

FRANZ ROSENTHAL



Knowledge Triumphant

The concept of knowledge in medieval Islam

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY DIMITRI GUTAS

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Knowledge Triumphant

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Knowledge Triumphant

The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam

By

Franz Rosenthal

with an introduction by Dimitri Gutas



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*AL-ILMU shay'un lâ yu'tîka ba'dahû hattâ tu'tiyahû kullaka fa-idhâ a'taytahû
kullaka fa-anta min i'tâ'i'hî laka l-ba'da 'alâ khaṭarin*

“KNOWLEDGE is something that will not give part of itself to you until you give your all to it, and when you give your all to it, then you stand a chance but you cannot be sure that it will give you that part” (an-Nazzâm as quoted by al-Jâhîz)¹

¹ Cf. al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Târîkh Baghîdâd*, VI, 97 (Cairo 1349/1931). Further, Abû Ahmad al-'Askarî, *Tâshîf*, 2 (Cairo 1383/1963); Abû Hilâl al-'Askarî, *al-Hathth 'alâ talab al-'ilm*, beg., in the Istanbul mss. Asîr Ef. 433, fol. 32a, and Hamidiye 1464, fol. 51a; ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Muhâdarât*, I, 28 (Bûlâq 1287), in the name of al-Khalîl; al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ'*, I, 44 (Cairo 1352/1933); Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tâdkîrat as-sâmi'* wa-l-mutakallim fî adab al-'âlim wa-l-muta'allim, 71 (Hyderabad 1353); al-'Almawî, *al-Mu'îd fî adab al-mu'îd wa-l-mustafîd*, 60 (Damascus 1349). Both Ibn Jamâ'ah and al-'Almawî quote only the first half, without the name of an authority. Only the originator of the statement would be able to tell us whether we should read *tu'tiyahû* or *tu'tîhi*, but at least I hope that I have caught the meaning of the difficult last two of his words.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	ix
INTRODUCTION	xi
<i>Dimitri Gutas</i>	
INTRODUCTION	1
I. THE KNOWLEDGE BEFORE KNOWLEDGE	5
1. The Root <i>‘l-m</i>	6
2. The Evidence of Poetry	12
II. THE REVELATION OF KNOWLEDGE	19
1. A Word Count and its Meaning	19
2. The Motivating Force behind the Qur’anic Use of <i>‘l-m</i>	22
3. Human Knowledge and Divine Knowledge	28
4. <i>Jâhilâyah</i>	32
5. Wisdom and Knowledge	35
III. THE PLURAL OF KNOWLEDGE	41
IV. DEFINITIONS OF KNOWLEDGE	46
V. KNOWLEDGE IS ISLAM (Theology and Religious Science)	70
1. Books and Chapters “On Knowledge”	70
2. Knowledge and Faith	97
3. God’s Knowledge	108
4. Man’s Knowledge of God	129
5. Shî‘ah Notions of Knowledge	142
VI. KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT (Sûfism)	155
VII. KNOWLEDGE IS THOUGHT (Philosophy)	194
1. Graeco-Arabic Translation Terminology	196
2. Logic, “The Science of Knowledge”	203
3. Epistemology as a Tool of Theology and Jurisprudence	208

VIII. KNOWLEDGE IS SOCIETY (Education)	240
1. <i>Ilm—'Amal—Adab</i> : Knowledge, Action, General Education	240
2. <i>Ilm in Adab</i> Anthologies	252
3. Monographs in Praise of Knowledge and the Educational Literature	277
4. Materials for an Appraisal of Knowledge as a Societal Force	298
The Attitude toward Doubt	299
Limitations on Individual Knowledge	308
Personal Failings of Scholars	314
Knowledge as Life and as Food for the Soul	318
Knowledge in its Relation to Money and Power	322
CONCLUDING REMARK	334
INDEX	342

FOREWORD

The present work has been in the making for many years. A first report was presented to the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow in August 1960 in the form of a brief paper. Its substance was published in the *Proceedings of the Congress*, II, 62 f. (Moscow 1962–63; *Index*, Moscow 1964). A preliminary treatment of the definitions of knowledge (Chapter IV) was contributed to a symposium, held at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, in the spring of 1965, on “The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Muslim Middle East.” It was published in a volume of this title edited by C. Leiden, which appeared in 1969 (1966), 117–33.

My great indebtedness to the many libraries which put their manuscript treasures at my disposal will become clear from the citations in the footnotes. A fellowship grant from the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT) enabled me to spend six weeks in Turkey in the spring of 1967, which were used for research in the libraries of Istanbul, Manisa, Edirne, and Bursa. This helped to round out previous research undertaken abroad, made possible mainly by the generous policy of Yale University with respect to Sabbatical leaves.

Attention may be called here to the *Index* and the way it has been utilized for simplified reference. Full bibliographical data are indicated in the body of the book at first occurrences only. Thereafter, abridged forms of reference are usually employed, most of which will be clear by themselves. However, the places where the full citations appear can be easily located in the *Index* under either the name of the author or, in the case of a work whose author is not known or not mentioned, the short title.

INTRODUCTION

Dimitri Gutas

Significant authors may write many and valuable works, but as a rule there is one among them in which there is such harmonious blend of profound and original insight, industry, and their own unique voice that it is exceptional. Franz Rosenthal's *Knowledge Triumphant* easily falls into this category, even when one considers the author's remarkable career and prodigious scholarly output.

Born and educated in Berlin, Franz Rosenthal (1914-2003) studied classics and oriental languages at the university in his home town at a time when German scholarship in the humanities had reached its apogee. His precocity matched the exacting standards of his renowned professors and he received his doctorate in 1935 with a dissertation on Palmyrenian inscriptions, which was soon (1938) followed by his classic history of Aramaic studies, for which he received the Lidzbarski Medal. He left Germany at the end of 1938 and came to the United States in 1940, where he taught first at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and then at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1956 he moved to Yale University where he taught, as Sterling Professor of Arabic and Semitic Studies, until his retirement in 1985.

Franz Rosenthal's scholarly work is extensive and covers most aspects of Arabic and Islamic studies and Semitic studies.¹ He was a consummate philologist in a number of languages, and especially in Arabic and Aramaic,² though much as he prized philology, he viewed it as the handmaiden of historical and cultural studies. Trained in an age when oriental studies had not developed narrow specialization in the various disciplines, he used the philological method to study and write about all aspects of Islamic history—intellectual, social, and political. He produced pioneering and classic works on such varied subjects as

¹ A bibliography of Rosenthal's writings was published in the third Variorum collection of his articles, *Science and Medicine in Islam* (Aldershot 1990), ix–xxvii, and, in a more complete form, in *Oriens* 36 (2001) xiii–xxxiv. For more information on some of the details in this Introduction see my biographical memoir in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 149 (2005) 442–446.

² On which he wrote the two classic textbooks in use to this very day, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (1961) and *An Aramaic Handbook* (1967).

Graeco-Arabic studies,³ Islamic history and historiography,⁴ the history of Arabic philology,⁵ literature and art history,⁶ and most importantly, Islamic social history, in a series of publications on a project close to his heart which he called “Man versus society in Islam.”⁷ In all this his approach was neither dogmatic nor moralizing but, as he himself put it, “to let the sources speak for themselves and to avoid subjective interpretation.”⁸

This orientalist approach, though perhaps justifiably impugned for its misapplications, in its proper and most productive form, as consummately practiced by Rosenthal, is particularly apt for the study of medieval Islamic civilization. The scholars and thinkers who left us their writings upon which we base our knowledge of that civilization were themselves not narrow specialists but polymaths, experts in various intellectual fields; to grasp the full range of their reach one has to command an equally vast body of knowledges. It is therefore no accident that one of Rosenthal’s masterpieces is his annotated translation of Ibn Ḥaldūn’s *Introduction* (*Muqaddima*), κτῆμα ἐξ αἰεί and unlikely to be surpassed;⁹ fully to understand that masterpiece one has to acquire the knowledge of all aspects of Islamic civilization that Ibn Ḥaldūn had.

All these characteristics of Rosenthal’s work come together in the present work, on a subject that is as multifaceted as it is original.

³ See his valuable anthology *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (original German version 1965, English translation 1975), and the collection of articles in the second Variorum volume, *Greek Philosophy in the Arab World* (Aldershot 1990).

⁴ Equally as significant as his *History of Muslim Historiography* (1952, second edition 1968) are his translations of the first and last volume of Tabari’s *History*, together with the study of Tabari’s life and work in the introduction of the first volume.

⁵ Unparalleled to this day remains his *Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship* (1947), which itself ought to be reprinted.

⁶ See the articles collected in *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam* (1971).

⁷ Rosenthal announced the project, with this title, in the first volume in the series, *The Muslim Concept of Freedom* (1960), p. viii. Other studies include *The Herb* (1971) and *Gambling in Islam* (1975), and some of the articles collected in the first Variorum collection, *Muslim Intellectual and Social History* (Aldershot 1990).

⁸ Characteristic, though, of both his scholarly integrity and his deep understanding of the contextuality of the author and the complex relationship between him and his subject, is his immediate qualification of this statement, “This, admittedly, is possible only to a limited degree;” foreword to the first Variorum collection mentioned in the preceding note, p. ix.

⁹ The latest translator of the *Muqaddima* into French (2002), the Moroccan thinker and historian Abdesselam Cheddadi, pays homage to Rosenthal’s “vaste érudition” in his *Actualité d’Ibn Khaldūn* (Témara, Morocco, 2006, p. 234). The Greek is Thucydides’ description of the purpose for which he wrote his own *History*: as “a possession [to be had] forever.”

“Civilizations tend to revolve around meaningful concepts of an abstract nature which more than anything else give them their distinctive nature,” Rosenthal begins his study, introducing his subject; this concept is, for Islamic civilization, knowledge, *ilm*. The audacity of the undertaking is stunning; because, in essence, I regard *Knowledge Triumphant* as Rosenthal’s response to Ibn Ḥaldūn’s *Muqaddima*: the latter aimed at describing and analyzing the motor of world history, or actually, Islamic history; Rosenthal responded by claiming to have identified knowledge as the quickening concept in Islamic civilization and proceeded to study it in great detail, without for a moment lapsing, just like his great predecessor, in meaningless generalizations. It is therefore instructive to observe how he structured the book by taking each relevant subject in succession: Ġahiliyya studies with comparative Semitics, Qur’ānic studies, *kalām* and other religious sciences, Ṣūfism, philosophy and Graeco-Arabic studies, culminating in his favorite subject, social history. Each one of these chapters could have been by itself subject for a monograph; such a monograph, though, would have been incomplete because it would reflect but a segment of the organic whole of medieval Islamic civilization with reference to the unifying theme of knowledge. As it is, each segment gains meaning not independently but from juxtaposition with the next, and leads to the cumulative effect of substantiating the author’s initial thesis.

Readers with sundry interests will find in the several chapters insightful discussions of their field of specialization documented with a large mass of source material awaiting further analysis and study—as will graduate students subjects for untold dissertations. Merely as examples of some of the many gems in the book I would like to direct attention to the extreme reserve and circumspection with which comparative Semitic material is used to describe the pre-Islamic situation in Arabia (ch. I), the inimitable little chapter on the plural of knowledge (ch. III, in conscious reference to which I used the word “knowledges” in the plural above), the translation of the introductory sections from the *Abkār al-afkār* by al-Āmidī, a very significant author the study of whose non-legal thought has been unduly neglected in Western Islamic studies (ch. VII,3), and the uncommonly pithy last chapter on knowledge and society, which, with its sections on the personal failings of scholars and on knowledge in its relation to money and power (ch. VIII,4) constitutes part and parcel of Rosenthal’s larger project on “Man versus society in Islam.”

Classical orientalism, of whose heroic—and final—stage Rosenthal was the most brilliant representative, was a discipline that in its best

moments encouraged asking such fundamental and seemingly essentializing questions about civilizations, but it also provided the requisite method, control, and tools to answer them. Knowledge triumphant defines medieval Islam, if any single concept can, as it defines the man who wrote it.

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August 2006

INTRODUCTION

Civilizations tend to revolve around meaningful concepts of an abstract nature which more than anything else give them their distinctive character. Such concepts are to be found at the very beginning of a rising civilization. Or they may signalize, when they first make their appearance, an entirely new departure toward the eventual transformation of the environment hospitable to them. In the course of time, they may undergo changes of tone and of volume. Such changes may be minor and merely serve to strengthen the hold exercised by the concepts before. But they also may provide the old concepts with new meanings. This signifies a fundamental change or a major break in the structure of the civilization in which it happens. The concepts as such may continue to be used, thereby obscuring the meaning and depth of the change or even totally hiding the very fact of its existence. If, on the other hand, they cease to be used in any meaningful manner, it is a clear indication that the civilization which lived by them is no longer fully alive.

Being an integral and intimate part of their particular civilization which was molded as it were to their specifications, such concepts present members of other civilizations with great difficulties in the way of achieving a correct understanding and appreciation of them. Anything lying outside one's own experience cannot be comprehended in its true dimensions. Verbalization runs up against a powerful barrier. It is impossible to find words in other languages that come close to the fullness of meaning conveyed by the original term. "The tremendous symbolic significance of linguistic phenomena"¹ is no doubt a reality. Yet, it should not be altogether impossible to interpret important linguistic phenomena sensibly and without too great a distortion of their conceptual power. Fortunately, there is comparatively little danger of distorting the significance of the concept of *'ilm* in Islam.

Arabic *'ilm* is fairly well rendered by our "knowledge". However, "knowledge" falls short of expressing all the factual and emotional

¹ In connection with the alleged lack of a word for "space" (*Raum*) in Greek, this was said by O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, I, 120 (Munich 1920).

contents of *ilm*. For *ilm* is one of those concepts that have dominated Islam and given Muslim civilization its distinctive shape and complexion. In fact, there is no other concept that has been operative as a determinant of Muslim civilization in all its aspects to the same extent as *ilm*. This holds good even for the most powerful among the terms of Muslim religious life such as, for instance, *tawhīd* “recognition of the oneness of God,” *ad-dīn* “the true religion”, and many others that are used constantly and emphatically. None of them equals *ilm* in depth of meaning and wide incidence of use. There is no branch of Muslim intellectual life, of Muslim religious and political life, and of the daily life of the average Muslim that remained untouched by the all-pervasive attitude toward “knowledge” as something of supreme value for Muslim being. *Ilm* is Islam, even if the theologians have been hesitant to accept the technical correctness of this equation. The very fact of their passionate discussion of the concept attests to its fundamental importance for Islam.

How this came about, how it continued to develop and grow, and what it meant historically—all this constitutes the proper subject of the following pages. Obviously, it is an extremely vast subject, dealing as it does with something talked and written about by uncounted people distributed over a large part of the globe in the course of many centuries. The relevant information had to be collected from many places. The material is plentiful, yet difficult to grasp and to penetrate. There are many areas where we have more material than would seem necessary. There are others for which we would wish to have more. There also is a constant temptation and, indeed, a seeming need to expand the immediate confines of our theme and to include the entire realm of intellectual perception and speculation, or, at least, a large part of it. It might easily be said that the subject of *ilm* in its totality is too vast for any comprehensive treatment and that it would have been better to restrict the investigation to the one or other facet of it. Nobody, certainly not this writer, would consider this an unjust suggestion. Happily, some, if very few, monographs on particular segments of the subject do exist. Many more will have to be written in the future. However, it certainly seems to serve a useful purpose to call attention, in one volume, to the multitude of important problems that call for their solutions. It can do no harm to highlight the very real importance of the concept as a

whole by studying, however briefly and rapidly, many of its major implications. The reader must not expect to find a full discussion of details or a review of all the available literature. Specimens must suffice to provide a substantial frame-work. Further bits and chunks of material can always be fitted into it as the need arises.

I have spent what I feel to be reasonable efforts to gain access to the primary literature. Many gaps remain which ought to be filled before a clear historical picture will emerge. Much of the oldest stage is lost, probably for ever. Only a small percentage of the later sources exists in print. The work of an important author may be preserved, or be accessible, only in part, while it ought to be known and studied to its full extent, in order to gain a correct appreciation of his position. In some cases, manuscripts had to be used, although printed texts do exist. Often, it was necessary to do without potentially important material known to exist but inaccessible. Everybody working in any field of Islamic studies is familiar with these and similar technical difficulties.

In connection with the present work, I had to contend with a more formidable handicap. Any historical problem must be viewed from a modern vantage point, resulting from the author's understanding of the state of the problem in his own time and cultural environment. A vast amount of thought has gone into the problem of knowledge in the modern West. The great discussion of the earlier years, particularly the seventeenth century, may be profitably compared and contrasted with what we find in the Muslim world. This has been considered outside the scope of the present work. However, I am also not prepared to claim that my reading has provided me with sufficient clarity as to what might constitute an acceptable modern position, a sort of rough and, perhaps, superficial but widely agreed upon understanding of the fundamental implications, with regard to the basic character and the multiple aspects of "knowledge." I can only hope that the resulting feeling of discomfort and uncertainty which has been bothering me all those years I have been working on the subject has not affected the inner core of my argumentation.

The eternal problem of translation shows itself here at its most intractable. Every term translated is a term distorted, no matter how much care has been spent on finding the most suitable English equivalent. For one, the English terms themselves are by no means unequivocal. They may suggest different conceptions to different

people. But then, the Arabic terms, too, are never unequivocal. The distinctions among them—all, as a rule, very subtle in nature—were not always observed with sufficient precision, even by writers aware of the technical intricacies of the choice of terms. It was possible for the same author to adhere strictly to technical terminology in one place, and make loose use of the same term in another. The terms *'ilm* and *ma'rifah*, for instance, could be used as plain synonyms. They were also differentiated enough to be used for defining each other. They could be treated as contrary and almost mutually exclusive concepts of mental activity. Or they could designate quite different and clearly defined subject matters. Various English terms can be used to translate them, but wherever this is done, the coherence created by terminology, which is strongly felt in Arabic, is severed. An additional problem in the particular case of *'ilm* and *ma'rifah* is peculiar to English which does not share with French or German the distinction between *savoir-connaître* or *wissen-kennen* which often approximates the one that exists between the two Arabic roots. Except using the untranslated Arabic terms or adding them in strategic positions wherever deemed necessary or making some artificial and potentially misleading distinction in translation between “knowledge” and “cognition,” “knowledge” and “gnosis,” “knowledge of” and “knowledge about” or the like, as has been inconsistently attempted in the following pages, not much can be done about this situation. The realm of abstract speculation, which is the foundation of all higher civilization, is a realm of terms, without which the human mind cannot operate. Transference from one language to another always disturbs unique thought patterns. It can lead at best to approximations. The realization of these facts is, perhaps, the master key to the understanding of our subject.

CHAPTER ONE

THE KNOWLEDGE BEFORE KNOWLEDGE

Our information on pre-Islamic Arabia, especially with regard to the intellectual level achieved in the central portion of the peninsula, remains very limited. Newly found material and a deepened and concentrated study of the available evidence have not changed, unfortunately, the general validity of this statement. As a rule, we have to be satisfied with inferences drawn from meager and often dubious data. We cannot be quite sure concerning the character and extent of the vocabulary employed for intellectual perception, much less so about the exact use to which this vocabulary was put.¹ The poetry believed to be pre-Islamic is our only serviceable source. We may, however, assume that the vocabulary of the Qur'ân reflects an earlier situation with a considerable degree of accuracy, except where it can be shown that old words were filled with subtly changed meanings or that new words were borrowed or coined. It also seems a rather safe assumption that, if there are basic roots not attested in either pre-Islamic poetry or the Qur'ân, they did exist in pre-Islamic usage. Altogether, we can be assured of the existence in pre-Islamic Arabia of an extensive and refined vocabulary for the expression of a variety of mental activities.

A Semitist looking at this vocabulary will be struck immediately by the fact that Arabic roots expressing mental activity have no clear-cut correspondences in other Semitic languages or appear to enjoy only a very restricted existence in the one or other of them. It is true that measured against the immense variety of spoken usage, the little that came to be enshrined in the preserved written documents of ancient Semitic languages is, indeed, insignificant. The gaps in our information are too wide and numerous to allow us to draw unambiguous and safe conclusions under most conditions. Many Semitic speech forms have gone entirely unrecorded. Some, lost until very recently, have been recovered to a degree. Others are not likely ever to become known again. On the other hand, it may be assumed that whatever concepts entered the mainstream

¹ Cf. T. Nöldeke, in *WZKM*, III (1889), 101 f.

of intellectual life could not have failed to be recorded somewhere in literature and those that were not were, in fact, outside the pale of effective conceptual life. For instance, the common Arabic root *sh-[‐]r* “to know” is, it seems, attested only once in ancient Hebrew, that is, in Deuteronomy 32:17 where we read: “whom their fathers had not known (*š̄’ārūm*).” The correspondence of the Hebrew root *š-[‐]r* in this passage with Arabic *sh-[‐]r* was recognized by modern scholars and is referred to in some dictionaries.² It is still overlooked or goes unacknowledged by many modern students of the Bible. Since, however, *š-[‐]r* occurs here in parallelism with *y-d-[‐]* “to know,” its meaning and, consequently, its connection with the Arabic root is as certain as anything in the field of ancient Semitic lexicography. Now, what does this occurrence in Hebrew mean in its uniqueness? Does it indicate that the rarity of the attestation of the root is the result of mere chance? This would seem unlikely. Or is *š-[‐]r* an obsolete or, possibly, dialectal root? This could very well be the case, considering that its only occurrence is in a poem. These are questions that cannot be answered at the present stage of our knowledge. It remains a fact that roots common and widely used in Arabic for various facets of mental activity are unusual or, apparently, unknown elsewhere in the close-knit circle of Semitic languages.

1. THE ROOT *‐l-m*

While the lack of correspondence for Arabic roots denoting mental activity in other Semitic languages is remarkable, it is no less remarkable that in turn, *y-d-[‐]*, the common Semitic root for “to know,” is not used in the Arabic with which we are familiar. *Y-d-[‐]* is found in practically all other Semitic languages. This includes Ethiopic which, in addition to *aydš'a* from the root *y-d-[‐]*, uses (*amara*) *a'mara* belonging to the root *‐m-r*, in its meaning of “to see” best represented in Akkadian, a situation for which one may compare Greek *oida* and Latin *video*.

² A connection between Arabic *sh-[‐]r* and Aramaic *s-[‐]r* has been suggested at times. It is not impossible, but it is neither clearly established nor necessarily supported by the meanings of *s-[‐]r* (to visit, visitate, investigate, do, etc.) in the Aramaic dialects in which the root occurs.

Later Muslim epistemological speculation tried to attribute some specific kind of perception to *sh-[‐]r*, cf., for instance, az-Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, I, 134 (Būlāq 1318–19), on *sūrah* 2:9/8; G. Vajda, *Recherches sur la philosophie et la Kabbale*, 388 (Paris and The Hague 1962).

It would seem probable that the terms employed for the expression of mental activity of any kind evolved slowly in human consciousness. In all likelihood, they were formed very gradually in the course of time in analogy to more primitive notions expressing, originally, physical perceptions and activities or, perhaps, magical ideas.³ We also find, for instance, that individual Indo-European languages have quite different words for “knowledge.” More precisely, certain roots were specialized in this sense in some Indo-European languages, while other roots prevailed elsewhere. Terms to express mental activity were gained not only through the process of specialization of primary roots, but, in addition, basic concepts were also often expressed by secondary modifications of primary roots. An example among many is Greek *epistamai*, *epistémē*, which is widely considered to be a dialectal form of *ephistēmi*, from the root meaning “to stand” with the preposition *epi*, English “to understand.” Greek *epistamai* has a rather striking parallel, although no Greek influence of any sort seems to be involved, in Arabic *w-q-f* ‘alā “to become acquainted with,” literally, “to stand (or stop) at.”

The common possession by the Semitic languages of a root “to know” (*y-d-*) is therefore no doubt another indication of the close relationship of all the Semitic languages⁴ and the comparatively recent date of their dispersion. All the more so does the non-existence of the root *y-d-* in Arabic and its replacement by other roots suggest some special development peculiar to the Arabian environment, which led to the rejection of *y-d-* and the preference shown for other roots.

³ An instructive attempt to derive “knowing” from “doing” in the Greek mind and to trace this development on the basis of expressions for “knowledge” in Greek thought before Plato was undertaken by B. Snell, *Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens in der vorplatonischen Philosophie* (Berlin 1924. *Philologische Untersuchungen*, 29). The study still bears reading, although the use of Greek as a language of high civilization is now known to date back into much more remote times and the possibility to recover the original concrete notions of abstract terms is correspondingly more remote.

No primitive concrete notion can be associated with Semitic *y-d-*, whose antiquity is fully born out by its use in Akkadian, cf. *The Assyrian Dictionary*, VII, 20 ff. (Chicago 1960). The etymological speculations reported by G. J. Botterweck, “*Gott erkennen*” im Sprachgebrauch des Alten Testaments, 11 (Bonn 1951, *Bonner Biblische Beiträge* 2), seem inconclusive, regardless of how much it would support the theory of a concrete origin for *y-d-*, if the root were to be connected with *yad* “hand.”

⁴ That is, in the narrow sense, disregarding the relationship of Semitic with Egyptian and Hamitic.

Our general rule that Arabic roots expressing mental activity lack correspondences in other Semitic languages holds good for the most important one among them, Arabic *‘l-m* “to know.” The occurrence of a derivation of *‘l-m* in the meaning of “to know” has been suggested for Ugaritic by J. Aistleitner.⁵ However, for the two passages listed, the context of one is quite uncertain, and the other is more commonly, and with much greater probability, interpreted as containing the word *‘âlam* “eternity.” The root *‘alama* listed in the Ethiopic dictionary as of rare occurrence in the language and as meaning “*signare, consignare litteris*” could possibly be disregarded as being a loan from Arabic. This, however, would not be correct, for the root *‘l-m* does occur in South Arabian inscriptions, and Ethiopic *‘alama* must be related to the South Arabian evidence.⁶ The latter requires closer study. We are greatly hampered in this respect by the uncertainties still surrounding the interpretation of much of the South Arabian material. In this particular instance, however, we are on comparatively safe ground. Most recent interpreters of the inscriptions containing the root *‘l-m* seem to agree on its semantic relationship to Arabic *‘alam* “sign, mark.” In addition to a proper name *‘lmn*,⁷ South Arabian inscriptions have a verb *‘l-m* in the basic conjugation and in the conjugation with prefixed *t-*, and both are generally translated “to sign.” The meaning of “document” is assigned to the noun *‘lm* used in connection with the verb, apparently on the basis of the assumption that a document is something “marked” or “signed” and, therefore, legally binding.⁸ There exists, however, a passage

⁵ *Wörterbuch der ugaritischen Sprache*, 232 (Berlin 1963, *Berichte der Sächsischen Akad. d. Wiss., philol.-hist. Kl.*).

⁶ For the situation in another Ethiopian language, Tigré, cf. E. Littmann and M. Höfner, *Wörterbuch der Tigré-Sprache*, 451 f. (Wiesbaden 1962). As shown by the authors of the dictionary, the derivations from the root *‘l-m* found in Tigré, too, hark back mainly to the meaning of mark or sign. Those signifying teaching or learning seem to be less well represented and can be assumed to be loans from Arabic.

⁷ Cf. *Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique*, no. 2774, see A. Jamme, in J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. 2nd ed., 509 (Princeton 1955). The same inscription also contains a proper name derived from *y-d-*. Cf. also *RÉS*, no. 3199:3. For a proper name *‘lm*, cf. also A. Jamme, *Sabaeian and Hasaean Inscriptions*, 38 (Rome 1966, *Studi Semitici* 23).

⁸ References for the verb in the basic conjugation (*‘l-m*): *RÉS*, no. 3566:23; A. Fakhry (G. Ryckmans), *An Archaeological Journey to Yemen*, no. 3:9 (Cairo 1952), cf. A. F. L. Beeston, *A Descriptive Grammar of Epigraphic South Arabian*, 69 (London 1962). For the *t*-conjugation (*t-‘l-m*): *RÉS*, nos. 3688:12, 3691:10, 3692:7, 3693:5, 3854:10, 3879:7, 3951:6,

in an inscription which reads *‘lm bhw t‘lm*, translated in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, IV, 74:16 f. “signum quo monitus est.” The basis for this translation is again clearly the assumed connection with Arabic *‘alam* “sign, mark.” Another recent publication proposes the translation, “the oracular vision whereby he was instructed,”⁹ thus bringing the verbal form *t‘lm* more closely in line with Arabic *ta‘allama* “to study.” However, it would seem that in this passage, the verb is a derivative of the noun and that the noun, whatever its precise meaning, is more easily connected with “mark” or “sign” than with “knowledge.” Similarly, the proposed translation of the verbal form *lyt‘lmn* “sollen angezeigt werden, anzuzeigen,” would seem to point to a basic meaning of “to be marked.”¹⁰ In sum, notwithstanding all the fearful uncertainties of interpretation, the South Arabian evidence favors the conclusion that *‘l-m* in South Arabian does not mean “to know,” but is semantically close to Arabic *‘alam* “mark, sign.”

The only other likely point of contact of the Arabic root *‘l-m* with another Semitic language¹¹ appears to be the name of a locality or, more precisely, two different localities mentioned in the Old Testament. One of them occurs in Joshua 21:18 as *‘Almōn*, whereas the corresponding passage in 1 Chronicles 6:45 has *‘Alēmet*. The other place bears the name of *‘Almōn Diblatāy‘mā* and is mentioned twice in Numbers 33:46 f. The correct form of the name of the first locality cannot be established beyond doubt, as is shown by the difference between Joshua and Chronicles and, in addition, by the Greek transcriptions (the use of initial Greek *g*, however, does not necessarily call in doubt the original Semitic ‘ of the name). In any event, an interpretation as **‘alamān* “the two way signs” suggests itself for *‘Almōn*. The ending *-n*, instead of *-m*,

and 4765:2. The meanings of “to produce, to promulgate,” which we find occasionally assigned to the verb (*RÉS*, no. 4771; Fakhry, no. 30 *bis*: 3 f.), would seem to be merely free variants of the meaning “to sign” (which is used by Beeston, 69 f.). References for the noun *‘lm*: *RÉS*, no. 2876:3, 4772 (?); Fakhry, no. 33: 4 (Beeston, 70).

⁹ Cf. Beeston, 58.

¹⁰ Cf. *RÉS*, no. 4176:5, 8 f. In *RÉS*, no. 2724:3, the translation of *dbh t‘lm* “par lequel a été informé...” is quite uncertain.

¹¹ A number of proper names found in Greek inscriptions, such as *Ilmos*, *Alamos*, *Olime*, *Olemos*, have been connected with *‘l-m*, cf. H. Wuthnow, *Die semitischen Menschennamen*, 157 (Leipzig 1930). However, their interpretation is uncertain. Moreover, these proper names reflect the situation in Arabic, and not that in other Semitic languages.

is not surprising in an ancient form, especially not in Moabite territory where the latter of the two places is located.¹²

It can thus be said that in the rather sparse occurrences of the root *‘l-m* outside Arabic, a semantic connection with “mark, sign, way sign” appears indicated. It is therefore not unjustified to suggest that the meaning of “to know” is an extension, peculiar to Arabic, of an original concrete term, namely, “way sign.”¹³ A similar development has been suggested for the Coptic verb *sooun* meaning “to know”; its supposed root *w-s-n* has been claimed to stand in the same relationship to Semitic South Arabian *w-th-n* “stone marking a borderline” as does German *merken* to *Mark* or *Markstein*.¹⁴ Be this as it may, the connection between “way sign” and “knowledge” is particularly close and takes on especial significance in the Arabian environment. For the Bedouin, the knowledge of way signs, the characteristic marks in the desert which guided him on his travels and in the execution of his daily tasks, was the most important and immediate knowledge to be acquired. In fact, it was the kind of knowledge on which his life and well-being principally depended. Thus, it is easy to see how in a largely nomadic environment, the general concept of knowledge was able to develop from the concrete process of being acquainted with “way signs.” Corroborative evidence for such an origin of Arabic *‘l-m* “to know” may be found in one of the roots expressing the opposite idea, namely, *j-h-l* “to be ignorant.” For the concept of

¹² For a discussion of the ending *-ôn* in Biblical place names such as *Shôm'rôn* Samaria, cf. for instance, G. R. Driver, in *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, LXXVII (1945), 9, XCI (1959) 158; J. G. Février, in *Semitica*, I (1948), 34 f.

¹³ Cf. also such derivations as *ma'lam* “known region” (cf. T. Nöldeke, *Fünf Mo'allaqât*, II, 28, in *Sitzungsberichte der k. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien, philos.-hist. Kl.*, 142 [1900]) and its opposite, *majhal* (*Lisân al-'Arab*, XIII, 138 [Bûlâq 1300–08]: *ard majhal* “land where there is no guidance,” *arḍ majhūlāh* “land in which there are no way signs and no mountains”).

It may be noted further that in Modern South Arabian, derivations from the root *‘l-m* in the meaning of “sign” are known although, probably, they are loans from Arabic, while for “to know,” the verbs *‘edah* *< y-d-*, *‘erob* *< r-f*, and *teb* are in use, cf. W. Leslau, *Lexique Soqotri*, 58, 198, 311, 325 f. (Paris 1938).

It was, perhaps, inevitable that later Muslim etymological speculation should derive “ilm from *‘alâmah* which means guidance and direction,” as was done by Abû 'Ali al-Fârisî (d. 377/987), who is quoted to this effect by al-'Aynî, *Umdat al-qâri*, I, 380 (Constantinople 1308). Cf. also p. 19, n. 1.

¹⁴ Cf. W. Vycichl, in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*, V (1957), 10–25, and I. M. D'yakonov, *Semito-Khamitskie yazyki*, 46 (Moscow 1964).

“not knowing,” Arabic shares with other Semitic languages the root *n-k-r. J-h-l*, which in the Arabic known to us is the ordinary opposite of “to know,” has, it seems, no Semitic cognates. There is a good deal of plausibility to explaining *j-h-l* as a secondary formation from the well-known root *j-w-l*, meaning “to go around.” “Going around” could be wandering around in circles, roaming about aimlessly and not knowing where one is going. This, then, would be the exact counterpart of a “knowing” conceived as guidance provided by way signs in an environment in which life depended upon such knowledge, and suffering and death were the likely results of being ignorant of it.

Semantic speculations of this nature are, of course, impossible of exact verification. They gain in likelihood through parallels from more recent and better known periods. One such parallel has been shown to exist in modern ‘Irâqî Arabic.¹⁵ There, *indall* “to be guided” tends to assume the general meaning of knowing or knowing one’s way or the whereabouts of things. If one believes in the possibility of recovering biconsonantal prototypes of existing triconsonantal roots, a connection of *‘l-m* with the preposition *‘al* suggests itself, in the sense of having come “upon” something and thus being acquainted with it (cf. also Arabic *w-q-f ‘alâ*, mentioned before) or, perhaps, in the sense of seizing the “high” points and orienting oneself with their help.¹⁶ Such a rather fanciful derivation could again be interpreted as leading to a knowledge based originally upon outstanding signs or markings in one’s environment, and we might find here the starting point for the noun formation *‘alam* “way sign” as the intermediary between the biconsonantal stage and the meaning of the verbal root “to know.” Needless to say, the further we go into this sort of speculation, the less certain does the ground become under our feet.¹⁷ Even the comparatively conservative theory that “knowledge” in general was originally the particular knowledge of way signs may not be acceptable to everybody and be open to—no less uncertain—

¹⁵ Cf. G. Krotkoff, in *JAOS*, LXXXIV (1964), 170 f.

¹⁶ Cf. A.-S. Marmardjî, *La Lexicographie arabe à la lumière du bilittéralisme*, 129 ff. (Jerusalem 1937).

¹⁷ It may be noted that Muslim philologists, who in general were fond of etymological speculation, did not have much to say in connection with *‘ilm*, because they felt that common words offered little chance of explanation by way of etymology. Cf., however, also above p. 10, n. 2, and below, p. 19, n. 1. For the different situation with respect to *‘r-f*, see below, p. 114.

arguments directed against it. The proposed combination of “way signs” and “knowledge” remains, however, a suggestive hypothesis for explaining the concept of knowledge prevalent in early central Arabia. Knowledge there was a rather primitive groping after elementary material data under quite restricted social conditions. These data were not necessarily connected by some kind of material or logical nexus. Most of them were considered valuable by themselves, and knowledge of any one of them could be aspired to and appreciated as a useful accomplishment. We may go a step farther and say that a similar conception of the meaning and value of knowledge can be discovered in much of the scholarly production of Muslim civilization at a much later date. It is tempting to see in the remarkable predilection shown for the presentation of information in a more or less random, unconnected fashion a survival of the very ancient Arabian approach to knowledge in an environment very different from that in which those particular modes of thought had their early origin. However, great caution is again indicated. Any such original meaning of the root *‘l-m* can have been truly alive only in an extremely remote period antedating by far the ages for which we might claim to possess some sort of concrete historical understanding. When we encounter *‘ilm* in actual use, it had long been a generalized abstract term unconnected with crude material data.

2. THE EVIDENCE OF POETRY

Poetry is practically the only intellectual pursuit which we can be positive was highly developed and much practiced in pre-Islamic Arabia. It seems certain that the Arabic word for poet, *shā‘ir*, meant originally “one who knows,” and the word for poetry, *shi‘r*, “knowledge.”¹⁸ What kind of knowledge was implied here is a moot

¹⁸ Cf., especially, I. Goldziher, *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, I, 17 ff. (Leiden 1896–99). Arab lexicographers define *shi‘r* “poetry” as being knowledge, cf. *Lisdn al-Arab*, VI, 76 f.: “*Shi‘r* is metrical speech. The term became specialized in this meaning because of the noble character of (such speech) gained through meter and rhyme, even if any knowledge may be (called) *shi‘r*, in the same manner in which the term *fīgh* (meaning knowledge and understanding) was specialized in the meaning of science of the religious law.” According to a remark attributed to the caliph ‘Umar and others, poetry was the only “knowledge” worthy of the name possessed by the Arabs, before the divine revelation brought them a better knowledge, cf. Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, *Kitāb az-Zīnah*, ed. H. F. al-Hamdānī, I, 96 f. (Cairo 1957–58).

question beyond our ability to answer with any amount of certainty. It could have been magical knowledge. On the whole, it would seem to be the more likely assumption that the poet was the person who was able to handle data beyond those of the most immediate practical experience, the person who was considered knowledgeable, alone of his fellow men gifted with insight and the ability to express his insight. If this was the case, it would mean that at the time the term came into usage, knowledge was a rare and restricted commodity and that it was a knowledge far removed from any scientific and scholarly pursuits. However, this hypothetical original significance of the term may have been felt only in the earliest, pre-historic times. The Greeks and the Romans did not ordinarily think of the "poet" as a "doer," nor does anyone today unless he wants to show off his learned understanding of word origins. Likewise, the Arabs in the centuries preceding the coming of Islam presumably did not see simply "knowers" in their poets, even if "knower" was the original meaning.

Turning now to the more concrete evidence we have from pre-Islamic poetry—that is, from poems that have come down to us connected with the names of poets assumed to have lived before the coming of Islam—, we are forced to admit that the ground we are entering upon is not much safer than the one of semantic and etymological speculation we have just left. Our task is not one of gaining some sort of overall picture of pre-Islamic life and conditions or of concepts and beliefs that antedated Islam. We want to obtain information on specific attitudes that may, or may not, have existed in pre-Islamic Arabia. Therefore, the problem of genuineness is of more than usual importance in each individual instance. Sporadic statements and reflections on particular attitudes toward mental activity and intellectual perception can often be suspected of being later insertions or inventions. They were also susceptible to much subsequent modification which, though minor in appearance, may profoundly affect their significance for our particular quest. Individual words are easily replaced in Arabic poetry by others, which may not change very greatly the general drift of meaning but play havoc with subtler distinctions. At the present state of our knowledge, the only feasible procedure is therefore to consider as genuine almost everything that is transmitted as pre-Islamic, while at the same time keeping in mind that some legitimate doubt attaches to every detail.

Even so, the material that is of use for our investigation is quite limited. Obviously, it would serve no purpose here to try to stress the amount of factual knowledge possessed by pre-Islamic Arabs as evidenced by their poetry. What we want to find out is the amount and kind of reflection that might have existed concerning the abstract concept of knowledge and its meaning as well as its significance. Poetry as such is certainly not the appropriate vehicle for conveying such information. The particular individual situation of the poet determined the amount of factual knowledge which he himself might have possessed and which was, in theory, available to him. Variations in this respect must have been very great, depending on the poet's relative location vis-à-vis the Mediterranean civilization of the time. Whatever his education, however, and regardless of the original meaning of the Arabic word for "poet," poets did not feel called upon to apply themselves to the purveyance of scientific information. Even less so would they have considered it their task to use their poetical talent for speculation about the nature and definition of knowledge. Their primary concern was the realm of the senses and its sublimation not into intellectual abstractions but into purer forms of sensual enjoyment. The root *‘l-m* and its opposite *j-h-l*, as well as other roots of related meanings, occur frequently in pre-Islamic poetry, but references to abstract knowledge are rare, and almost non-existent. Among the observations that may be made in this connection, it would seem that three points mainly deserve attention in our context.

In the first place, we find occasional indications of an awareness, which was certainly shared by every intelligent contemporary, that knowledge is something gradated, which has to be acquired, which possesses intrinsic value, and which has its circumscribed limits. Knowledge is something that sets the individual apart from his fellow men. A half-verse ascribed to an-Nâbighah adh-Dhubyâni runs:

He who is ignorant of something is not like the one who knows.¹⁹

Bishr b. Abî Khâzim exclaims dramatically:

Is the experienced person like the one who does not know?²⁰

Ignorance can be overcome only slowly by gathering a growing

¹⁹ Cf. W. Ahlwardt, *The Divans of the Six Ancient Arabic Poets*, 25, no. 23:11 (London 1870). The Qur'ân 39:9/12 asks, "Are those who know and those who do not know equals?"

²⁰ Bishr b. Abî Khâzim, *Diwân*, ed. 'Izzat Hasan, 180 (Damascus 1379/1960).

amount of information over a long period of time, as stated in a famous verse from Tarafah's *Mu'allaqah*:

The days will show you what you are ignorant of,
And someone for whom you did not provide (as your messenger) will
bring you the news.²¹

How to acquire knowledge through a constant search for more and more experience, is also described in verses said to be by a certain A'shâ Jillân, about whose lifetime nothing certain is known and who may as well have lived in Islamic times:

If you desire knowledge or the like
Or someone present giving information about someone absent,
Probe the earth with all its objects (*asmâ'iħâ*)
And probe companion with companion!²²

This would seem to be an interesting example of a rather concrete and definitely atomistic concept of knowledge, of the sort that was inherent in the root 'l-m according to our attempted semantic derivation.

The future is something that escapes even the most knowledgeable of men, as we learn from Zuhayr's *Mu'allaqah*:

I know about today and yesterday before it,
But I am blind to the knowledge of what is going to be tomorrow.²³

The same thought was expressed, for instance, also by Tarafah:

The woman who blames me says, although she does not have
Knowledge of what is to be tomorrow and thereafter...²⁴

Most important, there is a knowledge that is beyond the reach of human beings but is within the power of an omniscient deity. Again, the source is Zuhayr's *Mu'allaqah*:

You should not conceal from God what is in your minds,
In the hope that it will remain secret. Whatever may be concealed from
God, He knows.²⁵

²¹ Cf. Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 60, no. 4:102; M. Seligsohn, *Dīwān de Tarafā*, 108 (Paris 1901. *Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études*, 128). On the relationship between knowledge and experience later on in Islam, cf. below, pp. 276 f.

²² Cf. *The Dīwān of al-A'shâ*, ed. R. Geyer, 276 (London 1928, *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series*, N. S. 6).

²³ Cf. Nöldeke, *Fünf Mu'allaqât*, III, 18, verse 48 (*Sitzungsberichte... Wien*, 144 [1901]).

²⁴ Cf. Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 187.

²⁵ Cf. Nöldeke, *Fünf Mu'allaqât*, III, 16, 30, verse 27. For an early Islamic poet, al-'Ajjâj, expressing the same idea, cf. *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache*, II, 52a, s. v. *k-t-m* (Wiesbaden 1957).

According to T. Nöldeke, Zuhayr's poem is to be dated around 600 A. D. Nöldeke expressed well founded doubts about the genuineness of the verse; it may be genuine, he says, and may not have undergone Muslim influence, but the verse that follows upon it in the poem could, in his opinion, hardly be given even the benefit of the doubt. Thus, our dilemma is obvious. It is quite possible that the idea of an omniscient deity was widely known all over Arabia in pre-Islamic times and had appealed to the pagan poet. Yet, the possibility of Islamic influence cannot be ruled out. There are no criteria on which to base a valid scholarly judgment.

In the second place, the differentiation of various degrees of certainty in intellectual perception, expressed by a variety of terms, was clearly recognized. This would, in any case, be our conclusion on the basis of the employment of the relevant terminology in the Qur'ân.²⁶ Also, a lack of this kind of insight into mental processes would presuppose an infinitely more primitive society than pre-Islamic Arabia is likely to have harbored. However, we can also cite at least one express statement from a verse ascribed to 'Anṭarah:

I do know in a way that is different from guesswork (*ilman laysa bi-z-zanni*) that
When a man's master is lowly, he himself is, too.²⁷

Thirdly, and most significantly, numerous verses make it quite clear that knowledge was considered a heightened form of reality and truth. Instead of saying that something is so, the poet would say, as in the verse just cited, that he *knows* that it is so. The poet may describe himself as the depository of such knowledge. Much more frequently, another party is invoked to testify, through their knowledge, to the correctness of the statement the poet wishes to make. This other party may be the poet's tribe, his home, his enemies, even horses or feet. This peculiar use of the concept of knowledge constitutes the most common occasion by far for the use of *'-l-m* in ancient Arabic poetry. Nobody reading even a small amount of Arabic verse can fail to be struck by the force and frequency of this particular device. As rare as are verses dealing with other aspects of knowledge, those in which the poet emphasizes a point by referring to someone's knowledge of it are exceedingly frequent. There can be no doubt that this is a truly pre-Islamic

²⁶ Cf. below, pp. 30 f.

