I did not have control.
I was able to figure out the information I needed and I actively sought that information.
I carefully analyzed and interpreted the information I collected and was able to draw reasonable inferences from it.

3. INTEGRITY THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE*
(MORALLY OBLIGATED: *QANATA*)

Integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind,[78] to pay the purifying alms,[79] to spend in charity secretly and openly[80]—a beautiful loan to God[817]—a bargain that will never fail,[82] involving a glad tidings for the believers[83] and a cause of prosperity[84] and spiritual joy.[85] Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord.[86] They remove the stain of evil from the people[87] and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds.[88]

It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. *Those who, if We established them firmly on the earth, they performed the formal prayer and they gave the purifying alms and they commanded to that which is honorable and they prohibited that which is unlawful. And with God is the Ultimate End of the command.* (22:41)

Principle•

Moral discipline or integrity involves the recognition of the need to be true to one's own thinking, to be consistent in the standards one applies, to hold oneself to the same rigorous standards of evidence and proof to which one holds one's antagonists, to practice what one advocates for others, and to honestly admit discrepancies and inconsistencies in one's own thought and action. This trait develops best in a supportive atmosphere in which people feel secure and free enough to honestly acknowledge their inconsistencies, and can develop and share realistic ways of ameliorating them. It requires honest acknowledgment of the difficulties of achieving greater consistency.

Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. Students learn to practice what they advocate for others. They are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in their own thought and behavior. They are fervent believers in what has been justified by their own thought and experience. They bring together the person they want to be with the person that they are.

However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. People cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like them and underate those who do not. If their ego dominates them, they become blind to their understanding. They promote whatever serves their needs and disregard whatever does not support what they want.

Application•

Sometimes parents say: Do as I say, not as I do. There is often a lack of integrity in human life. Hypocrisy and inconsistency are common. As educators, we need to highlight the difficulties of being consistent in an often inconsistent world.

As teachers, we need to be sensitive to our own inconsistencies in the application of rules and standards, and we need to help students to explore their own. Peer groups often pressure students to judge in-group members less critically than out-group members. Students need opportunities to honestly assess their own participation in such phenomena.

Questions to Ask Students•

When have you found it difficult to listen to others?
Or: Why are people often unfair?
Would you have done otherwise?
Would it have been easy?
Why or why not?
Why do so few people do this?

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, have students assess both themselves and others, noting their tendency to favor themselves.

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Other signs of an affective or emotional response to a situation showing a lack of wisdom and integrity are:

Contradiction (a combination of statements, ideas, or features of a situation that are opposed to one another),
Contrariety (opposition or inconsistency between two or more things),
Insatiability (incapable of being satisfied),
Importunity (insistent solicitation and entreaty when you beg someone to do something) and
Impossibilities.

The first two (contradiction and contrariety) have to do with reason. It often happens that when we least expect it, while we are thinking and reasoning in our minds, an emotion or feeling finds its way into our mind and carries us beyond all control. The cause of these systems not working is because we become incapable of reflecting.

Each week, have students develop a heightened awareness of one of the universal standards (clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth, logicalness, importance, fair-mindedness). Focus one week on clarity, the next on accuracy, etc. For example, if they are focusing on clarity for the week, try to notice when they are being unclear in communicating with others. Notice when others are unclear in what they are saying.

When they are reading, notice whether they are clear about what they are reading. When they orally express or write out their views (for whatever reason), ask them whether they are clear about what they are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what they are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on their meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what they mean from experiences they have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what they mean. In other words, they will frequently: **state, elaborate, illustrate** and **exemplify** their points. They will regularly ask others to do the same

Obstacles to Developing Integrity

Error*

Error and conjecture are obstacles to integrity which the Quran at several places denounces as equivalent to untruth or lies[89] and which do not lend support to an individual in his moral life.[90] *I will turn away from My signs those who increase in pride on the earth without right. If they see every sign, they believe not in it. If they see the way of right judgment, yet they will not take that way to themselves. But if they see the way of error, they will take themselves to that way. That is because they denied Our signs and had been ones who are heedless of them.* (7:146)

Questions to Ask the Students•

How would someone else interpret them?
How can I adjust or support my interpretation?
What implications does the Quran want the reader to draw?
How can I help another reader to see that I mean this and not that?
Which of all of the things I'm saying is the most important?
How will another reader know which is most important to me?
Why is this detail important?

Have I assumed as a Quranic reader that I know something my classmates may not know?

Hypocrisy*

Hypocrisy is another obstacle to developing integrity. A hypocrite is one who says with his tongue what is not in his heart,[91] who is distracted in mind, being sincerely neither for one group nor for another.[92] Hypocrites are liars.[93] They expect people to praise them for what they never do,[94] compete with one another in sin and rancor,[95] and hold secret counsels among themselves for iniquity, hostility, and disobedience.[96] Hypocrites—men and women—enjoin evil and forbid what is just,[97] and if by chance they come into possession of a position of authority, they make mischief in the land, break ties of kinship,[98] and yet claim to be peace-makers.[99]

You command humanity to virtuous conduct and forget yourselves while you relate the Book? Will you not, then, be reasonable? (2:44)

Questions You Can Ask to Discipline Your Thinking*

What precise question are we trying to answer?
Is that the best question to ask in this situation?
Is there a more important question we should be addressing?
Does this question capture the real issue we are facing?
Is there a question we should answer before we attempt to answer this question?
What information do we need to answer the question?
What conclusions seem justified in light of the facts?
What is our point of view?
Do we need to consider another?
Is there another way to look at the question?
What are some related questions we need to consider?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT TO BE GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

4. EMPOWERING COURAGE* (*BATASHA*)

Principle•

To be independent Quranic thinkers who are fair, they often have to deal with unpopular ideas, beliefs and points of view. This requires courage on their part not to fear the reproach that others may use against them.

Courage as a human ideal implies that the human being has the potentiality of assuming responsibility undertaken by him of his own accord. He has all the faculties that are necessary for his physical and spiritual development. He is given the power of courage to distinguish between good and evil: *Truly, We guided him on the way, whether he be one who is thankful or ungrateful.* (76:3) and, therefore, he alone is responsible for what he does. *No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load.* (6:164) He is endowed with freedom of action, but his freedom is limited by the free causality of God. *No indeed! Truly, it is an admonition. So let whoever willed, remember it. But they will not remember unless God wills. He is Worthy of God-consciousness and He is Worthy of granting The Forgiveness.* (74:54–56) His responsibility is proportionate to his powers; he has been shown the path of God-consciousness and it is up to him to accept its lead or reject it. *Truly, We guided him on the way, whether he be one who is thankful or ungrateful.* (76:3)

In order to develop courage, students need to question what they learn. It take courage on their part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to their own thinking, questioning beliefs that they hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that they know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *and those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them,* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which students have strong negative emotions and to which they have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan.[100] But it is within his power to resist and overcome them.[101] Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance

of revelation,[102] and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses.[103] or be cowardly in their behavior.[104]

The struggle against the forces of evil and oppression demands that its participants must be characterized by perseverance, courage, fearlessness, and trust in God—the moral qualities which are described by the Quran as characteristic of the righteous in the social context. *And have you patience, for, truly, God wastes not the compensation of the ones who are doers of good.* (11:115)[105]; those who are firm and steadfast will never lose heart, nor weaken in will, nor give in before the enemy. *And how many a Prophet whom, along with him, many thousands fought, but none lost confidence with what lit on them in the way of God, nor were they weakened nor were they to give in. And God loves the ones who remain steadfast.* (3:146)

To determine for themselves which is which, they must not passively and uncritically 'accept' what they have 'learned'. Courage comes into play here, because inevitably they will come to see some truth in some ideas considered dangerous and absurd, and distortion or falsity in some ideas strongly held in their social group. They need courage to be true to their own thinking in such circumstances. The penalties for non-conformity can be severe.