²⁷ Cf. Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 68, no. 12:13.

Arabian conceit, which continued into later Islamic times. The variations are numerous. Only a few may be cited here:

We have inherited glory, the Ma‘add *know*.²⁸

I am the one whose excellence the Ma‘add *know*.²⁹

The Bakr *know* that we . . .³⁰

The tribe *knows* . . . that you . . .³¹

Know, woman, that I am a man . . .!³²

The people have come to *know* (that he has all good qualities).³³

The horses (*khayl*) *know* . . . that you . . .³⁴

Many horsemen do I have whom I *know*

To bear with patience repeated attacks and wounds.³⁵

Why do you not ask the people, O daughter of Mâlik,

If you are *ignorant* of what you do not *know* (and everybody will tell you about my prowess).³⁶

The people *know* that you are a lord.³⁷

Horses *know* when they snort on the field of death . . .³⁸

On a supple (foot) that *knows* where it is going.³⁹

²⁸ Qays b. al-Khatîm, *Dîwân*, 60 (Baghdâd 1381/1962). Similar uses of ‘-l-m can be found elsewhere in the work of this poet.

On verses beginning: *qad ‘alimat*, cf. M. Ullmann, *Untersuchungen zur Rağazpoesie*, 20 (Wiesbaden 1966).

²⁹ Imru‘u l-Qays, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 158, no. 59:22.

³⁰ Tarafah, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 62, no. 5:51, 185. Cf. also ‘Anṭarah and Zuhayr, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 51, no. 25:10, and 81, no. 4:5, as well as Abû Mihjan, *Dîwân*, ed. L. Abel, nos. 11:1, 13:2 (Leiden 1887).

³¹ A’shâ Hamdân (early Islamic), in *The Dîwân of al-A’shâ*, ed. Geyer, 319, no. 8:20.

³² ‘Anṭarah, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 42, no. 19:19. Cf. also *ibid.*, 48, no. 21:80.

³³ A’shâ Maymûn, in *The Dîwân of al- A’shâ*, ed. Geyer, 10, no. 1:40. Cf. also *ibid.*, 160, no. 36:18, etc.

³⁴ A’shâ Hamdân, in *The Dîwân of al-A’shâ*, ed. Geyer, 319, no. 8:23. Cf. also an-Nâbighah adh-Dhubyâni, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 27, no. 26:12.

³⁵ ‘Anṭarah, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 49, no. 22:1. Cf. also *ibid.*, 42, no. 19:14.

³⁶ From ‘Anṭarah’s *Mu‘allaqah*, cf. Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 49; Nöldeke, *Fünf Mo‘allaqât*, II, 19, verse 43.

³⁷ Abû Dhu‘ayb (time of the Prophet), *Dîwân*, ed. J. Hell, 34, no. 30c:4 (Hannover 1926). For examples from the poetry of Labîd, cf., for instance, *Sharh Dîwân Labîd*, ed. I. ‘Abbâs, 51, 186, 213, etc. (Kuwait 1962).

³⁸ ‘Anṭarah, in Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 179.

³⁹ Abû Dhu‘ayb, *Dîwân*, 26, no. 22:4.

How many a cup have I drunk for pleasure
 And again, others trying to cure myself through them from it,
 So that people will *know* that I am a man
 Who stands with both feet in manly life.⁴⁰

Khaybar *knows* that I am (so-and-so)...⁴¹

“Knowing” something means being a big step ahead of mere reality. It is a higher stage of experience. It serves as an appeal to man’s truer self. The conclusion that we have here a native Arabian forerunner of the important role knowledge was to play in Islamic civilization seems inescapable.

* * *

For the pre-Islamic attitude toward knowledge, it would be of considerable significance, if the Qur’anic term *jâhilîyah*, which came to be used for the dark period before the advent of Islam, were certain to be an Arabic term current before the time of the Prophet. This, however, does not seem to be the case, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Thus, no illumination as to the pre-Islamic attitude toward knowledge can be derived from it.

Altogether, there is little that can be said about “knowledge” in pre-Islamic Arabia. There existed, it seems, an original elementary concept of knowledge as the piecemeal acquisition of material data. It was, in the course of time, replaced by, or rather, amalgamated with a concept of knowledge as something possessing different degrees of realization. Eventually, there came the additional insight that knowledge constituted a higher and truer form of reality. Such was “knowledge” in Arabia when Muhammad came and forged the concept into the basic tool and objective of divine revelation, thus setting the stage for that reverence for knowledge which was to become the main theme of Islamic civilization.

⁴⁰ *The Dîvân of al-Asâhî*, ed. Geyer, 121, no. 22:17 f.

⁴¹ Cf. al-Wâqîdî, *Maghâzî*, ed. M. Jones, 654 f. (London 1966); at-Tabârî, *Annâles*, ed. M. J. de Goeje and others, I, 1577–80 (Leiden 1879–1901).

CHAPTER TWO

THE REVELATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The uncertainties which bothered us in the preceding chapter disappear as soon as we approach the Qur'ân. Here we have indeed "the full light of history," at least as far as the concept of knowledge is concerned. However, even history's fullest light falls concentrated only upon a few small spots and usually leaves most areas dimly lit by some weak and widely diffused light. As always, many problems of origin, analysis, and interpretation remain. Their final solution must be considered as something beyond our reach. But the overall import of all the questions raised and answers suggested leaves no room for doubt. Muḥammad's concept of "knowledge" set intellectual life in Islam on its basically unchangeable course. There was comparatively little that later influences and developments were able to accomplish by way of injecting new ideas into the fundamental structure of the Prophet's thought or by way of enriching it materially. Such influences and developments were, moreover, altogether unable to change its main thrust and effect.

1. A WORD COUNT AND ITS MEANING

In all its derivations, the root *‘l-m*—excluding, of course, the unrelated *‘ālam* "world"¹—occurs in the Qur'ân with unusual

¹ As may be expected, Muslim scholars sometimes connected *‘ālam* with *ilm* or *‘alam*. Cf. ‘Abd-al-Qâhir al-Baghdâdî, *Uṣûl ad-dîn*, 34 (Istanbul 1346/1928, reprinted, n. y., n. p.): "‘Ālam is everything that has knowledge and sense perception," but a combination with *‘alam/‘alāmah* is preferable. *Ālam* is "a designation for the angels, the jinn, and the human beings who possess knowledge." It is "the totality of bodies (substances) and accidents of which the Creator has knowledge" (cf. az-Zâmakhshârî, *Kashshâf*, I, 43). In this case, *ilm*, and not *‘alam*, is clearly meant. However, it is *‘alam/‘alāmah* which is adduced by the Imâm al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynî in explaining that *‘alam* is called *‘ālam* because it is an indication set up to indicate the existence of the owner of the *‘alam*. Likewise, the world with its substances, accidents, parts, and particles is a sign indicating the existence of the Lord, the owner of the world, cf. his *Luma‘ al-adillah*, ed. Fawqîyah Ḥusayn Maḥmûd, 76 (Cairo 1385/1965). The view expounded by ar-Râghib al-İsfahânî is not quite clear. With great if misplaced ingenuity, probably borrowed from some older source, he combines *‘ālam* with words of a similar

frequency. There are about 750 occurrences all told. Since the Qur'ân contains roughly something short of 78,000 words, it can be said that the derivations of the root *‘l-m* make up about one percent of its vocabulary. The auxiliary verb *k-w-n* “to be” occurs over 1,300 times, and the unavoidable *q-w-l* “to say” is found almost 1,700 times (which reveals something fundamental if obvious about later Muslim civilization, namely that its predilection for the spoken word in all its aspects has its roots in ancient Arabian tradition). Besides *k-w-n* and *q-w-l*, only the words *Allâh* “God,” with over 2,800 occurrences, and *rabb* “master, Lord,” with over 950 occurrences, surpass the root *‘l-m* by a large margin. The root *‘m-n* is found a few times more than *‘l-m*. This, however, takes into account not only the meaning of “to believe” but requires inclusion of the occurrences of the root in the basic conjugation, where the meaning is very different. Historically, and, presumably, also in the linguistic consciousness of the speaker, these various forms do not belong as closely together as do the various derivations of *‘l-m*. Thereafter, frequency figures fall off rather rapidly. From within the 450–550 range, we may mention *‘t-y* “to come,” *k-f-r*, which serves as the opposite of *‘amana* “to believe,” *r-s-l* “(to send as) messenger,” and *ard* “earth.”

It may be doubted whether such unrefined statistical evidence has any significance at all. However, such doubts would seem to be unjustified in this particular case. Muḥammad's message was no abstract intellectual exercise. The Prophet was also not concerned with variety in the ideas he preached. On the contrary, he

noun formation such as *khâtam* and *tâba'*, both meaning “seal,” and interprets it as the “instrument” by which the world with all the substances and accidents it contains “is known” (or does he mean, “is marked,” from *‘alam*?). Thus, the world is instrumental in proving the existence of its Creator, cf. his *Mufradât*, III, 141, s. *rad.* *‘l-m* (Cairo 1322, in the margin of Ibn al-Athîr, *Nihâyah*). At-Tahânahî is even more ambiguous. He also brings *‘âlam* together with *khâtam* and *tâba'* and derives it from *‘alam/‘alâmah* as the designation for something through which something is known. He presumably did not think at all of “is marked,” since he goes on to say that the word came to be used primarily for that “through which the Creator is known” (this would seem to be the only possible translation in this case). “It designates all the *existentia* with the exception of God, that is, the created things whether they are substances or accidents,” which indicate the existence of a Necessary Originator, cf. his *Kashshâf iṣtilâhât al-funûn*, 1053 (Calcutta 1854–62). Notwithstanding all these speculations, however, by and large little was made of the suggestive, if completely wrong, etymology which brings *‘âlam* together with the Arabic root *‘l-m*.

felt called upon to make his contemporaries conscious of a very few basic truths. The way to achieve this end was to repeat these truths constantly and singlemindedly, regardless of how much repetition this entailed. Using the same word or root over and over again was—and still is—the surest way to have the message it contains register in the minds of the listeners. It is evident that the terms which were truly important to the Prophet do indeed occur in the Qur'ân with greater frequency than all others. Vice versa, terms that expressed ideas which he did not consider vital elements of his preaching tend to appear low down on the scale in the tabulation of words. The correctness of this observation is in a way confirmed by the low frequency of certain terms which were to play important roles in Islam later on. They do occur in the Qur'ân and, in fact, were often propelled into their important roles on the basis of their occurrence in Qur'ânic passages. But they were of no special concern to Muḥammad during his lifetime. Therefore, they enjoy no prominence in the Qur'ân. For instance, “justice” (*‘-d-l*) belongs to a root sparsely mentioned in it. This obviously does not mean that the Prophet might have thought little of justice as a political, ethical, or religious force. It does suggest that in the historical and ideational context of his preaching, there was no fundamental need to make much of the concept and all it stood for. Avoidance of the discussion of issues that are of no immediate concern is as necessary for political success as is firm and constant insistence upon those that are. We may be disappointed to find, for instance, that the word “freedom” (*hurrîyah*) is not mentioned expressly in the Qur'ân. However, if it were, it would be merely incidental and of little significance; no matter how great a role the concept played at some later date, it could not have been a vital issue for Muḥammad requiring to be stressed and repeated constantly in his preaching. Considerations of this sort support the assumption that the frequency with which the root *‘-l-m* occurs in the Qur'ân is not a matter of chance. It is mentioned with such persistence that nobody could fail to notice it. It was a concept that the Prophet wanted to be noticed. It was one of the basic ideas he had made it his business to convey to his followers.

Another objection might be raised against the evaluation of the statistical evidence suggested here. At first glance, this objection may appear to possess some validity. However, in reality, it is

equally baseless. It could be said that *Allâh* “God” and *âmana* “to believe” (or its opposite, *k-f-r*) are strictly religious terms wherever they occur. ‘-*l-m*, on the other hand, although it is used with a religious connotation, is also a common verb with an ordinary meaning. Thus, it may be argued, ‘-*l-m* would inevitably occur quite frequently in any lengthy work regardless of its subject matter. In this respect, then, the use of ‘-*l-m* should be compared with, say, ‘-*t-y* “to come” which occurs very often without, of course, any special religious significance. This reasoning founders on three considerations. In the first place, the passages where ‘-*l-m* occurs filled with a special meaning in the Qur’ânic context are much more numerous than are those where an incidental, secular usage may be assumed. Secondly, a concept expressing mental activity such as “knowing” (and the derived one of “teaching”) is in fact something much less obtrusive than terms expressing physical activities such as “coming” or “saying.” Occurrences of its use therefore are much less likely to be incidental. And thirdly, everything tends to show that Muhammad did indeed attribute great significance to “knowledge” in the system of his religious thought. Even if the frequency of the occurrence of the root were to be reduced to a much smaller figure statistically, which need not be done, it would still be prominent enough to command attention. As it is, even the few supposedly incidental occurrences of ‘-*l-m* do not really seem to be incidental and cannot be dismissed as such. Every single occurrence of the root forms part of a plan to condition receptive minds to “knowing” as a basic force in the new religion. No doubt, this was fully intended to be so. Moreover, the very fact that we have here a concept in which religious and secular terminology came together is a matter of profound significance which will require some further elaboration later on.

2. THE MOTIVATING FORCE BEHIND THE QUR’ÂNIC USE OF ‘-*l-m*

Insistence upon the importance of “knowledge” in a religious view of life may perhaps seem rather natural to us and something that requires no further comment. However, not much reflection is needed to show that the stress upon “knowledge” in a religious system is something rather unexpected and remarkable, and its presence begs for an explanation, if one can be provided. In the case of the Qur’ân, in particular, native Arabian stimuli by themselves could hardly have provoked a development such as we find

in the Qur'ân with respect to knowledge. It is true, as shown in the preceding chapter, that knowledge had come to represent a higher level of reality for pre-Islamic Arabs. But no matter how much we might strain our imagination to find a possible substitute for the missing evidence, we would hardly be justified in assuming that in pagan Arabia at least, knowledge was a concept that possessed religious urgency and was ready to play a prominent role in a new religious movement. Unless there existed some conception of knowledge in pre-Islamic Arabia beyond our purview, it is impossible to understand why Muḥammad should have given knowledge such a crucial position in his teaching. Thus, we are compelled to look for possible outside influences. To some, this might seem to bring up again the much discussed question of the Prophet's "originality." The contention that any search for extraneous models and inspiration diminishes the originality of his accomplishment and is, anyhow, unnecessary is as wrong as it is trite. In fact, if the Qur'ânic use of *‘l-m* cannot be placed in a historical context—and pagan pre-Islamic Arabia by itself does not furnish such a context—it cannot but appear arbitrary and meaningless, and thus not truly original. True creative originality is found only where there is meaningful continuity. The "originality" of the Prophet's concern with knowledge will therefore be understood only if a likely source can be discovered.

In this connection, a highly suggestive passage is Qur'ân 102: 5–7/5–7: "Indeed, if you were to know *‘ilmā l-yaqīni*, you would see Hell. Then, you would indeed see it *‘ayna l-yaqīni*." *Ilma l-yaqīni* may merely stand for an English adverbial construction, "certainly, with certainty."² However, taken by itself, the words may rather suggest the meaning of "the knowledge of certainty." This translation calls to mind an extremely influential concept of Christian theological speculation, *hē gnōsis tēs alétheias* "the knowledge of truth."³ In Syriac translation, the Greek expression

² The adverbial construction in the form *‘alima ‘ilmān yaqīnan* appears, for instance, in the poetry of Dhū r-Rummah as quoted by ash-Sharīshī, *Sharh al-Maqāmāt al-Harīyah*, I, 23 (Cairo 1306), cf. also C. H. H. Macartney's edition of Dhū r-Rummah's *Dīwān*, 667 (Cambridge 1919), where further references are given. It came to be used very widely, cf., for instance, Hunayn, in his translation of Galen, *Über die medizinischen Namen*, ed., trans. M. Meyerhof and J. Schacht, 16, l. 19 f. (Berlin 1931, *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Kl.*).

³ Cf., for instance, W. Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius*, 53, 76, 136, 176, etc. (Leiden 1954),

appears as *īda'ṭā dashrārā*. There can be no objection to the use of *īlm* here to translate Greek *gnōsis*. The differentiation in Arabic usage involving a distinct preference for employing the root *'-r-f* for translating *gignōskō* and its derivatives⁴ is traceable only in much later times. It cannot be expected to have made its appearance already in the Qur'ānic period. Moreover, the Syriac phrase uses the root *y-d-*, which would undoubtedly be rendered by Arabic *'-l-m*. This makes unconvincing any attempt to rule out *īlm* as a possible translation of *gnōsis*.

The use of *yaqīn* in the sense of "truth" could also by no means be considered objectionable. *Yaqīn* always serves to refer to knowledge at its most certain.⁵ In the Qur'ān, *yaqīn* occurs twice paired with *haqq* "truth" in a genitive construction (*haqqu l-yaqīni*, 56:95/95 and 69:51/51). The exact interpretation of these passages has caused some difficulty to grammarians and Qur'ān interpreters. They vacillate mainly between two interpretations. *Haqq al-yaqīn* either "truth (resulting) from certain (information)" or "truth (which is) certainty." The latter interpretation assumes identity of meaning for *haqq* and *yaqīn*.⁶ Be this as it may, *yaqīn* could very

or H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, I, 14, and *passim* (on the understanding of *gnōsis* in early Christian theology) (Cambridge, Mass., 1956). The expression *da'at 'emet* of the Dead Sea Sectarians may also belong here, cf. W. D. Davies, *'Knowledge' in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, in *Harvard Theological Review*, XLVI (1953), 119. The later Sūfi interpretation of *īlm al-yaqīn* comes again very close to the Gnostic understanding of *hē gnōsis tēs alétheias*. A late Ismā'īlī author defines "faith" (*īmān*) as "the knowledge of the truth" (*īlm al-haqīqah*), cf. Shihāb-ad-dīn al-Maynaqī, *Kitāb al-Īdāh*, ed. 'Arif Tāmīr, 8 f. (Beirut 1965).

⁴ Thus, it is of no significance that in Graeco-Arabic translation literature, we find the Qur'ānic *īlm al-yaqīn* used to render Greek *epistēmē*, while *gnōsis tēs alétheias* occurring right next to it appears in Arabic as *ma'rīfat haqqat...*, cf. Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Arithmētikē Eisagōgē*, 2, l. 2 Hoche, Arabic trans. by Thābit b. Qurrah, ed. W. Kutsch, 11 (Beirut 1959). Cf. also 4, l. 10 Hoche = 13 Kutsch and below, p. 199. *Ma'rīfat al-haqq* occurs also in the commentary of *lýmūs* on the *Isagoge*, as quoted by Abū l-Ḥasan b. Abī Dharr, *Kitāb as-Sa'ādah wa-l-is'ād*, ed. M. Minovi, 340 (Wiesbaden 1957-58).

⁵ At a very early date, the meaning of "death" was attributed by many authorities to *yaqīn* in Qur'ān 15:99/99 and 74:47/48. Although there is hardly anything unusual in finding "certainty" used as a euphemism for "death," it seems more likely that this meaning is due to exegetes who felt that in the former passage, the ordinary meaning of *yaqīn* did not yield an acceptable sense. However, this is not really necessary. Another passage whose context also presents difficulties of interpretation contains an obviously parallel phrase in which *yaqīn* is replaced by *īlm* (10:93/93).

⁶ Cf. at-Tabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXVII, 110 f. (Cairo 1321); *Lisān al-Ārab*, I, 91, s. *rad. s-w'*. It may not be out of place here to mention that according to Antonius Melissa, in Migne.

well have been used as a suitable translation of *alêtheia*/*shrârâ*. There is no need to insist that only *haqq* could have served this purpose.

In favor of understanding *‘ilmā l-yaqīni* not as a rendering of “the knowledge of truth” but as an adverbial expression, it may be claimed that we have a parallelism between it and the following *‘ayna l-yaqīni*, which can mean only “(seeing) with the eye of certainty,” representing an adverbial construction. However, it is easily possible that the expression of “the knowledge of truth,” having once been adopted by Muḥammad as a phrase of religious import, suggested to him when he used it the seemingly parallel expression *‘ayna l-yaqīni* in the following sentence.

We cannot be absolutely certain that *hē gnōsis tēs alêtheias* found its way into the Qur'ân through direct translation from, presumably, some Aramaic dialect. There is, however, one undeniable fact in support of such an assumption. The phrase was much used and discussed in Christian circles in the time of the Prophet and in a geographical location as close to central Arabia as we might hope to find for any literary evidence of this sort. Significantly, the evidence does not come from a strictly traditional Christian work but from a work of Christian gnosticism, the *Centuries* of the fourth-century Evagrius Ponticus. The *Centuries* are known to us through their Syriac translation(s) and through the commentary of Bâbây of Mount İzlâ who was a contemporary of Muḥammad.⁷ *İda‘tâ dashrârâ* occurs in the work numerous times, and the importance of the expression for the thought of both the author and the commentator is fully evident. Further works in Syriac attest to the central position occupied by *îda‘yâ*

Patrologia Graeca, 136, 843 f., Chrysostomus defined truth as the certain insight into being (*alêtheia estin hē tou ontos asphalēs katanoēsis*).

⁷ For Evagrius, cf. the fundamental work by A. Guillaumont, *Les ‘Kephalaia Gnostica’ d’Evagre le Pontique* (Paris 1962). Guillaumont has shown that the work has come down to us in two Syriac translations, the one published by W. Frankenberg, *Euagrius Ponticus* (Göttingen 1912, *Abh. der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, philol.-hist. Kl.*, N. F. 13, 2), and used by Bâbây, in which much of Evagrius’ unorthodox thought was eliminated, and another truer to the original Greek text, published by Guillaumont himself, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, 28, 1 (Paris 1958). Relevant passages are to be found in Frankenberg’s edition, 58, l. 8, 90/92, 114, l. 19, 190, l. 23. For Bâbây, cf. A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 137–39 (Bonn 1922), as well as Guillaumont’s work.

For Joseph Hazzâyâ, cf. below, p. 210. n. 2.

“knowledge” in certain circles of Oriental Christianity. John the Hermit (John of Apameia) uses *îda’â* as a fundamental term. His work is possibly to be dated in the first half of the sixth century, although this date and his authorship of some of the material published under his name are highly uncertain. In the words of its editor, *îda’â* “is used to indicate an ability lodged in human nature. It is also used with reference to an ability that can be acquired by a life of resignation and, especially, quietude. And finally, it is used for the highest form of divine experience.”⁸ Shem’ôn d’Taybûteh, who lived in Islamic times, in the late seventh century, but before the existence of Islamic influence upon a man of his kind could be reasonably expected, also makes much of “knowledge” and of “the knowledge of the truth,” which is the light of the soul and is nourished by a sovereign free will and constant pious meditation. However, it must be admitted that for him, “knowledge” does not have as characteristic a function as it does for the other authors mentioned.⁹ It may further be added here that there is an interesting text of an older date which, however, might have been well known to the Christians along the borders of Arabia in the time of the Prophet, the *Odes of Solomon*, which, as has been pointed out,¹⁰ the root *y-d-* and its derivations are of much more frequent occurrence than the concept of faith (*h-y-m-n*).

The stress placed on knowledge in these works, and even the manner in which the concept is handled, forcibly recall the Qur’ânic treatment of *îlm*. It is a possible and by no means daring assumption that somewhat unorthodox Christian discussions in some form or other trickled down to Muḥammad and, sparking his interest in “knowledge,” set in motion the great movement toward *îlm* in Islam. This is a hypothesis, and it must remain one until further evidence is forthcoming, if this should ever be the case. However, it definitely helps us to understand the seeming discrepancy between the limited scope of pre-Islamic Arabian “knowledge” and the tremendous impact the concept undeniably made upon Muḥammad.

For the present, Christian gnostics, if they may thus be labeled,

⁸ Cf. L. G. Rignell, *Drei Traktate von Johannes dem Einsiedler*, 18 (Lund 1960, *Lunds Universitets Årsskrift, N. F. Avd. 1*, 54:4).

⁹ Ed. A. Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, VII, 48 f., text 307 (Cambridge 1934). Dâdîshô’, *On Solitude*, *ibid.*, 114, remarks that “through the power of knowledge we know God and love the Creator and righteousness”.

¹⁰ Cf. K. Rudolph, in *Revue de Qumran*, IV (1964), 525.

appear to have the first claim to a far-reaching historical role which they might have filled quite unknown to themselves. Normative Judaism takes little notice of “knowledge” in its preserved writings. It does not use the term in a way suggesting a comparison with the Qur’ân.¹¹ It should be stressed, though, that we know nothing precise about Jewish beliefs in the Arabia of the Prophet’s time and environment. Little can be made of the verses of a Jewish poet alleged to have been composed concerning an event of the year 624, the murder of Ka'b b. al-Ashraf, and presumed to have been spoken not much later than the following year:

I notice that he (Muhammad) is disapproved by the rabbis all,
 Each of whom possesses knowledge and is well-informed,
 Who have been studying every (kind of) knowledge
 Spoken of by the Torah and the Psalter.

Far from being “unquestionably authentic,”¹² these verses must be considered of doubtful genuineness, even if they are quite old. Assuming that they were indeed composed at the date indicated, one would have to find in them an echo of Qur’ânic terminology rather than the source of it. On the other hand, attention may be called to the fact that scholars feel that the term “knowledge” (*da’at*) plays a significant role in the writings of the Dead Sea Sectarians. In fact, the Palestinian Psalmist whose composition has been recovered in Qumrân anticipated an important Islamic development when he sang, “Grant me a spirit of faith and knowledge” (*rû’h ְmûnâh w-da’at hōnnî*).¹³ Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility of the existence of a similar influence of gnostic ideas on Arabian Judaism as is found among certain Christians, and hence, the possibility of the influence of such hypothetical Jewish gnosticism on Muhammad.

¹¹ Cf. also M. Lidzbarski, in *Zeitschrift für Semitistik*, I (1922), 93 f., who states that the use of *ilm* for theological knowledge is something peculiar to Islam and that “Hebrew *y-d-* ‘by no means developed in this direction, although it made attempts to do so (Is. 11:2; Hosea 4:6).’”

The fact that no less than sixty pages are needed to list all the occurrences of the root *y-d-* in the Babylonian Talmud would seem to be of no significance, cf. C. J. Kasowski, *Thesaurus Talmudis*, XVI, 130–90 (Jerusalem 1966).

¹² Cf. C. C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, 33 (New York 1933, reprint 1967). The source for the verses is Ibn Hishâm, *Sîrah*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, 659 (Göttingen 1858–60).

¹³ Cf. J. A. Sanders, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*, IV, 77, col. XIX. l. 14 (Oxford 1965). Cf. above, p. 23, n. 2, and M. Mansoor, in *Studies in the History of Religions (Supplement to Numen)*, XII (1967), 395 f. See below, chapter V, 2.

As with Judaism, so it is in this respect with pagan Gnosticism. Pagan Gnosticism, in some form or other, might have furnished the inspiration for Muḥammad’s religious conception of “knowledge.” Mandaeism at once comes to mind, although valid objections may be raised to referring to it as “pagan” gnosticism. The Mandaean religious writings speak constantly of *kushtâ* “truth.” Mandaeism derives its very name from “knowledge” in the guise of *Manda dHayye* “The Knowledge of Life.” It has also been pointed out that “truth” and “life” were brought into intimate contact in the Gospel of St. John 14:6.¹⁴ There would be nothing strange in encountering gnostic Mandaean influences in central Arabia. The possibility of such influences has indeed been hinted at tentatively in connection with a particular passage of the Qur’ān.¹⁵ However, it is hardly possible as yet, although future discoveries may very well alter the situation, to make out a documented and convincing case for a substantial influence upon the Qur’ān from this direction. Thus, the gnostic Christian hypothesis would so far seem to point to the most likely source of inspiration for the Prophet’s concept of knowledge.

3. HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AND DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

The constant repetition in the Qur’ān of the statement that God “knows” made a profound impact upon later Muslim theology. How Muḥammad conceived of such divine knowledge has been carefully studied by modern scholars.¹⁶ How God’s “knowledge,” His omniscience, was to be understood in the larger context of theology, whether or not the process of knowing was of the same kind in God as in human beings, what a knowing God meant for human affairs—all this was discussed over and over by Muslim scholars. They also noted that certain other roots besides *‘l-m* that expressed intellectual perception, in particular, *‘r-f*, were inapplicable to God and were therefore not used in the Qur’ān in connection with Him.¹⁷ It can hardly be assumed that Muḥammad

¹⁴ Cf. R. Macuch, *Anfänge der Mandäer*, in F. Altheim and R. Stiehl (eds.), *Die Araber in der Alten Welt*, II, 107 (Berlin 1965).

¹⁵ Cf. F. Rosenthal, *Nineteen*, in *Analecta Biblica*, XII (1959), 304–18.

¹⁶ Cf., in particular, Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice*, 51–66, 261–322 (Leiden 1960). On the use of the root *‘l-m* in Muḥammad’s preaching, cf. J. Corbon, in *Mélanges de l’Université St. Joseph*, XXXVI (1959 [1961]), 188 f.

¹⁷ R. Tietz, *Bedingungssatz und Bedingungsausdruck im Koran*, 94 (Diss. Tübingen 1963),

entertained notions about God's knowledge of the same kind as we find them expressed in later times or that he was fully aware of all the implications inherent in the speculation about divine knowledge. According to the Qur'ân, God's knowledge is undeniably superior in quantity to that of human beings. "God knows, and you do not know," the Qur'ân says frequently. But it is also somehow different in quality. God knows about secret matters, the knowledge of which escapes human beings, cf., for instance, Qur'ân 6:59/59 and also 11:31/33.

All human knowledge specifically comes from God. Thus, it is evident that human beings cannot know more than God (2:140/134). Even the angels know only what God has taught them (2:32/30). Nothing of the divine knowledge can be known except if God wills it (2:255/256). Much more important, however, is the obvious assumption throughout the Qur'ân that human knowledge, that is, true human knowledge, is to be equated with religious insight. In this connection, it is worthy of notice that *ilm* is supposed to have been possessed preferably by Biblical figures who succeeded in achieving knowledge of the true religion.¹⁸ Indeed, the prophets are in the possession of a knowledge coming to them from God such as ordinary human beings do not possess (7:62/60). But there are also numerous passages which show clearly that in Muḥammad's view, "knowledge" was to be equated with the divine revelation he himself, and his less successful predecessors among the Biblical prophets, had received. In a passage whose precise interpretation is not altogether certain, the Holy Book itself is described as "a book which We have set out according to knowledge" (7:52/50). Elsewhere, it is argued that faith follows upon knowledge, and the question is asked, how could anyone knowingly not believe? (3:71 ff./64 ff.). The equation of religious faith with knowledge finds its clearest indication in certain passages where the intended meaning is thrown into bold relief by the time-honored use of parallelism. *Ilm* and *īmān* appear once paired in a set phrase, which usually employs only *ilm* (30:56/56). "Believing" and "being

attempts rather interestingly to show that syntactic considerations in Qur'ân 2:197/193 and 3:29/29 suggest the meaning of "to learn, to take cognizance of" for *l-m* where God is the subject. This goes against later theological ideas. It might have already been repugnant to Muḥammad's concept of the omniscience of God. Cf., however, below, pp. 113 ff.

¹⁸ Cf. H. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, 130, n. 1 (reprint Hildesheim 1961).

given knowledge” appear as parallel expressions in Qur’ân 58: 11/12: “God will lift up by degrees those among you who have come to believe and those who have been given knowledge.” Another Qur’ânic passage also implies in the same manner that knowledge is the necessary consequence of faith: “And those who have come to believe know..., whereas those who do not believe say...” (2:26/24). In the rhymed prose style of the Qur’ân, “those who believe” are paired with “those who have certain knowledge (*yûqinûn*)” of the other world (2:4/3). The most telling indications for the basic identity of knowledge and faith are to be found in passages where roots expressing various forms of intellectual perception are juxtaposed with the verb “to believe.” Thus, Qur’ân 6:97–99/ 97–99 describes everything in the world as having been created for the guidance of mankind, in these terms: “And we have set out signs for people who know (*ya’lamûn*)..., for people who understand (*yafqahûn*)..., for people who have come to believe (*yu’mînûn*).” Less dramatically, the same idea is driven home in Qur’ân 45:3–6/ 2–5: “Signs for believers (*li-l-mu’mîn*)..., signs for people who have certain knowledge *yûqinûn*)..., people who have understanding (*ya’qilûn*)..., and in what story after God and His signs will they believe (*yu’mînûn*)?”

The accumulated evidence is striking and persuasive. Right from the start, the student of the Qur’ân finds himself confronted with the thought presented forcefully and inescapably that all human knowledge that has any real value and truly deserves to be called “knowledge” is religious knowledge. Moreover, it is not just vaguely some general religious information, but it is specifically identical with the contents of the divine message transmitted by the Prophet.

The Qur’ân does, of course, often refer to mundane knowledge possessed by human beings. Such knowledge, it seems, is considered acquired by means of three organs of the body, the eye, the ear, and the heart. This at least is the obvious interpretation of passages in which hearing, seeing, and “hearts” are mentioned together (32:9/8 and 67:23/23), and, in particular, of the Qur’ânic passage 17:36/38 which holds these three functions responsible for the absence of knowledge: “Do not go after that of which you have no knowledge, for hearing, sight, and heart, all these are held responsible.”

Furthermore, the vocabulary of the Qur’ân also reveals awareness

of the manifold shades of human intellectual perception by its use of practically all the relevant Arabic roots, such as *‘l-m*, *d-r-y*, *‘r-f*, *sh-‘r*, *‘q-l*, *y-q-n*, *f-q-h*, *f-k-r*, *f-h-m* (which occurs only once), *z-n-n*, *z-‘m*, *dh-k-r*, *b-y-n*, *d-r-s*, *baṣr bi-*, *khabir bi-*, and *muhît bi-*. The famous passage concerning the crucifixion of Jesus (4:157/156) catalogues in detail various degrees of cognition such as doubt (*shakk*), guessing (*zann*), knowledge (*ilm*), and certainty (*yaqîn*). In another passage, the Qur’ân speaks of knowledge, guessing, and conjecturing (*takhrusân*, 6:148/149). But not only do we find the existence of such gradations of knowledge attested in the Qur’ân. We are also told in a number of passages about the dialectical processes through which knowledge is acquired and sifted by human beings. The vocabulary used in this connection (*shâqqa*, *jâdala* “to dispute,” *hujâh*, *burhân* “argument, proof”) shows considerable refinement and precision, if not in the later philosophical sense.

In the Prophet’s view of the world, “knowledge” which in its totality is a matter of the deepest concern for him consists of two principal parts. There is human knowledge, that is, a secular human knowledge of an elementary or more advanced character and a religious human knowledge; the latter constitutes the highest development of knowledge attainable to man, and it is the kind of human knowledge usually meant in the Qur’ân where it preaches the importance of human knowledge. But in addition to human knowledge both secular and religious, there also exists a divine knowledge. It is basically identical with human knowledge, still, it is somehow of a higher order both quantitatively and qualitatively. The most important feature of these aspects of knowledge is that they are felt and represented by the Prophet as interlocking and interdependent. There can be no human knowledge secular or religious without the knowledge possessed by the deity. On the other hand, the reason for the existence of divine knowledge as well as its final destination are, in a manner of speaking, man and his need and desire for knowledge. Knowledge may be acquired by human action, but it would seem to be within the power of God to bestow it upon man in any degree and to any extent He chooses. The worth of knowledge and, indeed, the mere fact that something can be considered knowledge depend on the existence of a relationship between such knowledge and what is thought of as God’s knowledge or as being in harmony with it. It is obviously

questionable whether anything else that human beings may wish to call knowledge is to be regarded as such. Whenever one speaks of human knowledge, he has to keep in mind the connection between such knowledge and the form of knowledge that is suitable only for the deity. Knowledge appears as something varied and immense, but it is in a sense finite and monolithic. Above all, however, knowledge remains the goal of all worthwhile aspirations of mankind, the true synonym of religion.

These were the ideas that determined the development of Muslim “knowledge” and with it, of all Muslim intellectual life and, in fact, all Muslim religious and political life. From the Qur’ānic attitude toward knowledge, it would be possible almost to predict the course that Muslim theology, mysticism, jurisprudence and the like were to take, as well as the fate that had to befall the liberating influences set in motion by the reception of the Classical heritage in the ninth century. The triumphs and defeats of Muslim civilization are foreshadowed in Muḥammad’s understanding of “knowledge.”

4. *Jāhilīyah*

The term *jāhilīyah* occurs in the Qur’ān four times.¹⁹ The way it is used is another indication that in the mind of the Prophet, unawareness of or opposition to his message was equivalent to “ignorance” as being the opposite of knowledge and religion. Goldziher’s much discussed suggestion that the root *j-h-l* was, with reference to *jāhilīyah*, to be understood as the opposite of *ḥilm* “kindness” (or the like) and that it denoted “barbary” rather than ignorance²⁰ is of doubtful validity as such. It certainly

¹⁹ (3:154/148) “A group of you...thinking (*zann*) about God what is not true in the way of *al-jāhilīyah*.”

(5:50/55) “Is it the judgment (*hukm*) of *al-jāhilīyah* they desire? But who is better than God in judgment....”

(33:33/33) “(O wives of the Prophet)...do not swagger about in the manner of *al-jāhilīyah al-īlā*.”

(48:26/26) “Since those who did not believe put into their hearts fierceness, the fierceness of *al-jāhilīyah*, God thereupon sent down His *sakīnah* upon His Prophet and the believers....”

²⁰ Cf. I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, I, 219–28 (Halle 1889), English trans. by C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern, 201–8 (London 1967). The religious connotation of the use of the root *j-h-l* has been well brought out by Toshiko Izutsu, *The Structure of the*

does not apply to the meaning the Prophet himself found in *jâhilîyah*. But what is the original, precise significance of the word?

The main problem lies in the strange type of word formation represented by *jâhilîyah*. Genuine abstract noun formations ending in *-îyah* are rare in the Qur'ân, nor would one expect to find them there. Another clear example, *rahbâniyah* "monasticism," obviously originated under foreign influence.²¹ An abstract noun formation ending in *-îyah* on the basis of an Arabic participle, supposedly coined by Muḥammad himself, seems particularly strange, so strange indeed as to invite disbelief in its possibility. As a matter of fact, although there is at least one clear instance in the old *hadîth* where *jâhilîyah* denotes an abstract quality ("you are a man in which there is *jâhilîyah*"),²² the passages of the Qur'ân seen as they are and not through the eyes of traditional interpretation do not require an abstract meaning for the term. *Jâhilîyah* here might be considered a collective plural of *jâhil* "ignorant (person)." A corresponding formation would, for instance, be *hurrîyah* explained, in a verse by Dhû r-Rummah, as "nobles,"²³ A similar formation may be posited for *dhurrîyah* "progeny," although it must be admitted that the etymology of this word is quite uncertain (and the Arabic root *dh-r-r* "to sprinkle" parallels the root *dh-r-y*). In support of the interpretation of *jâhilîyah* as a collective plural, it should be noted that in all its occurrences in the Qur'ân, *jâhilîyah* is used next to pluralic forms referring to people. There is nothing to indicate in the Qur'ânic passages that *jâhilîyah* signifies some such concept as a definite "period of ignorance" or a well-defined "paganism."²⁴ All they say is that there is or was *al-jâhilîyah*, meaning, perhaps, "ignorant persons" who spoke and acted contrary to what Muḥammad considered the right way of thinking and behavior. Only the use of the adjective *al-ûlâ* "first" in 33:33/33 could give us pause. Intended as a

Ethical Terms in the Koran, 24 ff. (Tokyo 1959) (revised edition, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ân*, 28 ff. [Montreal 1966]). Izutsu's interpretation of *jâhilîyah* depends, however, too much on accepted traditional ideas concerning the term. For the unusual character of the *-îyah* formation, cf. also T. Nöldeke, F. Schwally, and others, *Geschichte des Qurâns*, I, 242 (Leipzig 1909–38).

²¹ But cf. J. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 64 (Berlin and Leipzig 1926).

²² Cf. A. J. Wensinck and others, *Concordance et Indices de la tradition musulmane*, I, 394a (Leiden 1936–).

²³ Cf. F. Rosenthal, *The Muslim Concept of Freedom*, 9 (Leiden 1960).

²⁴ It is hardly necessary to point out that the use of the Arabic definite article *al-* need not indicate specific determination. It would seem to signify here generic determination.

numeral, *al-ūlā* might suggest the existence of a sharply defined first group (or period) of *jāhilīyah* which was followed by a second (and, possibly, a third, etc.) one. The Qur'ān interpreters have, in fact, understood *al-ūlā* in this manner and have tried to fix the actual dates of the first and second *jāhilīyahs* in terms of the history of the Jewish-Christian prophets. However, *al-ūlā* may as well be understood as "first" in the general sense of "from early times," as is often the case in the Qur'ān. This seems to be the more likely interpretation. It would define *al-jāhilīyah al-ūlā* rather noncommittally as "previous *jāhilīyah*" (where *jāhilīyah* could be "ignorant persons"). It suggests, however, the placing of *al-jāhilīyah* into a more remote past than is required by the context of the other three passages.

The preceding discussion makes it extremely unlikely that the term *jāhilīyah* owes its origin to an attempted loan translation of a concept such as the *agnoia* of Acts 17:30.²⁵ Some notion akin to *agnoia* was no doubt in the mind of Muḥammad when he used the word, and the later understanding of *jāhilīyah* is in agreement with the sentiment expressed in the passage of the New Testament. But *agnoia* would hardly have appeared in Arabic in such a peculiar type of noun formation. *Jahl* or the like would have been used.

Jāhilīyah, it seems, was readily acceptable and understandable to the Prophet's contemporaries as a collective plural. Even so, it appears to have been used by the Prophet with peculiar forcefulness. This would suggest that some more specific and meaningful connotation was concealed behind the term. Such special significance might have accrued to the term through its connection with the famous Jewish concept of *gālūt*, *gālūtā* "exile, diaspora."²⁶ *Jāhilīyah* may represent the Jewish word assimilated by the Prophet to the common Arabic root *j-h-l*. This need not have occurred very early in his career, nor must it have taken place at any definable juncture of his life, since employment of the widely known Jewish

²⁵ Cf. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 61 f.

²⁶ Later Jewish scholars, among them Maimonides, did not forego the temptation of connecting *jāhilīyah* with *gālūt*. This in no way confirms the theory suggested here, nor does it justify increased scepticism with regard to it as may flow from the realization that medieval scholars, even the greatest among them, were fancifully perverse in nearly all their etymological speculations.

For the term *gālūt* as a possible influence on the Qur'ānic transformation of Goliath into Jālūt, cf. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 106, and A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, 97 f. (Baroda 1938).

term in the way suggested does not necessarily presuppose any friendly or intimate contact with Jews. The affinity between *gâlût* as conceived by the Jews and *jâhilîyah* as it was possibly understood by Muḥammad is readily observable. In the *Mishnâh, Ābôt* V, 9, it is stated that “exile” comes into the world as a result of idolatry, unchastity (incest), and bloodshed. It is a punishment for these sins. On the other hand, these sins are not wiped out and nullified by “exile.” “Exile” remains a situation in which they continue to flourish and from which, it seems, the land itself may have to suffer because of the sins of its inhabitants.²⁷ Thus, *gâlût* stands for the very qualities of savagery, immorality, and ignorance of the true God that Muḥammad finds objectionable in the *jâhilîyah*. Some specific detail to be found in Qur’ân 48:26/26 further suggests a connection between *gâlût* and *jâhilîyah*. This is the occurrence in this passage of the loan word *sakînah*. The *sakînah* is said to have been sent down by God to Muḥammad and the believers to put an end to the “fierceness of *al-jâhilîyah*.” It so happens that in Jewish literature, the *sh’kînâh* is also mentioned in connection with the sins of the “exile.” As long as Israel practices those sins, the *sh’kînâh* is said to keep away from the Jews.²⁸ This agreement in detail seems striking, but in view of the frequency with which the term *sh’kînâh* is employed in Judaism, its use in connection with both *gâlût* and *jâhilîyah* may be due to coincidence, and not too much should be made of it. However, all the difficulties surrounding the Qur’ânic usage of *jâhilîyah* would disappear, and a new dimension be added to the word, if it can be considered as having been formed by Muḥammad through a process of mentally and verbally adapting the Jewish concept of “exile” with its sinful, godless behavior to the “ignorance” of those ignorant men who did not acknowledge and believe in his message.

5. WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

The outstanding position accorded to *ilm* in the Qur’ân led to the practical elimination of *hikmah* “wisdom” as something superior to knowledge and, indeed, as a serious rival of it. In the Judaeo-Christian Oriental tradition, a distinction between “wisdom”

²⁷ Cf. *Sîfrâ* 86c, on Leviticus 18:28. I owe this reference to Judah Goldin.