Similarly, trust in God is the moral quality of all believers. *The ones who believe are only those whose hearts took notice when God was remembered. When His signs were recounted to them, their belief increased and they put their trust in the Lord*— (8:2) After you have taken all possibilities into consideration and made a decision, put your trust in God. ... *when you are resolved, then, put your trust in God. Truly, God loves the ones who put their trust in Him.* (3:159)

Application•

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. Students should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. Students who disagree with or doubt their peers should be given support. The teacher should raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which students have hitherto been discouraged from considering. The teacher should model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

Students Ask Themselves•

Why is it hard to go against the crowd?
If everyone around you as sure of something?
Why is it hard to question it or disagree?
When is it good to do so? When might you hesitate?
When should you hesitate? Is it hard to question your own beliefs? Why?

Students who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Students should be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anx-

iety they may experience so they may work their way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. Teachers should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs.

If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, students can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events:

Questions to Ask Students•

How did this seem at first? Why?
What made you change your mind about it?
Have you had other similar experiences?
Why did those ideas seem crazy or stupid at first? "

Have the students keep an intellectual journal. Each week, they should write out a certain number of journal entries using the following format (keeping each numbered stage separate):

1. Situation. Describe a situation that is, or was, emotionally significant to them (that is, that you deeply care about). Focus on one situation at a time.

2. Their Response. Describe what they did in response to that situation. Be specific and exact.

3. Analysis. Then have them analyze, in the light of what they have written, what precisely was going on in the situation. Dig beneath the surface.

4. Assessment. Assess the implications of their analysis. What did they learn about themselves? What would they do differently if they could re-live the situation?

Help them get in touch with their emotions: Whenever they feel some negative emotion, systematically ask themselves:

What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if they are angry, ask themselves, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can they think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it? If they can, concentrate on that thinking and their emotions will (eventually) shift to match it.

They will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. They will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. They will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables them to get in touch with their emotions. They may then recognize that the way they think (that is, define things) generates the emotions they experience. When they think they are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening'), they feel fear. If they define a situation as a 'failure', they

may feel depressed. On the other hand, if they define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' they feel empowered to learn. When they recognize this control that they are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

Cowardice*

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. *It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe.* (3:175)

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. *The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: *Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it.* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth,: *And they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption.* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not **your** cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster.* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains in height.

Arrogant and obstinate transgressors: ... *those who dispute the signs of God without any authority having approached them. It is troublesome, repugnant with God and with those who believed. Thus, God sets a seal on every heart of one who increases in pride, haughtiness,* (40:35) vainglorious people: *Truly, God loves not ones who had been proud, boastful,* (4:36) those fond of self-glory: *Nay! Those who were ungrateful are in vainglory and breach.* (38:2) people rebellious and wicked: *And He caused to be detestable to you ingratitude and disobedience and rebellion.* (49:7) and vying with one another in pomp and gross rivalry: *Know that this present life is only a pastime, a diversion and an adornment and a mutual boasting among you and a rivalry in respect to wealth and children as the likeness of plenteous rain water. The plants impressed ones who are ungrateful. Again, it withers; then, **you** have seen it yellowing. Again, it becomes chaff while in the world to come there is severe punishment and forgiveness from God and contentment. And this present life is nothing but a delu-*

sion of enjoyment. (57:20) are held out as examples of those who misuse their power. Satan is condemned to everlasting punishment for abusing power and becoming haughty.

Some people try to cover their misuse of power under the cloak of determinism: *And those who ascribed partners with God said: If God willed neither would we have worshiped other than Him anything, we nor our fathers, nor would we have held sacred anything other than what He forbade.* (16:35) but the Quran repudiates this stand as totally unrealistic. *Say: God has the conclusive disputation. And if He willed, He would have guided you one and all.* (6:149) The human being has the power to shape his destiny in the light of the truth of revelation. *And whenever guidance approaches you from Me, then, whoever heeded My guidance, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:38)

Questions to Ask the Students•

How can I answer those questions?
If I word it this way, would the reader understand it the way I intended? How can I clarify my meaning?
How could someone judge this idea or claim?
How can it be supported? How would others refute it?
Which of those criticisms should I take into account?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS* (STEADFAST: *SABARA*)

Principle•

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when teachers and others continually provide the answers, do students' thinking for them or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: *do good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good : *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.*(35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34)

It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

Application•

Perseverance can be developed by reviewing and discussing the kinds of difficulties that were inherent in previous problems worked on, exploring why it is necessary to struggle with them over an extended period.

Students should come to see mental struggle as crucial to Quranic learning by discovering its reward in genuine understanding. Students should have some experiences slowly reading difficult Quranic signs or sections. Prove to them that if they are careful and stick to it, examining it one word, phrase, and sentence at a time, they can master it. Such in-depth reading can be done as a class, sentence by sentence, with students interpreting and explaining as they go.

Raise difficult problems again and again over the course of the year. Design

long-term projects for which students must persevere. Of course, it is important to work with students on skills of breaking down complex problems into simpler components, so that they will see how to attack problems systematically.

Students can discuss experiences they have had wherein they came to understand something that at first baffled them, or seemed hopelessly confusing and frustrating.

Questions to Ask Students

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

The Quranic way of life is not divided into the simple and the hopeless. To help students develop the sense that they can begin to attack even complex Quranic issues, you could divide the class into groups and have them discuss various ways in which the problem could be approached, seeing if they can break the problem down into simpler components. It is important to devote considerable time to problem analysis, in order to develop student confidence in their ability to distinguish hard from easy problems and to recognize when a longer term commitment will be necessary.

Students will not develop perseverance unless they develop confidence in their ability to analyze and approach problems with success. You should not overwhelm students with the task of solving problems so difficult that they have little hope of making progress, nevertheless, they should be expected to make some progress toward understanding and sorting out complexities.

Take a basic idea within the Quran. Have students write their ideas on it and discuss them. Every month or so, have them add to, revise, or write another paper. At the end of the year, they can assess the changes in their understanding from repeated consideration over the course of the year, graphically illustrating their own progress and development achieved through perseverance.

For students to recognize the need for further study of a Quranic idea, they need to have some sense of how their present knowledge is limited. Presenting some problems that are beyond their knowledge can be useful, if the class can come to see what they would have to learn to solve them. In this context, students can successfully uncover what they don't know, thereby fostering intellectual humility as well as laying the foundation for intellectual perseverance.

Illustrate how getting answers is not the only form of progress, show students how having better, clearer questions is also progress. Point out progress made. Sympathize with students' natural frustration and discouragement.

Have students discuss the importance of sufficient thought regarding sig-

nificant decisions and beliefs, and the difficulty of becoming rational and well-educated, fairminded people.

When study and research fail to settle key questions, due to the inadequacy of available resources, the class could write letters to appropriate faculty of one or two colleges. Have students describe their research and results and pose their unanswered questions. The teacher may have to explain the replies. Students can then reopen the issues for further, better-informed discussion.

Have students choose one moral trait—persevering in goodness, empathic altruism, courage, humility and repentance, etc.—to strive for each month, focusing on how they can develop that trait in themselves. For example, concentrating on humility, begin to notice when they admit they are wrong. Notice when they refuse to admit they are wrong, even in the face of glaring evidence that they are in fact wrong. Notice when they become defensive when another person tries to point out a deficiency in their work, or their thinking. Notice when their arrogance keeps you from learning, for example, when they say to themselves:

I already know everything I need to know about this subject.
Or: I know as much as he does.
Who does he think he is forcing his opinions on me?

By owning their 'ignorance,' they can begin to deal with it.

O those who believed! Pray for help with patience and formal prayer. Truly, God is with the ones who remain steadfast. (2:153)

Wrong-doing*

The Quran denounces the obstacle to persevering in goodness which is wrong-doing i. e., doing wrong and shameful deeds. The Quran forbids—all shameful and evil deeds and uses a very comprehensive term *zulm* to cover them all. The Quran refers to Satanic tendencies in the human being such as ungratefulness,[106] hastiness,[107] impatience,[108] despair, and unbelief in times of adversity, and pride and conceit in times of prosperity;[109] quarrelsomeness,[110] arrogance,[111] greed of ever more and yet more,[112] miserliness,[113] transgression of the bounds of propriety,[114] and false sense of self-sufficiency: *No indeed! The human being is, truly, defiant. He considered himself self-sufficient.* (96:6) These tendencies often lead to different forms of wrong-doing and, therefore, must be counteracted by all right-thinking people.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?