²⁸ Cf. *Ābôt dRabbî Nâlân*, trans. J. Goldin, 160 f. (New Haven 1955, *Yale Judaica Series* 10).

and “knowledge” that gave preference to the former is clearly indicated. Syrian Christian philosophers defined “knowledge as the exact understanding of things through cognitive discernment,” whereas “wisdom was the good administration of knowledge.” Consequently, they said, “every wisdom is at the same time knowledge, but not every knowledge is at the same time wisdom.”²⁹ In the West, the distinction between “wisdom” and “knowledge” is in part a Semitic heritage, but it also gained much from the linguistic situation in Greek and Latin, both of which possessed two distinct words rivaling for greater recognition (*sophia-epistêmê* and *sapientia-scientia*). Christian theology gave further impetus to putting “wisdom” on a pedestal high above “knowledge” where it has remained to our days, celebrated in innumerable disquisitions poetry and prose. It was Augustine who took Cicero’s definition of “wisdom” as “the knowledge of things human and divine (and their causes)”³⁰ and proposed the thesis that “wisdom is properly called the knowledge of things divine, whereas the term ‘knowledge’ is properly applied to the knowledge of things human.”³¹ In God, however, there exists no distinction between “wisdom” and

²⁹ Cf. G. Furlani, “*Il Libro delle Definizioni e Divisioni*” di Michele l’Interprete, 70, 121, and, for parallel texts, 178 (Rome 1926, *Atti della R. Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Memorie, Cl. sc. mor., stor. e filol.* 6, 2).

³⁰ Cf. Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, IV, 26, 57, and *De officiis*, I, 2, 5. A Greek version attributed to Basilius reads, *Sophia esti epistêmê theiôn kai anthrôpinôn pragmatón kai tôn toutoîs aitiôn*, cf. Antonius Melissa, 797 f. See also al-Fârâbî, *Aphorisms of the Statesman*, ed., trans. D. M. Dunlop, 34 (Cambridge 1961). “Wisdom is the knowledge of remote causes. . . .”

Sophia “wisdom” was replaced by *falsafah* “philosophy” in the beginning of the Arabic translation of Pseudo-Plutarch’s *Placita*. Muslims thus knew “the knowledge of things divine and human” as the Stoic definition of philosophy, cf. H. Daiber, *Die arabische Übersetzung der Placita Philosophorum*, 123 f., 508 ff. (Saarbrücken 1968, doctoral dissertation). Cf. also Miskawayh, *Tahdhîb al-akhlâq*, ed. Q. Zurayq, 18 (Beirut 1966).

From the point of view of later Muslim developments, it is, however, not without interest to observe that Neo-Pythagoreanism in the person of Archytas considered “knowledge” (*epistâmâ*) the comprehensive term which included the “wisdom” (*sophia*) of matters divine and the “understanding” (*phronâsis*) of human and material things. The virtues depending upon reason and proof must be called “sciences” (*epistâmâ* in the plural). Cf. Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, ed. C. Wachsmuth and O. Hense, III, 63 (1884–1912, reprint Berlin 1958).

³¹ Cf. St. Augustine, *De trinitate*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 42, 1037 (Book 14, ch. 1, 3), as discussed by E. F. Rice Jr., *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom*, 4 (Cambridge, Mass., 1958). For instructive passages on later ideas concerning *sapientia* in the West, cf. Rice, 14 f., 78, 93, 103 f., 110, 163.

“knowledge.”³² For human beings, “wisdom” is something better than “knowledge.” It embodies a higher degree of knowledge and insight in the realm of both human perceptions and theological speculation.

In Islam, any distinction of this sort that might have been quite generally felt to be inherent in wisdom was effectively precluded by the great dignity reserved in the Qur’ân for the concept of “knowledge.” It probably was on account of the great weight the term *ilm* carried in Arabic that Greek *sophia* was at times translated not by *hikmah* but by *ilm*. This happened in the case of a passage of the New Testament possessing great theological significance. The designation of Christ as “the power of God and the wisdom of God” in 1 Cor. 1:24 resulted in an Arabic translation speaking of *qudrâh* and *ilm*. This suggested to Muslim theologians the problem of the essential attributes of God as they had become accustomed to consider them.³³ *Hikmah* was in a way a neutral and colorless term, and its use here would have been almost meaningless for them.

Another factor was operative in assigning “wisdom” a backseat to “knowledge.” The root *h-k-m*, which in other Semitic languages had long ago come to convey the idea of “wisdom,” expresses juridical and administrative/political activity in Arabic. It has been correctly suggested that *hikmah* “wisdom,” *hakîm* “wise,” and any derivation from the root that seems to imply “wisdom” owe their existence to foreign influence.³⁴ One-half of the passages in which *hikmah* occurs in the Qur’ân mention the word in connection with “the book.” Thus, they obviously attribute to *hikmah* some specific, if not clearly defined, religious meaning within the framework of the divine revelation. There is some logic, although it is of the fanciful variety, in the approach of ash-Shâfi’î who on the

³² Cf. St. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 40, 140 (Book 2, chs. 2, 3), quoted by D. Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, 27, n. 55 (Gotha 1877).

For ‘Isâ b. Zur’ah, “knowledge” is subsumed under “wisdom.” Therefore, among the three attributes of God (*jawâd*, *hakîm*, and *qâdir*), *hakîm* also takes care of *‘âlim*, cf. P. Sbath, *Vingt traités*, 12 (Cairo 1929).

³³ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Fîsâl*, I, 51 (Cairo 1317–21). I have no way of knowing how the various Christian Arabic translations handled the passage. In the Roman edition of 1671, however, *qâwâh* and *hikmah* are used. See below, pp. 122 f.

³⁴ Cf. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 72 f., and Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, III.

basis of these passages interprets *hikmah* as the *sunnah* of the Prophet.³⁵ The Qur'anic pairing of *hikmah* with *kitâb* “book” forces us to assume that in the other passages where the place of *hikmah* is taken by *hukm* (3:79/73, 6:89/89, 45:16/15), *hukm* was intended to have the same meaning as *hikmah*. Yet, the *hukm* which according the Qur'ân was given to the prophets might have been conceived rather as worldly authority, regardless of the fact that it also occurs paired with *îlm* (12:22/22, etc.). The “wisdom” of man—and of God to whom the attribute *hakim* is often applied—was certainly something highly significant in the religious view of the world held by the Prophet. However, since the original Arabic root meaning of *h-k-m* suggested a different range of notions and since *hikmah/hukm* in certain combinations appears to have been restricted to some specific meanings, *hikmah/hukm* never attained a position where it might have had to compete seriously with the much more firmly entrenched *îlm* for a leading role in the Qur'ân and in later Islam. Actually, *hikmah* and *îlm* became mere synonyms for most Muslims.³⁶ If a distinction was made, *hikmah* usually came after *îlm*. This is well exemplified by a passage from the *Kitâb al-Huqûq* of al-Hakîm at-Tirmidhî who declares that “God brought forth knowledge (*îlm*) in the beginning. From knowledge He brought forth wisdom (*hikmah*). From wisdom He brought forth justice (*âdl*) and truth (*haqq*), etc.”³⁷ It would seem that it was in this sense that the Sûfi, al-Fudâyl b. 'Iyâd (d. 187/803), expressed the view that scholars were numerous, but of sages there were few, and he considered it more appropriate to call the sages, rather than the scholars, the heirs of the prophets.³⁸

Naturally, the meaning of *hikmah* and its relationship to *îlm* were often discussed. Ar-Râghib al-Îsfâhânî expressed a very

³⁵ Cf. ash-Shâfi'i, *Risâlah*, 32 (Cairo 1358/1940), trans. M. Khadduri, 75 (Baltimore 1961); J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 16 (Oxford 1950), quoting ash-Shâfi'i's *Kitâb Jimâ' al-îlm* which is included in the *Kitâb al-Umm*, VII, 251 (Cairo 1326).

³⁶ Cf., for instance, ar-Râzî, *at-Tibb ar-rûhâni*, in *Opera Philosophica*, ed. P. Kraus, 43 (Cairo 1939). This is all the more remarkable as ar-Râzî was a staunch advocate of philosophy.

³⁷ Ms. İsmail Saib I, 1571, fol. 181a, in Ankara. I am obliged to N. Heer for letting me use a microfilm of the manuscript which he had obtained from A. J. Arberry.

³⁸ Cf. Abû Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-awliyâ'*, VIII, 92 (Cairo 1351-57, reprint Beirut 1387/1967). For another Sûfi statement preferring *hikmah* to *îlm*, cf. Abû Nu'aym, X, 122. Cf. also below, p. 180, n. 1.

widely held notion when he considered the term *hikmah* more appropriate to practical knowledge than theoretical knowledge and more used for action than for knowledge (with the reservation that effective action always requires previous knowledge). The subordinate position of *hikmah* after *ilm* and *aql* is further indicated by the author's definition of *hikmah* as "hitting upon the truth by means of knowledge and intelligence." According to him, *hikmah* on the part of God is God's knowledge about (*ma'rifah*)³⁹ matters and their most effective creation. On the part of human beings, it is knowledge about existing things and doing what is good. Or, as he states in another passage, *hikmah* on the part of God is the manifestation of all bounties in the realm of the *intelligibilia* as well as the realm of the *sensibilia* (*izhâr al-fadâ'il al-maqâ'ilah wa-l-mâhsûsah*). On the part of man, it is his recognition (*ma'rifah*) of that as much as is humanly possible.⁴⁰ Whatever it is, the position of *hikmah* is noticeably inferior here to that generally attributed to *ilm*. However, it should not be forgotten that the true ethical behavior in Islam was represented by the combination of knowledge and action.⁴¹ In this context, wisdom was, it seems, occasionally valued more highly than knowledge. For the Sufi Yûsuf ar-Râzî (d. 304/916–17), "education (*adab*) makes possible the understanding of knowledge, knowledge provides for correct action, action secures wisdom," and from there on, the individual can steadily progress through asceticism to the grace of God.⁴² For the tenth-century Ismâ'îlî, Abû Hâtim ar-Râzî, the wise man is the one who combines knowledge and action.⁴³ In the preceding century, the philosopher al-Kindî had defined wisdom as "the excellence of the (rational) power, the knowledge of the universals in their realities, and the employment (in action) of the realities that must be employed."⁴⁴ All these attempts to give "wisdom"

³⁹ The root 'r-f is *stricto sensu* not applicable to God, as ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî himself states elsewhere, cf. below, p. 114, n. 2, but also p. 113.

⁴⁰ Cf. ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Mufradât*, I, 276, s. *rad. h-k-m*, and the same author's *Tâfsîr*, as quoted on fol. 1a of the İstanbul Ms. Carullah 2080, which was written in Konya in 791/1389.

⁴¹ Cf. Below, pp. 246 ff.

⁴² Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât as-Sâfiyah*, ed. N. Shuraybah (Sharîbah?) 18 (Cairo 1953).

⁴³ Cf. Abû Hâtim ar-Râzî, *Zînah*, II, 104.

⁴⁴ Cf. al-Kindî, *Fî hujûd al-ashyâ'în*, in *Rasâ'il al-Kindî*, ed. M. 'Abd-al-Hâdî Abû Rîdah, I, 177 (Cairo 1369–72/1950–53); A. Altmann and S. M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, 31–35 (Oxford University Press 1958). For divine "wisdom" as implying the combination of knowledge and action, cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâsid*, II, 86 f. (Cairo 1355/1936).

a preponderant position in the ethical realm, even though they were repeated from time to time, remained muted vis-à-vis the constantly growing resonance of the term “knowledge.”

Philosophy played a certain role in these statements stressing the importance of “wisdom.” However, philosophy also turned out to be one of the factors that contributed to the further restriction of the general importance of “wisdom” in Islam, if in a more ambivalent manner. *Hikmah* was chosen to become the Arabic equivalent of Greek “philosophy.” As such, and in its additional role as a term to translate Greek *sophia*, *hikmah* was enabled to share to some degree in the glory which surrounded “wisdom” customarily in the West. “Wisdom is the beginning of the sciences,” young Aristotle is supposed to have said. In the same breath, however, he also proclaims that “Knowledge is the gift of the Creator, and wisdom His present,” making no distinction between knowledge and wisdom.⁴⁵ In the verses of Ibn Sînâ:

The soul is like a glass lamp, and knowledge
Is light (-giving fire), and the wisdom of God is the oil.
If it is lit, you are alive,
And if it is darkened, you are dead,⁴⁶

the position of “the wisdom of God” is in no way superior to “knowledge.” Presumably, it must be interpreted as divine inspiration being the equivalent of acquired knowledge. In any case, no matter how meaningful the term *hikmah* “philosophy” was for Muslim philosophers, its use in this special sense implied another restriction in meaning as compared to *‘ilm* which by that time was anyhow firmly entrenched as the dominant concept. The use of *hikmah* to designate philosophy made the fate of the term also greatly dependent on that of philosophy in Islam. It even became a term of opprobrium in the eyes of those who were strongly opposed to what they considered philosophy. On the other hand, the philosophers in turn were not able or willing to retaliate by putting any strictures on their part on the use of *‘ilm*. Thus, *‘ilm* was never placed in a position where it had to defend against *hikmah* the preeminence bestowed upon it by the Qur’ân.

⁴⁵ Cf. al-Mubashshir, *Mukhtâr al-hikam*, ed. ‘Abd-ar-Rahmân Badawî, 199 (Madrid 1958).

⁴⁶ Quoted in G. C. Anawati, *Essai de bibliographie Avicennienne*, 121 (Cairo 1950).

CHAPTER THREE

THE PLURAL OF KNOWLEDGE

Ulūm, the accepted plural of *‘ilm*, does not occur in the Qur’ān or in the old traditions of the Prophet. No passage in pre-Islamic poetry where the plural *‘ulūm* occurs can be cited. This is negative evidence. It does not suffice to prove that *‘ulūm* was not in use originally and that it constitutes a neologism of early Islamic, but otherwise uncertain, date. However, the possibility exists that this was actually the case. Until further evidence is forthcoming, such an assumption would seem to be rather probable. Modern English “knowledge” does not normally admit of a plural formation. However, the word was used in the plural in times past.¹ Correspondingly, *‘ulūm* might have once existed but then lain dormant until it gained wide currency in Islamic times. Thus, if any early instances of the use of *‘ulūm* should ever show up, the situation as it exists in English may serve as a kind of analogy that could help to make it clear that the mere occurrence of the formation does not invalidate the conclusions presented in this chapter.

Greek and Latin simply formed a plural for the respective abstract notions in these languages indicating “knowledge,” in order to obtain a general designation for the diverse concrete forms knowledge might take. In modern English, “knowledge” was retained to express the overall abstract concept, whereas other terms came to be employed for the general designation of “sciences” and “disciplines.” This was the result of the peculiar history of the English language. It is more in the nature of a special case, rare if not unique in its kind.

Arabic possesses a comprehensive abstract notion of “knowledge” (*‘ilm*), as we have seen. At first, it was used without any thought of classifiable variety in the sense of later specialized scholarship.

¹ Cf. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, V, 148b (Oxford 1933, 1961). “Those ingenuous knowledges” appears in 1627 in E. Bolton’s *The Cabanet Royal*, cf. T. H. Blackburn, in *Studies in the Renaissance*, XIV (1967), 168. For the general problem, cf. also B. Halpern, “Myth” and “Ideology” in *Modern Usage*, in *History and Theory*, I (1961), 130, n. 3: “In contrast [to opinion and theory], ‘knowledge’ is not used at all in the plural. Thus, it refers essentially to an isolated (abstract) relationship of a subject and an object, and is never used for plural or alternative relationships of subjects and objects.”

Among the Prophetic traditions, we find some instances of *ilm* being used without the definite article in contexts suggesting that some individual knowledge, and not the totality of knowledge, is meant. Thus, we have, for instance, traditions such as these: “He who is asked about a knowledge but keeps it concealed . . .,” or: “He who follows a path seeking there a knowledge . . .”² A chapter heading at the beginning of al-Bukhārī’s *Sahīh* reading, “He who is asked for a knowledge . . .,” clearly refers to inquiries about individual points concerning religious matters. However, there is always a great discrepancy between the constant appearance of *ilm* in al-Bukhārī’s chapter headings and the almost complete absence of it in the words put into the mouth of the Prophet.³ Whatever significance may be ascribed here to the use of *ilm* as specialized knowledge, we are not justified in assuming that we are dealing with a usage dating from the time of the Prophet.

The use of *ilm* as a specialized discipline appears to be attested in a verse of Kuthayyir ‘Azzah (d. 105/723):

I went to the Banū Lihb seeking *al-ilm* with them,
Since the *ilm* of those who practice augury has been entrusted to them.⁴

Here it looks as if augury is designated as a separate discipline within the general domain of knowledge. Unfortunately, however, there exists another version of the verse which does not contain the crucial second *ilm* but replaces it with a reference to “the augury of those who know.” This shows once more how little trust can be placed in the evidence Arabic poems furnish for the

² Cf. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, III, 234–41 (Cairo 1310, in the margin of az-Zurqānī, *Sharh al-Muwatta*), and at-Tirmidhī (with the *Commentary* of Ibn al-‘Arabī), *Sahīh*, X, 118, 115 (Cairo 1353/1934).

³ Cf. below, p. 83.

⁴ Cf. Kuthayyir ‘Azzah, *Diwan*, ed. H. Pérès, I, 214 (Algiers and Paris 1928), from Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, VIII, 39 f. (Būlāq 1285). For the other version, see al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, ed. W. Wright, 84 (Leipzig 1864).

Generally, *ilm* does not mean “specialized concrete discipline” in early poetry, even where something of the sort might be suspected at first glance. Cf., for instance, the verses (which, moreover, are certainly not genuine) cited in al-Yamānī, *Muḍāhāt amthāl Kitāb Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*, ed. M. Y. Najm, 76 (Beirut 1961): “. . . as the possessor of knowledge knows the (Qur’ān) interpretation (*ka-mā ‘alima t-ta’wila dhū l-ilmī*),” or *ibid.*, 86: “. . . the knowledge of the information in the possession of the informed person (*ilmā akhbārī l-khabīrī*).”

usage of individual words, quite apart from questions of genuineness and date.

At present, we are unable to determine the point in history when *ilm*, the concrete, specialized discipline of learning, with its plural *ulûm*, took its place in Islamic terminology next to *ilm*, the abstract concept. We can only speculate that this must have been quite early. It would, indeed, seem likely that at the beginning, there was the idea of “an *ilm*” constituting a distinctive part of the vast realm of religion conceived as knowledge and concerning individual points of religious law or theology and that this meant the starting point for the use of *ilm* as the designation for science or scholarly discipline. As always when we are dealing with the formative stages of Muslim civilization after the Qur’ân, neat chronological sequences cannot be established. Elements of all the later strains, such as theological theory, mystical speculation, Greek philosophical thought, and educational method, were ready to infiltrate Islam as soon as contact with areas more deeply steeped in contemporary civilization was made, if they had not been present already in the central Arabian home of Islam. A certain general acquaintance with the basic forms of intellectual life prevalent in the conquered territories could not have failed to make its presence felt almost immediately after the Muslim Conquest. There must have been an awareness of the fact that “knowledge” existed in a number of separate disciplines, that there was not only one *ilm* but a number of *ulûm*.

Ilm thus assumed another dimension in addition to the two that were indicated by the prehistory of the term and by the role it played in the thinking of the Prophet. *Ilm* can be some individual item of information, or a totality made up of a number of items of information. The plural *ulûm* did, in fact, serve later on occasionally to express also the plurality of a number of things known (*ma lûm*, *ma lûmât*) in the language of philosophy and speculative theology. It is also in this sense that, for instance, Ibn ‘Arabî, in his *Futûhât*, speaks of an infinite, number of *ulûm*. *Ilm* can be the absolute totality of all that can be known and can be done and is worth being known and being done. And, as we see, now, *ilm* can be one of the numerous sections of total knowledge that admit of systematic organization in the form of scientific disciplines.

All three dimensions of knowledge continued to live on independently and in a kind of interplay which determined the essence and

forms of Muslim civilization. The notion of knowledge as the sum of individual items loosely strung together re-appeared later on in Islam and showed itself in the preference accorded to a disjunctive juxtaposition of individual data as against a continuous and integrated exposition.⁵ It can also be assumed to have contributed to the growing tendency of constantly adding to the number of what was considered to constitute independent scientific disciplines, until they reached the number of 150, or even 316, according to the classification of the sixteenth-century Tâshköprüzâdeh.⁶ On the other hand, the notion of one indivisible knowledge raised the question whether the individual disciplines could in fact claim individual lives of their own or whether they were in no way essentially different from “knowledge” as a whole. The second alternative ultimately won out, favored as it was by philosophical considerations no less than by the Qur’ânic equation of knowledge with faith and religion. Essentially, all the sciences and all the crafts do not differ greatly from each other; their apparent differences concern only details and fine points.⁷ The attitude underlying this view may be turned into a plea for an intensive, non-discriminatory cultivation of all recognized branches of learning. All *‘ulûm* must be considered interdependent. Therefore, it would be foolish to cultivate one and neglect the others, for the purpose of all of them alike is man’s salvation.⁸ On the other hand, as a result of the general trend toward considering “knowledge” as one with Islam, all *‘ulûm* tended to become one particular *‘ilm* representing both the totality of knowledge and its systematization. The preferred *‘ilm* to serve this purpose was the *‘ilm* “that was inherited from the Prophet.” Everything else is either useless or not an *‘ilm* at all, even if it is called by that name.⁹ Other disciplines might claim to be the *‘ilm*, but the identification of the totality and specificity of “knowledge” with religious knowledge was predominant.

⁵ Cf. above, p. 12.

⁶ Cf. Tâshköprüzâdeh, *Miftâh as-sâ’âdah*, I, 68 f. (Hyderabad 1328–56), who also lists the fantastic claims made for the number of *‘ulûm* of Qur’ân interpretation.

⁷ Cf. the introduction of az-Zamakhshâri, *Kashshâf*, I, 10–12.

⁸ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Risâlat Marâlib al-‘ulûm*, in *Rasâ’îl Ibn Hazm*, ed. I. R. ‘Abbâs, 80 (Cairo, n. y. [1954]).

⁹ Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, as quoted by I. Goldziher, *Stellung der alten islamischen Orthodoxie zu den antiken Wissenschaften*, 6 (Berlin 1916, Abh. Der Kgl. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philos.-hist. Kl. 1915, 8).

The radically opposite view that religious writings should not be considered “knowledge” and that this word should be reserved for the works of secular scholarship could hardly be expected to make any headway in later Islam. Remarkably enough, however, there is a passage in al-Jâhiẓ that comes quite close to making this point. It was suggested to al-Jâhiẓ that the willingness of the Manichaeans to spend a great amount of money on the luxurious production of their books indicated a veneration for knowledge. Al-Jâhiẓ denied this. Since the Manichaean books deal with their religion, spending money on them is comparable to the Christians spending money on their churches and on crosses of gold, to the Zoroastrians spending money on their fire temples, and to the Indians spending money on the guardians of their Buddha statues. It would be different, if the Manichaeans were concerned with knowledge and philosophy and were spending their efforts on works of philosophy and logic¹⁰ or on works dealing with the crafts, commerce, technology, or educational literature. Then one could speak of a veneration for “knowledge.”¹¹ Al-Jâhiẓ would have vehemently repudiated any suggestion that his strictures applied with equal force to Muslim religious writings. He had no doubt to admit that they constituted true knowledge. Yet, it looks as if in his innermost heart, he did indeed feel that religious knowledge was basically different from secular knowledge and that only the latter was deserving of the name. Such an attitude was destined not to survive by much the time of al-Jâhiẓ.

In given passages of Muslim literature, it is often difficult to be certain whether the use of the term *‘ilm* is meant to refer to knowledge both secular and religious, or only to the latter kind. It is also often difficult to decide whether *‘ilm* is meant to denote abstract “knowledge” or the singular of *‘ulûm*, the individual discipline. In the Muslim mind, these distinctions rarely if ever loomed as important as they do in our own way of thinking. This by itself is a characteristic aspect of the Muslim concept of *‘ilm* in general and of the Muslim approach to its plural in which abstract knowledge finds its concrete expression.

¹⁰ The following three words are not quite clear, perhaps, “laws and rhetoric”(?).

¹¹ Cf. al-Jâhiẓ, *Hayawân*, I, 28 f. (Cairo 1323–25) = I, 55 f. (Cairo 1356/1958). This was the time when al-Kindî could write a work on what is expressly qualified as *human* knowledge (*Aqsâm al-‘ilm al-insâ*).

CHAPTER FOUR

DEFINITIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

In accordance with the ancient Arabic atomistic concept of knowledge, definitions, like aphorisms, were greatly appreciated in Islam. Philosophy and philology demanded them. Sūfism, with its willful assignment of meanings to terms and terms to meanings, was particularly fond of them. Such definitions always present an instructive cross section of the various views held in connection with a given topic. For a proper understanding, they require explanation and elaboration, but often they strip away the layers of obfuscation created by lengthy expositions. A perusal of a large number of definitions of “knowledge” is a helpful introduction to the discussion contained in the following chapters. In a brief compass, it anticipates a good deal of what can be expected to be found there.

Collections of definitions were not infrequently made by medieval scholars in various fields of scholarly activity. The mystic philosopher, Ibn Sab‘īn (d. 669/1270), brought together an extensive and rather mixed batch of definitions of “knowledge” in his *Budd al-‘ārif*.¹ However, it was speculative theology that passionately sought after a satisfying brief definition of *ilm*. Philosophers knew that no brief definition would do for them. Philologists had no need to consider the problems behind the seemingly plain meaning of the term, and they were naturally followed in this respect by the educators. Mystics were rather slow in working *ilm* into their particular vocabulary as a special term. But theology had a fundamental stake in the explanation of what “knowledge” really meant and of finding an acceptable definition for it that

¹ I used the Istanbul manuscript Bagdath Vehbi Ef. 833, fols. 66a–67b, 74a, and 85a. The definitions have been numbered by me, and the number in brackets following the title of the work refers to this numbering. A few definitions of knowledge are also mentioned in Ibn Sab‘īn’s *‘Ahd* which he addressed to his pupils, ed. ‘Abd-ar-Rahmān Badawi, in *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos*, V (1957), 41. In the *‘Ahd*, Ibn Sab‘īn refers to his large collection of definitions from the *Budd*. M. Schreiner, in *ZDMG*, LII (1898), 504, n. 1, indicates that he was aware of the *Budd*. N. Rescher, *The Development of Arabic Logic*, 201 (Pittsburgh 1964), mentions a doctoral dissertation by S. Lator, *Die Logik des Ibn Sab‘īn* (Munich and Rome 1942), which I have not seen.

would apply to God and man, to faith and to reason. It thus was the home and focal point for Muslim definitions of “knowledge.” The basic guidelines for the phrasing of these definitions can be assumed to have been operative at the very beginnings of *kalām* and to have produced a small set of definitions which remained fundamentally unchanged but in minor rewordings provided an outlet for intellectual creativity. As it happened, some powerful personalities such as al-Ash‘arī (around 900) or al-Bâqillânî (d. 403/1013) incorporated one or the other definition in their teaching or their writings, and their names thereafter became attached to it, providing one of those useful classifying labels that are always much valued by philosophical and theological system-makers. The names of the original coiners of the Arabic form of a given definition of *‘ilm* and their dates in history can, it seems, no longer be recovered except through uncritical reliance on later tradition. Even the authorship of such important distinctions as the insistence upon *sukún an-nafs* generally credited to the Mu‘tazilah (see below, F-3) can hardly be pinned down with any amount of certainty. The early ninth century appears to be a good general date for the completion of the first stage in the history of these definitions.

No handbook on speculative theology large or small could avoid going into a discussion of the definitions of *‘ilm*. In the course of time, the material to be discussed grew, and the form which this discussion had to take hardened. By the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the high point of this development had been reached. The authoritative collection of definitions of *‘ilm* to serve the purposes of speculative theology was made by al-Āmidî (d. 631/1233). In the opening pages of his great *Abkâr al-afkâr*, al-Āmidî reported and discussed these definitions thoroughly.² Predecessors of al-Āmidî on a smaller scale were such important scholars as the

² Among other manuscripts, I used the Istanbul manuscript Aya Sofya 2165 (the second volume of the work bears the number 2166). Both volumes exhibit the signature of ‘Abd-al-Wahhâb as-Subkî with the date of 763/1361–62 at the bottom right of their respective title-pages. The title-page of the second volume, at the top left, has preserved the signature of a former owner, Khalil b. Kaykaldî al-‘Alâ’î, who had died two years before as-Subkî put his name to the volumes. Another manuscript of the work, Aya Sofya 2167, is dated in 771/March 16, 1370. Its second volume, Aya Sofya 2168, is dated in 772/September 1370. The *Abkâr* was completed in 612/April 1216. Some definitions of knowledge which al-Āmidî considered acceptable were also discussed by him at some length in his *Ihkâm fi usûl al-ahkâm*, I, 6 f. (Cairo 1347).

Imâm al-Haramayn (d. 478/1083),³ al-Bazdawî (d. 493/1100),⁴ and Ahmâd b. Mahmûd as-Şâbûnî (d. 580/1184).⁵ There must have been many others in their time and even before. The *Abkâr* served as the principal source for the discussion of the subject to be found a century later in the *Mawâqif* of al-Îjî (d. 756/1355).⁶ Al-Îjî, in turn, furnished practically all the essential raw material that went into the exhaustive article on *îlm* from at-Tahânahawî's *Kashshâf*, 1055–66, of the mid-eighteenth century. It can fairly be said that at-Tahânahawî there summarized all the ideas ever expressed by Muslim thinkers on “knowledge.”

An understandable reaction against the presumptuousness of man who claimed to be able to reduce to capsule form something that spanned the world of man and God makes itself felt in the repeated suggestion that no definition of “knowledge” was, in fact, possible. This suggestion was discussed, for instance, by al-Ghazzâlî⁷ as well as al-Âmidî (in both the *Abkâr* and the *Ihkâm*). Knowledge cannot be verbally defined because it is too difficult and complicated for simple definition; it can be defined only through disjunction (*qismah*) and example (*mithâl*) (Imâm al-Haramayn and al-Ghazzâlî).⁸ Or, as stated by Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî (d. 606/1209), the knowledge of knowledge must be intuitive (*badîhî*) or necessary (*darûrî*); if it were neither, circular reasoning would result, since definition is possible only through knowledge.⁹ Al-Âmidî's attitude in this respect will be reported

³ Cf. Imâm al-Haramayn al-Juwainî, *Kitâb al-Irshâd*, 12 f. (Cairo 1369/1950), trans. Schreiner, in *ZDMG*, LII (1898), 495 f.

For the *Uṣûl ad-dîn* by 'Abd-al-Qâhir al-Baghdadî (d. 429/1037), cf. A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 251 (Cambridge 1932). The recent reprint (above, p. 19, n. 1) became available to me only after this book had gone to press.

⁴ Cf. al-Bazdawî, *Uṣûl ad-dîn*, ed. H. P. Linss, 10 (Cairo 1383/1963).

⁵ Cf. as-Şâbûnî, *al-Kîfiyah fî sharh al-Bidâyah fî uṣûl ad-dîn*, in the Istanbul Ms. Laleli 2271, fols. 3b–4a. The manuscript was written in 677/1279.

⁶ I used the *Mawâqif* in the edition Cairo 1357, 9–11. The Topkapusaray Ms. Koğuş 861 dated in 753/1352 claims to be written by the hand of the author. The translation by J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des 'Adudaddîn al-Îcî* (Wiesbaden 1966), contains a vast amount of information relevant to many of the aspects of *kalâm* epistemology, treated here much more briefly.

⁷ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustâṣfâ*, I, 17 (Cairo 1356/1937).

⁸ Cf. also Ibn as-Şâ'âti (d. 696/1296, or 694), *Matn al-badî' fî îlm al-uṣûl*, Istanbul Ms. Feyzullah 566, fol. 3b.

⁹ Cf. al-Âmidî (below, pp. 224 f.) and al-'Aynî, *Umdat al-qârî*, I, 380. Al-'Aynî's remarks, in turn, were reproduced in an abbreviated form by al-Qastallânî, *Irshâd as-sârî*, I, 178 (Bûlâq 1288).

later on.¹⁰ About a century after al-Āmidī, the question was taken up by the great Shī‘ah theologian, al-‘Allāmah al-Hillī (648–726/1250–1325). He denied the impossibility of a definition proposed on these two grounds: “1. Anything outside knowledge is revealed only through knowledge; thus, it is impossible for anything other than knowledge to reveal knowledge. And 2. I know necessarily that I am knowing through my existence, which is a special knowledge preceded by the perception of knowledge absolute. Now, some thorough scholars have objected to the first argument that the information desired from a definition of knowledge is the knowledge of knowledge. It is not absurd to assume that it (i.e., knowledge) reveals something else, and something else reveals the knowledge of it (i.e., knowledge). I say: When we say, for instance, that knowledge is an attribute requiring one’s own satisfaction (*sukūn an-nafs*), such a statement defines knowledge, but this is recognized only through knowledge. Thus, we might have an occurrence of circular reasoning. Here, the correct view, as you should know, is that knowledge is either a relative (*idāfiyah*) attribute subsisting in the knower (see below, A-14), or a form corresponding to the object known (see below, E-1), according to the two different views and twin assumptions (that is, general accepted alternatives). The object known is known only when that form is present or that attribute comes to the knower. Knowledge of that attribute or that form, through definition or indication (*rasm*),¹¹ belongs to what is not known. But the object known rests upon knowledge in the first instance in a way different from the way in which knowledge of that form rests upon definition or indication. Thus, there is no circular reasoning. The second argument is weak. We have shown its weakness in the *Kitāb Ma‘ārij al-fahm* ‘The Degrees of Understanding’ (which is preserved but as other works of the ‘Allāmah al-Hillī important for our subject is unfortunately not accessible).”¹²

¹⁰ See below, p. 225.

¹¹ *Rasm* is a definition consisting of a brief designation of a distinctive characteristic of the object defined, whereas *hadd*, the technical term for definition, is a definition describing the nature of the object defined, cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Ihkām*, I, 35 f. (Cairo, 1345–48). Cf. also A.-M. Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d’Ibn Sīnā*, 143 f. (Paris 1938); al-Ghazzālī, *Maqāṣid*, II, 8; Goichon, in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. *hadd*, etc.

¹² Cf. al-‘Allāmah al-Hillī, *Anwār al-malakūt fi sharh al-Yāqūt*, ed. M. Najmī-Zanjānī, 12 f. (Teheran 1338). The work, a commentary on the *Yāqūt* by a certain Nawbakhtī who appears to have lived in the tenth century, was written in 684/1285. See below, p. 214.

In a work on Avicennian philosophy, knowledge is adjudged incapable of definition, because knowledge “is a condition of the soul (*hâlah nafsâniyah*) which he who is alive finds in (*min*) his soul at the beginning without any equivocation . . . Knowledge can dispense with a definition, for whatever recognizes a thing is able to recognize its being cognizant of that thing without logical proof and speculation. Knowledge that one knows a thing stands for knowledge of one’s essence having the attribute (*ittiṣāf*) of knowledge. Now, knowledge of the attribution of a complete process (*ittiṣāf amr tâmm*) calls for the knowledge of each of the two things, that is, the object (*mawṣūf*) and the attribute (*sifâh*). If the knowledge of the reality of knowledge were acquired, it would be absurd to assume that our knowing a thing could be known without speculation and deductive reasoning. As this is not so, it is established that the knowledge of the reality of knowledge dispenses with acquisition.”¹³

Mystics also may at times feel repelled by the thought of defining knowledge. Thus, al-Qônawî (d. 672/1273) brands someone who attempts to define “knowledge” as either ignorant of the true meaning (*sîr*) of knowledge or being a gnostic desirous to indicate his position with regard to some of the attributes of knowledge while not intending to give a complete definition.¹⁴ He had in mind the true knowledge of the mystic, which is the only knowledge he recognizes as such and which he in fact defines in another of his works in terms of a general definition of knowledge (see below, L-5).

Where all theological endeavors that smacked of philosophical speculation were in ill repute, as they were with later traditionalist scholars, we also hear it said that the efforts to define “knowledge” were nothing but nefarious attempts made by anti-religious individuals for the purpose of confusing an issue that was clear and obvious. Ibn al-‘Arabî (d. 543/1148) expressed this idea in his commentary on the *Sahîh* of at-Tirmidhî in these words: “Knowledge is too clear a concept to require an explanation, but heretical innovators have wished to complicate the understanding of the

¹³ Cf. the Bursa Ms. Ulu Cami 2211, fol. 115b. The author and the title of the work are not known to me, but they may in fact be very well known. The edges of the manuscript carry the inscription *Kitâb fi l-hikmah wa-l-kalâm*, which is merely descriptive of the contents, but we also find there *Kitâb Sharh Maqâsid* . . . (of al-Ghazzâlî?).

¹⁴ Cf. al-Qônawî, *Ijâz al-bayân fi ta’wîl umm al-Qur’ân*, 49 Hyderabad 1368/1949.

term “knowledge” and of other religious and intellectual concepts, their aim being to lead people astray and to give them the erroneous impression that there exists no concept (*ma'nâ*) that can be known. However, these are baseless claims and sophistries.”¹⁵

Nevertheless, there were many definitions, and the process of polishing and discussing them never stopped. The classification of these definitions in the list that follows is neither historical nor in accordance with categories that might have been used by Muslim scholars themselves. It attempts to arrange the definitions according to what seems to be their most essential elements, even at the risk of separating what should rather remain together, or of restricting to one class what may at the same time also belong into another. It also does not take into account the likelihood that some variations may be due to the willful or unintentional inaccuracy of the reporter, as in the case of Ibn Hazm’s discussion of Ash‘arite definitions. (A classification according to essential elements was, however, considered appropriate also by Muslim theologians, as shown by Judge ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr’s discussion in the twelfth part of his *Mughnî* dealing with epistemology. ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr has many trenchant observations on the definitions listed below under B, C, D, F, and H. The Cairo edition of this volume of the *Mughnî* by Ibrâhîm Madkour is not dated and became available to me only in the beginning of 1969.)

Summarily, it may be said that most of the definitions are based on the assumption that the explanation of a subjective mental (psychological) process in its relationship to the objective, the mastery of concrete data, somehow suffices to grasp the nature of knowledge. It seems to have been considered an established fact that the object known (*ma'lûm*) is prior to knowledge; this, as Muslim thinkers were well aware, was a problem discussed by Aristotle in his logic. Quite a few of the definitions suggested rely on some kind of tautology and do not in effect shed any true light on the problem, as was already pointed out by Muslim critics. Further clarification will be found in a later chapter where the commentary of al-Âmidî is translated (below, pp. 220 ff.).

¹⁵ Cf. Ibn al-‘Arabî, *Āriqat al-ahwadhi*, X, 114 (Cairo 1353/1934). “Sophistic” skepticism with regard to the reality and possibility of any knowledge was the greatly feared and consistently rejected bugaboo of all the authors cited here, cf. below, p. 302. The difficult term *ma'nâ* needs further elucidation, cf., for instance, below, p. 123, n. 6.

A. Knowledge is the process of knowing and identical with the knower and the known, or it is an attribute enabling the knower to know.

1. “Knowledge is that through which one knows.”¹⁶
2. “Knowledge is that through which the essence is knowing.”¹⁷
3. “Knowledge is that through which the object known (*al-ma'lûm*) is known.”¹⁸
4. “Knowledge is that through which the knower knows the object known.”¹⁹
5. “Knowledge is that through which the knower is knowing.”²⁰
6. “Knowledge is that which necessitates for him in whom it subsists the name of knower.”²¹
7. “Knowledge is that which necessitates that he in whom it subsists is knowing.”²² This definition is ascribed to al-Ash'arî.
8. “Knowledge is that which necessitates that he in whom it resides (*mâhâl*) is knowing.”²³
9. “Knowledge stands for the object known.”²⁴
10. “Knowledge is but the concepts known (*al-mâ'âni al-mâ'lûmâh*).”²⁵

This is transmitted as the definition of Themistius.

¹⁶ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustâsfâ*, I, 16, with added discussion; al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2b. Al-Âmidî indicates that he derived this definition from a certain Abû 1-Qâsim al-Isfârâ'înî. The phrase *mâ yu'lâm*, as well as *bih 'âlim(ah)*, of the definitions 2 and 5, might conceivably and with some difficulty be translated, “that which one (essence, knower) knows,” whereby “knowledge” appears equated with “the known.” However, this is not meant.

¹⁷ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustâsfâ*, I, 16, with added discussion, and *Mî'yâr al-îlm*, ed. S. Dunyâ, 280 (Cairo 1961); as-Şabûnî, *Kîfâyah* (as the definition of al-Ash'arî) (“becomes knowing”).

¹⁸ Cf. Imâm al-Haramayn, *Luma'*, 88.

¹⁹ Quoted as al-Ash'arî's definition in Ms. Köprülü I, 856, fol. 2a. This is the manuscript wrongly ascribed to al-Mâturîdî in C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (cited henceforth as *GAL*), *Supplement*, I, 346 (Weimar and Berlin 1898–1902, Leiden 1937–49), cf. H. Ritter, in *Der Islam*, XVIII (1929), 40.

²⁰ Cf. the Istanbul Ms. Aya Sofya 2378, fol. 21a. Its authorship remains to be determined. The manuscript itself is dated in 790/1388. The definition said to be that of “the oldest (greatest?, *al-akbarîn*) of our colleagues.”

²¹ Cf. al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2b, where al-Ash'arî is indicated as the author of this definition.

²² Cf. al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2b; al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, at-Tahânavî, 1058.

²³ Cf. Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd* (as the definition of “our Shaykh,” apparently al-Ash'arî); Ibn Sab'in, *Budd* (3).

²⁴ Cf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Badâ'i' al-fawa'id*, II, 91 (Cairo, n. y.). Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâsid*, II, 73.

²⁵ Cf. *Kitâb as-Sâ'âdah*, 58.

11. “Knowledge is the mentally existing object (*al-mawjūd adh-dhihnī*).”²⁶
12. “Knowledge is the attribute through which the knower knows.”²⁷
13. “Knowledge is an attribute through which he who is alive becomes knowing.”²⁸ Cf. below, J-2.
14. “Knowledge is an attribute expressing the relationship (*sifah idā-fiyah*) between the knower and the object known.”²⁹ Cf. above, p. 49, and below, I-1.
15. “Knowledge is an attribute through which the conditions of the object known become clear as they are (*‘alā mā huwa ‘alayh min ahwālīh*).”³⁰ Cf. below, D-1.

B. Knowledge is cognition (*ma’rifah*).³¹

1. “Knowledge is cognition.”³²
2. “Knowledge is the cognition of the object known as it is (*‘alā mā huwa bīh*).”³³ This definition was adopted by al-Bâqillânî,

²⁶ Cf. at-Tahânahwî, 1061, l. 27, to 1062, l. 1, as a definition of the philosophers. Al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, speaks of knowledge as built upon ideal existence (*al-wujūd adh-dhihnī*).

²⁷ Cf. Ibn Sab‘în, *Budd* (15).

²⁸ Cf. ‘Abd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 5 f.

²⁹ Cf. Abû l-Barâkât Hibatallâh al-Baghdâdî, *Mu’tabar*. III, 2 (Hyderabad 1357–58/1938–39); al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 3b. One of the manuscripts of the *Abkâr* has wrongly “knowledge,” for “knower.”

³⁰ Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Ihkâm*, I, 38, in a polemic against the Ash’arite definition D-1.

³¹ The selection of “cognition” to translate *ma’rifah* in this connection is completely arbitrary, considering the wide range of meanings for ‘-r-f’ in its relation to ‘l-m. For the relation of *ilm* and *ma’rifah* in definitions, cf. also below, p. 115, n. 2 and p. 117, n. 1.

³² Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustâṣfâ*, I, 16, and *Mîyâr al-ilm*, 275 (rejecting such a definition). Al-Ghazzâlî explains that it may be argued hypothetically that knowledge is cognition “because every knowledge is belief, and every belief is cognition. Cognition is a wider term.”

³³ Cf. al-Bâqillânî, *Tamhîd*, ed. R. J. McCarthy, 6 (Beirut 1956); an-Nawbakhtî, *Yâqût*, as quoted and discussed by the ‘Allâmah al-Hillî, *Anwâr al-malakût*, 12 f., 134 ff.; Imâm al-Ḥaramayn, *Irshâd*; al-Bâjî, *Risâlah fi l-hudâd*, ed. J. (Gouda) Hilâl. in *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos*, II (1954), 4; aş-Sâbûnî, *Kîfâyah*, as an Ash’arite definition; Ibn Sab‘în, *Ahd*, where the definition is described as derived from the “fundamentalists” (*usûlîyûn*), those who deal with the principles of religion; Ms. Aya Sofya 2378, fol. 20b. Al-Bâqillânî is cited for this definition by al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2a, as well as al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, and at-Tahânahwî, 1057. l. 21, all of whom discuss its validity. Cf. further, al-Bazdawî, who describes this definition as the one suggested by the men of the *sunnah* and *jamâ’ah*, that is, the “orthodox” scholars, and al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustâṣfâ*, I, 16.

and it is therefore often credited to him. It is, however, clear that al-Bâqillânî was not the first to use it.

The last word of the definition (*bih*) is exceptionally replaced by *'alayh*.³⁴ This appears to be a mere oversight. In the *Budd*, this definition occurs also at the very beginning of the list of definitions, but without either *bih* or *'alayh*. It is difficult to say whether this omission is another mistake just as Ibn Sab'in's subsequent use of *'alayh* for *bih*, or whether it was intended to be another meaningful variant.

In connection with this definition, certain Greek definitions of "philosophy" are relevant. Nicomachus of Gerasa, in his *Arithmétiké Eisagôgê* as translated into Arabic by Thâbit b. Qurrah, ed. Kutsch, 13, ll. 8 f., says that "wisdom (*hikmah*, translating "philosophy") is the certain knowledge of the reality (*haqîqah*) of the existing things as they are." John of Damascus gives a definition of philosophy which appears to be the exact Greek equivalent of this particular definition of knowledge and is likely to have been its prototype. He speaks of philosophy as "cognition of the existing things *qua* existing things" (*gnôsis tōn ontōn hēi onta estin*).³⁵

It may be added that a late author, al-'Aynî, in his *Umdat al-qâri*, I, 247, defines "wisdom" as "the cognition of things as they are," but for al-'Aynî, I, 440, "wisdom" is a synonym of "knowledge."