How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

Students Summarize a Sign

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM* (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: *IHSAN*)

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*).

Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Principle•

Emphatic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

Application•

Students live in a world, both personal and social, in which every situation is 'defined,' that is, given a meaning. How a situation is defined determines not only how they feel about it, but also how they act in it, and what implications it has for them. However, virtually every situation can be defined in more than one way. This fact carries with it tremendous opportunities. In principle, it lies within their power to make their lives are more happy and fulfilling than they are. Many of the negative definitions that students give to situations in their lives could in principle be transformed into positive ones. They can be happy when otherwise they would have been sad.

They can be fulfilled when otherwise they would have been frustrated. In this strategy, they practice redefining the way they see things, turning negatives into positives, dead-ends into new beginnings, mistakes into opportunities to learn. To make this strategy practical, they should create some specific guidelines for themselves. For example, they might make themselves a list of five to ten recurrent negative contexts in which they feel frustrated, angry, unhappy, or worried. They could then identify the definition in each case that is at the root of the negative emotion. They would then choose a plausible alternative definition for each and then plan for their new responses as well as new emotions.

This is clear evidence from your Lord and guidance and mercy for a folk who believe. (7:203)

Hatred and Unkindness*

Against the moral trait of altruism are the obstacles of hatred, harshness, or unkindness to others. People are advised not to speak any word of contempt to their parents, to orphans, and to beggars. Believers are not to revile even those whom the ungrateful call upon besides God. The Prophet is described as safe from severity and hard-heartedness towards others.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

7. BEING FAIR AND JUST* (*ADL*, RIGHT-MINDED, *RASHAD*)

Justice

Justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to equity* (7:29)*; truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you.* (42:15) and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) for He loves those who judge equitably.

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfil all obligations.

Principle•

Developing into a fair and just person requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense

to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Application•

The best fair and just thinkers don't believe any and everything they hear or read. They use standards to decide what to believe. They use standards to keep their thinking on track. Here are some of the important ones to introduce to students. When they use them every day, their thinking improves.

Standards for Students to Understand•

Be clear! Can you state what you mean? Can you give examples?
Be accurate! Are you sure it's true?
Be relevant! Is it related to what we are thinking about?
Be logical! Does it all fit together?
Be fair! Am I considering how my behavior might make others feel?
Be reasonable! Have we thought through this problem thoroughly and with an open mind?
Be Relevant: Something is relevant when it relates directly to:
the problem you are trying to solve.
the question you are trying to answer.
whatever you are talking about or writing about.
Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is relevant:
How does what you say relate to the problem?
How does this information relate to the question we are asking?
What will help us solve the problem?
How does what you say relate to what we are talking about?
How does this relate to our purpose?
Be Logical: Make Sure Everything Fits Together
Thinking is logical when everything fits together, when everything makes sense together.
Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is logical:
This doesn't make sense to me .
Can you show me how it all fits together?
The sentences in this paragraph don't seem to belong together.
How can I rewrite this paragraph so that the sentences all fit together?
What you are saying doesn't sound logical.
How did you come to your conclusions?
Explain why this makes sense to you.
The messages I am getting from this TV show don't seem sensible.
Should I follow along with these ideas, or should I reject them?

Think About Purpose:

Your purpose is what you are trying to achieve or make happen.

Questions you can ask to target purpose:

What is our purpose in doing what we are doing?
What is my purpose in doing what I am doing?
What is your purpose?
What is the purpose of this assignment?
What is the purpose of the main character in this story?
What is my teacher trying to accomplish?
What is my friend's purpose?
What is the purpose of this textbook?
Should we change our purpose?
Is my purpose fair to everyone?