3. "Knowledge is the cognition of a thing (*ash-shay*) as it is."³⁶ As compared to the preceding definition, "object known" is

³⁴ Cf. Ibn Sab'in, *Budd* (17) (Ms. Bagdath Vehbi Ef. 833, fol. 74a), describing this definition as the one preferred by Ash'arites.

It may be noted that *'alâ ma hîya 'alayh* was used to translate Greek *hyparchein*, cf. the Arabic translation of the Aristotelian *Physics* 197a29, ed. 'Abd-ar-Râhîmân Badawî, 125 (Cairo 1384-85/1964-65).

³⁵ Cf. John of Damascus, *Pégê gnôseôs*, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, 94, 521, Engl. trans. F. H. Chase, 11 (New York 1958).

According to the Jâbir corpus, "philosophical knowledge is the knowledge of the realities of the caused existing things," cf. P. Kraus, *Jâbir ibn Hayyân, Textes choisis*, 104 (Paris and Cairo 1935).

³⁶ Al-Bâqillânî, *Tamhîd*, 6, and al-Bazdawî discuss and reject this definition; al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ*, I, 26. English trans. N. A. Faris, 73 (Lahore 1962); versified in Ibn Bassâm, *Dhakhîrah*, I, 2, 409 (Cairo 1361/1942).

An almost identical definition was employed in thirteenth-century Europe, cf. W. G. Waite, *Johannes de Garlandia*, in *Speculum*, 35 (1960), 187. Cf. also the definition of F. Sanchez (Sanchez) (1552-1623): *Scientia est vei perfecta cognitio*, quoted here from R. H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes*, 40 (Assen, Netherlands, 1960).

replaced here by “thing.” The difference is considered meaningful. Use of the term “thing,” it is argued, excludes knowledge of the non-existent. The non-existent is one of the possible objects of knowledge. Therefore, it ought to be covered by a definition that fulfills the required condition of comprehensiveness. It is, as soon as “object known” is used instead of “thing.” Cf. also below, C-2 and D-2.

4. “Knowledge is certain cognition (*tayaqqun*) of a thing as it is.”³⁷
5. “Knowledge is the cognition of things and their realities (*haqâiq*) without mistake or error.”³⁸ Cf. below, C-12.
6. “Knowledge is the cognition of the object known to one’s own satisfaction (*ma’ a sukûn an-nafs*).”³⁹ For *sukûn an-nafs* as a Mu’tazilah modification, cf. below, F-3.
7. “Knowledge is the cognition of the cause of the object known as being a cause of that particular object known.”⁴⁰ This definition is stated to go back to Alexander of Aphrodisias.
8. “Knowledge of a thing is the knowledge of the causes of its existence.”⁴¹
9. “... Knowledge is likewise cognition and perception, but in addition, it is granting him who hears and understands room for agreement and disagreement concerning the statement made...”⁴²
10. “Knowledge is that which one knows for certain and understands clearly.”⁴³
11. “Knowledge is excellent cognition and the constant application to the excellent art.”⁴⁴ This definition occurs in the beginning of the Arabic translation of the Pseudo-Plutarchan *Placita* where the Stoics speak of philosophy as the practice of a proper art

³⁷ Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Ihkâm*, I, 30.

³⁸ Cf. Ibn Farîghûn, *Jawâmi’ al-‘ulâm*, Ms. Topkapusaray, Ahmet III 2768, fol. 67a.

³⁹ Cf. al-‘Allâmah al-Hillî, *Anwâr al-malakût*, 12 f., 134 ff.; Ibn Sab’în, *Budd* (5).

⁴⁰ *Kitâb as-Sâ’âdah*, 58. The first “object known” is a necessary correction of *al-‘ulâm* of the text.

⁴¹ Cf. ‘Abd-al-Lâtîf al-Baghdâdî, *Mâ ba’d at-ṭabî’ah*, Istanbul Ms. Carullah 1279, fol. 153b.

⁴² Cf. Abû l-Barakât, *Mu’tabar*, II, 395.

⁴³ Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’ bayân al-‘îlm*, II, 36 (Cairo, n.y.), considers this the definition of the speculative theologians. He adds: “Everybody who knows for certain and has a clear understanding of a thing knows it. Correspondingly, whoever does not know a thing for certain and speaks about it on the basis of traditional information (*taqlîd*”) does not know it.”

⁴⁴ Cf. Pseudo-Plutarch, *Placita*, ed. Daiberg, 123.

(*askēsin epitēdeiou technēs*), namely, virtue. The equation of *sophia* or *philosophia* with virtue may have seemed to the translator an incomplete definition of “knowledge,” and he therefore added the reference to cognition. This would also indicate the existence of the definition of *‘ilm* by *ma’rifah* in the ninth century.

C. Knowledge is a process of “obtaining” (*d-r-k, h-s-l*) or “finding” through mental perception. This reflects a Stoic definition of knowledge attributed to Zeno, speaking of knowledge as *katalēpsis asphalēs*, cf. Diogenes Laertius, VII, 47. The use of *idrāk* for translating Greek *katalēpsis* is attested in Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Arithmētikē Eisagōgē*, 2, ll. 9 f. Hoche, Ar. trans., ed. Kutsch, 11, 1. 10.⁴⁵ Similarly, knowledge is a process of “comprehending.”

1. “Knowledge is the perception (*idrāk*) of the object known as it is (*‘alā mā huwa bih*).”⁴⁶ This definition is primarily credited to al-Ash‘arī.

2. “Knowledge is the perception of a thing as it is,”⁴⁷ or, “of a thing in its reality (*bi-haqiqatih*).”⁴⁸ For the replacement of “object known” by “thing,” cf. above, B-3.

When we read in the work of a littérateur that “the intellect (*‘aql*) is the perception of things in their realities,”⁴⁹ we are forced to conclude that this statement is based upon an unthinking substitution of “intellect” for “knowledge.”

3. “Knowledge is attaining (*darak*) the object perceived (*mudrak*) as it is (*‘alā mā huwa ‘alayh*) itself, provided that attaining it is not impossible.”⁵⁰

4. “Knowledge is the perception of the realities of things through traditional and intellectual channels (*masmū‘an wa-ma‘qūlān*).”⁵¹

⁴⁵ For other Greek equivalents of *idrāk*, cf. S. M. Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian*, 105 f. (Leiden 1964). M. van den Bergh’s equation of *katalēptos* with *maṣṭūm* or *ma’lūm* is not based upon actual occurrences in the translation literature, which remain to be found, cf. his translation of Averroes’ *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, II, 45, 55, 112 (Oxford and London 1954, *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series*, N. S. 19).

⁴⁶ Cf. al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, fol. 2b; al-Ījī, *Mawāqif at-Tahānawī*, 1058, 1. 3, as well as al-Bazdawī. Cf., further, Ms. Aya Sofya 2378, fol. 20b, and Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Ja’mi*, II, 117, who combines this definition with D-2.

⁴⁷ Cf. Ibn Bukhtishū‘, *ar-Rawdah at-tibbīyah*, ed. P. Sbath, 46 (Cairo 1927).

⁴⁸ Cf. ar-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Mufradāt*, III, 138.

⁴⁹ Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 249 (reprint Cairo 1375/1956).

⁵⁰ Cf. Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkīyah*, I, 91 f. (Cairo and Mecca 1329), below, p. 190.

⁵¹ Cf. al-Ibshīhī, *Mustāraf*, I, 23 (Būlāq 1268).

5. "Knowledge is the perception of the realities of the existing things *qua* existing things (*bi-mâ hiya mawjûdât*)."⁵²

6. "Knowledge is the attainment (*tâḥṣîl*) by the heart of some matter corresponding to what it is itself, whether this matter is non-existent or existent."⁵³

7. "Knowledge is the finding (*wijdâن*) of things in their realities."⁵⁴

8. "Knowledge is the finding (*yâftân*) of the things as the things are."⁵⁵ This would seem to be a combination of C-2 and C-7, unless it is in fact identical with C-2, Persian *yâftân* "to find" being used for translating *îdrâk*. However, this would seem unlikely. "Finding," as shown in C-7, belongs to the philosophical vocabulary in connection with "knowledge." However, like the idea of comprehending, it was a term suitable to the intuitive, mystical approach toward "knowledge," especially in combination with "heart," "soul," or "breast."

9. "Knowledge is the finding by the soul of its objective when suspicions (doubts, *riyâb*) occur to a person concerning it (*fî amrih*)."⁵⁶

10. "Knowledge is finding in the heart and firm conviction (*thubût*) without change."⁵⁷

11. "Knowledge is that which comprises firm conviction without allowing for any change."⁵⁸

12. "Knowledge is the comprehension (*ihâṭah*) of the thing as it is (*'alâ mâ huwa 'alayh*) without mistake or error."⁵⁹ Cf. above, B-5.

13. "Knowledge can be described as the comprehension (*ihâṭah*)

⁵² Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (18) (Ms. Bagdath Vehbi Ef. 833, fol. 85a); Istanbul Ms. Râghib 1483, fol. 106b. The Râghib manuscript has a number of definitions introduced by *qâla sh-Shaykh* which appear to have been written by a hand more recent than the rest of the manuscript.

⁵³ Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûhât*, I, 91, below, p. 188.

⁵⁴ Cf. al-Kindî, *Hudûd*, in *Rasâ'il al-Kindî*, I, 169; Muhammad b. 'Alî b. 'Abdallâh al-Hindî, *Jumal al-falsafah*, in the autograph manuscript dated in 529/1135 and preserved in Istanbul, Ms. Esat Ef. 1918, fol. 3a, I wish to thank Professor Fuat Sezgin for having drawn my attention to this manuscript.

⁵⁵ Cf. Nâṣir-i-Khosraw, quoted here from A. E. Bertels, *Nasir-i Khosrov i Ismailizm*, 235 (Moscow 1959).

⁵⁶ Cf. Abû Ḥayyân at-Tawhîdî, *Muqâbasât*, 365 (Cairo 1347/1929). *Fî amrih* hardly means "in his business."

⁵⁷ Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (9).

⁵⁸ Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (8). *Muta'ayyin* of the manuscript (if my copy is correct) has to be corrected to *mutaghayyir*.

⁵⁹ Cf. al-'Âmirî, *al-Îlâm bi-manâqib al-Islâm*, ed. A. 'Abd-al-Ḥamîd Ghurâb, 84 (Cairo 1387/1967).

of the objects known . . ., it comprises the reality of every object known, or it would not be known.”⁶⁰

14. “Knowledge is but what the breast contains (*wa’âhu*).”⁶¹

D. Knowledge is a process of clarification, assertion, and decision (*bayyana, mayyaza, athbata, qata’â*). Cf. also B-10.

1. “Knowledge is the clear understanding (*tabayyun*) of the object known as it is (*‘alâ mâ huwa bih*).”⁶² Cf. also above, A-15.

2. “Knowledge is the explanation (*tabyîn?*) of a thing as it is (*‘alâ mâ huwa ‘alayh*).”⁶³ “Explanation” would seem to be a clerical mistake for “clear understanding,” although *tabyîn* is also found in Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr (see above, p. 56, n. 2). For “thing” instead of “object known,” cf. above, B-3.

3. Knowledge is the asseveration (*ithbâ’*) of the object known as it is (*‘alâ mâ huwa bih*).⁶⁴

4. “Knowledge is that which clarifies (*abâna*) the truth and gives information (*a’âd al-fâ’idah*), without leaving (the need) for anything to be investigated.”⁶⁵

5. “Knowledge stands for an attribute (*sifah*) through which the soul of him who possesses this attribute attains the discernment (*tamyîz*) of some reality not perceptible by the senses [in the soul, thus guarding himself against the *sensibilia*, at which he arrives] in a way that does not leave open the possibility that it could be different from the manner in which it has arrived.”⁶⁶ Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî has what appears to have been intended as the same

⁶⁰ Cf. Ibn ‘Arabî, *Futuhat*, I, 43. Cf. also below, p. 117, n. 1.

⁶¹ Cf. Abû Hayyân at-Tawhîdî, *al-Imtâ’ wa-l-mu’ânasah*, ed. A. Amîn and A. az-Zayn, II, 150 (Cairo 1939–44).

⁶² Cf. Imâm al-Ḥaramayn, *Irshâd*; al-Bazdawî; al-Āmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 3a, referring to one of his colleagues (*ba’âl al-ashâb*); also briefly referred to by al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*; at-Tâhânahâwî, 1058, ll. 15 f.; Ms. Aya Sofya 2378, fol. 21a. *Tabayyun* is the reading found in the works of the Imâm al-Ḥaramayn and al-Bazdawî. The Aya Sofya manuscript and al-Āmidî have *byn* (no dots). However, Ms. Aya Sofya 2167 of the *Abkâr* has *tbyn*. The reading *tabyîn* of al-Îjî and at-Tâhânahâwî appears to be a mistake, despite the occurrence of the form in the following definition. Cf. also above, A-15.

⁶³ Cf. Ibn Sab’în, *Budd* (2).

⁶⁴ Cf. al-Āmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2b, citing one of his colleagues; Ms. Aya Sofya 2378, fol. 20b; al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*.

⁶⁵ Cf. Ibn Sab’în, *Budd* (7).

⁶⁶ Cf. al-Āmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 3a, who discusses this definition, considering it the most acceptable of all the definitions proposed. The words in square brackets are not to be found in Ms. Topkapusaray, Ahmet III 1774, of the *Abkâr*. They apparently do not belong here.

definition in a briefer and rather different form which does not make mention of “discernment” and is therefore listed below, E-13. Strangely enough, Ms. Aya Sofya 2167 of al-Āmidī’s *Abkār* substitutes the text of E-13 for the definition cited here.

6. “Knowledge stands for an attribute through which the soul of him who possesses this particular attribute attains a distinction (*tamayyuz*) between the realities of the universal concepts (or meanings, *ma’ānī kūl-līyah*) in a way that does not leave open the possibility of its opposite (*naqīd*).”⁶⁷

7. “Knowledge is an attribute that necessitates that he in whom it resides (*mahall*) distinguishes (*tamyīz*) between the concepts (*ma’ānī*) in a way that does not admit of the opposite.”⁶⁸

8. “Knowledge is to be defined as an attribute that necessitates a discernment (*tamyīz*) that does not leave open the possibility of the opposite in matters concerned with (abstract) concepts.”⁶⁹ In connection with D-10, at-Tahānawī considers and rejects this definition, even when one omits the restriction to abstract concepts and includes sense perception.

9. “Knowledge is the discernment (*tamyīz*) of a concept in the soul that does not leave open the possibility of (its) opposite.”⁷⁰

10. “Knowledge is an attribute through which the object mentioned (remembered?, *madhkūr*) becomes revealed to him in whom (that attribute) subsists.”⁷¹ Aṣ-Ṣābūnī considers this the definition of Abū Maṣṣūr (al-Māturīdī?), which he accepts as the best one known to him. At-Taftāzānī adds this comment: “that is, whatever is mentioned (remembered?) becomes clear and obvious and can be expressed, whether it is existent or nonexistent.”

11. “The purpose of knowledge is but the decision (*qat‘*) concern-

⁶⁷ Cf. al-Āmidī, *Iḥkām*, I, 7, with added comment.

⁶⁸ Cf. al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*, II, who considers this the best (*mukhtār*) definition. At-Tahānawī, 1058, ll. 26 f., shortens the definition to “that necessitates discernment between,” but takes over from al-Ījī the remark that it is the preferred definition of the speculative theologians.

⁶⁹ Cf. al-‘Aynī, *Umdat al-qāri‘*, I, 380 f. (cf. I, 466); al-Qaṣṭallānī, *Irshād as-sāri‘*, I, 178. Omitting “in matters...concepts,” the definition is also discussed in Ms. Laleli 2221, fol. 16b.

⁷⁰ Cf. at-Tahānawī, 1061, ll. 4 f.

⁷¹ Cf. aṣ-Ṣābūnī, *Kīfāyah*, and at-Taftāzānī, *Commentary on the ‘Aqā’id of an-Nasafī*, 99 f. (Cairo 1358/1939), trans. E. E. Elder, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam*, 15 (New York 1950). The explanatory statement was added by at-Taftāzānī.

ing the object known that it is as we know it, without any suspicion (*rayb*) or doubt.”⁷²

12. “The establishment (*taqarrur*) in the mind of the result of combination (*ta'lif*) together with whatever truth is contained in it is called knowledge.”⁷³

E. Knowledge is a form (*ṣūrah*), a concept or meaning (*ma'na*), a process of mental formation and imagination (*taṣawwur* “perception”) and/or mental verification (*taṣdiq* “appereception”). For knowledge as *taṣdiq* “faith,” cf. below, p. 101, n. 3.

1. “Knowledge is the form of the object known in the soul of the knower.”⁷⁴ A variant has “the arrival (*husūl*) of the form,” cf. also below, E-9.

2. “Knowledge is the delineation (*irtisām*) of the form of the object known in the knower.”⁷⁵

3. “The soul is originally knowing (*'allāmah*), and knowledge is its form.”⁷⁶

4. “Knowledge conforms fully (*muṭābiq*, *musāwī*) to the object known, because it is the spiritual form of the object known. The difference between the two is that the object known is a form whose substratum is matter, whereas knowledge is a form whose substratum is the soul.”⁷⁷

5. “Knowledge stands for the fact that the form of the object known has impressed itself upon the soul.”⁷⁸

⁷² Cf. Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūhāt*, I, 34.

⁷³ Cf. Abū l-Barakāt, *Mū'tabar*, I, 36 (cf. I, 70).

⁷⁴ Cf. *Rasā'il Ikhwān as-ṣaғā'*, I, 198, 317, III, 360, IV, 126 (Cairo 1347/1928). The plural (“the sciences are the forms...”) occurs in the *Rasā'il*, I, 210, cf. also II, 7. Cf., further, at-Tawhīdī, *Imtā'*, I, 40; Ibn Sa'bīn, *Budd* (4); Ms. Esat Ef. 1918, fol. 3a; at-Tahānawī, 1060, ll. 17 f., 1062, ll. 12 f., 1065, ll. 17 f.

The variant occurs in the Ankara Ms. Ismail Saib I, 2468 of Ibn Bukhtishū's *Rawdah*. The edition of the *Rawdah*, 46, does not have the additional word.

⁷⁵ Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-‘āliyah*, Ms. Bursa Hüseyin Çelebi 676, beg, quotes and discusses this definition as that of Abū l-‘Abbās al-Lawkarī contained in his *Tibyān (Bayān) al-haqq*. Al-Lawkarī was a student of Ibn Sīnā's student, Bahmanyār b. al-Marzubān.

⁷⁶ Cf. at-Tawhīdī, *Imtā'*, III, 202.

⁷⁷ Cf. 'Abd-al-Latīf al-Baghdādī, *Mā ba'd at-tabi'ah*, fol. 163a.

⁷⁸ Cf. al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, fol. 3a, as a definition of the “philosophers.” Al-Ghazzālī, *Maqāṣid*, II, 71 f., speaks of the impression of an immaterial form upon an immaterial essence.

6. “Knowledge is an apodictic formation (*hay'ah burhānīyah*).”⁷⁹ This definition is referred to Aristotle.

7. “Knowledge is the form of the thing in the mind (*adh-dhihn*).”⁸⁰
8. “Knowledge is the form of the thing in the intellect (*al-'aql*).”⁸¹
9. “Knowledge is the arrival (*huṣūl*) of the form of a thing in the intellect.”⁸²

10. “Knowledge is the arrival of the form known at the knower” (or, “attainment by the knower of the form known”).⁸³

11. “Knowledge means that the mind obtains through it a form that conforms to the external object known.”⁸⁴

12. “Knowledge is the arrival (*wuṣūl*) of the soul at the meaning (*ma'nā*) of a thing.”⁸⁵ Qinâlîzâdeh, who considers this the best definition known to him, explains that “when the arrival of the soul at the meaning of a thing comes, knowledge of that thing comes, in that the soul comes to it.”

⁷⁹ Cf. *Kitâb as-Sâ'âdah*, 57.

⁸⁰ Cf. Ibn al-Akfâni, *Irshâd al-qâsid*, ed. A. Sprenger, 96 (Calcutta 1849, *Bibliotheca Indica* 5).

⁸¹ From the *Mutamminât at-Ta'rifât al-Jurjâniyah*, a work possibly composed in the eighteenth century, cf. Ms. Yale University Library L-36 (Catalogue Nemoy 1116). The definition is attributed to the philosophers.

⁸² Cf. al-Abhârî, *Tanzîl al-afkâr fî ta'âdil al-asrâr*, Ms. Laleli 2562 (dated 686/1287), beg.; Ms. Aya Sofia 2526, fol. 13a, quoting the *Talwîhât*, the well-known work by as-Suhrawardî *al-maqâtil*. Further, *Qusâs al-afkâr fî tahqîq al-asrâr*, which is stated to have been composed in 683/1284 and, according to Ms. Aya Sofia 2565, to have as its author Shams-ad-dîn as-Samarqandî (?); al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, who ascribes the definition to the philosophers and adds a discussion of it, as was also done by at-Tâhânahawî, 1056, l. 10; at-Taftâzâni, *Sharh at-Tâhdhib*, used here in the Istanbul Ms. Damat Ibrahim 1152, fol. 3a, also with added discussion; Muhammad b. Muhammad Bilâl al-Hanâfi, at the beginning of a brief treatise dealing with *abhâth tata'allaq bi-tâ'rif al-'ilm*, written for Mehmet b. Sulaymân b. Selim (d. 950/1543) and preserved in the Ankara Ms. Ismail Saib I, 2772.

⁸³ Ali Çelebi Qinâlîzâdeh (d. 979/1572, cf. *GAL*, II, 433, *Supplement*, II, 644) rejects this definition, “because knowledge is an attribute of the knower, whereas the arrival of the form of a thing is an attribute of the form, which is not the same thing.” He prefers the definition E-12, and also the possible formulation that “knowledge is the arrival of the form of a thing for the intellect (*li-l-'aql*).” Qinâlîzâdeh’s ideas are known to me from a marginal note in the Bursa Ms. Haraççi 1378, fol. 5a, of al-Kâfiyâjî’s commentary on at-Taftâzâni’s *Tâhdhib fî l-mantiq wa-l-kalâm*.

⁸⁴ Cf. Abû l-Barakât, *Mu'âbar*, II, 398. Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûhât*, I, 45.

⁸⁵ Cf. Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *Sharh al-Ishârât*, which I consulted in the fourteenth-century manuscript in Fez, *Qarawîyîn* 406/80.

⁸⁶ Cf. above, n. 4.

13. “Knowledge stands for the arrival (*husûl*) in the soul of some concept (*ma'na*) in a way that does not leave open the possibility that it could be different from the manner in which it has arrived.”⁸⁶ Cf. above, D-5 and D-9.

14. “Knowledge is the perception (*taṣawwur*) of a thing according to its realities.”⁸⁷ Almost identical formulations are: “The knower... is he who perceives (*mutaṣawwir*) a thing according to its reality,”⁸⁸ and, “Knowledge is perception (*taṣawwur*) on our part of a thing according to its reality,” or, “perception of a thing as it is.”⁸⁹

15. “Knowledge is the perception (*taṣawwur*) by the soul of the distinctive characteristics (*rusûm*) of the objects known in its essence.”⁹⁰ The pronoun “its” refers to “soul.” Grammatically it could also refer to “distinctive characteristics” or “objects known,” but then, the plural “essences” would be expected.

16. “Absolute knowledge is the soul's perception of the truths of things which are the objects of knowledge.”⁹¹

17. “Knowledge is the perception (*taṣawwur*) of things through thorough understanding (*tahaqqiq*) of quiddity and definition and apperception (*taṣdiq*) with regard to them through pure, verified (*muḥaqqaq*) certainty.”⁹²

18. “Knowledge is that which perception (*taṣawwur*) and apperception (*taṣdiq*) teach (*afâda*).”⁹³

19. “The intellect is the perceptions and apperceptions that arrive at the soul (or, “are attained by the soul”) by natural endowment (*bi-l-fitrâh*), whereas knowledge is that which arrives by acquisition (*iktisâb*).”⁹⁴

20. “Knowledge is the verification (*tahqîq*) in the mind (*adh-*

⁸⁶ Cf. Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *Mubîn*, Ms. Aya Sofya 2384, fol. 80a. Al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, according to Ms. Aya Sofya 2167 (see above D-5), goes on to explain that “arrival in the soul of some concept” means “distinguishing (*tamyîz*) it in the soul from everything else.”

⁸⁷ Cf. Ms. Esat Ef. 1918, fol. 3a.

⁸⁸ Cf. *Rasâ'il Ikhwân as-safâ'*, III, 360.

⁸⁹ Cf. Nâṣîr-i-Khosraw, according to Bertels, *Nasir-i Khosrov*, 234.

⁹⁰ Cf. *Rasâ'il Ikhwân as-safâ'*, IV, 123.

⁹¹ Cf. Ishâq al-Isrâ'îlî, according to Altmann-Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, 54. The translation of Altmann and Stern has been reproduced here. It employs a somewhat different English terminology.

⁹² Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâsid*, II, 86.

⁹³ Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (12), with added discussion, and 'Ahd.

⁹⁴ Quoted in the Istanbul Ms. Topkapusaray, Revan Köşk 2042, fol. 4a. The manuscript contains a work by a certain Mu'ayyadzâdeh (?), apparently of quite recent date.

dhīhn) of what is imagined (*mutakhayyal*) and perceived (*mutasawwar*).⁹⁵

F. Knowledge is belief. This conception of knowledge, philosophical in origin, was basically Mu'tazilah doctrine, to be refuted by the argument that God could not be thought of as believing.⁹⁶ Aş-Şâbûnî states flatly that it is an assault upon the concept of God's knowledge, since it requires Him to believe.⁹⁷ The implications and pitfalls of "belief" and *sukûn an-nafs* (lit., "rest of the soul") are reviewed in great detail from the Mu'tazilah point of view in the twelfth part of 'Abd-al-Jabbâr's *Mughnî*.

1. "Knowledge is the trust (*thiqah*) that the object known is as it is ('alâ mâ huwa bih')."⁹⁸

2. "Knowledge is believing (*i'tiqâd*) the thing (to be) as it is." Both 'alâ mâ huwa bih⁹⁹ and 'alâ mâ huwa 'alayh¹⁰⁰ are used.

3. "Knowledge is believing a thing (to be) as it is to one's own satisfaction (*ma'a sukûn an-nafs ilayh*)," or, "while becoming oneself used to the object believed (*ma'a tawâfîn an-nafs ilâ l-mu'taqad*)."¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Cf. Ibn Sabîn, *Budd* (6).

⁹⁶ Cf. 'Abd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 44.

⁹⁷ Cf. aş-Şâbûnî, *Kîfâyah*. At the same time, aş-Şâbûnî also objects to the definitions G-5 and H-2 as implying that God has a seeing or moving heart.

⁹⁸ Cf. al-Āmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 3a; al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, at-Tahânahâwî, 1058, l. 18. Abû Hilâl al-'Askârî, *al-Furûq al-lughawîyah*, 63 (Cairo 1353), has "firmly believing" (*i'tiqâd... 'alâ sabîl ath-thiqah*).

⁹⁹ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustasfâ*, I, 17; al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, at-Tahânahâwî. All these authors describe and discuss this definition as that of the Mu'tazilah. 'Abd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 5, singles out al-Kâbî. Cf., further, aş-Şâbûnî, *Kîfâyah*, and Ibn Sabîn, *Budd* (14).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. al-Āmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2 a, referring to it as the Mu'tazilah definition.

¹⁰¹ Cf. 'Abd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 5; Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*; al-Bazdawî; al-Āmidî, *Abkâr*. They all mention that this is the Mu'tazilah definition. *Tawâfîn* appears in the Imâm al-Haramayn. Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, below, p. 211.

According to al-'Askârî, *Furûq*, 63, the presence of *sukûn an-nafs* and *thalaj aş-sâdr* "calmness, assuredness" turns "knowledge" into "certainty." "Certainty" appears paired with *thalaj* already in Prophetic traditions. For al-Kindî, "certainty" requires *sukûn al-fahm*, cf. *Rasâ'il al-Kindî*, I, 171; Altmann-Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, 58. On *sukûn an-nafs*, see also G. Vajda, in *REJ*, CXXVI (1967), 388 f. Cf. also below, p. 169.

The description of "knowledge" as "warranted belief" (cf. W. H. Werkmeister, *The Basis and Structure of Knowledge*, 3, New York and London, 1948), sounds similar to this Mu'tazilah definition, which, however, thinks of subjectively warranted, and not as the modern statement, of objectively warranted.

4. “Knowledge is believing a thing (to be) as it is, when it happens on the basis of necessity or proof.”¹⁰²
5. “Knowledge, as well as cognition (*ma’rifah*), is believing a thing (to be) as it is, and certainty (*tayaqqun*) as well as the removal of any doubt concerning it.”¹⁰³
6. “Knowledge is believing that a thing is so, coupled with the belief that it cannot possibly be not so.”¹⁰⁴
7. “Knowledge is a definite (*jázim*) belief that conforms to something that is necessary (*al-muṭābiq li-mújab*).”¹⁰⁵
8. “Knowledge is definitive and firm (*thábit*) belief that conforms to actuality (*al-muṭābiq li-l-wâqî’*).”¹⁰⁶

G. Knowledge is remembrance, imagination, an image, a vision, an opinion.

1. “Knowledge is merely remembering (*tadhkîr*, lit., being reminded).”¹⁰⁷ For *madhkîr*, see also above, D-10.

¹⁰² Cf. al-Ash’arî, *Maqâlât al-Islâmiyyîn*, ed. H. Ritter, 523 (Istanbul and Leipzig 1929–30, reprinted Wiesbaden 1963, *Bibliotheca Islamica* 1), who has, “...through necessity or proof”; al-Āmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2a. al-Ash’arî reports on a discussion of al-Jubbâ’î. Cf. also ‘Abd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 5.

¹⁰³ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Fîsâl*, V, 109. Ibn Ḥazm goes on to polemicize against the Ash’arites in connection with this definition.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Ibn Sînâ, *Nâjâh*, 87 (Cairo 1367/1938), with added discussion (cf. Goichon, *Lexique*, 240); Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî. *Sharh al-Ishârât*; at-Tahânahwî, 1060, ll. 1 f.

¹⁰⁵ This definition is ascribed to Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî in al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, and at-Tahânahwî, 1058, l. 20.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Mutammimât at-Ta’rifât al-Ǧurjâniyah*. Also at-Tahânahwî, 1056, ll. 4 f.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Bâlînûs, *Sîr al-khalâqah*, Ms. Köprülü I, 872, fol. 174a. Contrast also below, p. 115, n. 2. There is no need to suggest correcting *tadhkîr* to *tadhakkur*. Ibn Bâjjah, *Fi n-nâfs*, refers to Socrates as having assumed that knowledge is remembrance (*yâdâ’u l-’ilmâ tadhakkuran*), cf. the Berlin Ms. Wetzstein, I, 87 (Catalogue Ahlwardt 5060), fol. 165a. The Berlin manuscript is presumed lost, but I do not think that when I copied this passage before World War II, I made a mistake and read “knowledge” when it should have been “learning” (*at-tâ’allum*). The edition of Ibn Bâjjah’s work on the soul by M. S. H. al-Mâ’ṣûmî, 144 (Damascus 1379/1960), which is based upon the manuscript in the Bodleian Library, has *at-tâ’allum* in this connection. However, in spite of some similarity, the published text is entirely different from the one in the Berlin manuscript. The determination of learning (*ta’allum* = *mathêsis*) as remembrance (*tadhakkur* = *anamnêsis*) was, of course, widely known through the *Analytica Priora* 67a21 (Ar. Trans. in ‘Abd-ar-Rahmân Badawî, *Manṭiq Aristû*, I, 289 [Cairo 1948–52]), from Plato, *Meno* 81D, cf., for instance, Ibn Sînâ, *Shifâ’*, IV, 545 (*jumlah* 1, *fann* 4, *maqâlah* 9, *faṣl* 19) (Cairo 1384/1964); Abû l-Barakât, *Mu’tabar*, I, 41.

2. “Knowledge is imagining (a phantom of, *khayál*) the object known in the soul of the knower...”¹⁰⁸

3. “Knowledge is not the perception (*taṣawwur*) of the object known, and it is not the concept (*ma’nâ*) that perceives the object known, for not every object known is perceived, and not every knower perceives. Perception comes to the knower only from his being one who uses imagination (*mutakhayyil*), and the form for the object known consists in its being in a condition seized by the imagination (*khaydl*). There are objects known not seized by the imagination at all. Consequently, they certainly have no form.”¹⁰⁹

4. “Knowledge is the opinion (*ra’*) that falls firmly upon the essence (*kunh*) of the realities of things, so that it cannot be dislodged from it.”¹¹⁰

5. “Knowledge is a vision (*ru’yah*) of the heart that is looked at.”¹¹¹

6. “There is no meaning to knowledge except that of its being an image (*mithâl*) that arrives in the soul, which conforms to that which is an image in sense perception, namely, the object known.” Or: “Knowledge is an image that conforms to the object known, like a picture (*sûrah*) or sculpture (*naqsh*), which is the image of a thing.”¹¹²

7. “Knowledge stands for the arrival (*husûl*) of the image in the mirror... Likewise, the arrival (*wuṣûl*) of the image of the object known in the heart is called knowledge... Likewise, the arrival (*husûl*) of an image that conforms to the reality of the object known in the heart is called knowledge.”¹¹³

8. “Knowledge is the establishment of the image (*tamaththul*) of the quiddity of the object perceived (*mudrak*) in the soul of the perceiver (*mudrik*).”¹¹⁴

9. “Knowledge is the shadow (*zill*) and formation (*hay’ah*) of the object known...”¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Ibn Sab’în, *Budd* (16b), see below, p. 69, n. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Ibn ‘Arabî, *Futûhât*, I, 42. Also, Ibn ‘Arabî, *Kîtâb at-Tarâjîm*, 11 (Hyderabad 1367/1948, in Vol. II of *Rasâ’îl Ibn ‘Arabî*), and *Kîtâb al-Masâ’il*, 21 (also in Vol. II).

¹¹⁰ Cf. at-Tawhîdî, *Muqâbasâl*, 305. At-Tawhîdî maintains that he is relying upon the authority of an ancient scholar.

¹¹¹ Cf. aṣ-Ṣâbûnî, *Kîfâyah*. See above, p. 63, n. 3.

¹¹² Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mîyâr al-îlm*, 76, also 312, 323, and *Maqâsid*, I, 7.

¹¹³ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Iḥyâ*, III, 11. See also al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustâfâ*, I, 17 f., and Ibn ‘Arabî, *Futûhât*, I, 45 and 91.

¹¹⁴ Cf. al-İjî, *Mawâqif*, and at-Tahânahâwî, 1056, l. 11, with added discussion, ascribing the definition to the philosophers.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Ibn Sab’în, *Budd* (16a). Cf. below, p. 69, n. 4.

H. Knowledge is a motion.

1. “(Proclus, on the authority of Aristotle) called knowledge ‘motion’ (*harakah*).”¹¹⁶ However, in the *Sirr al-khalīqah* of Balīnūs,¹¹⁷ it is said that “knowledge does not come about through a motion that is given a material form” (*bi-harakah mujassadah*, or read, *mutajassidah* “that takes place in a body, in a corporeal form”?). The view that motion is not involved corresponds, it seems, more closely to the Aristotelian conception, cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 247b.¹¹⁸

2. “Knowledge is a motion of the heart.”¹¹⁹

I. Knowledge is a relative term. This Aristotelian idea (cf. *Categories* 6b35, Arabic trans., ed. ‘Abd-ar-Rahmān Badawī, *Mantiq Aristū*, I, 23 [Cairo 1948–52]) underlies many of the definitions quoted previously in which knowledge is brought into relation with the object known and the knower, cf., in particular, A-14.

1. “Knowledge belongs to the category of relation (*mudāf*), because it is used in comparison (*bi-l-qiyās*) with the object known.” Also, “knowledge, which is the genus of the object known,¹²⁰ is said to belong to the category of relation, because it is a knowledge of the object known.”¹²¹

2. “Knowledge is the interdependence itself (*nafs at-ta‘alluq*).”¹²²

3. “Knowledge is a truth-related (*haqīqiyah*) attribute that is characterized by interdependence (*dhāt ta‘alluq*).”¹²³

J. Knowledge may be defined in relation to action. Aristotelianism claimed that “knowledge was the beginning of action, and action

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Kitāb as-Sa‘ādah*, 58.

¹¹⁷ Ms. Koprülü I, 872, fol. 197b.

¹¹⁸ H. A. Wolfson, *Crescas Critique of Aristotle*, 548 (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), refers to Simplicius, *In Phys.* 1075, ll. 23 f. Diels.

¹¹⁹ This statement is ascribed to an-Nazzām, cf. ‘Abd-al-Qāhir, *Uṣūl*, 6: al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, 403, where knowledge and ignorance are described as motions. As-Şābūnī, *Kifāyah*, adds, “because of an emotion (*wijdān*) it feels.” Ash-Shahrastānī, 38, trans., I, 55, has the Nazzāmīyah speak of knowledge and will (both in the plural) as motions of the soul. Cf. H. A. Wolfson, in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem*, 367 (Jerusalem 1967).

¹²⁰ Read *al-ma‘lūm* (Ms. *al-‘ulūm*).

¹²¹ Cf. Abū l-Faraj b. ict-Tayyib, *Commentary on the Categories*, in Ms. Cairo *hikmah* 1 m, fols. 157b, 161a, 170a. Cf. also, for instance, Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu‘tabar*, 1, 225, III, 2.

¹²² Cf. at-Tahānawī, 1061, l. 4.

¹²³ Cf. at-Tahānawī, 1061, l. 23, who considers this a definition adopted by some Ash‘arites.

the entelechy of knowledge.” This aphorism was very well known in Islam and is frequently cited.¹²⁴ The inseparable character of knowledge and action was at the center of all Muslim ethics, both religious and philosophical.¹²⁵ In speculative theology, the relevance for God’s knowledge is considered foremost, although life and capability are inescapable conditions for human knowledge.

1. “Knowledge is that through whose existence he in whom it subsists is enabled to act in an orderly fashion and to act well.”¹²⁶

2. “Knowledge is an attribute (*sifah*) whose existence does not make it impossible for him who is alive and capable (*al-hayy al-qâdir*) to act well.”¹²⁷ Cf. K-1.

3. “Knowledge is the attribute (*wasf*) that enables him who possesses this attribute to act in an orderly fashion.”¹²⁸

K. Knowledge is conceived as the negation of ignorance. This follows the practice of lexicographers wishing to avoid the definition of common terms whose meanings they consider self-evident. It does not explain anything, not even where it is expanded to include certain other elements.

1. “Knowledge is an attribute (*sifah*) through which ignorance, doubt, or conjecturing is removed from him who is alive.”¹²⁹ Cf. J-2.

L. Knowledge is the result of an intuition coming from outside or as the result of introspection. This category of definitions is meant to present examples of those proposed by mystics or holding a special appeal for them. In contrast to the other categories, this one has the material arranged according to the approximate

¹²⁴ Cf. Abû l-Hasan al-‘Âmirî, as quoted in the Bodleian Ms. or. Marsh 539, fol. 124a Cf., further, Ibn Khaldûn, *Muqqaddimah*, trans. F. Rosenthal, II, 415, n. 10 (New York 1958, 1067); S. M. Stern, in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, VII (1962), 234–52.

¹²⁵ Cf. below, pp. 246 ff.

¹²⁶ Cf. al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, fol. 2b, who refers to Ibn Fûrak. Al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, has a somewhat abbreviated version, omitting “existence” and “to act well”, as does at-Tahânahâwî, 1058, ll. 8 f. The Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, combines this with the following definition as follows: “Knowledge is that which enables him who possesses the attribute of (knowledge) to act in an orderly fashion and to act well.”

¹²⁷ Cf. Ibn Hâzm, *Ihkâm*, I, 38. Ibn Hâzm polemizes here against Ibn Fûrak, whom he does not mention by name.

¹²⁸ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustâfi*, I, 16, with added discussion. Cf. also ‘Abd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 5.

¹²⁹ Cf. aş-Şâbûnî, *Kîfâyah*.

chronological sequence of the authors quoting a given definition. The building blocks of some of these definitions are obviously not in any way mystic in origin. This applies in particular to L-2 and 6 with their clear philosophical antecedents. And we have also seen already definitions mentioned by mystics such as Ibn 'Arabî which appear to fit much better in other categories, quite apart from some that reflect mystical terminology and thinking, although their reporters cannot be simply classified as Sûfîs.

1. "Knowledge is the revelation (*tajallî*) of things themselves."¹³⁰ Note the use of the verb *tajallâ* in D-10.

2. "Knowledge is the falling of the soul's sight (*basâr*) upon the universals."¹³¹

3. "Knowledge is a light thrust by God into the heart."¹³² For the concept of knowledge as light, see below, pp. 155 ff.

4. "The knower is he whom God allows to witness (*ashhadahû*) His divinity and essence, while he is not (yet) possessed by a state (*ḥâl*). Knowledge is his state, but on condition that a distinction be made between it and gnosis (*ma'rîfah*) and the gnostic ('ârif)."¹³³

5. "The arrival of the knowledge of a thing whatever it may be and its perfect cognition (*ma'rîfah*) is based upon union (*ittihâd*) with the given object of knowledge, and union with a thing is based upon the cessation of everything whereby the knower is distinguished from the object known."¹³⁴

6. "Knowledge is intuition (*badîhah*) as well as acquisition (*iktiṣâb*)."¹³⁵ This hardly qualifies as a "definition" of knowledge, although it is listed as such by Ibn Sab'în. The fact that Ibn Sab'în lists evident knowledge next to acquired knowledge in this fashion would seem to indicate that for him, the philosophical-theological assumption of the existence of such knowledge corresponded with the mystic's desire for divinely inspired knowledge.

¹³⁰ Cf. al-Hakîm at-Tirmidhî, *Mas'alah fi l-fârq bayn al-îlm wa-l-fîqh*, as quoted by U. I. Yaḥyâ, in the introduction of his edition of al-Hakîm at-Tirmidhî's *Khatm al-awliyâ'*, 65 (Beirut 1965).

¹³¹ Cf. *Kitâb as-Sâ'âdah*, 58, where this definition is ascribed to Plato; Ibn Bukhtîshû', *Râwdah*, 46.

¹³² Cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qût al-qulûb*, I, 197 (Cairo 1351/1932).

¹³³ Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûhât*, II, 129; *İshlâh as-Sîfîyah*, 15 (Hyderabad 1367/1948, in Vol. II of *Rasâ'il Ibn 'Arabî*).

¹³⁴ Cf. al-Qônawî, *an-Nafâhât al-ilâhiyyah*, Ms. Bursa Ulu Cami 1669, (dated in the beginning of Dhû l-Hijjah 872/June 1468), fols. 16b–17a. See above, p. 50.

¹³⁵ Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Budd* (13).

7. “Knowledge is that which the soul desires.”¹³⁶

8. “Knowledge is the falling of the soul (‘s sight)¹³⁷ upon that which is concealed deep inside it (*fi sirrihâ*), and its stopping there and not coming out from it and leaving it.”¹³⁸

9. “Knowledge, is a secret (*sirr*) that is thrust into the soul. If it is applied to the discernment (*tamyîz*) of the existing things, the careful searcher of the object sought, who controls a thing entirely and comprehends the newly arising object of perception, its essence, and its substance absolutely, finds it...”¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Cf. Ibn Sab‘în, *Budd* (11).

¹³⁷ My copy of the text, omitting the words in brackets, may be faulty, cf. L-2.

¹³⁸ Cf. Ibn Sab‘în, *Budd* (10).

¹³⁹ Cf. Ibn Sab‘în, *Budd* (16). This definition goes on to include G-2 and 9.

CHAPTER FIVE

KNOWLEDGE IS ISLAM (Theology and Religious Science)

1. BOOKS AND CHAPTERS “ON KNOWLEDGE”

The root ‘-l-m occurs frequently in the literature concerned with the traditions of the Prophet. This fact is not surprising. It is confirmed by the many pages of references listed in *Concordance*, IV, 313a25–339b39. It is, perhaps, not surprising either, but not quite as expected, that some monographs on traditions on knowledge were soon written and that the collections of *hadîth*, which laid the foundations for the religio-legal complex of later Islam, came to include special chapters, or “books,” devoted to the topic of “knowledge.”

The great legal compilation of the Imam Mâlik (b. ca. 91/710, d. 179/795) takes us back into the eighth century. The *Muwaṭṭa'* contains a chapter on “the search after knowledge,” which occurs within the context of other moral prescriptions. It consists of only one tradition, or rather, wisdom saying, going back to Mâlik himself, which quotes the pre-Islamic sage from the Qur’ân, Luqmân, as exhorting his son in these words: “Son, sit at the feet of the scholars and close to them, for God gives life to the hearts through the light of wisdom, like as He gives life to the dead soil through rain from heaven.”¹ This saying is quoted by later authors in a number of slightly different recensions.² Unfortunately,

¹ Cf. Mâlik. *Muwaṭṭa'*, 1002 (Cairo 1370/1951): IV, 429 f. (Cairo 1355/1936), with the commentary of az-Zurqâni, which does not add anything of importance.

² Cf. al-Jâhîz, *Bayân*, ed. ‘Abd-as-Salâm Hârûn. II, 149 (Cairo 1367–69/1948–50), where another long saying ascribed to Luqmân is similarly introduced; *Rasâ’il Ikhwâni as-saŷâ’*, I, 272; al-Mubashshir, 265, II. 6 and 8, where similar remarks are ascribed to Luqmân, while the saying in the form it has in the *Muwaṭṭa'* appears on p. 272, 11 10 f., followed there by references—rare in al-Mubashshir—to Muslim conditions: ath-Thâlabî, *Qîsâs-al-anbiyâ'*, in the chapter on Luqmân, corresponding only to the first half of the saying; al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ'*, I, 8, trans. N. A. Faris, 17; Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 106, quoting Mâlik, on his authority and that of other scholars, with some slight distortion, in one place obviously due to the printer; az-Zamakhsharî, *Râbi' al-*

nothing can be said about its earlier history, except that it does not seem to occur in the related wisdom literature going under the name of Ahiqar. It might very well have been derived from an old collection of wisdom sayings of non-Arab or Arab origin. It might even have been invented by Mâlik himself, although this would seem to be very unlikely. The absence from the *Muwaṭṭa'* of other and, from the Islamic point of view, more authoritative quotations is significant. It indicates that Mâlik was not aware of other relevant material that he might have considered worthy of inclusion in his work in this particular connection. There is no reason in the world why he should not have included it, had he known about it and thought it genuine and important. There was every reason to mention it. None of the material included in the chapters on *‘ilm* in later *ḥadīth* collections is referred to in Mâlik’s chapter on *‘ilm*, a clear indication that the situation which led to the inclusion of that material had not yet reached the stage which suggested, if it did not demand, its inclusion. In Mâlik’s generation, *‘ilm* apparently had not yet achieved the stage of a problem in traditionist religious thought and scholarly methodology.

Of the large *ḥadīth* collections only those which arrange their material topically, as against works arranged according to transmitters, are of interest to us here. The largest part of the earlier literature of this type preceding the six so-called “canonical” collections, has not yet been recovered or is known so far only in fragmentary fashion. The *Jāmi‘* of the Egyptian jurist, ‘Abdallâh b. Wahb (b. 125/742–43, d. Sha'bân 25, 197/May 1, 813), whose principal teacher had been the Imam Mâlik and who was supposedly nicknamed “Dîwân al-‘ilm” because of his vast knowledge,³ included a “Book on Knowledge.” This we learn from quotations in Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr’s *Jāmi‘*. Ibn Wahb’s *Kitâb id-‘Ilm* cited statements by Mâlik to the effect that “knowledge does not rest in the large amount of transmitted material, but it is a light that God has placed in the hearts of men,” and that “knowledge and wisdom are a light by which God guides whomever He wishes;

abrâr, Istanbul Ms. Fatih 3894 (written in 857/1453), fol. 25b; Ibn ‘Arabî, *Futûhât*, IV, 513; al-Ibshîhî. *Mustâraf*, I, 25. Al-Baṭalyawî, *al-Insâf fî i-tanbîh ‘alâ l-asbâb*, 78 (Cairo 1319), cites Luqmân’s remark as an example for the metaphoric use of life and death for knowledge and ignorance (which, according to al-Baṭalyawî, is one of thirteen such metaphoric uses of life and death).

³ Cf. Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhîb*, VI, 73 (Hyderabad 1325–27).

they are not the large number of problems.” Ibn Wahb also stated on Mâlik’s authority that “it is part of a man’s happiness to be blessed with being right and good, as it is part of his unhappiness not to cease making mistakes.” His *Kitâb al-Ilm* also featured the tradition warning against supposititious traditions: “He who ascribes to me something I did not say, let him take his deserved place in the Fire; he who gives misleading advice to his friend who asks him for advice cheats him; and the fault for (mistakes resulting from) a *fatwâ* given to someone without sufficient grounding in the subject rests with the one who gives it to him.”⁴ The few complete books of Ibn Wahb’s *Jâmi’* that have been preserved and published⁵ do not comprise the *Kitâb al-Ilm*. Thus, nothing definite can be said about the position it occupied within the work or about its contents.

Almost two generations after Mâlik, the great Shâfi’î (150–204/767–820) wrote a special treatise on “The Sum Total of Knowledge” (*Jimâ’ al-ilm*).⁶ To ash-Shâfi’î, “knowledge” meant the establish-

⁴ Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, II, 25, 72, 115 f., and, without express reference to Ibn Wahb’s *Jâmi’*, I, 17 f. The first of the statements quoted above is quoted in Abû Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, VI, 319, with other relevant statements. It is credited to ‘Abdallâh b. Mas’ûd in al-Ghazzâli, *Ihyâ’*, I, 44, trans. N.A. Faris, 128, cf. also below, pp. 161 and 165; al-‘Almawî, *Mu’id*, 30. The statement of Ibn Wahb on the authority of Mâlik: “Wisdom, I think, is insight (*fiqh*) into the religion of God.” is presumably derived from his *Jâmi’*. Many other quotations from Ibn Wahb in Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr (*Jâmi’*, I, 135, 162, 190, II, 7, 11, 25, 32, 45, 52, 54, 58, 60, 80, 98, 123, 133–138, 141, 143, 140, 159, 165 f., 173 f.) may possibly go back to the *Kitâb al-Ilm* of Ibn Wahb’s *Jâmi’*. However, this remains uncertain. In one instance (Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, II, 53 f.), the source is indicated to be Ibn Wahb’s *Kitâb al-Majâlis* (see below, p. 310, n. 5).

Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qût*, 1, 200, 11. 5 ff., quotes Ibn Wahb as follows: “The search for knowledge (*talab al-ilm*) was mentioned in Mâlik’s presence, and he said, ‘Searching for knowledge is good, and spreading knowledge is good, if it is done with the right intention, but look and find out what behooves you, from morn to night, and from night to morn, and do not give preference over that to anything.’”

For knowledge conceived as light, cf. below, ch. VI. Mâlik also speaks about “the light of knowledge” in a statement attributed to him to the effect that quarrelsomeness and disputation cause the light of knowledge to disappear, cf. Ibn Rajab, *Fadl ilm as-salaf*, 22 (Cairo, n. y.). For knowledge conceived as guidance, cf. also al-Ibshîhî, *Mustâraf*, I, 28: “Knowledge is light and guidance. Ignorance is erring and perdition.”

⁵ Ed. J. David-Weill (Cairo 1939–48, *Publications de l’Institut français d’archéol. or. et textes arabes* 3–4), cf. *GAL*, 2nd ed., I, 163, *Suppl.*, I, 257; F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, I, 466 (Leiden 1967–).

⁶ Included in ash-Shâfi’î, *Umm*, VII, 250–62, but originally an independent work and known as such to later scholars. Cf. also below, p. 232.

ment of legal principles. It is embodied in the four fundamental sources of law upon which the legal system of Muslim jurists came to be based and which ash-Shâfi‘î discusses here. The highly sophisticated character of the brief treatise leaves little doubt that the more elementary occupation of *hadîth* scholars with “knowledge” as they understood it preceded that of ash-Shâfi‘î (and his predecessors in this respect in the legal field if there, were any), but the *Jimâ‘ al-ilm* is the earliest genuine example so far known of a methodological discussion of “knowledge” in monograph form.⁷

The slightly younger Abû Khaythamah (b. 160/776–77. d. 234/849) wrote a *Musnâd*, which is not preserved,⁸ but he also wrote a monograph entitled *Kîtâb al-ilm* which is preserved and is of great importance; for the history of the treatment of knowledge by *hadîth* scholars.⁹ Abû Khaythamah’s *Kîtâb al-ilm* contains 163 traditions, a few of which are duplicates. One tradition is ascribed to Moses and was apparently included because the three questions Moses addresses to God include one about the best judge (*ahkam*) among men. Another tradition is ascribed to Jesus and is an almost literal quotation of the second half of Matthew 5:19. Quite a few of the traditions concern conditions or persons after the time of the Prophet. Most of them are ascribed to the first generation of Muslims. Less than a dozen go back to the Prophet himself. One of these is ascribed in one place to the Prophet, and in another to Ibn ‘Abbâs (nos. 25 and 17). While it is impossible to ascertain whether or not the material attributed to the Prophet goes in fact back to him, it is clear that the Prophetic authorship assumed for a large number of traditions dealing with “knowledge” in later times is the result of the process, worked out by J. Schacht for jurisprudence, of the attribution of traditions slowly working its way back in time.

There is no discernible order in Abû Khaythamah’s arrangement

⁷ The legal principles of the Hanbalite school were treated in a *Book on Knowledge* by al-Khallâl (d. 311/923, cf. *GAL Suppl.*, I, 311), according to Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Ímân*, 333 (Damascus 1381/1961), a passage quoted in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., I, 274b. However, there seems to be some uncertainty as to the exact title of al-Khallâl’s work.

⁸ Cf. Ibn an-Nâdîm, *Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, 230, 1, 9 (Leipzig 1871–72) = 321, 1, 12 (Cairo 1348). For Abû Khaythamah, cf. Sezgin, I, 107; adh-Dhahabî, *Tbar*, ed. Șalâh ad-dîn al-Munajjid, I, 416 (Kuwait 1960–66).

⁹ Ed. M. Nâṣîr-ad-dîn al-Albânî, in a collection entitled: *Min Kunûz as-sunnah: Rasâ‘îl arba‘*, 103–149 (Damascus, n.y. [1385]).

of his material. Occasionally, traditions going back to the same authority are grouped together, as in the case of *Makhlū* (nos. 41–44) or *Masrūq* (nos. 46–50). The purpose, however, of all the material brought together by *Abū Khaythamah* is evident. It is meant to show the superiority of “knowledge”, that is, of traditional information, over independent judgment (*ra'y*, *ijtihād*, *kalām*, *qiyās*) and to set forth the educational and methodological problems involved in the transmission of “knowledge.” The religious merit of knowledge and study is exalted. Scholars are praised highly. The real religious meaning of “knowledge” is indicated. The necessity of instruction, the process of instruction, the role of memorization versus written transmission, the reluctance required in expressing legal opinions the relationship of knowledge and action—all these matters, and many others, are dealt with in one or more traditions. It is clear at this point that the discussion of “knowledge” in traditionist thought served primarily educational ends. In fact, while at first slanted toward the needs of traditionist and legal education, the same principles were transferred later to Muslim education in general and are reflected in Muslim educational literature.¹⁰ It also seems a likely assumption that the accumulation of material for the traditionist and legal discussion of “knowledge” in the educational and methodological sense had reached the stage where it warranted coherent presentation during the first half of the eighth century.

The same situation is, in a somewhat different way, also indicated in the important *Muṣannaf* of the Kūfan transmitter, *Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Shaybah* (b. 159/775–76, d. 235/849). Like *Abū Khaythamah*’s small monograph, the many volumes of the *Muṣannaf* do not deal exclusively with Prophetic traditions. The work includes throughout statements and opinions of early Muslims on a great variety of topics, and it pays considerable attention to such subjects as historical data, something we do not find in later *hadīth* collections. *Ibn Abī Shaybah*’s *Muṣannaf* may, in fact, be viewed as a literary form all its own which was discontinued when, on the one hand, *hadīth* works concentrated on the Prophet and religiously relevant information and, on the other, a vast accumulation of secular entertaining, morally edifying, and educational material made the composition of separate, quasi-secular *adab* works

¹⁰ Cf. below, pp. 280 ff.

possible and desirable. Or, the *Muṣannaf* might have constituted an attempt to draw the ancient tradition of *adab* writing into the realm of religious scholarship. Characteristically, Ibn Abī Shaybah’s concern with “knowledge” expresses itself within the framework of a “Book on *Adab*.¹¹ Well tucked away somewhere in the middle of the voluminous compilation, the chapter on *adab* is preceded by sections on medicine and dress. Ibn Abī Shaybah’s treatment of “knowledge” reflects the greatly varied interests of *adab* authors and shows scant affinity to the approach of the collectors of *ḥadīth*. The “Book on *Adab*” begins with remarks on kindness and gentleness (*mâ dhukira fī r-rifq wa-t-tū’adah*) and continues with traditions concerning a great many other good or bad qualities of character and modes of behavior, such as the proper forms of greeting and so on. Considerable space is devoted to the attitude of the Prophet and the, early Muslims toward piety as an important component of *adab*. The part of the chapter dealing with *‘ilm* occupies only about, one-fifth of it and is, moreover, interspersed with paragraphs on such subjects as backgammon, chess, the game of “fourteen” (*arba’ata ‘ashara* or, with its Persian name in an Arabicized form, *shahārdah*), and children’s games. Among the subjects discussed we find studying (*talab al-‘ilm*) and teaching, studying for the sake of gaining worldly esteem, and traveling in quest of knowledge. The “Book on *Adab*” is immediately followed by a brief “book” on traditional information set down in writing (*al-ḥadīth fī l-karāris*).¹² It deals with opinions about the permissibility of or the dislike for the written fixation of “knowledge,” but it also has a section on what a man must learn himself or teach his children. The problem of whether or not a teacher may accept payment for his services, incidentally, is treated elsewhere in the *Muṣannaf*.¹³ The following “book” then deals with a legal

¹¹ Cf. the following Istanbul manuscripts of the *Muṣannaf*: Murad Molla 599 (according to the present numbering), containing the “Book on *Adab*” on fols. 166b–207a, with the sections on knowledge appearing on fols. 199b–207a, and the *Kitāb al-Ḥadīth fī l-karāris* on fols. 207a–226b (fols. 137a–292b of the manuscript were, it seems, written in the fourteenth century; the rest is dated in 1094/1683); Nuru Osmaniye 1219 (dated in 1088/1677), fols. 48b–76a (71a–76a) and 76b–89a; Topkapusaray Ahmet III 498, Vol. 5 (Catalogue Karatay-Reşer 2563), fols. 171a–210a and 210a–227a.

¹² Cf. *Concordance*, V, 559a3–5; Abū Khaythamah, no. 93 (?).

¹³ Cf. Ms. Köprülü, I, 442, fols. 186b–188a; Topkapusaray Ahmet III 498, Vol. 4, fol. 270.

subject, the payment of blood money (*dīyāt*). No order is readily discernible in Ibn Abī Shaybah's arrangement of topics concerning knowledge, most certainly because there was none. The view that a coherent discussion of "knowledge" could serve as a suitable and, indeed, necessary foundation and introduction for a work on religious traditions was apparently still too new, and the *adab* outlook of the *Muṣannaf* militated against imitating the *ḥadīth* scholars' preoccupation with methods for the defense and preservation of their "knowledge."

The situation is already different in the *ḥadīth* work of ad-Dārimī (181–235/797–865) who represents the next generation. Ad-Dārimī's compilation does not contain what could be called a special "book" on *‘ilm*. However, a large, part of its introduction is given over to individual chapters (*bāb*) that discuss various aspects of *‘ilm* as illustrated by statements of the Prophet and, mostly, other early Muslim authorities.¹⁴ Beginning with a discussion of the excellence of the Prophet, ad-Dārimī soon leads over to his proper subject, the Prophetic traditions and their transmission. It is in this connection that he speaks, among other matters, about such subjects as the recommendable imitation of scholars, the threatening danger of a disappearance of "knowledge," or the need of acting in accordance with one's knowledge and its approved use. He speaks of the tradition that "knowledge is fear and piety," of the importance of the right intent and the blame-worthiness of seeking knowledge not for the sake of God, of the equal treatment due to all students of traditional knowledge, and of the honor that belongs to scholars. Then, he goes into the problems of the transmission of traditional knowledge and whether or not its fixation in writing is permissible. He includes a chapter on traveling in quest of knowledge and on the appropriate behavior that preserves the dignity of knowledge, on the interpretation and the discussion and study of traditions and their use for rendering legal decisions, and the like. He concludes his discussion of *‘ilm* with a chapter illustrating the reverence due to knowledge. More in the *adab* tradition than in that of austere *ḥadīth* scholarship, this chapter consists of three rather lengthy sermons expounding the wisdom of true religious scholars who teach the right ethical approach toward life, including an epistle by the eighth-century

¹⁴ I used the Istanbul Ms. Reiselküttap 257, fols. 18b–43a.

Abû ‘Utbah ‘Abbâd b. ‘Abbâd al-Khawwâs¹⁵ that begins with a praise of intelligence (*aql*). This constitutes the end of ad-Dârimî’s general introduction. Ad-Dârimî clearly anticipates the development that led to the introductory “book on knowledge.” While he still appears to be undecided as to the overall and systematic importance of the concept, he is, to our knowledge, the first author of one of the large *hadîth* collections to use the discussion of “knowledge” as a general introduction.

A quotation from a *Kitâb al-Mârifah* by al-Hasan b. ‘Alî al-Halwânî (d. 242/857) suggests that, in spite of the use of the word *ma’rifah*,¹⁶ al-Halwânî’s treatise was in fact also a traditionist study of knowledge, but another quotation seems to indicate a wider range of topics.¹⁷ A *Kitâb Jâmi‘ al-ilm* by an early Shi‘ah author, al-Ḥuṣayn b. Mukhâriq as-Salûlî, who lived in the ninth century, may also have dealt with knowledge after the manner and in the spirit of *hadîth* scholars.¹⁸ A title credited to the founder of the Zâhirî school, Dâwûd b. ‘Alî (b. ca. 815, d. 270/884): “Traditions that make knowledge necessary” (*Kitâb al-Khabar al-mûjib li-l-ilm*), should presumably be corrected to... *li-l-‘amal* and translated “...that require acting (in accordance with them).”¹⁹ It is also by no means certain that *ilm* in the title of a work by Ibn Abî Sarh, who wrote in 274/887: “Book on Knowledge and what has been mentioned about it,” is the correct reading. If it is, the work may have dealt with the merits of knowledge in a secular sense and thus have stood close to the beginnings of a long chain of literary effusions in praise of knowledge.²⁰

¹⁵ Cf. Sezgin, I, 519, where, however, ‘Abhâd b. ‘Abbâd is wrongly identified with the person mentioned by Ibn Hajar, *Tâdhîb*, V, 95. Like ad-Dârimî’s ‘Abbâd b. ‘Abbâd, the one mentioned by Sezgin is listed by Ibn Hajar, *Tâdhîb*, V, 97.

¹⁶ For the frequent occurrence of *ma’rifah* in the titles of early Shi‘ah and Mu’tazilah works, cf. below, pp. 146 ff.

¹⁷ Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi‘*, I, 85; also I, 89, 102, II, 80, where no title is indicated, as against Ibn Hâjâr, *Fâth al-bârî*, VI, 384 (Cairo 1378/1959). For al-Halwânî, cf. Ibn Hajar, *Tâdhîb*, II, 302 f., where he is mentioned as the author of a *sunan* work. The *Kilâb al-Mârifah wa-l-yaqîn* by the famous Mâlikite Ibn Abi Zayd, which is listed in Ibn Farhûn, *Dîbâj*, 137 (Cairo 1351), would seem to have been a work on theology, dealing with the acquisition of certainty in the knowledge about God.

¹⁸ Cf. *Fihrist*, 192, 1, 21 = 272, 1, 21; at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 82 f. (Najaf 1380/1961). Ibn Mukhâriq’s lifetime is approximately fixed by the *isnâd* mentioned in at-Tûsî.

¹⁹ Cf. *Fihrist*, 217, 11, 13 f. = 305, 11, 4 f.

²⁰ Cf. *Fihrist*, 128, 1, 5 = 182, II, 2f.; J. A. Bellamy, in *JAO*, LXXXI (1961), 226. Cf. also below, p. 279.

No chapter on knowledge expressly so designated appears in two of the six so-called authoritative collections of traditions, those of Ibn Mâjah and an-Nasâ'i, as will be discussed later. The other four do have “books” on knowledge of some length. They show some variety not so much in their contents as in the emphasis they place on the material they report. The oldest of the six, and the most influential, al-Bukhârî (194–256/810–870), made another change which proved to be very effective. He transposed the ‘book on knowledge’ from its relatively obscure position in the middle of the work to near the beginning. Al-Bukhârî starts out by dealing with a historical subject that can claim pride of place both as to time and as to importance, that is, the beginnings of the Prophet’s divine mission. As al-Bukhârî’s commentators were quick to point out, this serves as a sort of perfunctory introduction and cannot be considered a regular “book” of the work. Next, al-Bukhârî devotes a “book” to the subject of “faith” (*īmân*). It is true faith which justifies and, indeed, demands the composition of works on the traditions of the Prophet with all that goes with them. After the discussion of faith, and before he goes into the detailed exposition of all Muslim religious duties, al-Bukhârî presents his *Kitâb al-‘ilm*. Its position indicates that in the author’s view, the subject of “knowledge” is as basic as, or more so than, the beginnings of Muhammad’s mission and true faith. A look at the contents of his “book on knowledge” clearly shows why he considered this to be so. On the surface, the material of the “book” seems to be chosen rather arbitrarily, and its arrangement to be quite unsystematic. However, this is in a way deceptive, as the following analysis of the contents shows:²¹

1. A chapter heading only, referring to Qur’ân 58:11/12 (cf. 2:234/234, etc.) as well as 20:114/113, in praise of knowledge and its importance.

2. The method to be followed in communicating religious information: A story of the Prophet to the effect that he did not interrupt the discussion he was engaged in when he was asked some other question.—A story about speaking loudly while exhorting people to fulfill their religious duties or risk damnation.—

²¹ I used the text of al-Bukhârî’s *Sahîh* with the commentaries of Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bârî*, I, 149–241; al-‘Aynî, *‘Umdat al-qârî*, I, 379–641; and al-Qastallânî, *Irshâd as-sârî*, I, 178–261. The numbering of topics in al-Bukhârî and the other *hadîth* collections, as it appears here, has been supplied by me.

On the choice of the most appropriate expressions (such as "he told us," etc.) to introduce a tradition.—A parable comparing Muslims to a tree that does not shed its leaves; the same parable is used to make the point that it is good pedagogical practice not to explain the solution of a problem right away but to ask the listeners first whether they are able to find the solution by themselves, in order to test their knowledge.

3. A chapter heading only, referring again to Qur'ân 20:114/113.

4. On the various possible methods of studying: Reading to a teacher; listening to him (this includes the famous story of people listening while a Bedouin questions the Prophet about the essentials of Islam); and, on the basis of 'Uthmân's sending out of written copies of the Qur'ân and of the Prophet's writing of letters on various occasions, writing down traditions and transmitting them when knowledge of them was acquired through written material (the chapter heading uses the technical term *munâwalah* used for this procedure in the science of *hadîth*).—A story illustrating the proper selection of his seat by a student who comes to class when it is already in session.—Those attending a session are required to inform those who did not about what went on in class, even if the latter know the material better in the first place.

5. A chapter heading only, referring to Qur'ân 47:19/21 (the *shahâdah*) and 35:28/25 (the scholars' particular reverence for God), etc.—Traditions indicating the precedence of knowing over speaking; scholars being the heirs of the prophets; the search for knowledge opening up the road to Paradise; God giving insight (*faqqâha*) into religious matters to those whom He likes; knowledge being attained only through study; Ibn 'Abbâs interpreting the word *rabbâniyûn* as those who educate (*yurâbbî*) people first in less important matters, and then in the more important ones. The last statement is expanded by references to the need for a skilful spacing of exhortations; they should not be given too frequently, nor should they be too frightening. Similarly, the tradition that God gives insight into religious matters to those whom He likes is to be understood in the sense that individuals are given such insight in different degrees, for the spiritual well-being of the community. Some individuals are quicker than others in understanding. This is illustrated again by the parable referred to under 2.

6. Statements in praise of knowledge by the caliph 'Umar, recommending that a person gain knowledge (*f-q-h*) before he is

to assume leadership, and by Muḥammad to the effect that two persons are to be envied, the person who is given property by God and is enabled to spend it wisely, and the person who is given wisdom by God and renders judgment by it (*yaqdi bihâ*)²² and teaches it to others.

7. Statements on the necessity of studying are found in Qur'ân 18:66/65 with the story of Mûsâ and al-Khiḍr, which also illustrates the need for traveling long distances in quest of knowledge, and in the tradition: "God, teach him the Book," which proves the necessity of teaching the Qur'ân. It is necessary to start out studying at a very young age. The Prophet does not mind when 'Abdallâh b. al-'Abbâs joins the prayer at an age just approaching puberty. The Prophet spits a little water upon a five-year old.—The need for knowing and teaching is illustrated by the Prophet's comparison of the right guidance and knowledge given him by God for his Prophetic mission with plentiful rain falling upon good soil and creating fertility, and falling upon depressed ground and being of no use.

8. One of the signs of the Hour is the disappearance of knowledge.

9. The Prophet dreams of drinking milk (*laban*) and passing the vessel from which he is drinking on to 'Umar. This refers to knowledge and its transmission.

10. Instances of situations in which religious information can be communicated, and of the ways and means of communicating religious information: Stories illustrating the necessity of communicating religious knowledge and of traveling in order to obtain it; the possibility of sharing information with a fellow-student; the need for the teacher to exercise restraint when he gets angry under questioning; and the recommendable procedure of frequent repetition in teaching. The Prophet repeated every *salâm* or remark (cf. above, under 2) three times.

11. The permissibility of giving instruction to women: The Prophet speaks of the three kinds of persons who can expect to receive a twofold reward. Among them is the person who gives a good education to his maid-servant, then manumits and marries her.—The Prophet himself exhorted women.

12. Muslims ought to prove themselves eager to study traditions.

²² This is the translation suggested by the commentators, but since al-Bukhârî makes little of the relevance of *ḥadîth* to jurisprudence in this chapter, he may have conceived here of the phrase in a more general way.

This is illustrated by the Prophet’s praise for Abû Hurayrah’s eagerness in inquiring about the person most deserving of the Prophet’s intercession on the Day of Resurrection.

13. Knowledge will not be taken away from mankind, but scholars will disappear. When no scholar remains, stupid men will be put in command. They will go astray themselves as well as lead others astray.

14. The need for regular and constant instruction: The Prophet set aside one particular day for the exhortation of women.—‘A’ishah’s example shows that it is necessary to consult an authority repeatedly about a matter, until one understands it fully.—The students who were in attendance must inform those who were not (cf. above, under 4).

15. Famous statements warning against the falsification of traditions: “Do not ascribe falsehoods to me,” and “He who ascribes falsehoods to me intentionally, let him take his deserved place in the Fire.” There are several, slightly different recensions.

16. Stories that have nothing to do with *ilm*, except that they mention the writing down of religious information and thus have relevance to the process of instruction.

17. It is recommendable to study even at unusual hours: The Prophet woke up in the night and had his household awakened in order to exhort them.—The Prophet prayed and exhorted people after nightfall.

18. The great number of existing traditions calls for good memories. Abû Hurayrah was cured of forgetfulness by the Prophet personally, so that he was able thereafter to boast of his tremendous knowledge of traditions.

19. The required behavior of teachers and students in class: The Prophet gives orders that people be kept quiet and be forced to listen.—Nobody should claim that he knows best. This ought to be left to God, as illustrated again by the story of Mûsâ and al-Khiḍr.—The Prophet was addressed by a man who was standing while he himself was sitting, and had to look up to the questioner.—Religious information may be imparted even while throwing pebbles at Minâ.—Even obnoxious questioners may be tolerated, as illustrated in the questioning of the Prophet by the Jews and his forbearance (Qur’ân 17:85/87).

20. Not all religious information is to be communicated to everybody, because it may be misunderstood and cause harm.

The Prophet entrusted some of his secret ideas to 'Â'ishah. She revealed one that concerned the Ka'bah to 'Abdallâh b. az-Zubayr.—'Alî said: “Tell people only what they understand, so that they will not ascribe falsehoods to God and His Prophet.”—The Prophet himself recommended keeping secret his statement that the *shahâdah* protects those who pronounce it from Hell and that the avoidance of polytheism (*shirk*) guarantees Paradise. His purpose was to prevent people from relying upon it and using it as a pretext for omitting to do good deeds.

21. Bashfulness (*hayâd'*) belongs to knowledge. Mujâhid, however, said that neither a bashful nor a haughty person was able to acquire knowledge. On the other hand, 'Â'ishah stated that their natural bashfulness did not prevent women from getting insight (*tafâqqaha*) into religious matters (cf. above, under 5). Again, the parable of the tree (cf. above, under 2) is quoted to show that it was young Ibn al-'Abbâs' bashfulness that prevented him from coming out with the right answer on a certain occasion.—If a man is bashful, as was 'Alî with regard to a sexual problem he had, someone else may be asked to go and elicit the information required.

22. Religious information, such as the question as to where to put on the *ihrâm* upon approaching the holy territory, may be inquired about in a mosque.

23. In reply to a question as to how the *muhrim* must dress, the Prophet went at length into what he must *not* wear, etc. This proves the teacher's freedom to handle problems put to him as he sees fit.

A rather clear picture emerges from the preceding analysis of the contents of al-Bukhârî's chapter on knowledge. It could hardly be expected that the arrangement adopted by the author would be a strictly systematic one. However, one easily notices the definite purpose behind the choice and arrangement of the material which gives the chapter a considerable degree of unity. Al-Bukhârî discusses the procedures to be followed by the teacher of “knowledge,” that is, traditional religious information, and those to be followed by the student. At the end of the entire “book,” he refers again to the behavior of both teacher and student during instruction, to the quality of bashfulness in students, and to the liberty of teachers to teach whatever they consider necessary and appropriate in a given situation. In between, the author, interspersing

his discussion with the customary praise of knowledge, dwells on the need for knowledge and instruction. He stresses the urgency of that need by citing the Prophet to the effect that the disappearance of knowledge and of scholars will herald the end of the world, and by referring to the existence of that need even under the most unusual circumstances, even for women, even at odd hours. A correlate of the urgent need for knowledge and the instruction in it is the necessity to avoid wrong teachings and the instruction in matters for which the student may be unprepared. Al-Bukhârî is concerned with justifying his meticulous and detailed approach to the study of *hadîth*. An exposition of scholarly methodology seemed to him the proper way of doing it. His “Book on Knowledge” comes after the discussion of the theological problem of “faith,” but it was not meant to deal with “knowledge” in any theological sense. As a matter of fact, the term *îlm* occurs rather infrequently in the text itself of the traditions reported. It occurs frequently elsewhere in the chapter and, in particular, in the chapter headings, which are very helpful in explaining why a particular story or tradition has been mentioned in the context. Without them, we would often be at a loss as to the relevance of the material cited to the subject of “knowledge.” A late commentator on al-Bûkhârî’s work, al-‘Aynî, states correctly that “the Book on Knowledge deals with the explanation of what is connected with knowledge, and not with the explanation of the essence of knowledge, because the study of the essences and real meanings (*haqâ’iq*) of things forms no part of the work.”²³ It is understood throughout that “knowledge” is exclusively religious knowledge. More particularly, it is the discipline to which the work is devoted, that is, the scholarly investigation of Prophetic traditions. The philosophical or theological concern with the meaning of knowledge does not enter al-Bukhârî’s “Book on Knowledge.” It is, as we have seen, an exposition of the most suitable method of higher education.

Turning now to Abû Dâwûd (202–275/817–889)—it is difficult and, perhaps, not very important to decide upon the exact chronological sequence, but Abû Dâwûd may have been slightly older than the following Muslim although he survived him by more than a decade—we encounter a considerable difference in emphasis.

²³ Al-‘Aynî, *Umdat al-qâri*, I, 379. Cf. also Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bârî*, I, 149, who includes a reference to Abû Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabî and his general attitude toward *îlm* as cited above, pp. 50 f.

Abû Dâwûd's "Book on Knowledge" still occupies an inconspicuous position within the body of the work. The subject of "knowledge" is thus characterized as just one of the various procedures requiring guidance from precedents set by the Prophet. However, it follows directly upon the book dealing with the judiciary, which is the most important part of the Islamic religious structure. Abû Dâwûd's "Book on Knowledge" can be briefly analyzed as follows:²⁴

1. Statements in praise of knowledge: The search for knowledge opens up a road to Paradise; scholars are more excellent than pious worshipers to the same degree in which the full moon is more excellent than all the other stars; scholars are the heirs of the prophets, leaving behind them not money but knowledge, etc.

2. Information given by non-Muslims is to be accepted but without comment as to its truth or falseness.

3. The written fixation of religious information: The Prophet permitted his speech during the last pilgrimage to be written down, and he also said. "Write it down, for truly, only what is true comes forth from my mouth." But he is also said to have forbidden expressly that any such information be set down in writing.

4. Against falsifying traditions: "He who ascribes falsehoods to me intentionally, let him take his deserved place in the Fire."—The use of "opinion" (that is, the use of other than traditional information) with regard to the Qur'ân is always a mistake.

5. The necessity, method, and extent of instruction: The Prophet repeated each of his statements three times, thereby indicating the need for repetition as an educational device. He did so slowly and deliberately, without any undue haste.—No tricky questions are allowed,²⁵ and it would be wrong to put someone in a position where religious knowledge is required and to ask him questions, if it is known that he does not possess the necessary knowledge to answer them. On the other hand, the knowledge one possesses must be passed on ("He who is asked about a religious problem [*ilm*] and conceals the answer will be bridled with a bridle of fire on the Day of Resurrection"). The transmission of religious knowledge is a necessary and continuous process to be undertaken even by those

²⁴ The editions of the *Sunan*, III, 234–41, also III, 432–41 (Cairo 1369/1950), and the commentary by al-Khaṭṭâbî, *Ma'âlim as-sunnah*, IV, 182–88 (Cairo 1352/1934), have been consulted.

²⁵ Cf. below, p. 255.

who are no religious scholars in their own right and who may happen to transmit their information to men who are actually better informed than they themselves. “That one man obtains right guidance through you, is better for you than red camels.”—The transmission of religious information on the authority of Israelites is not objectionable. In fact, the Prophet did this on one occasion throughout the night.

6. The study of religious information for any kind of worldly advancement is detrimental to the student. He who does so, “will not be able to smell the perfume of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection.”—Only a man in a position of command, or someone ordered to do so, or a conceited individual²⁶ would undertake to be a *qâsî* to speak about religious matters in public. However, the Prophet himself once joined a group of ragged strangers and listened together with them to a *Qur’ân* reader. Although he was the recipient of the divine revelation, he liked to have someone else read the *Qur’ân* to him.

As in al-Bukhârî, we find here the same preoccupation with the ways and means of the transmission of traditions. The presentation, however, is much less systematic. There are fewer details, and much greater value is attached to the idea of religious merit. In a way, *îlm* is the science of traditions for Abû Dâwûd, too, as is to be expected. Yet, Abû Dâwûd did not feel compelled to consider the methodological aspects of the acquisition and transmission of knowledge for their own sake. He seems to be much more concerned with the moral values to be found in it.

The situation is totally different in the *Sahîh* of Muslim (b. ca. 202/817 or 206/821, d. 261/875). A few Prophetic traditions considered as somehow belonging together have been labeled in the *Sahîh* as its “Book on Knowledge.” It is a brief chapter. It follows upon the discussion of a theological subject, the problem of predestination (*qadar*). However, Muslim does not view *îlm* as a theological term, nor does he deal with it as a peg on which to hang the methodology of scholarship. The information he gives shapes up as follows:²⁷

1. On the occupation with the *Qur’ân*: As shown by *Qur’ân*

²⁶ For a Sûfi interpretation of the meaning of *amîr*, *ma’mûr*, and *murâ’î* in this tradition, cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qât*, I, 195 f.

²⁷ Cf. Muslim, *Sahîh*, II. 579–84 (Calcutta 1265/1849), with the commentary by an-Nawawî, *Minhâj*, V, 283–88 (Bûlâq 1283).

3:7/5, the Prophet expressed disapproval of any occupation with the “ambiguous” verses of the Qur’ân. He expressed anger at and disapproval of dissension in the interpretation of the Qur’ân. Quite generally, he disliked contentiousness. (All this clearly refers to the Qur’ân as such and is not meant to apply to religious information in general).

2. On the occupation with Prophetic traditions: The laws and customs (*sunan*) of the forefathers must be followed inch by inch even to the extent of, say, following them into a lizard’s hole, were they to enter one, and even if those forefathers were Jews or Christians or what not. The Prophet said that quibblers would come to a bad end. He repeated the words three times. (The “quibblers” here are not to be identified with those students who put tricky to their teachers, as mentioned by Abû Dâwûd. Further more, Muslim did not have in mind the necessity of repetition in the teaching process when he let the Prophet condemn the “quibblers” three times. The threefold repetition is mentioned here merely for emphasis.)

3. Various recensions of the traditions that the disappearance of knowledge is one of the signs of the approach of the Hour; that knowledge will be taken away when the Time draws near; and that it is not knowledge as such that will be taken away, but the scholars will disappear and be replaced by stupid men.

4. The establishment of good precedents, as, for instance, with regard to generosity in giving charity to the poor, or the promotion of ways of right guidance assure a divine reward for the originator of such precedents, when the good precedent he established is followed by others. Divine punishment, conversely, will hit the originators of bad precedents.

It is clear that in his chapter on knowledge, Muslim did not intend to do more than stress the role of “knowledge” in the proper interpretation of the Qur’ân and in the proper evaluation of the high esteem to be accorded to the *sunnah* of the Prophet. Knowledge is also praised perfunctorily as a religious term. In view of the fact that Muslim wrote at a time when a discussion of the methodology of “knowledge” was recognized as an intrinsic part of the science of *hadîth*, it is astonishing that so very little was made by him of the subject.

The approach of at-Tirmidhî (d. 279/892), again, is rather different. In the context of his “Book on Knowledge,” at-Tirmidhî

understood “knowledge” as referring exclusively to the science of traditions. He discussed all the material that offered hints as to the methods to be followed in this discipline, but his main purpose was to underline and exalt its importance. The position of his chapter on knowledge within his work characterizes “knowledge” as but one of the many religious duties and functions, even though, as in al-Bukhārī, it is preceded by the chapter on faith. Since at-Tirmidhī placed “knowledge” next to “faith,” he considered probably both concepts as belonging somehow together and as rating about equally on his scale of religious values. However, the “faith” he was speaking about was not a theological problem of the first rank. Rather, in his view, “faith” was to be considered a minor accessory to the performance of religious duties, and “knowledge,” consequently, was for him a similarly restricted subject. At-Tirmidhī’s “Book on Knowledge” has grown to rather large proportions:²⁸

1. “God gives insight into religious matters to those whom He likes.”
2. On the search for knowledge: “It opens up a road to Paradise;” “The person in quest of knowledge is on the path of God until he returns;” “It is an expiation for past deeds.”
3. On the necessity to pass on religious information to others: He who does not do so will be bridled with a bridle of fire on the Day of Resurrection; visiting students should be received with kindness.
4. The knowledge will not be taken away, but scholars will disappear and be replaced by stupid men. A continuation of the mere outward performance of religious duties, such as reciting the Qur’ān, does not mean that knowledge may not be on its way toward disappearance. A first sign of the disappearance of knowledge is the disappearance of humility.
5. Those who seek knowledge for any kind of worldly advancement will go to Hell.
6. A person must transmit to others religious information he has received, even if the person to whom he communicates it possesses greater knowledge than he does. The Prophet blessed someone who heard him make a statement, learned it by heart, and passed it on to others.

²⁸ Cf. at-Tirmidhī, *Sahīh*, 435–42 (Delhi 1266), with the commentary by Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Āridat al-ahwadhī*, X, 113–59.

7. “He who ascribes falsehoods to me intentionally, let him take his deserved place in the Fire,” with variations which make it plain that this tradition refers to lying transmitters of *hadîth*.

8. Disapproval was expressed of someone who refused to listen to traditions because he felt that the Qur’ân contained all the necessary information.

9. Writing down traditions: The Prophet refused permission to do so when he was asked for it, but someone who complained of being unable to remember all the traditions he had heard from the Prophet was told, “Use your right hand.” The Prophet also gave orders for (his speech in Mecca) to be written down. Abû Hurayrah admitted that ‘Abdallâh b. ‘Amr (b. al-Âs)²⁹ knew more traditions than he, because he wrote them down, whereas he did not do so.

10. There is no harm in transmitting information on the authority of the Israelites. This is coupled with a repetition of the statement that those who ascribe falsehoods to the Prophet intentionally will take their deserved place in the Fire.

11. Great value and religious merit are to be found in establishing good precedents in general, and in finding out about the *sunnah* of the Prophet in particular. Conversely, the establishment of bad precedents is blameworthy. “He who points to what is good is like the one who does good.” A number of stories illustrating this proposition. It is commendable to hold on to the precedents (*sunnah*) set by the Prophet and by the first four caliphs, as well as to avoid innovations. The Prophet warned against taking a critical attitude toward traditions: “Leave me as I left you. If I tell you a *hadîth*, accept it on my authority. Those before you perished because of too much questioning and too much disagreement with their prophets.”

12. Statements in praise of the representatives of religious learning: “The scholar of Medina,” that is, Mâlik, is the greatest source of *hadîth*.—“A religious scholar (*faqîh*) causes more annoyance to Satan than a thousand pious worshipers.”—An extended version of the tradition mentioned above under 2, as well as in Abû Dâwûd under 1.—“An impious hypocrite (*munâfiq*) is devoid of the combination of two qualities, namely, good behavior and the knowledge of religious matters (*fiqh fi d-dîn*).”—“Scholars are more excellent than pious worshipers to the same degree in

²⁹ Cf. Sezgin, I, 84. His death is to be placed between 63/683 and 77/696.

which I am more excellent than the lowest among you.”—“God and the angels, down to the ant in her hole and down to the fish, pray for those who teach mankind what is good.”—“A scholar who acts (in accordance with his knowledge) and teaches is called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”³⁰—No believer can learn enough of beneficial religious information until he reaches Paradise.—“The wise saw is the stray beast of the Muslim. Whenever he finds it, he is fully entitled to keep it.”³¹

Ibn Mâjah (209–273/824–887) does not have a “Book on Knowledge” expressly so designated in his *Sunan*.³² In its place, he has a rather lengthy introduction at the beginning of the work which is intended to bring out the importance of the *sunnah* of the Prophet as well as the importance of its transmission and its observation, in about the manner of at-Tirmidhi. Ibn Mâjah also discusses some of the men concerned with the transmission of traditions. Moreover, he includes chapters on predestination and faith. He adds traditions on the merit of studying and teaching the Qur’ân and on traveling in quest of knowledge. Of the six “authoritative” collections, only Ibn Mâjah’s *Sunan* mentions the famous tradition that “seeking knowledge is a religious duty (*farîdah*) for every Muslim. He who puts knowledge before those unprepared for it is like one who puts a necklace of precious stones and pearls and gold on swine.”³³ Ibn Mâjah concludes his remarks with a statement on the

³⁰ This, again, is a quotation of Matthew 5:19, cf. Abû Khaythamah, above, p. 73, and below, p. 246.

³¹ For a different version on “knowledge being the stray beast of the Muslim”, cf. also Abû Khaythamah, no. 157. Ibn al-‘Arabî’s commentary goes on here with remarks on the traditions about story-telling (*qâsâs*), found at the end of Abû Dâwûd (above, p. 85).

³² Ed. M. Fuâd ‘Abd-al-Bâqî, 3–98 (Cairo 1372/1052).

³³ By consulting the *Concordance*, it can be easily verified today that Ibn Mâjah is the only one of the six to quote this *hadîth* with its scriptural overtones. In medieval times, this required a *fatwâ*, cf. Taqî-ad-dîn as-Subkî, *Fatâwî*, II, 545 (Cairo 1355–56). The first part of the tradition is at times coupled with another tradition as famous as it is spurious: “Seek knowledge, even if it be (as far away) as China.” Cf., for instance, Abû Tâlib al-Makki, *Qût*, I, 191–94 (below, p. 182); al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ*, I, 13 ff., trans. N. A. Faris, 30 ff.; Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi‘*, I, 7 ff., for lengthy discussions of the import of the statement that knowledge is a *farîdah*, whether or not it is a *farîdah* in the legal sense, and which types of knowledge are individual duties and which types of knowledge are community duties. For Sûfi connections of the *hadîth* referring to China, cf. I., Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, 2nd ed., 127 (Paris 1954).

necessity of transmitting to others the material one learns and on the penalties attending on not transmitting it. Thus, like at-Tirmidhî, he sees “knowledge” as the epitome of the greatness and importance of the science of traditions. But on the other hand, he shares with al-Bukhârî the insight that “knowledge,” together with other important religious concepts, is to be treated as a propaedeutic subject and that the discussion of it must precede the detailed exposition of the religious injunctions of Islam.

Although he is the most recent of the authors of the six collections, an-Nasâ'î (215–303/830–915) has no “book” or chapter on *ilm* in his *Sunan*, which is also called *al-Mujtabâ* and which, it seems, is an abridgement of his larger *Sunan* work, which appears not to be preserved.³⁴ It should be noted, however, that al-‘Aynî, in his *Commentary on al-Bukhârî’s Sahîh*, repeatedly quotes traditions from “an-Nasâ’î *fi l-ilm*.³⁵ One of these traditions is also said by al-‘Aynî to occur at the same time in “an-Nasâ’î *fi t-tibb*.³⁶ Only exceptionally can one of these traditions be traced to an-Nasâ’î’s *Sunan* work in its available form.³⁷ In general, the traditions cited do not occur in it at all.³⁸ It is possible but not certain that they may have been derived from the original larger compilation. So far, however, the references from al-‘Aynî remain rather enigmatic.

Still from the ninth century, we have information about a “Book on Knowledge” by Abû Bakr Alhmad b. ‘Alî al-Marwazî, who died around the year 292/904–5.³⁹ His work certainly belonged into the context of traditionist treatments of knowledge. The same applies to another *Kitâb al-Ilm*, cited as a work by Ibn Abî ‘Âsim. We are tempted to equate this author with the well-known *hadîth* scholar, Abû Bakr Alhmad b. ‘Amr b. Abî ‘Âsim an-Nabîl. This may be the correct identification, although Abû Bakr b. Abî ‘Âsim died in 287/900, and the direct authority of the author of the *Kitâb al-Ilm* in his chain of transmitters died as late as 301/

³⁴ Cf. Sezgin, I, 167 f.

³⁵ Cf. al-‘Aynî, *‘Umdâl al-qârî*, I, 574, 576, 594, 624, 632.

³⁶ Cf. an-Nasâ’î, *Sunan*, VII, 128 (Cairo 1348/1930), in the *Kitâb Tâhrîm ad-dam*.

³⁷ At least, as far as I was able to ascertain by means of *Concordance*.