Injustice*

Opposed to the value of justice is the disvalue of injustice and violation of the principle of the mean. It is forbidden by the Quran to be influenced by people's vain desires and to deviate from the truth while judging between them. It is also forbidden to distort justice or decline to do justice: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor; then God is Closer to both than you are. So follow not your desires that you become unbalanced. And if you distort or turn aside, then, truly, God had been Aware of what you do.* (4:135) or to withhold justice from people merely because they are your enemies. It would be perfectly unjust to oneself and to others to pile up wealth, to bury gold and silver, and not to spend them in the cause of God and God-consciousness.

The Quran equally forbids as violation of the principle of justice the squandering of wealth like a spendthrift and recommends the middle way of prudence which is neither extravagance nor miserliness. It advises one neither to make one's hand tied to one's neck nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach so that one becomes blameworthy and destitute. One should eat and drink but not waste by excess for that would be violating the principle of justice. Excess in any form is forbidden whether in food or in religion: *O those who believed! Forbid not what is good that God permitted to you and exceed not the limits. Truly, God loves not the ones who exceed the limits.* (5:87) Usury is forbidden, for it means devouring other people's substance wrongfully and involves injustice on both sides: *God eliminates usury, and He causes charity to increase. And God loves not any sinful ingrate.* (2:279)

The Selfish Critical Thinker•

Selfish critical thinkers are unjust and unfair, egocentric people who use their thinking to get what they want, without considering how their actions might affect other people. They are good at thinking, and they know it. But they

are also very selfish. They may be greedy and unkind as well.

Here is the voice of the selfish critical thinker: I think a lot! It helps me get what I want. I believe whatever I want to believe as long as it gets me what I want. I question anyone who asks me to do what I don't want to do.I figure out how to get other people to do what I want them to do. I even figure out how to avoid thinking if I want. Sometimes I say 'I can't!' when I know I could but don't want to. You can get what you want from people if you know how to manipulate them. Just the other night, I talked my parents into buying me a really expensive new computer gadget I knew they couldn't really afford. But hey, they work don't they? They can always make more money. I'm their kid so they should give me what I want. It helps to tell people what they want to hear. Of course, sometimes what they want to hear isn't true, but that doesn't matter because you only get into trouble when you tell people what they don't want to hear. You can always trick people if you know how. Guess what, you can even trick yourself if you know how."

Those who believed in God and His Messengers, those, they are the just persons. The witnesses to their Lord. For them is their compensation and their light. (57:19)

Who is fairer in the way of life than he who submitted his face to God and he is one who is a doer of good and followed the creed of Abraham, a monotheist? And God took Abraham to Himself as a friend. (4:125)

Give judgment fairly among humanity and follow not your feelings, for it will cause you to go astray from the way of God. (38:26)

Develop Questions About the Question•

Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.
Question: How does the Quran teach us to think critically?

Students Summarize a Sign or Signs

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and analyze it.

Student Assessment to be Given to the Students

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

Notes to the Preface, Acknowledgements and Prelude

1. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Reading the Signs".

2. Abu Hamid Abu Sulayman's essay has been excerpted from his *The Quranic World View*.

3. McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning, Princeton University. "Ask questions that require students to defend their positions."

4. The Center for Critical Thinking has worked with the College Board, the National Education Association, the U.S. Department of Education, as well as numerous colleges, universities, and school districts to facilitate the implementation of critical thinking instruction. See http://www.criticalthinking.org/ pages/center-for-critical-thinking/401.

5. Information in this prologue has been taken from Paul, R. & Elder, L. 2001, *The Thinker's Guide to How to Study and Learn*, Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation For Critical Thinking with changes by the author to relate the revelant information to Quranic Studies.)

6. Toshiko Izutsu, *Structure of Ethical Terms*, Chicago: ABC International Group, Inc. 2000.

7. Multilogical (multi-dimensional) means: Problems that can be analyzed and approached from more than one, often from conflicting, points of view or frames of reference. For example, many ecological problems have a variety of dimensions to them: historical, social, economic, biological, chemical, moral, political, etc.)

8. See 18:29.

9. See 4:123

10. See 3:106

11. See Abdul Haleem, *The Study Quran* for more examples.

12. ibid.