³⁸ Cf. al-‘Aynî, *‘Umdat al-qârî*, I, 557. For al-Marwazî, cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 272; Sezgin, I, 162. Ibn Hajar, *Tâhddîb*, I, 62, makes reference to his authorship of a *Kitâb al-Ilm*.

913–14.³⁹ Further into the tenth century, we get with the *hadîth* scholar, at-Tabarâni (d. 360/971), who is credited with a *Kitâb al-Ilm* consisting of one fascicle.⁴⁰

It may not be entirely beside the mark to cast here a rapid glance at the much neglected Shi‘ah (Twelver) literature dealing with *hadîth*. Little material is so far accessible, although there exists a large body of works of potential interest. No certain date can be assigned to its origin. Its ascription to the Imâms cannot be maintained, since this would mean that much of what is known elsewhere in Islam clearly as the result of later developments was anticipated by them. Moreover, the available manuscripts, unless they are forgeries, are as a rule too recent to give positive support to a very ancient origin of the works transmitted in them. It is less clear, however, when the oldest nucleus of this literature first found written expression and how far back individual writings have to be dated. A collection of *hadîths* attributed to Ja‘far aş-Şâdiq (d. 148/765) is entitled *Miṣbâḥ ash-shârī‘ah wa-miftâḥ al-ḥaqîqah*.⁴¹ The title already suggests a date far more recent than the ninth century, and the work’s haphazard use of mystical-ethical terminology would tend to bring it further down, at least beyond the time of the eleventh-century al-Qushayrî. The *Miṣbâḥ* has chapters on “knowledge” (*ilm*, ch. 62), “certain knowledge” (*yaqîn*, ch. 88), “wisdom” (*hikmah*, ch. 99), and “ignorance” (*jahl*, ch. 77). The chapters are spread over the whole, work seemingly without any clear motivation justifying their insertion in the particular places in which they are found. “Ja‘far” starts, of course, with the praise of knowledge as he does with the blame of ignorance whose progress is darkness⁴² and whose recession is light.

³⁹ Cf. al-‘Aynî, *Umdat al-qârî*, I, 427, 463. Ibn Abî ‘Aşîm’s immediate authority was al-Muqaddamî, who is listed in *GAL Suppl.*, I, 278; Sezgin, I, 165 f. For Abû Bakr b. Abî ‘Aşîm an Nâbil, cf. Sezgin, I, 522. and F. Rosenthal, in *JAOS*, LXXXIX (1969), 294 a.

⁴⁰ Cf. at-Tabarâni’s bibliography by Yahyâ b. ‘Abd-al-Wâhhâb b. Mandah, in the Istanbul Ms. Esat Ef. 2431.

Abû Nu‘aym al-İsfahânî (d. 430/1038) also wrote a *Kitâb al-Ilm* which was presumably concerned with traditions, cf. as-Sam‘âni, *Ansâb*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, fol. 3a (Leiden-London 1912, *E. J. W. Memorial Series* 20) = I, 6 (Hyderabad 1382/1962—).

⁴¹ I used the edition of the commented Persian translation by ‘Abd-ar-Razzâq Gilânî, who wrote in 1087/1676. R. Ettinghausen kindly gave a copy of the second volume of the work (Teheran 1344/1965), which contains the chapters mentioned on pp. 57–66, 187–91, 249–51, and 141–44.

⁴² Cf. below, p. 161.

He is concerned with clarifying the particular aspect of knowledge that is referred to in such common traditions as the search for knowledge being a duty, the search for knowledge to be extended even as far as China,⁴³ and the knowledge about one's soul being the knowledge of the Lord.⁴⁴ In the first case, the knowledge intended is the knowledge of the fear of God and of certainty (*ilm at-taqwâ wa-l-yaqîn*); in the second, the knowledge about (*ma'rîfah*) the soul/self which includes the knowledge about the Lord; and in the third (where this last knowledge is particularly specified), the knowledge that requires acting in accordance with it and which is "sincere devotion" (*ikhlâs*). The theme of the necessity of acting with sincere devotion is then elaborated by means of statements castigating useless knowledge and stressing the fact that just a small amount of knowledge supports a large amount of life-long work. An inscription found and deciphered by Jesus and a revelation received by David likewise indicate the need for action. "Knowledge" is the only way leading to God. The true "knower" is identified by his prayers, his piety, and his actions, and not by his appearance, his pretensions, and his words. True knowledge has always been sought in the past by those possessing intelligence, devotion (*nûsk*), modesty (bashfulness, *hayâd'*), and the fear of God (*khashyâh*); today it is sought by men not possessing any of these qualities. Statements concerning the qualities required of teachers and students conclude "Ja'far's" chapter on knowledge. Knowledge, for "Ja'far," is the result of introspection, a response within the individual to the divine. But it is also the result of a process of teaching and studying, and it must find expression in relevant human activity. The whole would seem to be a mixture of moderate Shî'ah views of revealed and inspired knowledge and the "orthodox" concern with the methodology of the transmission of traditions and their practical legal significance.

The traditionist discussion of knowledge can be said to serve basically two purposes. First and foremost, it is intended to clarify the proper method and educational procedure to be followed in the study of traditions. Secondarily, it wishes to stress the essential relationship of knowledge with the faith of the true religion, as it considers knowledge a fundamental part of it. For the *hadîth* scholars, knowledge thus is the key to both the theory and the

⁴³ Cf. above, p. 89, n. 4.

⁴⁴ Cf. below, p. 137.

practice of Islam. The second purpose is in line with the role assigned to knowledge already in the Qur’ân. The attempt to formulate an educational and scientific methodology grew out of a natural tendency toward the intelligent preservation of the accomplishments of former generations of scholars. The rapid spread of Islam threatened to bury the authority of the early Muslims under a wealth of new impressions and different views of the world. The methodical preservation of their genuine or assumed views, primarily in the ancient Oriental form of wisdom sayings or brief stories and parables, was the answer. The beginnings of this process no doubt date as early as the middle of the seventh century, or even earlier. Consolidation, it appears set in during the first half of the eighth century.⁴⁵ It stimulated and, in turn, was helped along by the growing acquaintance with “the plural of knowledge,” with the development of individual disciplines which necessitated a certain amount of implicit and expressed reflections on the method and procedures of scholarly activity.

The most visible result of the traditionist discussion of knowledge was the permanent establishment of “knowledge” as an introductory subject for all kinds of scholarly works. The example of al-Bukhârî who moved his “Book on Knowledge” to the beginning of his authoritative *Ṣaḥīḥ* was decisive. Monographs were written on knowledge. Introductory chapters or prefaces dealing with “knowledge,” and even more frequently, remarks on the excellence and merits (*fadl, faḍīlah*) of knowledge, became a well established custom. This development was not exclusively the result of the labors of *ḥadīth* compilers, but they provided the earliest stimulus. They also provided the religious justification as well as a large body of always appropriate quotations.

An example of the routine character of introductory discussions of knowledge is the addition of a first chapter “on the excellence of knowledge and of scholars” to a work based on Suhnûn’s *Muḍawwanah* which has as its author a certain Abû Sa‘îd Khalaf b. Sa‘îd al-Barâdhiî and which was written in the late tenth century.⁴⁶ The Imâm Mâlik, as we have seen, had dealt with “knowl-

⁴⁵ Cf. above, p. 74. For the Syriac collection of theological sayings by Joseph Hazzâyâ, cf. below, p. 210, n. 2. However, it was not in any way a real parallel to the traditionist treatment of knowledge. No convincing outside model seems to exist for it.

⁴⁶ As mentioned by J. Schacht, in *Études d’orientalisme dédiées à la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, 275 (Paris 1962). Cf. Sezgin, I, 483 f.

edge” only in the most perfunctory fashion. Suḥnûn (d. 240/854), writing a large legal compilation based upon Mâlik’s work, had no particular reason to devote any space to knowledge as such. Yet, as shown by al-Barâdhi’î, a century later it had become inevitable for “knowledge” to take its place in the discussion of Mâlikî jurisprudence. Further equally striking evidence for the general spread of the chapter on knowledge is furnished by Shî‘ah legal literature, although here the historical antecedents are much harder to unravel. The Shî‘ah jurist al-Kulînî (d. 328/939) begins his large *Kâfi fi ‘ilm ad-dîn* with a chapter on the intellect and intelligence (*aql*) and ignorance (*jahl*), and then continues with a long collection of edifying remarks on the excellence of knowledge (*fadîlat al-‘ilm*).⁴⁷ Later in the tenth century, another Shî‘ah jurist, the famous Qâdî an-Nu‘mân (d. 363/974), conformed even more closely to the traditionist custom. The first book of his *Da‘â’im al-Islâm* begins with the discussion of “faith,” then treats of the imâmate, and concludes with a chapter containing statements in praise of knowledge and its great importance, as found in the Qur’ân and in the traditions of Muhammad and, principally, of ‘Alî and other ‘Alids. This is followed by a discussion of the men who are acceptable sources of religious knowledge, and those who are not.⁴⁸ In al-Kulînî’s case, the strong *adab* influence is unmistakable, and in that of the Qâdî an-Nu‘mân, certain cross-currents from speculative theology may be discerned.

The custom of an initial discussion of “knowledge,” which, it seems, had its most conspicuous beginning in the *Sahîh* of al-Bukhârî, reached its high point with al-Ghazzâlî (d. 505/1111) and the “Book on Knowledge” introducing his *Ihyâ’*. Meanwhile, logic and, above all, speculative theology had established once and for all that epistemology was the basis of scholarly activity and had to be discussed first, thereby bolstering the procedure with regard to knowledge evolved by the traditionists. For al-Ghazzâlî, the problem of knowledge is no longer simply one of knowledge as a correlative of faith and as the focus for the methodology of scholarship and educational theory and practice. These were naturally subjects of great concern to al-Ghazzâlî, but logic,

⁴⁷ Ed n. p., 1892, 15–36. The Shî‘ah monographs on the excellence of knowledge, listed in an-Najâshî, *Rijâl*, 51, 96, 185, 266, 279) (Bombay 1317), may have been of a similar character.

⁴⁸ Ed. A. A. A. Fyzee, I, 97–102, 103–120 (Cairo 1370/1951).

mysticism, and the entire apparatus of a highly developed intellectual life were present in his mind when he wrote on knowledge in the *Iḥyā*. His principal and almost exclusive concern is with the adjudication of religious and moral values. He goes at great length into the determination of which knowledge, in his view, is valuable and which has to be considered harmful. The abstract concept of knowledge is no longer distinguishable here from “knowledge” as the individual, sharply defined discipline of learning. Al-Ghazzālī is deeply involved in the eternal problem of the necessary moral qualifications of scholars and the right and wrong of the methods they use. He is strongly influenced by earlier Sūfi attitudes toward worldly and religious knowledge. His sympathies lie all with the latter, although he retains his practical attitude toward secular learning. He is concerned about the relationship between knowledge and action as the principal theme of Muslim theological ethics. He concludes his book on knowledge with remarks on the intellect, since as a result mainly of the philosophical debate, the concept of “intellect” had been pushed into the foreground of all epistemology as the presumed instrument of rational human knowledge. Al-Ghazzālī’s presentation of a wealth of problems and ideas connected with “knowledge” within a comparatively small space does not have its match elsewhere in Muslim literature as far as completeness and human attractiveness are concerned. Most importantly, however, it must not be forgotten that his book on knowledge in the *Iḥyā* was intended to serve as an introduction to Muslim religious practice and dogma. It is followed by a brief treatment of the basic dogmas of Islam, of the nature of God and of faith.⁴⁹ Thereafter, the main religious duties are subjected to the author’s scrutiny in great detail. The arrangement of topics is thus practically the same as the one that became established by the ninth-century traditionists. Al-Ghazzālī continued their tradition, even if in so doing, he drew upon a much vaster reservoir of knowledge and ideas.

If any proof of the pervasive power of cultural and literary custom with regard to the chapter on knowledge is needed, it can be found in the great *Law Code* (*Mishne Tōrāh*) of Moses Maimonides. The *Law Code* starts out with a first book entitled *Sefer ham-maddā‘* “Book on Knowledge,” containing, as explained by the author

⁴⁹ English translation by N. A. Faris (Lahore 1963).

himself, all the basic duties of the Law of Moses which human beings must know.⁵⁰ This “Book on Knowledge” is divided into five parts. They discuss, respectively, theology (the nature of God, of the Universe, and of prophecy); the proper behavior in eating, drinking, hygiene, dealing with other people, etc.; the rules and regulations governing the study of the law and the relationship between teachers and pupils; the reprehensible aspects of idol worship and the attitude Jews are required to take toward idol worship and everything that has to do with it; and sin and repentance. This last subject makes it possible for Maimonides to conclude his “Book on Knowledge” with a few remarks on the necessity of loving God, something that can be achieved only through knowledge. Without the existence of a *Bukhârî* or a *Ghazzâlî*, and without the cultural tradition out of which their works grew, all these subjects could hardly have been united by a Jewish scholar under the title of “Book on Knowledge.” The different Jewish situation is most clearly reflected in the section on idol worship. For Jews living in a non-Jewish environment, in this case, the Muslim environment, everything touching on Jewish relations with a real or theoretical non-Jewish world was absolutely indispensable knowledge for them. The remainder of the contents of Maimonides’ “Book on Knowledge” can be read as a summary in miniature of al-Ghazzâlî’s *Iḥyā’*. In particular, those matters of concern to the Muslim author for which the following detailed discussion of Jewish law offered little, if any, room, have found their place in it and, coming at the very beginning of the entire work, have been given considerable prominence and weight. Maimonides’ “Book on Knowledge” has been ingeniously adapted to Jewish concepts and tailored to Jewish needs with respect to “knowledge.” Like al-Ghazzâlî, Maimonides possessed an original and extremely fertile mind. He did not have to have recourse to the conscious imitation of any model. However, it is obvious that his “Book on Knowledge,” occurring as it does at the beginning of the *Law Code*, owes its title, its being, and its place to the attitude of Muslim civilization toward “knowledge” and the trends and developments described in this chapter.

⁵⁰ Ed. M. D. Rabinowitz (Tel Aviv 1946), English translation by M. Hyamson (Jerusalem 1962), French translation (not seen) by V. Nikiprowetzky and A. Zaoui (Paris 1961).

1. THE KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH

The attempts to distinguish *islám* and *īmān* (which for the sake of convenience has been translated here as “faith”) do not concern us in this investigation. It is an ancient problem in Islam. The two terms were originally conceived by and large as synonyms. However, *islám* and *īmān* came to be seen eventually as involving primarily the relationship between formal religious practice and religious belief. It is in these terms that we find the decisive discussion of the problem in al-Ghazzâlî’s *Iḥyâ*.⁵¹ The word *islám* was also occasionally identified with *īlm*. An interesting example—unfortunately of quite uncertain date—is the replacement of *islám* by *īlm* in the famous, often quoted *hadîth* of Islam appearing, or starting out, as a stranger (*gharîb*) and at the end becoming a stranger again. This version, however, is rare.⁵²

As we have seen, “knowledge” (*īlm*) and “faith” (*īmān*) are equated in the Qur’ân. However, this identification was not left undisturbed and undiscussed by subsequent generations of Muslim religious thinkers. It had to be investigated whether knowledge and faith were really identical, and how the relationship between them could best be defined. As in the case of *islám* and *īmān*, this involved the relationship between religious practice and religious belief, if to a minor degree. Here, it was primarily a contest between rational/material and irrational/supernatural modes of knowing and understanding. As the problem of the divine attribute of knowledge to be discussed in the following section, the problem of knowledge and faith, too, was the particular concern of Muslim speculative theology and as such part of the history of the influence of Greek logic and Christian theology upon Islam. It is to be seen

⁵¹ According to J. van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Hârit al-Muḥâsibî*, 161 (Bonn 1961), who bases himself upon ideas expressed by L. Gardet (cf. also his *Dieu et la destinée de l’homme*, 369–72, Paris 1967), al-Muḥâsibî kept *īmān* and *islám* separate, as did the Ash’arites later on, whereas the Mu’tazilah considered both terms identical. This is as it should be, since for purely theological speculation, it was quite superfluous to bother with making a distinction that was crucial only for those concerned with the practical side of the Muslim religion as well. Cf. also al-Qâbîsî, ed. A. F. al-Ahwâni, *at-Ta’lim ‘alâ rây al-Qâbîsî*, 244 ff. (Cairo 1364/1945), 2nd ed. under the title of *at-Tâbiyah fi l-Islâm*, 269 ff. (Cairo 1955). For the identification of *īmān* and *islám* in the *Creed* of at-Tahâwî (d. 321/933), cf. J. Schacht, in *Der Islam*, XXI (1933), 289. I have not seen T. Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Īmān and Īslâm* (Yokohama 1965).

⁵² Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, II, 119.

together with the discussion of epistemology in theology and jurisprudence (below, chapter VII, 3), but it is more general in its implications for the identification of “knowledge” with religion in Islam and has therefore its proper place in this chapter.

Popularly, the identity of *ilm* and *īmān*,⁵³ or rather, the superiority of knowledge over the more elementary concerns of faith, was rarely a matter of doubt. One of the early Muslims, ‘Ubādah b. aṣ-Ṣāmit (d. ca. 34/654–55), exhorted his son al-Walīd on his deathbed in these words, as reported by at-Ṭabarī: “You will not be God-fearing, and you will not achieve *knowledge* until you *believe* in God and in predestination good or bad.”⁵⁴ Knowledge is clearly conceived here as coming after faith, which appears to be the more primitive and simpler achievement. On the other hand, knowledge enjoyed precedence over the recognition of the oneness of God (*tawhīd*). For a writer on mysticism, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, this is proven by verses of the Qur’ān such as 11:14/17 and 47:19/21. There, the formula “there is no God but God (Him)” is preceded by references to knowing.⁵⁵ Thus, knowledge comes first, and thereafter the *tawhīd*. For Ibn ‘Arabī, “sound knowledge” (*al-ilm aṣ-ṣahīḥ*) is admittedly a higher stage than faith. It includes and preserves, yet transcends, faith.⁵⁶ The high Muslim esteem of knowledge as compared to faith is reflected in the mind of a Christian scholar, Abū l-Faraj b. at-Ṭāyyib (d. 1043). On the basis of a similar reasoning as the one exhibited by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, he argues that 1 Corinthians 12:28 shows that knowledge is superior to miracles, since Paul adopts the sequence of apostles, prophets, teachers (*‘ulamā’*), miracles (*alladhiḥ yaf‘alūn al-mu‘jiz*, i.e., “miracle workers”), etc.⁵⁷ Ibn at-Ṭāyyib’s additional argument is the restrictedness of miracles as an expression of faith both in time and in place, whereas knowledge can be found always and everywhere. This proves its superiority. In Oriental Christian tradition, this attitude expectedly antedates Islam. It was held at least in

⁵³ For al-Ghazzālī, cf. F. Jabre, *La Notion de certitude selon Ghazālī*, 141 (Paris 1958). The identity of wisdom (*hikmah*) and the belief in God (*al-īmān bi-illāh*) is proclaimed in a saying attributed to Hermes, cf. al-Mubashshir, 15, II, 6 ff.

⁵⁴ Cf. at-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, I, 30.

⁵⁵ Cf. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūṭ*, I, 172.

⁵⁶ Cf. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūhāt*, II, 660, ch. 292.

⁵⁷ Cf. Abū l-Faraj b. at-Ṭāyyib, *Fi l-ilm wa-l-mu‘jiz*, in P. Sbath, *Vingt Traités*, 179 f.

the limited circles of Oriental Christianity interested in philosophy. Paul the Persian, writing an exposition of Aristotelian logic for Khosraw Anôsharwân, says in his introductory remarks that “knowledge is concerned with what is near, manifest, and knowable, while faith is concerned with all the things that are remote, invisible, and not knowable with accuracy. The one (*i.e.*, faith) is affected by doubt, and the other (*i.e.*, knowledge) is without doubt. Now, any doubt produces schism, whereas the absence of doubt produces harmony. Consequently, knowledge is (better) than faith, and the one (*i.e.*, knowledge) must be preferred to the other (*i.e.*, faith). Believers, too, when questioned about (their) faith, rely upon knowledge as an excuse, saying that what we now believe in, we shall know later on.”⁵⁸ Thus, only where there is the likelihood of knowledge confirming faith does faith possess value for human insight.

However, some previous knowledge is necessary for the achievement of faith. Beginning with the earliest stages of Muslim theological speculation, “faith” was viewed and defined as something that somehow depended on knowledge. The term used for this knowledge that is a condition of faith is usually not *ilm* but *ma'rifah*, that is, “knowing about” the existence of certain presumed facts fundamental to faith, without necessarily “knowing” them, that is, possessing or needing a deeper insight into them. Such *ma'rifah* may be the knowledge about God, and nothing more. Or a knowledge about additional articles of faith may be considered necessary, in order to assure the presence and validity of faith. The main problem then was whether such *ma'rifah* was sufficient by itself, or whether it had to be accompanied by some express indication of the individual’s awareness of possessing it. If we can trust the attributions of later heresiographers—and we have little choice in the matter, since there are no direct, authentic sources for the opinions held by scholars from the early formative period of Muslim speculative theology—, Ghaylân, who lived around 700, conceived of knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God as a primary insight coming to man through an act of God. Therefore, it is not part of faith. Faith, according to Ghaylân, is a secondary knowledge

⁵⁸ Cf. J. P. N. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca*, IV, 2 f. (text), 3 (trans.) (Leiden 1875); P. Kraus, in *RSO*, XIV (1934), 17. For faith and knowledge in the Christian tradition, cf. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, I, 112 f., 121 ff.

about God, together with the love of God and submissiveness to Him.⁵⁹ Since Ghaylân had possible Christian antecedents, it may not be out of place in this connection to refer to the strange combination of love and knowledge to be found in 1 Corinthians 8:3.⁶⁰ The necessary and intuitive character of the knowledge about God and about the principal articles of faith is also said to have been maintained by the Shî'ah in general.⁶¹ The Shî'ah, however, also required, for the presence of faith, the acknowledgement (*igrâr*) of such knowledge,⁶² whereas among the theologians bracketed in the same group with Ghaylân under the name of Murji'ah, there were some who felt that an acknowledgement was not required and, indeed, formed no part of faith.⁶³ The ill defined group of the Jahmîyah, named after Jahm b. Șafwân who lived one generation after Ghaylân, is credited with the doctrine that knowledge in the heart—the reporter, Ibn Taymîyah, uses the term *îlm* in this connection—is needed to assure perfect faith.⁶⁴ However, while Ibn Taymîyah around the year 1300 used *îlm*, Abû 'Ubayd al-Qâsim b. Sallâm, who lived five centuries earlier, did not use the term. He showed himself righteously outraged by what he stated was the Jahmîyah's definition of faith, namely, “the knowledge about (*ma'rîfah*) God in the heart” pure and simple, without works and ritual observance, without an accompanying confession, without the acknowledgement of prophecy, and so on.⁶⁵ Among later Khârijites, the Ibâdiyah were also said to have held the opinion that the knowledge about God alone constituted the line of separation between polytheism (*shirk*) and faith.⁶⁶ Again, the early Abû 'Ubayd has nothing of the sort.⁶⁷

Another element was injected into the discussion, and it was one that became firmly entrenched in the majority (Ash'arite) thought of Muslim theology, by the introduction of the term

⁵⁹ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 136, also, 133; W. M. Watt, *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam*, 42 (London 1948); C. Pellat, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. Ghaylân.

⁶⁰ Cf. also below, p. 139.

⁶¹ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 53. See also below, p. 148.

⁶² Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 54, 73.

⁶³ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 132.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Îmân*, 120.

⁶⁵ Cf. Abu 'Ubayd, *Kîtâb al-Îmân*, ed. al-Albânî, *Min kunûz as-sunnah*, 79, 101; 'Abd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 249. Cf. also below, p. 102.

⁶⁶ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 102

⁶⁷ Abû 'Ubayd, *al-Îmân*, 101.

taṣdīq into the accepted definition of faith. The use of *taṣdīq* all but eliminated the idea of *ma'rīfah* as a condition of faith. When this replacement of *ma'rīfah* by *taṣdīq* began first to take place, the sources do not make sufficiently clear. *Taṣdīq* occurs repeatedly as a synonym of *īmān* in the traditions of the Prophet.⁶⁸ As used in the definition of *īmān*, *taṣdīq* literally means “declaring, or judging, to be true.” The root *s-d-q* is found employed for translating various forms of Greek *pistos*. *Taṣdīq* itself is used for rendering Greek *pistis* “faith.”⁶⁹ In its role as a synonym of faith and, at the same time, as a constituent part of knowledge, *taṣdīq* forcefully calls to mind the definition, ascribed to Aristotle though not found in his preserved works, of *pistis* as the judgment (*krima*) that something is true, that follows upon knowledge (*epistēmēi*).⁷⁰ The similarity between this definition and Arabic statements on faith employing the term *taṣdīq* is such that some relationship is strongly indicated. It may have been of an indirect nature. When Greek philosophy was studied seriously in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, its approval as Aristotelian of a definition of “faith” operating principally with the term *taṣdīq* may have recommended that definition to Muslim scholars and paved the way for the later triumph of *taṣdīq* in connection with faith.

For the chronological problem, it would seem to be of considerable importance that monographs on “faith” written no later than the early ninth century do not yet speak about any equation of faith with knowledge, nor do they employ the word *taṣdīq* in any significant manner. This applies to the *Kitāb al-Īmān* by Ibn Abī Shaybah, which is a straight collection of Prophetic traditions, and to the work of the same title by Abū 'Ubayd, who discusses the theory of faith from the orthodox point of view.⁷¹ Outside “orthodox” circles, the use of *taṣdīq* in connection with *īmān* is attested from

⁶⁸ Cf. *Concordance*, III, 276 f.

⁶⁹ As may be seen, for instance, in the translation of Aristotle's Physics and in the use of *s-d-q* for translating *pistis*, (*a)pistein* in the *Monostichoi* of Pseudo-Menander, nos. 87 and 114 of the edition by M. Ullmann, *Die arabische Überlieferung der sogenannten Menandersentzen* (Wiesbaden 1961, AKM 34, 1). In another sense, *pistis* in the *Monostichoi*, nos. 110 and 250, was translated very correctly not by a derivation from the root *s-d-q* but by *amīnah*. Cf. below, p. 199.

⁷⁰ Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, ed. O. Stählin, II, 120, ll. 25–27 (Leipzig 1906). Cf. *Topics* 128a35 f., speaking of *tēn epistēmēn hoper pistin*. This appears in Arabic translation as *al-īlm huwa at-taṣdīq*.

⁷¹ Both works were edited by al-Albānī, *Min kunūz as-sunnah*.

around 800, assuming that the words of an-Najjâr (or his followers) have been reproduced with verbatim fidelity. In arguing that people possess faith in different degrees, an-Najjâr is said to have expressed himself to the effect that some men know God better (*a'lam*) than others and possess *taṣdīq* of Him to a greater degree.⁷² Already his famous teacher, Bishr al-Marîṣî (d. 218/833), is credited with the definition of *īmân* as *taṣdīq*, “because *īmân*, linguistically, means *taṣdīq*,”⁷³ and incidentally, it may be noted here that a contemporary Ṣûfî, Abû 'Alî (Abû 'Abdallâh) al-Anṭâkî, also equated *īmân* with *taṣdīq*.⁷⁴ It strains belief, however, that already Jahm b. Ṣafwân (d. 128/746) should have used the term exactly in the same way which later became accepted, as reported by Ibn Taymîyah: “*Īmân* is just the *taṣdīq* and *īlm* of the heart, thus excluding from *īmân* the actions of the heart.” Moreover, Ibn Taymîyah has the customary and, for the modern scholar, highly frustrating additional and vague ascription of the definition to Jahm’s “followers.”⁷⁵ This seems all the more dubious since the formulation of Jahm’s view reported by al-Ash'arî uses the expected *ma'rîfah* and ascribes to Jahm the statement that “faith is just the knowledge about (*ma'rîfah*) God, while unbelief (*kufî*) is just the lack of knowledge about (*jahl*) Him.”⁷⁶ Apart of its highly doubtful value for determining the historical origins of the use of *taṣdīq*, Ibn Taymîyah’s formulation may be considered representative of the equation of *īmân*-faith with *taṣdīq*-faith which, being elaborated in the tenth century, became a reality in Muslim

⁷² Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 136. Judge 'Abd al-Jabbâr, who states expressly that *al-taṣdīq bi-l-qâb* is the Ash'arite definition of faith, attributes to both Jahm b. Ṣafwân and the Najjâriyah a definition of faith as knowledge (*ma'rîfah*) in the heart, cf. his *Sharh al-uṣûl al-khamṣah*, ed. 'Abd-al-Karîm 'Uthmân, 708 (Cairo 1384/1965).

The Imâm al-Haramayn argues that the definition of *īmân* as *taṣdīq* precludes variations in the degree of faith, because *taṣdīq* does not excel *taṣdīq*, just as *īlm* does not excel *īlm*, cf. Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 399.

⁷³ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 140.

⁷⁴ Cf. Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 227.

⁷⁵ Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Īmân*, 157. For the early dating, a Murji'ite catechism may be of importance, if it indeed originated in the second half of the eighth century. The question, “What is faith?,” receives the somewhat bewildering answer, “It is *taṣdīq* and *ma'rîfah* and *yaqîn* and *īgrâr* and *islâm*.” See J. Schacht, *An Early Murji'ite Treatise: The Kitâb al-Ālim wal-muta'allim*, in *Oriens*, XVII (1964), 106.

⁷⁶ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 279, 1, 3; also above, p. 98, and Judge 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, above, n. 1.

orthodoxy at least with or immediately after al-Ash‘arî. It has found its classic expression in the *Tâmhîd* of al-Bâqillânî (d. 403/1013) who states: “*Îmân* is the *taṣdîq* in God, it being (identical with) knowledge, and the *taṣdîq* is found in the heart.”⁷⁷ The definition of *îmân* as *taṣdîq* was hereafter almost generally accepted.⁷⁸ The synonymous use of *îlm* and *taṣdîq* in speaking of faith—apart from the different relationship of these terms in epistemology—was also nothing unusual. Al-Ghazzâlî, true to his role as the great conciliator, used it. For him, “...knowledge (*îlm*)... is the root and designated by the term ‘faith’ (*îmân*) in basic linguistic usage, since faith is *taṣdîq* in the heart; if it is strong, it is designated by the term ‘certainty’ (*yaqîn*)...”⁷⁹

Another suggestion toward the most plausible way of correlating faith with knowledge was made by al-Mâturîdî (d. 333/944). In the creed attributed to him, al-Mâturîdî stated that *islam*, *îmân*, *ma’rifah*, and *tawhîd* were various aspects of man’s knowledge of God.⁸⁰ And Ibn Fûrak (d. 406/1015) claimed the authority of al-Ash‘arî for his attempt to establish a partial equation of faith and knowledge. “*Îmân*,” according to Ibn Fûrak, “is believing (*i’tiqâd*) the truthfulness of the informant with regard to his information in a kind of believing that is knowledge; part of it is not knowledge.”⁸¹

The practical theological problem was whether such belief and knowledge in the heart were sufficient to constitute acceptable faith (or *islâm*), or whether “acknowledgement” (in Arabic, usually, *îqrâr*) by express statement (*bi-l-lisân*, *qawl*) was an additional requirement, or whether, furthermore, actions had to accompany

⁷⁷ Cf. al-Bâqillânî, *Tâmhîd*, 346, quoted also, for instance, by Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Îmân*, 101.

The Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 397, requires knowledge for *îmân* but apparently does not equate the two. For him, “*îmân* is *taṣdîq* in God. *Taṣdîq* is in reality the speech of the soul, and it is established only together with knowledge.”

⁷⁸ Cf., for instance, al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ*, I, 103, or Abû Hâtim ar-Râzî, *Zînah*, II, 70. See also the discussion in as-Subkî, *Tâbaqât ash-Shâfi’îyah*, I, 66 (Cairo 1324).

⁷⁹ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ*, IV, 211, at the beginning of the discussion of *tawakkul*. Cf. also Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Îmân*, 110, 119, 121, 195. For the Druze equation of true *îlm* with *tawhîd* *Mawlânâ*, see below, p. 153.

⁸⁰ Cf. J. A. Williams, *Islam*, 184 (New York 1961), translating the creed from the publication, not available to me, of Y. Z. Yörükân, *Islam akaidine dair eski metinler* (Istanbul 1953).

⁸¹ Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Îmân*, 125.

belief and acknowledgement. The majority of Muslims, and in particular the Ḥanafites, opted for the definition of *īmān* that made faith a combination of *taṣdīq* and *iqrār*.⁸² A summary description of the possibilities is given by Ibn Ḥazm, with, however, little regard to historical accuracy: “Some people hold the opinion that faith is just the knowledge about (*ma’rifah*) God in the heart... Others hold the opinion that faith is the acknowledgement of God by the tongue (Muḥammad b. Karrām as-Sijistānī)... All the other jurists, *ḥadīth* scholars, Mu’tazilah, Shī’ah, and all the Khārijites hold the opinion that faith is the knowledge about religion in the heart, its acknowledgement by the tongue, and action by means of the limbs of the body...” Ibn Ḥazm then refers to the replacement of *ma’rifah* by *taṣdīq* and to Abū Ḥanīfah’s definition of faith as “belief expressed (*taṣdīq*) by the tongue and the heart together,” as well as to the definition which replaces *ma’rifah/taṣdīq* with still another term, *‘aqd*.⁸³ For al-Jurjānī (740–816/1340–1413), the Ash’arites were satisfied with *taṣdīq*, the *iqrār* being the beginning of the execution of the legal-religious duties (*ahkām*). The Ḥanafites combined *taṣdīq* and *iqrār*, to which the Mu’tazilah added action.⁸⁴

The relationship of knowledge and faith in the mystics’ view was necessarily a close one. In their estimation, knowledge may well transcend any concept of faith, as it seemingly did for Ibn ‘Arabī. Ordinarily, it was sufficient for Ṣūfis to stress the identity of knowing God with believing in Him. Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī (d. 215/830) is credited with a fine statement to this effect: “The knowledge of God and the faith in Him are inseparable companions. The knowledge of God is the scale in which the faith in Him is weighed to determine increment from deficiency. For knowledge is the outward form of faith, uncovering and revealing it, while faith is the internal form of knowledge, stirring and kindling⁸⁵ it. Thus,

⁸² Cf., for instance, the so-called *Testament* and the *Fiqh al-akbar* ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfah, in Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 125, 194, with Wensinck’s comments, 132 ff., or the creed of the Ḥanafite an-Nasafī, with the commentary by at-Taftāzānī, 432–53, trans. Elder, 116–26. Cf. also above, p. 102, n. 1.

⁸³ Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīṣal*, III, 188–90, 210; I. Friedländer, in *JAO*S, XXVIII (1907), 29.

⁸⁴ Cf. al-Jurjānī’s *Hāshiyah* to az-Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf*, I, 98; also, for instance, al-Malāfi, *Tanbīh*, ed. S. Dederling, 35 ff., III ff. (Leipzig 1936, *Bibliotheca Islamica* 9).

⁸⁵ Text: *y-sh-gh-l-h*, read, perhaps, *yash’aluhū*.

faith is the support and the eye of knowledge, while knowledge is the strength and the tongue of faith. The weakness and the strength, the increment and the deficiency of faith are in direct proportion to the increment and the deficiency, the strength and the weakness of the knowledge of God.”⁸⁶ For the Ṣūfi, the knowledge of God was the only knowledge deserving the name, the “useful” knowledge that brought faith,⁸⁷ and all the manifestations of faith flowed naturally from the knowledge of and the faith in God. Ad-Dârâni’s statement resumes, or, if its attribution is genuine, somehow anticipates, in Ṣūfi terms, the general orthodox definition of faith, which in Ṣūfi usage may also be transferred to the definition of *ma’rifah*.⁸⁸

In view of the almost universal trend in Islam toward an identification of faith with knowledge, it may come somewhat as a surprise to find the Ikhwâن as-ṣafâ’ maintaining the distinctiveness of the terms. The same Qur’ânic passages which indicate to us the identity of knowledge and faith in the mind of the Prophet are taken by the “Sincere Friends” to be a convincing indication of divine differentiation between the two. Looking at their exposition more carefully, it will be possible for us to see what caused them to take the position they did. “Because many scholars,” the Ikhwâن say,⁸⁹ “are not acquainted with the difference between *‘ilm* and *īmân*, we must explain first what the difference consists in. Many speculative theologians (*mutakallimûn*) call faith ‘knowledge.’ They say that faith is knowledge by way of traditional learning (*sam’*), while what is known through ana-logical reasoning (*qiyâs*) is knowledge by way of the intellect. Therefore, we want to explain right now what knowledge is in reality. The philosophers (*hukamâ’*) have said that knowledge is the perception (*taṣawwur*) by the soul of the distinctive characteristics of the objects known in its essence.”⁹⁰ If this is knowledge, the soul does not perceive it in

⁸⁶ Cf. Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî, *Qât*, I, 200. For the acceptance of the Qur’ânic identification of *‘ilm* and *īmân*, cf. *Qât*, II, 4.

⁸⁷ With reference to Qur’ân 30:56/56, Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî, *Qât*, II, 38, makes it clear that separate use of *‘ilm* and *īmân* in this verse means that “faith and certainty” bring with them the gift of “knowledge”, but only “useful knowledge” brings the gift of faith. This statement reflects the continuing polemics of religious scholars against “secular” knowledge.

⁸⁸ Cf. al-Ḥakîm at-Tirmidhî, *Kitâb al-‘Aql wa-l-hawâ*, ed. A. S. Firat, in *Şarkiyat Mecmuası*, V (1964), 121 f., who says: *Al-Ma’rifah taṣdîq al-qalb bi-iqrâr al-lisân*.

⁸⁹ Cf. *Rasâ’il Ikhwâن as-ṣafâ’*, IV, 123–27.

⁹⁰ Cf. above, definition of knowledge E-15, p. 62.

its reality whenever information about it comes down by way of traditional learning. Consequently, such information is not knowledge, but faith (*īmān*), acknowledgement (*iqrâr*), and belief (*taṣdīq*). It is for this reason that the prophets first asked their particular nations to acknowledge (*iqrâr*). Then they challenged them to believe (*taṣdīq*), after clarity had been achieved (*bayâن*), and then they urged them to study the true matters of knowledge (*al-mâ’ârif al-ḥaqiqiyâh*). Proof of the correctness of our statement is these passages from the Qur’ân: ‘Those who *believe* in the supernatural (2:3/2).’ Here, God does not say, ‘...know the supernatural.’ God urged the people to seek knowledge, saying: ‘Consider, men of understanding,’ or ‘men of insight (59:2/2).’⁹¹ Then, God uttered praise, saying: ‘God will lift up by degrees those of you who have come to believe and those who have been given knowledge (58:11/12).’ And He said: ‘Those who have been given knowledge and faith (30:56/56).’ This is sufficient (proof of the existence of) a difference between knowledge and faith.”

In connection with the study of the true matters of knowledge (*ma’ârif*), according to the Ikhwâن, every human being can be classified according to one of four categories. There are those who have been provided with knowledge but not with faith; those who have been provided with faith but not with knowledge; those who have been blessed with both; and those who are deprived of both. The Ikhwâن themselves, they say, have been given an abundant share of both faith and knowledge. They are meant by the verse of the Qur’ân 58:11/12 just quoted. There are different degrees of believers, as there are different degrees of scholars. Their conclusion is rather lengthily summed up by the Ikhwâن in this manner: “Since the excellence of both knower and believer as well as the meaning of knowledge and faith are now clear, we want to mention the quiddity of each and explain their quantity and quality. Now then, knowledge is the form of the object known in the soul of the knower,⁹² and faith is believing (*taṣdīq*) one who knows better than you about the information he gives⁹³ you about what you do not know... Faith is believing an informant with regard to what he says and gives information about... Faith leaves behind as its inheritance knowledge, because faith is prior in existence to

⁹¹ The latter is the exact expression used in the Qur’ân.

⁹² Cf. above, definition of knowledge E-1, p. 60.

⁹³ Text: does not give (?).

knowledge. Therefore, the prophets asked the nations to acknowledge (*iqrâr*) first what they had given them information about, and to believe (*taṣdīq*) matters supernatural that their senses were not able to perceive (*idrâk*) or their imagination to picture (*taṣawwur*). When they expressed acknowledgement with their tongues, the prophets called them ‘believers’ (*mu’minûn*). Then, they challenged them to believe (*taṣdīq*) in their hearts, as mentioned by God in the Qur’ân 64:11/11: ‘The heart of him who believes in God, He guides aright.’ When belief (*taṣdīq*) entered their hearts, the prophets called them *ṣiddiqûn* ‘true believers,’ as stated in the Qur’ân: ‘He who comes with the truth and believes (*sad-dâqa*) in it, they are the ones who fear God (39:33/34).’ “The beginning of faith was the belief of the prophets in the information given them by the angels, and the angels themselves need faith and possess it in various degrees. “You, too, should know that you need faith and belief in the words of your informant who is superior to you in knowledge and above you in information (*ma’ārif*), because, if you do not believe in the information he gives you, you will be deprived of the noblest knowledge (*‘ulûm*) and the most important information (*ma’ārif*). You will realize that at the beginning, the only possible way for believing your informant is having confidence (*husn az-zann*) in his truthfulness (*sidq*). Then, in the course of time, the truth of that will become clear to you. Thus, do not seek proof from him at the beginning. Rather, try to picture (*taṣawwara*) in your mind what you hear with your ears. Thereafter, seek a method and proof. Do not be satisfied with blind acceptance, when you have gotten halfway toward knowledge, and do not seek proof when you are at the beginning. Follow us, friend, to a gathering where you will find virtuous, learned, helpful friends of yours, to hear what they have to say, to observe their qualities, to become acquainted with their secrets, to perceive (*taṣawwara*) in the pure essence of your soul what they have perceived in the pure essence of their souls, to behold with the eye of your heart, as they have beheld with the eyes of their hearts, and to see with the light of your intellect what they have seen with the light of their intellects.”

Clearly, the statement made by the Ikhwân at the beginning of their discussion of the subject as to the manner in which “speculative theologians” have identified knowledge and faith is not overly accurate in the light of the evidence presented here. The relegation of faith to the limbo of traditional knowledge, as against the certainties of intellectual knowledge, would more likely be the

work of philosophers and skeptics than of Mutakallimûn. But then, the Ikhwân do not really appear to be intent upon a separation of knowledge from faith. They stress the primacy of faith as far as the process of initiation into knowledge is concerned, but the real purpose of faith is the eventual achievement of knowledge, of true esoteric knowledge as advocated by the Sincere Friends, through a process which forcibly recalls Ismâ‘îlî views and practices. For the Ikhwân, as for most other Muslims, faith is inextricably connected with knowledge. But faith here is something quite different from the faith of the theologians. It is not “*islâm*” or a set of beliefs. It is merely a tool, to be discarded after use, of the seeker of knowledge—who can be presumed to have very little interest in any formal sort of religious faith and belief.⁹⁴

This helps to explain why there is so much evidence for the equation of faith and knowledge in Muslim religious writings, and so little for the opposite point of view that the two have nothing to do with each other. Those who felt that faith was to be kept separate from knowledge were the ones who were inclined to favor rationalist or esoteric knowledge and to play down the importance of formal faith. Since “faith,” however, was a sacred term of religion, it was only prudent for such thinkers to avoid public discussion of the term outside their own groups whenever possible, and not to use it when belief was under discussion merely as an element of epistemology. Thus, we rarely find clear-cut statements of views on the distinctiveness of knowledge and faith. On the other hand, the vast majority of Muslims were conditioned by the Qur’ân and the history of the term *‘ilm* to see “faith” as a function of “knowledge,” or vice versa, and they were not disposed toward swerving from their engrained habits of thought. They felt that both belonged together in the Islamic context and added mutually to their respective prestige as culture terms.

3. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

The divine attribute (*sifah*) of *‘ilm* “knowledge” and the “name” of *‘âlim* or *‘âlîm* “knower” used for God cannot be separated from all the other attributes and names considered as belonging to the Deity. In theological discussion, they were at times seen as different

⁹⁴ These observations do not apply to less intellectual levels of Ismâ‘îlism where *‘îmân*, it may be recalled (above, p. 23, n. 2), could be defined as “the knowledge of the truth (reality).”

categories, making a distinction between the names, the attributes, and, within the attributes, between a restricted number of “essential” attributes. More rarely, distinctions were attempted within the major categories. The most convincing explanation of all the problems raised in this connection would have been one that offered a unified theory opening up the whole complex field of the divine attributes as with one master key and admitting of easy application to all its aspects. In any such theory, “knowledge” could not have been treated differently from the other attributes. However, no master key was ever found. In the many attempts to explain the problems of the divine attributes, the very nature of the concept of knowledge gave it a special and conspicuous position. “Knowledge” is found winding its way throughout the entire discussion of the attributes, in particular, the essential attributes of which it was considered one. It was, indeed, “the mother of the divine attributes.”⁹⁵

From the earliest times, probably from its very beginning, Muslim theology was preoccupied with the divine attributes.⁹⁶ It maintained its passionate interest in them and considered them a central problem after other important subjects of discussion, such as the character of the leadership of the Muslim community (*imāmah* “caliphate”), had faded into the background. Islam, it seems, never knew any theological speculation that did without them. The concept of God’s knowledge, His omniscience, was an ever present

⁹⁵ Cf. al-Kalanbawī (d. 1205/1790–91), in his *Gloss* to ad-Dawwānī’s *Commentary* on al-İjī’s *Aqā’id al-‘Adudiyah*, II, 2 (Constantinople 1316).

According to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1178b7 f., 21, perfect happiness is a *thèorétikē energeia*, and the *energeia* of God is such a *thèorétikē energeia*. In Graeco-Muslim philosophy, this is transformed to read, “The only virtue that may be ascribed to God is knowledge,” cf. *Kitāb as-Sā’idah*, 7. The transformation may be due to some intermediary such as a Greek commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* or on the *lambda* of the *Metaphysics*.

⁹⁶ As indicated above, the historical sequence of the early discussion cannot now be determined with any certainty and is of no real consequence for this study. The first requirement for any attempt at sorting out the various opinions historically would be detailed collections of all the fragments ascribed to each major figure. Whether this will lead to the desired result, is doubtful, but it has not been seriously attempted. A premature and incomplete attempt to collect all the material according to individual theologians chronologically arranged in translation was made by M. Horten, *Die philosophischen Systeme der spekulativen Theologen im Islam* (Bonn 1912), a work quite admirable for its time. However, Horten attempted too much interpretation, giving the impression of sure knowledge where there were, and still are, at best, hints and clues.

reality to scholars in whatever field of intellectual endeavor they happened to be engaged.

A very definite purpose was behind the discussion of the divine names and attributes. It explains why that discussion was so heated and why it never stopped. This purpose is as easy for us to perceive as it was near impossible for Muslims to admit and express. It was to provide rational reassurance for the existence of God. Officially, it was maintained that the existence of God was a fact vouchsafed by necessary knowledge and independent of all the discussion about His attributes.⁹⁷ However, if it was possible to show exactly in which way God differed from human beings in those human terms which belonged to Him according to the divine revelation of the Qur'ân, then the existence of the Deity, stated so boldly and uncompromisingly by the Law, became comprehensible to the human mind. Custom and tradition may have contributed to keeping alive the discussion of the long exhausted topic, but its amazing vitality was the result of its essential purpose which was to show that God could be "described" and, therefore, could not be denied existence. The argument was of necessity circular. If God exists, it must be possible to describe Him. And if it is possible to describe Him, then there can be no doubt of His existence. Thus, an unmistakable aura of unreality envelops the entire endless discussion of the attributes in general, and of God's knowledge in particular. It is always obvious that the argument depends upon assumed and completely arbitrary premises. As a result, we find that for every point of detail, opposite views could be, and were, argued with equal vigor and conviction, if, of course, not with equal historical success.

It is in a way surprising that the Muslims took to the debate about the manner in which traditional anthropomorphic descriptions of the Deity were to be understood and explained with such zeal and at such an early date in Muslim history. The Qur'ân is quite explicit on such matters as God's knowledge, and the later popular understanding of what God's knowledge was never went beyond elaborating the concept in terms such as those put together al-Ghazzâlî: "God knows (*âlim*) all objects of knowledge and comprehends whatever takes place (in the world) from the boundaries of the earth to the highest point of heaven. He is knowing

⁹⁷ Cf., for instance, the Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 28–31, 191.

(‘ālim) in a way which makes it certain that the weight of a particle of dust on earth and in heaven does not escape His knowledge. Indeed, He knows the scurrying of a black ant upon a hard rock in a dark night. He perceives the motion of the mote in the air. He knows what is secret and hidden. He observes the innermost thoughts that occur, the ideas that stir, and the secrets that are concealed in the heart.”⁹⁸ With these words, al-Ghazzālī does not mean to cater to popular feeling and intellectual limitation, even if they express well how ordinary people pictured God’s knowledge. Each one of them echoes the theological discussion of preceding centuries. This becomes much clearer from his concluding words: “(God knows) by means of a primeval (uncreated, *qadīm*)⁹⁹ and eternal knowledge that has never ceased to be an attribute of His in all eternity, and not by means of a knowledge that is constantly new and arrives in His essence through in-dwelling and transference.” Long exposure had accustomed a large number of medieval Muslims to accept such difficult terminology. On the other hand, most of the speculation behind it remained accessible only to the very few. “The understanding of the masses does not suffice to understand such subtleties.”¹⁰⁰ This was the way Ibn Rushd put it in the twelfth century, but it must have been clear from the outset that the speculation about the divine attributes was far above the heads of the followers of the new religion, and that it spelled trouble. While probably no theologian meant to doubt openly that God had “life,”¹⁰¹ or was willing to admit bluntly that God did not have “knowledge,”¹⁰² the mere asking of questions about the concept of God raised the spectre of an embarrassing inability

⁹⁸ Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā’*, I, 80, II, 3 ff, and 96.

⁹⁹ “Primeval” seems an appropriate translation for *qadīm*. It is a way to avoid using “uncreated” or “eternal”, for which other words exist in Arabic. “Primeval” somehow reflects the root meaning of the word which, it is true, may no longer have been felt. *Qadīm* has therefore been translated here consistently by “primeval,” with an occasional reminder in brackets that “uncreated” is what is meant.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut at-Tahāfut*, trans. S. van den Bergh, I, 215.

¹⁰¹ Cf. al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, 503.

¹⁰² Cf. for instance, the *Kitāb al-Haydah*, ed. Jamil Salibā, 51 f. (Damascus 1384/1964), ascribed to ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz al-Kinānī, who lived in the first half of the ninth century (cf. Sezgin, I, 617): “Do you acknowledge, Bishr (al-Marīṣī), that God has knowledge, as we have been informed (by the divine revelation), or do you contradict the revelation? Bishr dodged the answer, not wanting to express unbelief openly by saying, ‘God does not have knowledge.’ . . .” For the discussion and its meaning, cf. below, p. 120.

to answer them and of coming up with answers that might have appeared convincing to some but were in apparent contradiction to the words of the divine revelation. The conviction that it was better not to ponder the “how?” of the divine attributes rapidly gained ground. Why, then, was the discussion started in the first place? It could be hardly doubted that we must see in it a continuation of the similar discussion that had long occupied Christian theology and the Hellenistic world in which Christianity had gained maturity. However, why did the Muslims take up so readily something that was strange and foreign to them and, moreover, did not constitute any clear-cut practical gain for pious and fervent believers? Again, we are confronted with the mystery of intellectual creativity. Among the early Muslim theologians, there must have been many with Christian antecedents who merely transferred their accustomed patterns of thought to the new religion. Also, Muslim scholars were forced to some degree to combat Christian theological criticism of Islam on the home ground of the attackers with the techniques employed by them. The principal motivation, however, seems to have come from a creative force unleashed by a movement which felt driven to remodel the higher civilization of the time of which it itself was an underprivileged offshoot. Since it was a religious movement, its first major effort was directed toward metaphysical questions; the other branches of philosophy and science were taken up and assimilated at a somewhat later stage. The initial impulse was naturally to seize eagerly and appropriate whatever there was there. But then, the new creative force went to work turning it into something much larger and more powerful than it had been before. Christian theology provided the first opportunity for Muslims to become acquainted with the question of the divine attributes. Almost immediately, however, Islam went far beyond its original source of inspiration. According to John of Damascus, God knows (*epistatai*) all things, and He has an all-encompassing foreknowledge (*synhektikē pronoia*) and knows (*eidenai*) all things before their creation (*genesis*).¹⁰³ Yet, other lists

¹⁰³ Cf. John of Damascus, *Pêgê gnôseôs*, 808 f., 919, trans. Chase, 177, 207. According to Watt, *Free Will*, 58, n. 27, the entire formulation of the problem of predestination (*gadar*) in Islam is different from the ideas expressed by John of Damascus. For the relationship of John of Damascus with Muslim speculative theology in general, cf. also, for instance, Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 77 ff. and *passim*; M. S. Seale, *Muslim Theology*, 30 ff. and *passim* (London 1964).

of divine attributes in the Damascene's work do not include "knowing." Already, it seems, at the same time and possibly even earlier, but certainly not very long thereafter, Muslim theologians bandied about a whole plethora of the most subtle questions concerning the concept of divine knowledge. It is fairly certain that the elaboration was their own and constitutes the creative response to the presence of ideas which they would have done better to keep away from. But such is the power of ideas that once they exist, their spread is difficult and often impossible to halt.

The Muslim discussion of God's knowledge concentrates on the term *ilm*, as against any other term of cognition, including the root *'-r-f*. Yet, it should be noted that the *Testament* attributed to Abû Hanîfah ascribes *ma'rîfah* to God and sharply distinguishes the function of this *ma'rîfah* in God from that of the *ilm* possessed by Him. God's *ma'rîfah* appears to be a momentary awareness of happenings, serving as a supplement and, if such a term may be used in connection with God, corrective of His eternal and consistent knowledge.¹⁰⁴ But the root *'-r-f* is not employed in the Qur'ân in connection with God. And, whether *'-r-f* was considered a synonym of *'-l-m* or differentiated from it in the conventional manner in which terms of intellectual perception may be differentiated from each other, *'-r-f* never really entered the discussion of the divine attribute of knowledge. According to the Mu'tazilah al-Jubbâ'i (b. 235/849–50, d. 303/916), God could indeed be given the name of *'âlim*, if (human) reason indicates that He is knowing, even if He Himself had not applied to Himself the name of "knower." However, the Baghdâdî school of Mu'tazilah did not admit this possibility. They thought that " *'âlim* has the same meaning as *'ârif*, but we designate God as *'âlim*, because He has thus designated Himself, and we do not designate Him as *'ârif*," and this applies to other synonyms of *'âlim*, such as *fâhim*.¹⁰⁵

A philological explanation of the inapplicability of *'-r-f* to God was given by Abû Hilâl al-'Askarî (d. 395/1005). He proceeded from the argument of az-Zuhri¹⁰⁶ which went as follows: "I do not describe God as *'ârif*, though I do not blame anyone who describes Him thus, because *ma'rîfah* is derived from the *'îfân* of the man-

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 126 f.; Seale, *Muslim Theology*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. al-Ash'ârî, *Maqâlât*, 525.

¹⁰⁶ I am not sure about the identity of this Zuhri, if this is indeed the correct form of the name.

sion, that is, the traces (*âthâr*) which serve to make the mansion in question recognizable ('-*r-f*). It is not permissible to assume that God's knowledge of things comes from effect ('trace') and indication (*dalîl*). *Ma'rifah* is the act of distinguishing (*tamyîz*) between the objects of knowledge." For al-Askari, '-*l-m* is a transitive root that may take two objects ("to know someone/something as something"), whereas '-*r-f* is restricted to one object ("to know, to recognize, to be acquainted with someone/something"). The grammatical difference is indicative of the difference in meaning that exists between the two roots. '-*r-f* indicates the distinction of one object of knowledge from another ("to know Zayd," as distinguished from somebody else). '-*l-m* does this only by virtue of some other kind of particularity connected with the object of knowledge referred to ("to know Zayd as standing"). *Ma'rifah* is more restricted than *îlm*, because it is the knowledge of only some aspect of something. *Îlm*, on the other hand, is both comprehensive and detailed knowledge. "Every *ma'rifah* is an *îlm*, but not every *îlm* is (necessarily) *ma'rifah*." The objects of knowledge may be assumed to be distinct in God, and *ma'rifah* shows their distinctiveness, but God's knowledge is not the act of making a distinction between objects.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, it is something more than *ma'rifah* and cannot properly be called *ma'rifah*.

Basically the same line of argument was followed by later scholars, as it presumably had been by scholars prior to the time if Abû Hilâl al-'Askârî. Ar-Râghib al-Îsfahânî (11th century) connects '-*r-f* with the meaning of "smell" or of "border, rim." He views *ma'rifah* (opposite *înkâr*) as more restricted in meaning than *îlm* (opposite *jahl*), inasmuch as it is "the perception of something by reflecting about and pondering over its effect (*athar* 'trace'),"¹⁰⁸ obviously an inferior way of perception inadmissible in God. Certain scholars contended that there was no difference between the two roots and their applicability or inapplicability to God. The basis for their contention was the Qur'ânic passages 8:60/62 and 9:101/102 which mention God's knowing ('-*l-m*), that is, being acquainted with, someone and the simultaneous not

¹⁰⁷ Cf. al-'Askârî, *Furûq*, 14, 62 f.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. ar-Râghib al-Îsfahânî, *Mufradât*, III, 103, s.v. '-*r-f*. Cf. also below, p. 134. According to ad-Dawwânî, as quoted by al-'Âmilî, *Kashkûl*, I, 397 (Cairo 1380/1961), "others" held the same opinion, probably before and after ar-Râghib al-Îsfahânî.

knowing of human beings. However, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah (691–751/1292–1350), who reports this view,¹⁰⁹ prefers the more common view that ‘-r-f is inapplicable to God’s knowledge. ‘-r-f, he contends, means simple knowledge (such as knowing about Zayd and about standing), whereas ‘-l-m means composite knowledge (such as knowing that Zayd is standing). Therefore, “some Mutakallimûn have maintained that since in contrast to created beings, God knows simple and composite things without distinction, the root ‘-r-f is inapplicable to Him.” For Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah, this is based upon the theory, which he is not willing to accept, that God knows everything in the same way (His knowing the truth of the Prophet being identical with His knowing the untruth of the pseudo-prophet Musaylimah). He himself believes in the differentness of the various objects of knowledge and of the knowledge by which each is known. Therefore, it must be the root meaning of ‘-r-f which precludes its use for God. ‘-r-f indicates cognition, mental or physical, of someone or something, after having forgotten or lost touch with him/it and the unscrambling of a confused notion—which, of course, is a state of affairs never present with the Deity.¹¹⁰ Still another explanation along these lines was offered by ash-Sharîf al-Jurjânî. In contrast to ‘ilm, *ma’rifah* to him implies either of two notions. One of them is “perception following upon ignorance,” and the other, “the last of two perceptions of one and the same thing which are separated by non-being (non-understanding, ‘adam).”¹¹¹ Neither is a fitting description of God’s way of knowing.

The discussion of the “grammarians,” as he characterizes them, was taken up by Ibn ‘Arabi and transformed by him with that

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah, *Badâ’i*, II, 62 f. The author refers to one of his other works, entitled *at-Tuhfah al-Makkîyah*, where the subject was treated in greater detail.

¹¹⁰ According to a saying ascribed to Plato, “the difference between knowing about (*ma’rifah*) a thing and knowing (*ilm*) it is that *ma’rifah* is remembering what one has forgotten, whereas *ilm* of a thing means that aspects of it not perceived before become firmly established in one’s soul.” Cf. Ibn Hindû, *al-Kalîm ar-rûhâniyah*, 27 f. (Cairo 1318/1900). This part of the edition does not seem to belong to Ibn Hindû’s text but was added by the editor, Muṣṭafâ al-Qabbâni, from some unidentified collection of Platonic sayings.

¹¹¹ Cf. al-‘Amîlî, *Kashkûl*, I, 397, citing the *Gloss* of ash-Sharîf ar-Râdi to the *Sharh Maṭâli’ al-anwâr*. This *Sharh* appears to be al-Jurjânî’s *Gloss* to the work of al-Urmawî (594–682/1198–1283), but in the absence of the text, this identification could not be checked. On ‘adam, cf. also below, p. 227.

reckless abandon which is the hallmark of the imaginative mind. The occasion seized by Ibn ‘Arabî for discussing the matter came in connection with the place name ‘Arafah. The locality near Mecca was named ‘Arafah, Ibn ‘Arabî suggests, because of the noble character of “*ma’rifah* which is identical with *‘ilm*.” Since in Arabic, *‘-r-f* takes only one object, oneness (*ahadîyah*) belongs to *ma’rifah*, and *ma’rifah* is an especially noble term for knowledge. “*Ma’rifah*, in a way, is knowledge (*‘ilm*) of the divine oneness, whereas *‘ilm*, in contrast to *ma’rifah*, applies to oneness as well as to other matters.” The grammarians, referring to the Qur’ânic verse 8:60/62, which is customarily cited in this discussion: “You do not know (*‘-l-m*) them, God knows them,” conclude that *‘-l-m* here takes the place of *‘-r-f*, and thus takes one object and has relation to oneness. But, Ibn ‘Arabî says, they neglected to pay attention to something known to him and to his fellow mystics, namely, that *‘ilm* also strives after oneness, and therefore may rightly be called *ma’rifah*. In practice, *ma’rifah* is not used as an attribute of God, although it falls under the same definition as *‘ilm*, yet, *ma’rifah* is one of the synonyms (“names”) of *‘ilm*, and the term *‘ârif* is used by the mystics as a designation of the knower of oneness. The oneness in the root *‘-l-m* lies in the fact that “knowing Zayd as standing” does not aim at a knowledge (*‘-r-f*) of Zayd and of his standing but at the relationship that is implied in the statement, which is one object, while the grammarians wrongly assumed that the knowledge of the relationship between Zayd and his standing was identical with the knowledge of Zayd and of standing. However, both Zayd and the standing must have been known before a relationship between them can be known.¹¹²

A philosophical distinction between the meanings of the two roots, as may be found in the *Mu’tabar* of Abû l-Barakât,¹¹³ starts from the concept of simple and compound data and leads to the result that *‘ilm* is more restricted in meaning than *ma’rifah* but for this reason represents a more complex stage of intellectual activity. *Ma’rifah* is more general than *‘ilm* and prior to it. Since everything composite contains the simple elements from which it is compounded, every *‘ilm* contains some *ma’rifah* which is the

¹¹² Cf. Ibn ‘Arabî, *Futûhât*, I, 636. For the problem of *ma’rifah* “gnosis” and its relation to *‘ilm*, which is uppermost on Ibn ‘Arabî’s mind here, cf. below, pp. 165 ff.

¹¹³ Cf. Abû l-Barakât, *Mu’tabar*, I, 36.

perception (*tasavvur*) of the simple elements contained in it. However, since not all simple matters appear in composition, the opposite is not correct, and not every *ma'rifah* is connected with an *'ilm*. Abû l-Barakât states elsewhere¹¹⁴ that *'ilm* goes beyond *ma'rifah* also in that it requires for its realization an additional element of judgment. In these passages, Abû l-Barakât is not at all concerned with the idea of divine knowledge. The distinction would, however, have been applicable if God's knowledge had been under discussion.

During the late stages of medieval Islam, all these reflections on the relationship between *'l-m* and *'r-f* were at times thrown together under the general impression that no plausible and valid distinction could be made between the two roots. Thus, in the introduction of his essay on *ma'rifah*, Muhammad b. Quṭb-ad-dīn al-Iznīqī (d. 885/1480)¹¹⁵ cites the distinction between the *Ṣūfi* *ārif* and the *'ālim* made by Kamāl-ad-dīn al-Kāshānī to the effect that “the gnostic (*ārif*) is the one whom God allows to witness His essence, attributes, names, and actions, with gnosis (*ma'rifah*) being a state originating from witnessing the truth by means of the truth together with the remainder of the true form (*rasm*) which is illuminated¹¹⁶ by the light of the Essence and the ray of the one (?) face, whereas the knower (*'ālim*) is the one to whom God gives knowledge not through witnessing but through certainty.”¹¹⁷ However, al-Iznīqī's further remarks on the subject of mystic *ma'rifah* pay no attention to “knowledge,” and he seems to prefer the view that both terms are linguistically identical. He draws upon

¹¹⁴ Cf. Abû l-Barakât, *Mu'tabar*, II, 395, III, 2, see above, p. 53, definition A-14.

Two centuries earlier, the superiority of *'ilm* over *ma'rifah* was defended by the author of the *Kitâb al-Bâd' wa-t-tâ'rikh*, believed to have been a certain al-Muṭahhar b. Tâhir al-Maqdisî. He adopted the view that *'ilm* is the comprehension of the essence and the definition of the thing as such, whereas *ma'rifah* is the perception (*idrâk*) of the essence and persistence (*thabâl*) of the thing, even without a perception of its essence and reality. *'ilm* is thus more general and far-reaching than *ma'rifah*. Everything known (*ma'lûm*) is at the same time known about (*ma'rîf*), while not everything known about is also known. The intellectual means for attaining cognition (*ma'rifah*) are the instruments for the achievement of knowledge. Cf. the edition and translation by C. Huart, *Le Livre de la création*, I, 21 f. (text), 18 (trans.) (Paris 1899, *Publications de l'École des Langues Or. Vivantes*, IV, 16).

¹¹⁵ Cf. *GAL Suppl.*, II, 328, and, for al-Kâshânî, II, 280 f.

¹¹⁶ *Munawwar*, rather than the active *munawwir*.

¹¹⁷ Contrast definition L-4, above, p. 68.

philosophy by adducing the incipient words from Ibn Sînâ's *Najâh* where *ma'rîfah* and *'ilm* are mentioned in one breath as apparent synonyms. However, he bravely tries to associate *'ilm* with apperception (*taṣdîqât*), and *ma'rîfah* with perception (*tasawwurât*). He draws upon philology by mentioning the related argument of the two objects of *'l-m* as against the one object of *'r-f*, and from theology, he derives the argument of the inapplicability of *'l-m* to man's knowledge of God, since *'l-m* implies total comprehension of universals, whereas *'r-f* is employed with regard to particulars (and implies partial knowledge). Further, since *ma'rîfah* implies understanding (*îdrâk*) after ignorance or a secondary understanding interrupted by a period of non-understanding (*'adam*), neither of which is the case in connection with *'ilm*, God can be called *'âlim*, but He cannot be called *'ârif*.¹¹⁸

Much additional ingenuity was no doubt spent by other Muslim scholars upon the explanation of the inapplicability of the root *'r-f* to divine knowledge. Regardless of the possible degree of truth or probability these speculations contained—and it must be rated very low indeed—the fact remains that God's knowledge was properly designated only by the term *'ilm*. The Sûfi Abû Sa'id al-Kharrâz expressed the situation with admirable succinctness by stating that “God knew (*'l-m*) you, before you knew about (*'r-f*) Him.”¹¹⁹ Going beyond the immediate mystic concern of its author, this statement shows the great difference in value which Muslim consciousness attached to the two roots.

The basic point of contention with regard to God's knowledge and knowing was the question of eternality. Complete denial of the possibility of employing any descriptive attribute in connection with God was in flagrant contradiction to the Qur'ân, but “philosophers” went occasionally so far as to describe God merely as “eternal.”¹²⁰ With regard to the eternality of His knowledge and His knowing, the formula, “He has not ceased knowing” (*lam yazal 'âliman*), finally won the day. Certain radical Shî'ah theologians are said to have denied it,¹²¹ whereas the Mu'tazilah accepted the

¹¹⁸ For al-Iznîqî's work, I used the Topkapusaray manuscript Ahmet III 3163 (Catalogue Karatay 7446), which contains it on fols. I–27a, cf. fols. 2b–3b.

¹¹⁹ Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Kütâb as-Šîdq*, ed. A. J. Arberry, 73, trans. 59 (Oxford 1937). Cf. also below, pp. 129 ff.

¹²⁰ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 183 f.

¹²¹ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 157, ll. 15 f.

statement with, however, several restrictions as to the objects of God's knowing, since an eternal knowing by God might otherwise give rise to the assumption of eternal objects of His knowing.¹²² God is also assumed to have not been knowing before He created the creation¹²³ or the knowledge by which He then became knowing.¹²⁴ As to the meaning and method of God's knowing, His "knowing" may mean His not being ignorant."¹²⁵ Or, according to an-Nazzâm, the use of the term "knowing" for God affirmed His essence and eliminated the possibility of ignorance on God's part.¹²⁶ He may be knowing "in reality," in the true sense of the term (*fī l-haqīqah*), or metaphorically (*bi-l-majāz*). Thus, 'Abbâd b. Sulaymân (first half of the ninth century), who seems to have been followed in this respect by al-Jubbâ'i, is said to have expressed the view that God cannot be knowing in the real sense, because, if this were the case, there could be no knower except God. An-Nâshî (d. 293/906) maintained that God was knowing in reality and man was knowing metaphorically, whereas a contemporary of al-Ash'arî, Ibn al-Iyâdî, upheld the opposite view. Most Mutakallimûn thought that both God and man were knowing in reality."¹²⁷ God may be "knowing by means of knowledge" or "not by means of knowledge, but essentially" (*ālim bi-dhâtih*).¹²⁸ His knowing may be "knowing not like (human) knowers."¹²⁹ With the growing acceptance by Muslim thinkers of Aristotelian philosophy, the question of the objects of God's knowing became the center of discussion. The objects being

¹²² Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 158–61, 488.

¹²³ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 212, 1, 16. This is said to be the opinion of the Mujassimah, meaning, it seems, the Jahmîyah, cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. *tashbîh*.

¹²⁴ Cf. Ibn ar-Râwandî, *Qadîb adh-dhahab* ("The Golden Rod"), according to the *Fîhrîst* in the portion published by M. T. Houtsma, in *WZKM*, IV (1890), 217–35, and republished at the end of the Cairo edition of the *Fîhrîst*, p. 5 (Cairo 1348), cf. the Persian translation of the *Fîhrîst* by M. Ridâ Tajaddud, 317 (Teheran 1343). Ibn ar-Râwandî's view is said to have been refuted by al-Khayyât.

¹²⁵ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 166, 281, who reports this as the opinion of Dirâr b. 'Amr (cf. Sezgin, I, 614). Dirâr lived in the eighth century, but there is some doubt as to whether he lived or did not live long beyond the middle of the century.

¹²⁶ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 166, also 487 f. (Dirâr).

¹²⁷ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 183 f., 483, 500, 524.

¹²⁸ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 71, 166 ('Abbâd), 168 (Mu'ammâr), 488 (Mu'ammâr); 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Sharh al-usûl al-khamsah*, 201 ff.

¹²⁹ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 168, 501, 519, as the opinion of Abû l-Husayn as-Şâlihi.

divided into particulars and universals, the question was whether God's knowing extended to the particulars and what it means that God knows only Himself.¹³⁰ Another question was whether God could know Himself, which was discussed as a problem of epistemology and is rather unlikely to have already occupied Mu'ammār, who died, probably, in the early ninth century, in the way stated by Ibn Ḥazm.¹³¹

The problem of God's "knowing" was not identical with the problem of God's "knowledge," even if the two notions could not be held strictly apart and it was accepted later on that God's possession of knowledge followed from God's knowing.¹³² The famous ninth-century mystic, Abū Yazīd al-Bīṣṭāmī, is said to have denied God both *īlm* and *ma'rifah*, because only something known (knowable) can be alluded to as possessing knowledge (*īlm*), and only something limited (*mahdūd*) as possessing cognition (*ma'rifah*); thus, only an unbeliever or a heretic would do the one or the other.¹³³ For the Mu'tazilah, the eternality of God's knowing was problematical. The eternality of God's knowledge was inadmissible. In this sense, an-Nazzām¹³⁴ as well as Bishr al-Marīṣī,¹³⁵ we are told, denied God's knowledge. The Mu'tazilah, in general, agreed that the Creator was not the possessor of a created knowledge by which He knew.¹³⁶ They admitted only that "He was knowing without a primeval knowledge."¹³⁷ Once the interpretation of *īlm* as referring

¹³⁰ Cf., for instance, Ibn as-Sīd al-Baṭalyawṣī, *Kitāb al-Hadā'iq*, ed. M. Asīn Palacios, in *al-Andalus*, V (1940), 89 ff.; Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, trans. van den Bergh, I, 200 ff., 275 ff., also his *Risālah fī bayān aqwāl al-hukamā'*, ch. 6, in the Istanbul Ms. Hac̄ı Mahmud Ef. 5683; Maimonides, *Dalālat al-hā'iṛīn*, I, ch. 53, III, ch. 20, trans. S. Pines, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago 1963); M. E. Marmura, *Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars*, in *JAOS*, LXXXII (1962), 299–312; R. Arnaldez, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., II, 772b, s.v. *falsafa*.

¹³¹ Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fiṣal*, IV, 194, and ash-Shahrastāmī, *Mīlāl*, ed. W. Cureton, 48 (London 1842–46) [= I, 87 (in the margin of Ibn Ḥazm, *Fiṣal*)], trans. T. Haarbrücker, I, 71 (Halle 1850–51), but not so in al-Ash'arī. Cf. also Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah*, I, 652 f. (Beirut 1963–64), in his survey of various views on God's knowing; A. Chejne, in *The Muslim World*, LI (1961), 314.

¹³² Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 169 ('Abdallāh b. Kullāb); al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 197 ff.

¹³³ Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Lumā'*, 295 (Cairo 1380/1960).

¹³⁴ Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 486.

¹³⁵ See above, p. III, n. 5.

¹³⁶ Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 206.

¹³⁷ This phrasing of the general view of the orthodox Mu'tazilah goes back to Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qāṭ*, III, 331.

not to “knowledge” *per se* but to the “objects of knowledge” is accepted, references to God’s knowledge in the Qur’ân are not quite as numerous as one might be inclined to think, and scholars such as al-Bâqillânî who argued philosophically for God’s knowledge against the Mu’tazilah were able to cite only two passages from the Qur’ân as suitable arguments from Scripture (4:166/164 and 35:11/12).¹³⁸ The opinion of the Jahmîyah is said to have been that God’s knowledge was created. He created it, and then He knew by means of it.¹³⁹ More precisely, whenever God created something, He created for Himself a knowledge of its coming-into-being through which He knew what He had not known before.¹⁴⁰ For the createdness of God’s knowledge, reference was made to the Qur’ânic expression in the famous throne verse, *shay’ min ‘ilmih* “something of His¹⁴¹ knowledge” (2:255/256). The preposition being understood as partitive, the knowledge of God mentioned here would admit of parts and, therefore, must have been something created.¹⁴² As Ibn Hazm reports with disapproval, a Spanish Neo-Mu’tazilah assumed that God’s created knowledge consisted of two kinds, a knowledge of universals which included the knowledge of supernatural data and of such general matters as the existence of believers and of unbelievers, and a knowledge of particulars, known by God only when it comes into being.¹⁴³ The Mu’tazilah did not deny,

¹³⁸ Cf. al-Bâqillânî, *Tamhîd*, 203. The entire chapter of the *Tamhîd* (pp. 197–212) is basic for the “orthodox” point of view.

¹³⁹ Cf. al-Ash’arî, *Maqâlât*, 22, 494, see R. M. Frank, *The Neoplatonism of Ğahm ibn Ṣafwân*, in *Le Muséon*, LXXVIII (1965), 395–424, especially, 408 ff.; Ibn Hazm, *Fîsâl*, IV, 204; ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Sharh al-uṣûl al-khansah*, 183; an-Nisâbûrî, *‘Uqalâ’ al-majâin*, 98 (an-Najaf 1387/1968). Ibn Hazm, *Fîsâl*, IV, 182, reports the same opinion as held by the Shi’ites Hishâm b. al-Hakam and his pupil, Abû ‘Ali aş-Şakkâk.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. ad-Dârimî, *Kitâb ar-Radd ‘alâ l-Jahmîyah*, ed. G. Vitestam, 65 (Lund and Leiden 1960); Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 95 f. See also O. Pretzl, *Die frühislamische Attributenelehre*, 18 f. (Munich 1940, *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wiss., philos.-hist. Abt.*, 1940, 4). Cf. also *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. *badâ’*.

¹⁴¹ The reference of this pronoun to God appears incontestable. However, in his recent German translation of the Qur’ân, 38 (Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln-Mainz 1966), R. Paret seems to prefer understanding it as referring to the previously mentioned object of God’s knowledge, *wissen nichts davon* “of the knowledge of that”. This is all but impossible. The situation here is quite different from the passage 20:110/109, discussed below, pp. 130 ff.

¹⁴² Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Fîsâl*, II, 133, see I. Goldziher, *Die Zâhiriten*, 123 (Leipzig 1884).

¹⁴³ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Fîsâl*, IV, 198, speaking about Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallâh b. Murrah b. Najîh al-Andalusî.

much as they might have liked to do that or as their adversaries believed they did, that God had knowledge. An-Nazzâm and others supposedly believed that speaking of God's knowledge meant that He was knowing,¹⁴⁴ and according to 'Abbâd b. Sulaymân, it ought to be said neither that God had knowledge nor that He did not have knowledge.¹⁴⁵ The formula widely used by Mu'tazilah and certain sectarians was that "God has knowledge in the sense that He is knowing,"¹⁴⁶ this tends to be contrasted with the rather different notion that God has knowledge in the sense of "objects known,"¹⁴⁷ which in Mu'tazilah thought are finite.¹⁴⁸

The identity or non-identity of God's knowledge with God was fervently discussed. Either alternative was defended.¹⁴⁹ The compromise solution that God's knowledge was neither identical with Him nor other than Him, hard as it is to understand, was the natural escape from the dilemma.¹⁵⁰ From the statement that God's knowledge was identical with Him or with His essence,¹⁵¹ it was only a short but dangerous step to the statement that "the knowledge of God is God," which the Jahmites are supposed—it seems, wrongly—to have taken.¹⁵² We are told by both Muslim and Jewish authors that among Christians, Jesus the Son is considered as identical with the divine knowledge.¹⁵³ The tenth-century Qaraite

¹⁴⁴ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 187 f.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 188, 497.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 164.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 165, 188, 508. See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Baddâ'i'*, II, 91, for *'ilm* as "object known" and as an infinitive implying the object known.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 163 f. Al-Khayyât, *Kitâb al-Intisâr*, ed. (pace H. S. Nyberg) A. N. Nader, 16, trans. 8 (Beirut 1957), indignantly denies the correctness of the attribution of this opinion to Abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf. He mentions that Abû l-Hudhayl assumed that God knew Himself who is infinite.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 165, 171, 188, 484 ff.; Ibn Hazm, *Fîsâl*, V, 139; 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Sharh al-usûl al-khamsah*, 183.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 37, 70, 169, 171, 222, 298.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Sa'adyâh, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. S. Rosenblatt, 104 (New Haven 1948, *Yale Judaica Series* 1), see Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, 72; Maimonides, *Guide*, III, ch. 20, trans. Pines, 481.

¹⁵² Cf. ad-Dârimî, *Radd*, 59; al-Ash'arî, *Ibânah*, trans. W. C. Klein, 88, 95 (New Haven 1940, *American Oriental Series* 19); Ibn Hazm, *Fîsâl*, V, 139. In the second passage of the *Ibânah*, al-Ash'arî cites Abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf as a representative for this view. Cf. also below, p. 142, n. 3. On Jahm's view of God's knowledge, cf. also Khâlid al-'Asâli, *Jahm b. Safwân*, 108 ff. (Baghdâd 1965).

¹⁵³ Cf. Sa'adyâh, trans. Rosenblatt, 103, see Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, 42; Ibn Hazm, *Fîsâl*, I, 50. For the Son as "wisdom, knowledge, and truth," cf. Clement

al-Qirqisânî explains that since God acts, He must be alive by means of a life that is other than Him, and He must be knowing by means of a knowledge that is not like Him. Thus, God's *ilm* and life are two hypostases, and the essence (*jawhar*) is the third. Since knowledge is generated by the knower like as the son is generated by the father, knowledge is the son of God. All this, it is contended, goes back to the Greek word *logos* in that "knowledge" for the Christians is identical with "speech" (*nutq*).¹⁵⁴ The Imâm al-Haramayn prefers to use "the word" (*al-kalimah*) in this connection.¹⁵⁵ While there were quite a few Christian Arab authors who equated the Son or the Holy Ghost with wisdom or knowledge, the equation of the persons of the Trinity with divine attributes cannot be traced in the works of the Christian Church Fathers. Neo-Platonic influence has been suggested for its origin, as well as for the origin of the "essential" attributes which are in the center of Muslim theological speculation.¹⁵⁶

Another line of thought concerning the nature of God's knowledge among early Muslim theologians led to the assumption that it was a "thing" (*shay'*), as maintained by the Zaydî Sulaymân b. Jarîr.¹⁵⁷ Others, that is, the Mujassimah (Jahmîyah?), countered that it was not a "thing," but an "idea" or "concept" (*ma'nâ*).¹⁵⁸ An eccentric concept of God's knowledge was developed in much later years by

of Alexandria, *Stromata*, IV, 317, ll. 21 f., and similar passages. See, for instance, E. F. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria*, 38 (Cambridge 1957): "God is undemonstrable and cannot be the object of knowledge; but the Son is wisdom..."

¹⁵⁴ Cf. al-Qirqisânî, *Kitâb al-Anwâr wa-l-maarâqib*, ed. L. Nemoy, 43, 188. 190 (New Haven 1939–43).

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 47.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. H. A. Wolfson, *The Muslim Attributes and the Christian Trinity*, in *Harvard Theological Review*, XLIX (1956), 1–18. Going beyond Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, 42, Wolfson adduces a statement of Marius Victorinus, *Adversus Arium*, I, 63 (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, VIII, 1087D), as the only relevant passage from old Western Christian sources. There, the Trinity is aligned with *esse*, *vita*, and *intelligentia*.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. al-Ash'ârî, *Maqâlât*, 70, 171.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. al-Ash'ârî, *Maqâlât*, 213. For a more precise understanding of the term *ma'nâ* beyond its literal meaning of "meaning, concept, idea" in the usage of certain speculative theologians, cf. H. A. Wolfson, *Mu'ammâr's Theory of Ma'nâ*, in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of H. A. R. Gibb*, 673–88 (Leiden 1965), and R. M. Frank, in *JAO*, LXXXVII (1967), 248–59. The former tries to equate *ma'nâ* with 'arâd "accident," and the latter with both 'arâd and 'illâh "cause."

as-Suhrawardî *al-maqṭūl* (d. 587/1191) to conform with his philosophy of illumination. God's knowledge of Himself, according to as-Suhrawardî, is His being a light unto Himself, and His knowledge of things is their being apparent to Him by themselves or by their reflection in the cosmic scheme. God's knowledge is identical with His luminous quality (*nūrīyah*), as are indeed the other attributes of "the Light of lights."¹⁵⁹ As as-Suhrawardî was well aware, all this does not differ radically from other attempts of explaining God's knowledge of Himself and of the world; it was merely a consistent application of his Neo-Platonic ideas of light.

The interminable discussion, sketched so briefly on the preceding pages, was not just an exercise in metaphysical speculation divorced from human affairs. On the human level, the understanding of the concept of God's knowledge was pivotal for deciding whether there could be some degree of freedom for human action or whether rigid predestination had to prevail. If God were to know what human beings were going to do, they could not be held responsible for their actions.¹⁶⁰ If God's knowledge was true omniscience, that is, the knowledge of everything particular and universal; if it was eternal and immutable, man's fate was of necessity determined in all its details. God's knowledge meant more for the problem of human freedom than God's power or God's will. His power and His will could, in theory, be so construed as to leave some choice for human beings. But God's knowledge had to know, if there was a choice, what the outcome was to be, or it was imperfect knowledge, unworthy of God. Thus, there could be no real choice whatever, if God was truly omniscient. A conditional knowledge, in the sense that "God will punish the unbeliever, *if* he does not repent, and let punish him, *if* he does," was advocated by some Mu'tazilah.¹⁶¹ The idea does not seem to have met with much favor and acceptance, and deservedly so. The primeval pen has written down all of God's knowledge to the end of days on the well-guarded tablet.¹⁶² "The pen has dried upon the knowledge of God," a well-known

¹⁵⁹ Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-īshrāq*, ed. H. Corbin. *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques de Shihabaddin Yahya Sōhrawardī*. I, 152, 168 (Teheran-Paris 1952, Bibliothèque Iranienne 2). Cf. also below, pp. 157 ff.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqālāt*, 37 (Hishām b. al-Ḥakam).

¹⁶¹ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqālāt*, 182 f., 495.

¹⁶² As, for instance, described by al-Mas'ūdī (?), *Akhbār az-zamān*, 3 f. (Cairo 1357/1938).

hadīth makes the Prophet say.¹⁶³ There can be little doubt that this *hadīth*, ancient as it may be, was polemical in nature and defended what was to become “orthodox” Muslim doctrine against attempts to free men from the tyranny of God’s knowledge.

The connection of God’s knowledge with the concepts of His power and His will could not be overlooked. Alexander of Aphrodisias had already taken notice of its existence in the second century in his treatise “On Providence,” which was translated into Arabic by Abū Bishr Mattā (d. 940) and has been preserved only in this Arabic translation. Muslim theologians of the eighth and ninth centuries were fully aware of the relationship between knowledge and power and will as well as of the necessity of somehow restricting God’s knowledge in order to assure at least a modicum of human self-determination. Yet, the contention that God does not know what is not, and that He does not know what is before it is,¹⁶⁴ had to give way to the determinist point of view that He knows what is not, and that He knows what is before it is.¹⁶⁵ The radical attempt ascribed to the *ahl at-tashbīh* (meaning the Jahmīyah??) to make room in God’s all-encompassing foreknowledge for human freedom of action by making an exception for human actions “which He knows only at the stage of their coming-into-being, because if He knew who would be obedient to God and who would be disobedient and a sinner, He would intervene between sinner and sin,”¹⁶⁶ seems to have found as little of an echo as the more modest formula in favor of a conditional knowledge in God cited above. The difficult problem whether God had the power to go against His previous knowledge and change it, and, specifically, whether as an act of grace (*latīfah*), He had the power to turn a man who He knew would not believe into a believer,¹⁶⁷ appears not to have been capable of a satisfactory solution in the positive sense.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Cf. *Concordance*, I, 350a; ad-Dârimî, *Radd*, 58.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. al-Ash’arî, *Maqâlât*, 38, 158 (Abû l-Husayn aş-Şâlihî), 219 f., 489; ad-Dârimî, *Radd*, 59, 64.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. al-Ash’arî, *Maqâlât*, 162 f.; Ibn Hazm, *Fîṣal*, V, 45; Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 190.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. al-Ash’arî, *Maqâlât*, 221; Watt, *Free Will*, 117. Cf. also al-Malaṭî, *Tanbîh*, 133, for the denial by a “Qadariyah group” of the existence of divine foreknowledge of the actions and destiny of human beings.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. al-Ash’arî, *Maqâlât*, 573 ff.; Watt, *Free Will*, 75, 85. On *lutf*, cf. Imâm al-Ḥaramayn, *Irshâd*, 300 f.; ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Sharḥ al-uṣûl al-khamsah*, 518 ff., also his *Mughnî*.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. al-Ash’arî, *Maqâlât*, 203 ff., 559 ff.

The Imâm al-Haramayn hit upon the compromise that God had the power to make happen what He knew would not happen. He would be able to bring about the end of the world in this time, although He knows that it will not happen presently. However, this is a possibility in God and is within His power, and remains such; what He knows will not happen, thus definitely will not happen.¹⁶⁹ Whether God's knowledge was identical with His power, was another debated point. Abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf is said to have suggested that it is wrong to say that God's knowledge is identical with His power, and that it is wrong to say that it is not identical with His power.¹⁷⁰

Life is in a way prior to knowledge. On the human level at least, it is obvious that nobody can acquire knowledge without being alive.¹⁷¹ However, proof for the First Principle being alive may, on the other hand, be deduced from Its knowing Its own essence.¹⁷² The existence of knowledge is not compatible with death.¹⁷³ While probably posterior to, or coextensive with, life, knowledge is certainly prior to power and will, because only knowledge provides a sensible basis for the exercise of power and will. This would seem to be an anthropomorphic presupposition which may be entirely inapplicable to the Deity, but Muslims mostly took its correctness for granted without much apparent reflection, at least during the earlier stages of the discussion. A late summary of the problems of divine knowledge by al-Íjî mentions, however, as the *muttakallim* proof for its existence God's well ordered actions and His being powerful (*qâdîr*) as necessitating His knowledge. And since God's knowledge includes the possible, the necessary, and the impossible, it is wider than His power (*qudrah*), which concerns

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 229.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 177, 298. For restrictions placed by God's knowledge upon His power, cf. al-Khayyât, *Intiâr*, 23, trans., 18 f.; Ibn Hazm, *Fîsâl*, IV, 194, 197.

¹⁷¹ Cf. W. Stark, *The Sociology of Knowledge*, 14 (Glencoe, Illinois, 1958). Cf., however, 'Abd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 5 f., for sectarian views on the existence of knowledge in the dead and in minerals. Also *Uṣûl*, 42 f., on the relationship of life to knowledge, power, etc.

¹⁷² Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâsid*, II, 71.

¹⁷³ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 232, 313 f., 678, as against 406, II., 14 f. Also 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Mughnî*, ed. I. al-Ibyârî, VII, 33 (Cairo 1380/1961). For Maimonides' equation of life and knowledge in God, cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, I, ch. 53, trans. Pines, 122. On the Christian argument for a difference of "life" and "knowledge," cf. al-Bâqillâni, *Tamhîd*, 79 f. Cf. also above, p. 70, n. 2, and below, pp. 320 f., on the identification of knowledge with life.

only the *possibilia*.¹⁷⁴ According to the theory of a Fâtimid-Ismâ'îli author, who, incidentally, argues for God's strict unknowability and His possession of only negative attributes, life is in the center of a circle whose sectors form an interlocking chain, with no discernible beginning and end, from power, knowledge, intelligence to eternity, oneness, existence, creativity; in this connection, however, it is stated that power necessarily precedes knowledge.¹⁷⁵

According to Khârijite-Ibâdîte opinion, shared by an-Najjâr and other Mu'tazilah,¹⁷⁶ as reported by al-Ash'arî, God's knowledge determines His will: "God has eternally willed that what He has known will be, will be, and that what He has known will not be, will not be. He wills the acts of obedience and disobedience that He knows (will be)..."¹⁷⁷ A restrictive connection of knowledge and will, on the other hand, is supposed to have been formulated by adherents of the extremist Shî'ah theologian, Shaytân at-Tâq, as follows: "God knows the things only when He has determined (*qaddara*) and willed them. Before that, it is impossible for Him to know them, not because He is not knowing, but because a thing is not a thing until He determines and establishes it through determination equated with will."¹⁷⁸ The argument that knowledge must precede will was also turned around in the sense that "God does not know a thing until He creates the will. If He creates the will that it be, He is knowing that it will be. If He creates the will that it be not, He is knowing that it will not be. And if He does not create a will that it be, or a will that it be not, He is neither knowing that it will be, nor knowing that it will not be."¹⁷⁹

God's supposed knowledge has played a large and fateful role in the history of Muslim society and Muslim individuals as the most immovable and least manageable source of determinism. Another important connection of the concept of divine knowledge with human affairs consisted in the fact that the speculation about God's knowledge influenced the speculation about the character of human knowledge. God's knowledge was generally thought of

¹⁷⁴ Cf. al-Îjî, *Mawâqif*, 285–90.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Hamîd-ad-dîn al-Kîrmânî, *Râhat al-'aql*, ed. M. Kâmil Hüsayn and M. Muştafa Hîlmi, 80 ff. (Cairo and Leiden 1953, *The Ismaili Society Series C-1*).