Notes to the Introduction

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Aqqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Aqqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-

Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635;

and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. See the Introduction.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. al-Ghazzali, *On Knowing Yourself*, Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1999.
5. See the Introduction.
6. al-Ghazzali, *Deliverance from Error*.
7. See 22:5.
8. See 23:70; 32:3; 52:33.
9. See 6:150.
10. See 2:111; 21:24; 27:64; 28:75)
11. See 34:9; 20:89; 21:44; 13:41; 16:48; 17:99.
12. See 80:24; 86:5.
13. See 7:185.
14. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Maqasid al-Shariah Made Simple*, pp 2-3.
15. See Introduction.
16. See 7:176.
17. See 59:2.
18. See 6:98.
19. See 10:24.
20. See also 3:18; 6:105; 22:54; 34:6.
21. See also 22:71.
22. See also 22:8; 31:20.
23. See 58:11.
24. See 35:28.
25. See 27:40.
26. See 2:247.
27. See 28:14.
28. See 21:79.

29. See 12:68.
30. See 12:22.
31. See 28:14.
32. See 6:75–79.
33. See 12:37–39.
34. See 6:104; 7:203; 12:108; 17:102; 28:43; 45:20.
35. See 38:29
36. See 6:80.
37. See 30:21.
38. 2:219.
39. See 21:24.
40. See 27:64.
41. See 16:10-11.
42. See 6:97-98.
43. See 16:12.
44. See 5:8.
45. Ali Shariati, *Shariati on Shariati*, p 104.
46. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. see Osman Bakar, "Reflections on Islamic Environmentalism," http://www.cilecenter.org/en/videos/dr-osman-bakar-reflections-on-islamic-environmentalism/
54. Taken from Paul, R. (1993). Critical Thinking: What Every Student Needs to Survive in A Rapidly Changing World, Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation For Critical Thinking.
55. * Indicates B. A. Dar. "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," *History of Muslim Philosophy* edited by M. M. Sharif. http://www.al-islam.org/history-muslim-philosophy-volume-1-book-2/chapter-8-ethical-teachings-quran and "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," in the same source. M. M. Sharif wrote this second article.
56. See also 3:81-3:87; 5:13, 5:15, 7:172.
57. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Reading the Signs," in the Preface here.
58. See also 10:4; 13:29.
59. See also 9:112.
60. See 5:3.
61. See 2:83, 2:177, 2:215; 4:36; 17:26.
62. See 30:21.
63. See 2:187.
64. See also 5:72.
65. See 2:213; 4:1; 6:98; 10:19; 39:6; 49:13.
66. See 4:1; 39:6.
67. See 3:195.
68. See 27:53; 41:18.
69. See 2:24; 4:129.
70. See 5:30; 22:37.

71. See 2:177.
72. See 25:63–74.
73. See 25:63–64; 25: 67–68, 25:72–74.
74. See 30:30.
75. See 7:180; 17:110; 59:24
76. See 14:34; 17:11, 17:83.
77. See 7:23; 11:21, 11:101; 16:33.
78. See 2:238.
79. See 98:5. t
80. See 25:29.
81. See 72:20.
82. See 25:29.
83. See 22:34; 27:2.
84. See 31:5
85. See 20:139.
86. See 31:5; 97:5.
87. See 11:114.
88. See 29:45.
89. See 6:148; 10:66
90. See 4:157; 6:116; 53:23.
91. See 2:167; 4:81; 47:11.
92. See 4:143.
93. See 59:11; 63:1.
94. See 3:188
95. See 5:65.
96. See 57:8.
97. See 9:67.
98. See 47:22.
99. See 2:11.
100. See 15:36–40.
101. See 6:99.
102. See 2:36.
103. See 3:175.
104. See 3:122.
105. See also 16:127; 40:55; 46:35; 50:39; 73:10.
106. See 7:10; 36:45–47; 74:15–25; 100:1–8.
107. See 16:37; 17:11.
108. See 70:19–21.
109. See 11:9–10; 17:83.
110. See 16:4.
111. See 75:31–40; 90:5–7.
112. See 74:15.
113. See 17:100 .
114. See 96:6.

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