¹⁷⁶ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 283, 512, 514.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 108, 124.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 37, 489.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 220.

as being different from human knowledge.¹⁸⁰ However, it may be noted that according to Ibn Ḥazm, the Ash‘arites—he also mentions the names of Ibn Fūrak and al-Bāqillānī—assumed that the same definition applied to both the knowledge of God and the knowledge of human beings, thus implying the identity of divine and human knowledge. In fact, while these men make a distinction between the primeval and uncreated (*qadīm*) knowledge of God and the created knowledge of man, which they consider to be of a different order, they state that “the three kinds of knowledge, *i.e.*, the primeval knowledge of God and the two subdivisions of created knowledge, do not differ, insofar as a thing constitutes knowledge, in being ‘the cognition of an object known as it is.’”¹⁸¹ Such a statement would seem to be a sufficient justification for Ibn Ḥazm’s contention, although the identity of divine and human knowledge is only in reference to the object known. In another work, Ibn Ḥazm put his relevant objections to the Ash‘arites in these words: “They say that there ought to be no difference in definitions whether they apply to the primeval (*qadīm*) or the created (*muhdath*). This is a statement that has disbelief as its necessary consequence, for they thereby make the Creator fall under the category of creat-edness (*hudūth*), because everything defined (*mahdūd*) is finite and com-posite, and everything composite must be created (*makhlūq*), because it is composed from its genus and its differentia, which makes it to be dis-tinguished from what belongs together under its genus. Thus, they make their Lord out to be created (*muhdath*)!”¹⁸² However, the general view universally entertained among Muslims certainly was that God’s knowledge was something different, and, we may add, something rather oppressive from the human point of view. The idea of the existence of such overpowering divine knowledge could hardly have been a source of inspiration for feeble human efforts at acquiring knowledge. Yet, the debate of God’s knowledge also included certain elements of human epistemology, such as the question of the identity of self-knowledge

¹⁸⁰ Cf. for instance, Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 189; Maimonides, *Guide*, I, ch. 35, III, ch. 20. trans. Pines, 80, 482.

¹⁸¹ Cf., Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīsāl*, II, 136, V, 109; al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 7, ll. 11 f. Muhammad b. Muḥammad b. Bilāl al-Hanafi discusses whether the definition E-9 (above, p. 61, n. 4) applies only to the knowledge of the *possibilia* or is common to this (human) knowledge and the divine knowledge; the former is said to be the generally accepted opinion.

¹⁸² Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 37 f.

with the knowledge of outside objects, or the general problem of abstract knowing as against knowing through sense perception. It also kept alive the discussion of “knowledge” long after nearly all hope had been lost that a secular discussion of the meaning of knowledge would be permitted to continue except in very small, restricted circles. It made knowledge the most discussed item of learned theological speculation, which was so prominent and important that the common people also could not ignore it. By its mere stress on “knowledge,” it helped to sustain the value level of the concept and, in fact, endow it with all the awe surrounding the numinous.

4. MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The phrase “knowledge of God” is ambiguous in English, since it may have God as either the subject or the object of knowing. Employing “God's knowledge” for the one, and “man's knowledge of God” for the other, is the somewhat clumsy expedient adopted here in order to avoid ambiguity. In Arabic, an easy syntactic distinction is possible by means of the use of *ilm Allāh* for the former, and *al-ilm bi-llāh* for the latter. However, *ilm Allāh* was also employed, if rarely, for man's knowledge of God, let alone such specialized usages as “theology” or the knowledge God bestows upon mankind of Himself or the like.¹⁸³ Fortunately, the context leaves hardly ever much room for confusion. While linguistically close, the two notions moved on greatly different levels. The knowledge possessed by God was treated, as we have seen, as a problem of divine ontology and epistemology. Man's knowledge of God, on the other hand, was by and large considered as something divorced from any rational or pseudo-rational speculation and as constituting an unfathomable mystery of man's emotional being. This applied to man's *ilm* of God as well as to his *ma'rifah* “gnosis” of God where the emotional element was preponderant from the outset. It must be stressed again here, as it will be once more soon, that the two terms tended to blend, unless a conscious effort was made to keep them apart. The discussion of whether and of how man can know God has been an unending one in Islam. “Much

¹⁸³ This particular usage attaches to *ilm Allāh* in the phrase *al-qandāh bi-ilm Allāh*, frequent in al-Muḥāsibī.

Ma'rifah may be followed by a depending genitive as a genitivus objectivus or by the preposition *bi-* without any apparent distinction, but it is always *al-'arif bi-llāh*.

talk (and many different opinions) about God are a sign of man falling short of the knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of Him.” This remark, attributed to Pythagoras in the Graeco-Arabic gnomic literature, obviously failed to make an impression upon Muslim scholars. Pythagoras is also stated to have expressed himself convinced of “man’s potential for a knowledge of God through few words, by not directing his attention to knowing his fellow men but, it seems, through a contemplative withdrawal into himself. This sentiment in a way fell on more fertile soil in Muslim minds.¹⁸⁴

It has been noted that man’s knowledge of God is not mentioned in the Qur’ān.¹⁸⁵ Man knows, or ought to know, all the particulars about God. He knows, or ought to know, that God knows everything (5:97/98), that He sees everything (96:14/14), that He hears and knows (2:244/245), that He has power over everything (2:259/261, 65:12/12). But there is no express statement to the effect that man knows God, using either the root ‘-l-m or the root ‘-r-f. There is one passage in the Qur’ān, the interpretation of which is, however, contested, that might conceivably contain a clue as to the possible reason for the failure of the Qur’ān to speak of man’s knowledge of God. This is *sūrah* 20:110/109 which reads: “He (God) knows what is before them and what is behind them, while they do not comprehend it/ Him in knowledge (*wa-lá yuhîtūna bih̄ ilman*).”¹⁸⁶ Some modern translators of the Qur’ān into European languages have taken the view that the pronoun in *bih̄* refers to God. Among them were E. H. Palmer (1880), M. Henning (1901), and the most recent English and French translators, R. Bell (1937–39), A. J. Afberry (1955), and R. Blachère (1949–51). The list of those who take the pronoun to mean “it” and to refer to the preceding relative clauses (“what is before them and what is

¹⁸⁴ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 62, ll. 4 f. and 11. In Greek, we find: *Gnōsis theou poiei andra brachylogen*, cf. H. Schenkl, *Das Florilegium Ariston kai prōton mathēma*, in *Wiener Studien*, XI (1889), 14, no. 27; also Stobaeus, V, p. VII.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. A. S. Tritton, *Theory of Knowledge in Early Muslim Theology*, in *Woolner Commemoration Volume*, ed. M. Shafi, 253–56 (Lahore 1940). The brief and undocumented article appears to be mainly concerned with man’s knowledge of God.

¹⁸⁶ “Comprehend in knowledge” is an attempt at a literal rendering of the Arabic idiom. In fact, it means nothing more than “to know.” *Ahāta* “to comprise, to comprehend” indicates intellectual comprehension with or without the qualifying accusative *ilman* or *khubrān*. In addition to the passage under discussion, only Qur’ān 18:68/67, 91/90, 27:84/86, and 65:12/12 feature such qualifying accusative.

behind them") is much longer. It includes such translators as A. du Ryer¹⁸⁷ and L. Marracci in the seventeenth century, G. Sale and M. Savary in the eighteenth century, L. Ullmann and J. M. Rodwell in the nineteenth century, and, among the most recent scholars, the Russian I. Krachkovsky (1963, published posthumously) and the German R. Paret (1963 [1966]).¹⁸⁸ The reader who consults any of the translations mentioned is not being told that the translators in either case made a rather important choice from the theological point of view. They did so, it seems, rather lightheartedly, without being greatly concerned about the consequences. Muslim commentators were much less sure of the correct understanding of the passage and expressed themselves with considerable hesitation. At-Tabarī thus left it open whether the passage should be interpreted to mean: "His creatures do not comprehend Him in knowledge, in the sense that He comprehends His servants in knowledge, while they do not comprehend Him in knowledge," or whether, as some scholars had thought, the meaning was that "God knows what is before His angels and what is behind them, and His angels do not comprehend in knowledge what is before themselves and what is behind themselves."¹⁸⁹ At-Tabarī's preference seems to go to the first interpretation. The second interpretation becomes necessary only if the subject is assumed to be the angels of whom it must not be said that they do not comprehend God, on the basis of a very uncertain interpretation of the preceding verse ("On that day, intercession will be of no use except [by ?] one to whom the Merciful One permits and whom He likes to speak up") implying that the reference to intercession there rules out human beings as the subject.

Later commentators were definitely influenced by theological considerations concerning God's knowledge. Their preference would seem to go to the interpretation of the pronoun as having as its antecedent the preceding relative clauses. The Zâhirite Ibn Hazm, it is true, appears firmly convinced that *bihī* refers to the knowledge

¹⁸⁷ The French original uses an ambiguous *le* (with a small *l*), but the English translation (London 1649, p. 105) has "it".

The medieval Latin translation of 1143, published by T. Bibliander (Basel 1543, I, 103, ll. 23 f.) omits the sentence.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. also above, p. 121. The translations mentioned here represent a random selection. No attempt has been made to find out whether the explanation of the pronominal suffix as referring to God appears in European translations before that by Palmer.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. at-Tabarī, *Tafsîr*, XVI, 142.

of God which human beings are unable to possess in its entirety. For anything that can be comprehended by knowledge in its entirety would have to be limited and finite, and God, of course, is neither limited nor finite. Ibn Ḥazm is also inclined to interpret the phrase “some of His knowledge” in Qur’ân 2:255/256 as indicating a limited knowledge of God that man may have, if it is given to him by God.¹⁹⁰ For az-Zamakhsharî, who is well known for his Mu’tazilah tendencies, there is also no doubt that *bihî* of 20:110/109 must be combined with *‘ilmihî* of 2:255/256. However, in both instances, *‘ilm* is to be understood in the sense of *ma’lûm* “object known.”¹⁹¹ No essential knowledge of God is therefore involved in either passage.

Other commentators were often less willing to take a firm stand. A Shî‘ah contemporary of az-Zamakhsharî, at-Tabarsî, who died in the fifties of the twelfth century, paraphrased the Qur’ânic passage as follows: “They do not comprehend God in knowledge, meaning His objects of power and knowledge, or, according to another interpretation, the substance of His majesty (*kunh ‘azamatih*) in His essence and His actions. Another interpretation explains ‘it’ in ‘they do not comprehend it in knowledge’ as what is before them and what is behind them, except those whom God enables to know (*atla‘a*) that. That interpretation goes back to al-Jubbâ’î. Another interpretation has it that the passage means: ‘They do not perceive it by means of some of the senses, so that their knowledge would comprehend it.’”¹⁹² A specimen of Shî‘ah interpretation from much later times may be found in a commentary by the eighteenth-century Yemenite Tayyibî-Ismâ‘îlî writer, Diyâ’-ad-dîn Ismâ‘îl b. Hibatallâh (d. 1173/1760). He interprets the pronominal suffix in *bihî* as referring to His (that is, ‘Alî’s) knowledge and position (*maqâm*).¹⁹³ However, for another late Syrian Ismâ‘îlî author, Shihâb-ad-dîn al-Maynaqî, there is no question but that the pronoun refers to God and that the passage offers incon-

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fîṣal*, II, 133 f., 174 f., see above, p. 121. In the first passage, Ibn Ḥazm paraphrases *‘ilmih* by *ma’rifatih*.

¹⁹¹ Cf. az-Zamakhsharî, *Kashshâf*, I, 278, II, 253.

¹⁹² Cf. at-Tabarsî, *Majma‘ al-bayân fî tafsîr al-Qur’ân*, VII, 31 (Teheran 1374). It would seem impossible to understand here “Him”, instead of “it”.

¹⁹³ Ed. R. Strothmann, *Ismailitischer Kommentar zum Koran*, 216 (Göttingen 1955, Abh. der Akad. der Wiss., philol.-hist Kl., Dritte Folge, Nr. 31).

trovertible evidence for God's unknowability.¹⁹⁴ Ṣūfi authorities, it may be added, such as Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (d. after the 3208/9308) and Ȣhmad b. ‘Aṭâ’ ar-Rûdhabârî (d. 369/980) had naturally taken the same attitude much earlier in response to the Qur’ânic verse.¹⁹⁵

The great theologian Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî (d. 606/1209) preferred the assumption of a connection of the pronoun with the preceding relative clauses, for two reasons, the one syntactical, because a pronoun ought to be taken as referring to the nearest antecedent, which in this case would be the relative clauses rather than God, and the other, homiletical, since the purpose of the phrase is to warn people that whatever they may do is known to God, even if it is not known to themselves.¹⁹⁶ Al-Bayḍâwî, finally, about a century later, alluded briefly, as usual, to all the principal interpretations suggested: 1. Their knowledge does not comprehend His store of knowledge. 2. Their knowledge does not comprehend His essence (in this case, *bihî* “Him” is interpreted to mean “His knowledge” as an essential attribute). And 3. the pronoun refers to one of the two preceding relative clauses, or to both of them (a distinction possibly prompted by the unjustified assumption that if it referred to the two-pronged relative clause, it ought to be in the dual), “since they know neither the totality of it nor part of what they know in detail.”¹⁹⁷

If we dispense with all exegetically or theologically determined subtleties of interpretation, it is perfectly obvious that the pronominal suffix must be understood as “it,” according to the common Arabic usage of having a pronoun refer back to a preceding sentence or thought expressed. “It” thus means “their entire fate as known to God.” If it were possible to understand the pronominal suffix as referring to God, we might have here the authentic explanation of the reason for the lack of any mention of man’s knowledge of God in the Qur’ân. As some of the Muslim interpreters did in fact assume, the reason which made the Prophet hesitant to speak about knowing God would be that man was felt by him to be unable to have a comprehensive knowledge of God. Even without the supporting evidence of Qur’ân 20:110/109, this might very

¹⁹⁴ Cf. al-Maynaqî, *Idâh*, ed. ‘Ârif Tâmir, 106, 109, 111 (Beirut 1964 [1965]). Cf also below, p. 142, n. 3.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma‘*, 56, 124.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *Tafsîr*, XXII, 119 (Cairo 1381/1962?).

¹⁹⁷ Cf. al-Bayḍâwî, *Anwâr at-tanzîl*, ed. H. L. (O.) Fleischer, 606 (Leipzig 1846–48).

well have been the case. If the Qur'ân also never speaks of knowing about ('-r-f) God, this might have had its reason in the Prophet's firm conviction of God's manifest existence which did not require man's acknowledgement or needed to be made one of the subjects of the Prophetic preaching. Yet, all this is quite uncertain. For all we know, the assumption of mere chance may be the preferable explanation for the absence of any mention in the Qur'ân of man knowing God.

In his philological discussion of the Qur'ânic vocabulary, ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî stated that it could well be said that "someone knows about ('-r-f) God," but it would not be possible to say that "someone knows ('-l-m) God," because the human knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God derives from reflection about the observable signs of His works but is not, as the term *'ilm* would imply of necessity, a perception of His essence.¹⁹⁸ This kind of reasoning is hardly applicable to the language and intellectual climate of the Qur'ân. Nor is it a distinction that could be said to fit the later history of the idea of man's knowledge of God in Islam in any consistent manner. *'ilm* and *ma'rifah* came to be employed with little tangible distinction in this respect, although *ma'rifah* may appear to have been the term more commonly used. The real distinction derived from the various purposes connected with the notion of knowing God in the minds of those who spoke about it. The subject as such was taken up and discussed in Islam at a very early date, even if it did not constitute a topic of discussion in the Qur'ân. This is hardly surprising, seeing that it had engaged the mind of man since pre-historic times and was particularly alive in Christian circles,¹⁹⁹ whence some stimulus for its discussion might have come to Muslim scholars.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Mafradât*, III, 103, cf. above, pp. 114 f. Similarly also ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Tafsîr*, as quoted on fol. 1a of the Istanbul Ms. Carullah 2080 (above, p. 39, n. 2).

For the Judaeo-Christian view that God is known by His works and His creation, cf., for instance, the early ninth-century Job of Edessa, who argued that, therefore, our knowledge of the causes of created beings was the knowledge of them as well as of God (*Book of Treasures*, ed., trans. A. Mingana, 298a, trans., 2 f. [Cambridge 1935]).

¹⁹⁹ Cf., for instance, E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 3 (Leipzig-Berlin 1913). Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, I, 8, refers to the relevant Pauline passages on (*epi)gnôsis* and to the *da'at 'elohîm* of the Old Testament. He feels, however, that they express the idea of a divine wisdom taught to human beings.

The knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God belonged, as we have seen, to the earliest stages of the attempts to define “faith.”²⁰⁰ Ignorance of God was said to constitute unbelief (*kufr*).²⁰¹ In his anti-Christian polemic, Ibn Ḥazm contended that the statement, “Only the Father knows the Son, and only the Son knows the Father” (Matthew 11:27), held the implication that nobody else knew God, and this would mean that everybody is an unbeliever.²⁰² Ibn Ḥazm’s remarks were an echo of the lengthy discussion into which the Church Fathers had been forced to enter in order to combat such an unacceptable interpretation of the Gospel.²⁰³ Already some Khārijite sects are said to have debated the question whether knowing God by only some of His names sufficed for the knowledge of God and true belief.²⁰⁴ The existence of an unknowable quiddity of God was a point of issue between the Mu‘tazilah and their opponents.²⁰⁵ Abū l-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf and an-Najjār, we are told, saw in the beatific vision of God a form of knowledge of Him. It is permissible for God to transfer the eye to the heart and give it the power of knowledge (*ilm*), so that the heart may know through it; this knowledge then is seeing God in a beatific vision, and that is knowing Him.²⁰⁶ According to al-Jubbā’ī, God’s description as “existing” (*ma‘jūd*) meant that He was an object of knowledge or knowable (*ma‘lūm*),²⁰⁷ a reversal of the theory that every object of knowledge was existent. In later centuries, little remained to be said about the subject from the majority point of view. As explained by ar-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, God was recognizable by His works. An intimate, essential knowledge of Him was not possible. Corresponding to the Qur’ānic contention that man can know only what God wants him to know, a Hermetic saying reported by al-Mubashshir made the point that human beings would not be constituted to achieve knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of the majesty of God, were it not for the fact that He has made Himself

²⁰⁰ Cf. above, pp. 99 f.

²⁰¹ Cf. al-Ash’arī, *Maqālāt*, 100, 132.

²⁰² Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīsāl*, II. 32. For whatever it may be worth, it may be noted that the Arabic Bible uses ‘-rf, instead of ‘l-m (ed. Rome 1671; ed. P. de Lagarde, Leipzig 1864).

²⁰³ Cf. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 74 ff., 390.

²⁰⁴ Cf. al-Ash’arī, *Maqālāt*, 96 f.

²⁰⁵ Cf. al-Ash’arī, *Maqālāt*, 206.

²⁰⁶ Cf. al-Ash’arī, *Maqālāt*, 216, 285.

²⁰⁷ Cf. al-Ash’arī, *Maqālāt*, 520, ll. 13 ff.

knowable to them through the divine revelation of prophets.²⁰⁸

When Muslim philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition spoke about knowing God, they referred to the various proofs for God's existence.²⁰⁹ The true debate on man's knowledge of God came from what is comprehensively called "mysticism," a conglomerate of a wide variety of outlooks on religious phenomena. Among mystics, the knowledge of God was a crucial concept. For them, it included as a rule the entire process of mystic "gnosis" and constituted the final culmination of it. Much of the debate had its roots in the ancient conception of the cognition of like through like. In Antiquity, this theory was widely (if, it seems, wrongly) believed to have originated with Pythagoras and his followers. However this may have been, it played a considerable role in Greek epistemological speculation and is encountered under many disguises.²¹⁰ It obviously entailed the exclusion of any knowledge of God by man, unless it was assumed that man possessed in himself some part of the divine, enabling him to "assimilate to the divine" (*homoiōsis theōi*) and to obtain at least some imperfect knowledge of God. Such was, indeed, the accepted doctrine of Neo-Platonists, mystics, and Christians in late Antiquity. From there, it passed on directly to the Muslims. Sufism, deeply committed as it was to the basic innowability of God, at times succumbed to the harsh realization that a knowledge, of God was possible only for God Himself.²¹¹ Usually, it avoided this realization, which was incompatible with its very being, by stating expressly that it was the *true* knowledge if God, the knowledge of the divine reality (*haqīqah*), that was unattainable to human beings. A few words of al-Ghazzālī develop the ancient theory of *homoian-homoiōi* in its application to the knowledge of God in a manner eminently comprehensible to the

²⁰⁸ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 11.

²⁰⁹ Thus, for instance, Abū l-Barakāt, *Mu'tabar*, III, 130, entitled a chapter: "On the scientific (*ilmiyah*) methods by which man by means of his knowledge (*ilm*) comes to the knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of God."

²¹⁰ Cf. A. Schneider, *Der Gedanke der Erkenntnis des Gleichen durch Gleiches in antiker und patristischer Zeit*, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, Suppl.*, II (1923), 65–76, and the substantial elaboration of the subject by C. W. Müller, *Gleiches zu Gleichen, ein Prinzip frühgriechischen Denkens* (Wiesbaden 1965, *Klassisch-philologische Studien*, Heft 31). Cf. also H. Merki, *Homoiōsis Theōi: Von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Freiburg, Switzerland, 1952), where, however, no attention is paid to the epistemological implication.

²¹¹ See below, p. 140.

popular mind of his days: “First of all, it must be realized that only God truly knows about Himself (*ya'rif haqq ma'rifatih*) and fully comprehends the essence of His majesty. This need not be considered strange. For I say, only an angel truly knows about angels. Only a prophet truly knows about prophets. Indeed, only a scholar truly knows about scholars. I would even say that as long as a student has not attained his professor's rank in scholarship, he does not truly know his professor. When he has attained his professor's rank, he knows him almost in the way the professor knows himself... I would even say that it cannot be conceived that an impotent man could truly know about the condition attained by a person during cohabitation...” Al-Ghazzâlî goes on to say that even for low animal life such as ants and gnats, it must be assumed that any true knowledge of their being is possible only for ants and gnats, that man has no true knowledge of himself and as a rule knows about himself only through the actions and characteristics of his self (soul), while ignoring its quiddity, “and once man knows that he is of necessity unable to perceive²¹² the essence of God's majesty, he has attained what is the end of his perfection, as this is the goal of human perfection.”²¹³

The need for the divine spark in man in connection with his knowing of God through the medium of knowing himself is at the core of the famous pseudo-*hadîth*, at times endowed with great holiness, “He who knows about (‘-r-f) himself, knows about His Lord.” It was eagerly embraced by Muslim mysticism. In pre-Islamic times, we find its closest model in the *Paedagogus* of Clement of Alexandria (*heauton gar tis ean gnôi, theon eisetai*), where the variation between *gignôskein*, the traditional verb for self-knowledge, and *eidenai*, for the knowing of God, may be noted.²¹⁴ The idea of *gnôthi seauton* as a means for understanding the mysteries beyond the human self did not require specific mystical implications in any technical sense. There were none, for instance, in the para-

²¹² Here, al-Ghazzâlî comments on the maxim discussed below, p. 141.

²¹³ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Masâ'il fî ma'rifat Allâh*, ed. N. A. Faris, in *al-Abhâth*, XIV (1961), 206–22, especially, 208 f.

²¹⁴ Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, III, 1 beg., ed. O. Stählin, I, 325 (Leipzig 1905). For references to the sources and some of the innumerable occurrences of the maxim, cf. F. Rosenthal, in *Islamic Culture*, XIV (1940), 409 f., and, especially, XV (1941), 393; C. A. Nallino, *Raccolta di scritti*, II, 279, 339 f. (Rome 1939–48); Merki, *Homoiôsis Theôi*, 174; H. Ritter, *Das Meer der Seele*, 618 f. (Leiden 1955). Cf. also below, p. 186, n. 1.

phrase presented by the ninth-century physician and convert from Christianity, 'Ali b. Rabban at-Tabarî, in his medical encyclopaedia: “The philosopher, Aristotle, says that the knowledge (*ilm*) of the rational soul is more important than any other kind of knowledge (*ulûm*), because he who knows about (*'-r-f*) the soul knows about his own essence, and he who knows about his own essence has the potential to know about God (*ma'rifat Allâh*).”²¹⁵ Thus, it seems also not necessary to think of a philosopher like Abû l-Barakât as writing in the Sûfi spirit, even though he employs unmistakable Sûfi terminology, when he says: “The ladder of man's knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) his Lord is the knowledge of himself, for the latter is the first chapter of the knowledge of (*ilm bi-*) the world of divine lordship.”²¹⁶ Yet, the famous maxim of the relationship of the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God appealed especially to the Sûfis and was wholeheartedly welcomed by them, in particular, by the highly influential Ibn 'Arabî. From the Muslim theological point of view, as it concerned the meaning of the concept of God, it was a highly doubtful pronouncement. However, the danger of any direct conflict with orthodox opinion was not great on account of the vagueness of the meaning and true implications of “self-knowledge.”

Sûfism, as we shall see, wrestled hard and unceasingly with both *ilm* and *ma'rifah*. For Sûfis, both terms in connection with God meant primarily man's knowledge of God. While one may translate *ilm* by “knowledge” and *ma'rifah* by “gnosis,”²¹⁷ the

²¹⁵ Cf. 'Alî b. Rabban at-Tabarî, *Firdaws al-hikmah*, ed. M. Z. Siddiqi, 60 (Berlin 1928).

²¹⁶ Cf. Abû l-Barakât, *Mu'tabar*, III, 99. See S. Pines in *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, VI (1960), 171–76. For Ibn Rushd's use of the maxim, cf. Nallino, *Raccolta*, II, 469.

²¹⁷ There is the not uncommon use of *ilm al-ma'rifah* “the science of gnosis,” employed, for instance, by Abû Tâlib al-Makkî in his *Qât* (for *ilm al-ma'rifah* and *ma'rifat al-ma'rifah*, cf. also below, p. 167). Understandably, the reverse, *ma'rifat al-ilm*, was less current, but cf. al-Hakîm at-Tirmidhî (above, p. 38, n. 3), fol. 61a, speaking of the occupation with “the cognition of the knowledge of God” (*ma'rifat al-ilm bi-llâh*). In 'Alî's exhortation of Kumayl (below, p. 256, n. 5), the phrase *ma'rifat al-ilm* apparently refers to the cognition of knowledge as a recommendable rule (*dîn yudâ' bih*), although a somewhat different interpretation (the knowledge about the excellence, or the honor, or the necessity, of knowledge being a religious duty) was given by Ibn Abî l-Hadîd, V, 436. For a further and more detailed discussion of the various meanings of *ma'rifah* and *ilm* for Sûfism, see below, chapter VI.

A seemingly strange juxtaposition of *ilm* and *ma'rifah* occurs in the beginning of the

distinction was often, but by no means always, small or non-existent. The ninth-century mystic Abû Sa‘id al-Kharrâz employed the two terms next to each other as apparent synonyms.²¹⁸ People who follow the stations set up by al-Kharrâz reach “the high station, and the knowledge (*ilm*) of God, and the noble station, and, as a result, they will get to joy and ease, and to being favored with the knowledge (*ma‘rifah*) of God...”²¹⁹ Both the *ilm* and the *ma‘rifah* of God may be possessed to a greater or smaller degree by human beings, and thereby they are distinguished in virtue and excellence.²²⁰ Al-Junayd used both *ma‘rifah* and *ilm* for the knowledge of God.²²¹ The desire to find an early Islamic precedent shows in the attribution to Umm ad-Dardâ, a woman traditionist of the first century of the hijrah, of the following remark: “The most excellent knowledge (or science, *ilm*) is the gnosis (*ma‘rifah*).” This remark supposedly prompted an unidentified poet to rhyme:

Best of us is the one most excellent in knowledge (*ma‘rifah*)
And whenever a human being knows about (‘-r-f) God.²²²

At the peak of human gnosis, man’s knowledge of God may appear associated with the love of God. An early Sûfi is said to have remarked that he loved God, because God had bestowed upon him, among other favors, his knowledge of Him.²²³ And a writer on mystic love mentions a group holding the opinion that “love is *ma‘rifah*” and that *ma‘rifah* “occurs after the full realization of love.”²²⁴ The combination of the knowledge of God with His love was, of course, as little restricted to Sûfism²²⁵ as that of the knowledge

chapter on knowledge in az-Zamakhshari’s *Rabi‘* (Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 183a; al-Ibshîhî, *Mustâraf*, I, 23), where it is said in praise of knowledge that “through knowledge (*ilm*) God is known (‘-r-f) and His oneness acknowledged.” *Ilm* is here again the theological information through which it is possible to know about God.

²¹⁸ Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Sidq*, 41, 70, 73, but cf. Abû Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, X, 247.

²¹⁹ Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Sidq*, 60, trans., 49.

²²⁰ Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Sidq*, 61, trans., 50.

²²¹ Cf. Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, 96 ff (London 1962, *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, N.S.* 22). For al-Ghazzâlîs occupation with *ilm* and *ma‘rifah*, cf. Jabre, *La Notion de certitude*, 143 f.

²²² Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi‘*, II, 40.

²²³ Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Sidq*, 50, trans., 41.

²²⁴ Cf. ad-Daylâmî, *Kitâb ‘Af al-alif al-mâlîf ‘alâ l-lâm al-mâtiif*, éd. J. C. Vadet, 52 (Cairo 1962).

²²⁵ Cf. above, p. 100; M.-L. Franz, *Aurora Consurgens*, 180 (New York 1966, *Bollingen Series* 77): “...many (medieval) philosophers supposed that every act of cognition was preceded by a kind of ‘love’ or ‘natural appetition’ of the knower for the object.”

of God with the fear (*khashyah*) of Him which is attested in the Prophetic traditions as well as among Sufi authors.²²⁶

For the author of a little booklet of maxims, Ibn 'Atâ'llâh al-Iskandarî ash-Shâdhilî (d. 709/1309), a man's reliance upon his possession of the knowledge (*îlm*) of God is sufficient protection or him against all the harm the world might do to him, whereas anyone who wants more than such knowledge suffers more harm than all the malice of the world taken together could do to him.²²⁷ The knowledge of God is for Ibn 'Atâ'llâh the true meaning of mystic union. This is the way he expressed this idea: "Your reaching your Lord means your reaching the knowledge of Him (*al-îlm bih*). Except for that, God's majesty excludes that anything might unite with Him, or that He might unite with anything."²²⁸

In fact, the possibility or impossibility of man's knowledge of God depended in Sufi thinking upon the various views concerning the general relationship of man to the divine. Where union was considered attainable, or where monistic doctrines entered the field, some human knowledge of God was automatically admitted. But at the same time, it could also be said bluntly that "only God knows God."²²⁹ Abû Yazîd al-Bîstâmî felt that the claim to "gnosis with regard to the essence, of the Truth (= God) was ignorance," and the claim to "knowledge with regard to the reality of gnosis was a crime."²³⁰ The mystic Abû 'Alî Ibn al-Kâtîb, who lived in the

²²⁶ Cf. Psalms 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; *Concordance*, IV, 319b66, 330b60; al-Muhâsibî, *Ri'ayah*, ed. M. Smith, 282, ll. 15 f. (London 1940, *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series. N.S.* 15), in the name of 'Abdallâh (b. Mas'ûd); al-Hakîm at-Tirmidhî, *Khatm al-awliyâ'*, 405, cf. also the editor's introduction, 41; Ja'far aš-Šâdiq, *Mîshâbîh*, 81 (above, pp. 91 f.); Ibn 'Atâ'llâh, *al-Hikam al-Atâ'îyah*, 59, n. 233 (Damascus, n.y. [1965 ?]). One may also compare the Hermetic, *Hé gar eusebeia gnôsis estin tou theou*, quoted in Greek from Lactantius in A. D. Nock and A. J. Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum*, IV, 110 (Paris 1945–54), where, however, the reference to a *testimonium Latinum* is entirely out of place, since it turns out to be a passage from al-Mas'ûdî, *Murâj*, II, 379 (Cairo 1346) which reads: *Man 'arafa dhâtahû ta'llaha* "he who knows about his own essence becomes godlike." Cf. also below, p. 165, n. 1, and, for some remarks on the fear and love of God, Mir Valiuddin, *The Sufi Concept of Knowledge*, in *Studies Islam*, II (1965), 144–152.

²²⁷ Cf. Ibn 'Atâ'llâh, *Hikam*, 59, no. 234.

²²⁸ Cf. Ibn 'Atâ'llâh, *Hikam*, 55, no. 213.

²²⁹ Cf. Ibn Khaldûn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 97. Cf. also al-Qônawî, *Ijâz al-bayân*, 49, 173.

²³⁰ Cf. as-Sahlajî, *Kîtâb an-Nûr*, ed. 'Abd-ar-Râhîmân Badawî, *Shatahât aš-Sâfiyyah*, 133 (Cairo 1949). Also Abû Nu'aym, *Hîliyah*, X, 37. In as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 74, "crime" is

first half of the tenth century, made a brilliantly phrased comparison of the *Şûfi* attitude toward the unknowability of God with that of the rationalistic theologians: “The Mu‘tazilah declared God to be remote rationally, and they proved wrong. The *Şûfis* declared God to be remote for knowledge, and they proved right.”²³¹ The intellect itself was unable to state who God was, until God anointed its eyes with the light of divine uniqueness, for, as al-Kalâbâdhî developed this theme, the only guide to God and the knowledge of God is God Himself.²³² Ahmâd b. ‘Atâ’ distinguished between two *ma‘rifahs*, of God, the *ma‘rifah* of truth (*haqq*) and the *ma‘rifah* of reality (*haqîqah*). The former, being the cognition of God’s oneness through His names and attributes, is possible for human beings, whereas the latter is unattainable to them.²³³ For Ibn ‘Arabî, knowledge of the reality of the divine essence is precluded. “Knowledge of God” means the knowledge of His existence, which is nothing other than His essence. Yet, His essence is unknowable, and only the attributes of ideas and perfection ascribed to Him can be known.²³⁴

Another maxim most tellingly expresses the dilemma caused by the gap between the mystic’s emotional and intellectual claim to nearness to God and the unknowability of God. This is the famous maxim which proclaims that “the inability to perceive is perception.”²³⁵ An Ismâ‘îlî paraphrase of it put into the mouth of Ja‘far as-Şâdiq the statement that God has turned the Muslims’ acknowledgement of their inability to know (*ma‘rifah*) Him into faith on their part in Him.²³⁶ The maxim was also ascribed anachronistically to the caliph Abû Bakr who said in a sermon: “Praised be God who prepared the way for man’s knowledge of Him (*ma‘rifatih*) just through his inability of attaining a knowledge of Him.”²³⁷ For Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, one of those who quoted Abû Bakr’s

replaced by “confusion.” See also H. Ritter, in *Westöstliche Abhandlungen R. Tschudi*, 214 (Wiesbaden 1954).

²³¹ Cf. as-Sulâmî, *Tabaqât*, 386 f.; al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 27, ll. 18 f. (Cairo 1367/1948), in the note on Abû ‘Ali.

²³² Cf. al-Kalâbâdhî, *Kîtâb at-Ta‘arruf*, trans. A. J. Arberry, 46–50 (Cambridge 1935).

²³³ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma‘*, 56. See also above, p. 133, n. 2.

²³⁴ Cf. Ibn ‘Arabî, *Futûhât*, I, 118 f. Cf. also the long passage from the *Futûhât*, pp. 180 ff.

²³⁵ Cf. Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, 444 f.; Ibn Khaldûn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 39.

²³⁶ Cf. al-Maynaqî, *İdâh*, 107.

²³⁷ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma‘*, 57; Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qât*, III, 129, ll. 4 f. See below, p. 190.

alleged remark, it expressed in a nutshell the true oneness of God.

Thus, man's knowledge of God, or his ignorance of God which done can be called knowledge in this connection,²³⁸ was above all a mystic concern in Islam. It is to be understood as the most essential part of the mystic endeavor and of the mystic concept of knowledge in general. With its emphasis on the desirability and, basically, possibility of knowing God through some sort of essential knowledge or gnosis, mysticism attempted to fill a vacuum left by the theologians and provided for the discussion of an aspect of knowledge which was all but read out of existence by the various concepts of God's being and knowledge evolved in the theological debate about the divine attributes. The majority consensus, however, reached eventually was again expressed clearly and forcefully by al-Ghazzâlî: "The knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God is the end of every cognition (*ma'rifah*) and the fruit of every knowledge (or science, *ilm*) according to all schools of thought."²³⁹ There is no true knowledge of God for man, but human knowledge can achieve some realization of His being.

5. SHÍ'AH NOTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

At the present limited stage of our knowledge of authentic Shí'ah literature, it does not seem possible to make many meaningful distinctions between the various Shí'ah groups in dealing with Shí'ah notions of "knowledge." In spite of the great differences in outlook and attitude that prevailed among the Shí'ah, much of what will be said here would seem applicable to most of them. Naturally, more attention has been paid to what would appear to be views of a more radical character, as it is there that we encounter the more different and, therefore, more noteworthy ideas. As we have seen, Shí'ah groups and individuals participated in the discussion of God's knowledge.²⁴⁰ They also participated in

²³⁸ Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûhât*, II, 160, 170. For Pierre Charron in the seventeenth century, "la vraye connoissance de Dieu est une parfaite ignorace de lui. S'approcher de Dieu est le connoistre lumière inaccessible," cf. his *Trois veritez*, 26 (Paris 1595), quoted here from Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 58 f.

²³⁹ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mîzân al-'amal*, ed. S. Dunyâ, 351 (Cairo 1964). For the disputed authenticity of the work, cf. W. M. Watt, in *JRAS*, 1952, 24–45, and M. Bouyges and M. Allard, *Essai de Chronologie des œuvres de al-Ghazâlî*, 30 n. (Beirut 1959).

²⁴⁰ Cf. above, pp. 118 ff. For a brief treatise discussing the divine attributes ascribed to the Zaydî imâm, Yahyâ al-Hâdî ilâ l-Haqq, cf. C. van Arendonk, *De opkomst van het*

featuring prominently the concept of knowledge in collections of traditions.²⁴¹ In Ismā'īlism at least, influences from Greek philosophy, principally Neo-Platonic, made knowledge and the sciences a constantly recurring theme. While the *zāhir*, the outward appearance, of everything is what is observed by the senses, the *bātin*, the inner reality, depends for its establishment on knowledge.²⁴² For a man like Nāṣir-i-Khosraw in the eleventh century, faith and knowledge were almost identical concepts.²⁴³ More or less peculiar to Shí'ism were such matters as 1. the special knowledge possessed by "Alī and the imāms among his descendants; 2. the use of *ma'rīfah* for the knowledge of the essentials of Shí'ah beliefs (which in a way parallels the early use of *ma'rīfah* in the definition of "faith"); 3. the esoteric symbolism of knowledge, which seems to have been restricted by and large to Ismā'īlism; and 4. the particular manner in which secular knowledge was related to religious concerns.

1. Religious knowledge was, of course, stressed in Islam generally as a qualification for the leadership of the Muslim community, but the extraordinary role played by the Shí'ah imāms led to sometimes extravagant claims for them as depositories of all knowledge natural as well as supernatural. In keeping with its early origins antedating the development of Shí'ah extremism, Zaydī theory exhibits moderate views also in this respect. The extent of the Zaydī imāms' knowledge and independent judgment (*ijtihād*) is in principle, limited to the ability of following and evaluating the scholarly discussion.²⁴⁴ Thus, the knowledge required of them is not really much different from what is required of the caliphs

Zaidietische Imamaat in Yēmen, 250, 263 (Leiden 1919), French trans., 287 (Leiden 1960). Cf. also the treatment of the divine attributes by al-Maynaqī, *Idh*, 83 ff., 106–11 (above, pp. 132 f.): God is unknowable, and consequently, He can be said to be knowing only metaphorically, and not in reality. He can also not be said to be knowing in the sense of the definition of knowing as possessing knowledge. God knows through His essence, and not through a knowledge. If the divine knowledge were identical with God, it would be possible to invoke God by saying, "O knowledge, provide for us...!" (and this is something that is obviously not done). For the last item, cf. the remarks ascribed to Abū l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf in al-Ash'arī, *Ibānah* (above, p. 122, n. 9).

²⁴¹ Cf. above, pp. 91 f., 94.

²⁴² Cf. the Qādī an-Nu'mān, *Asās at-ta'wil*, ed. 'Ārif Tāmir, 28 (Beirut, n.y. [1960]), apparently a quotation from the same author's *Kitāb Hudūd al-ma'rīfah*.

²⁴³ Cf. Bertels, *Nasir-i Khosrov*, 202 ff., 229.

²⁴⁴ Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, *Sharh al-uṣūl al-khamsah*, 752; Arendonk, *Oppkomst*, 249, French trans., 273.

according to the orthodox theory of the caliphate. This, however, was exceptional in Shī‘ism. The knowledge of the caliphs which was one of the required qualifications for their high office is in no way comparable to that attributed to Shī‘ah imāms.

According to an apocryphal *hadīth* no doubt of Shī‘ah inspiration, the Prophet has said, “I am the city of knowledge, and ‘Alī is its gate.”²⁴⁵ ‘Alī was undisputedly the most excellent and knowledgeable representative of the Muslim nation.²⁴⁶ On the other hand, ‘Alī’s knowledge was also considered equal to that of the Prophet.

²⁴⁵ Cf., for instance, al-Malāṭī, *Tanbīh*, 20; al-Buhlūlī, *Sharh Qaṣīdat as-Ṣāḥib Ibn ‘Abbād*, ed. M. H. Ȅl Yāsīn, 100 (Baghdād 1967); the apocryphal *Questions of the Monks addressed to ‘Alī*, ascribed to Salmān al-Fārisī, in the Istanbul Ms. Hasan Hüsnü Paşa 976, 4. The *hadīth* is also alluded to in a poem ascribed to as-Sayyid al-Ḥimyārī (cf. the edition of his collected poems by Shākir Maḥmūd Shukrī, 58, Beirut, n.y. [1966?]). Rashīd-ad-dīn Faḍlallāh commented on it in his *Bayān al-haqā’iq*, cf. E. Quatremère, *Histoire des Mongols*, I, p. CLVI (Paris 1836). At the beginning of his *Risālat al-Īdāh*, the Tayyibī-Ismā‘īlī Yemenite, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd (d. 612/1215), added a description of the imāms, the descendants of al-Ḥusayn, as “(fertile rain) clouds of knowledge”, cf. R. Strothmann, *Gnosis-Texte der Ismaïliten*, 138 f. (Göttingen 1943. *Abh. der Akad. d. Wiss., Göttingen, Philol.-hist. Kl., Dritte Folge*, Nr. 28). Abu Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, I, 61, speaks of ‘Alī as “the gate of the city of knowledge and the sciences” (*al-‘ilm wa-l-‘ulūm*). Cf. Ibn Taymīyah, *Fatāwī*, I, 465–474 (Cairo [1966?]), etc.

Madīnat al-‘ilm occurs as a book title and may have been inspired by the *hadīth* in the case of the famous tenth-century Shī‘ah author, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Bābawayh al-Qummī, among whose works it is listed, cf. at-Ṭūsī, *Fīhrist*, 185. This is not absolutely certain, since the expression is also used as an ordinary metaphor even by Shī‘ah authors, as, for instance, by Ṣadr-ash-Sharī‘ah ath-thānī ‘Ubaydallāh b. Maṣ‘ūd (d. 747/1346) who began his work with the words: “Praised be God who gave the city of knowledge an elevated (entrance) gate, a location difficult of access, and a construction resting upon a strong foundation, as well as sturdily built gates, (fortified) castles overlooking the whole, and walls protected against any dislocation” (cf. the Istanbul Ms. Carullah 1350 *mükkerer*). In the introduction of his *Mīfād as-sa‘ādah*, Tāshköprüzādeh described “the city of knowledge” in terms reading, in the somewhat shortened form of a re-worked version: “The city of knowledge is located far away and is made difficult of access by (strong) walls. On the way toward it, there are mountains with difficult tracks, hills with desolate thickets, and far-flung oceans with high waves,” cf. Tāshköprüzādeh, *as-Sa‘ādah al-fākhirah fī siyādat al-dakhirah*, in Ms. Bursa Haraççı 1043, fols. 17b–18a. It may be added here that the Istanbul Ms. Köprülü, I, 1387, does not have *madīnat al-‘ilm* in its title, as indicated in *GAL*, II, 453, but *madīnat al-‘ulūm* “city of the sciences.” It is apparently identical with the abridgment of the *Mīfād as-sa‘ādah* listed in *GAL*, II, 426, *Suppl.*, II, 633. It was dictated in November 1560 by Ahmad b. Muṣṭafā b. Khalīl, clearly Tāshköprüzādeh himself, who died a few months later.

²⁴⁶ Cf. al-Malāṭī, *Tanbīh*, 20.

All knowledge was deposited in him by the Prophet, and all the sciences (*‘ulūm*) large and small were his.²⁴⁷ ‘Alī’s knowledge is described as the knowledge of the supernatural, the knowledge of that which will be tomorrow, the knowledge about children still in the mother’s womb, the knowledge of the secret doings of people in their own houses. And it was believed by some that all this detailed knowledge was known to all the successive imāms exactly as it was to ‘Alī.²⁴⁸ The imām is knowing. He knows everything, as he is with regard to all his affairs on one level with the Prophet.²⁴⁹ But ‘Alī and the imāms after him possessed not only the Prophet’s knowledge of this world and the next world. They also were in the possession of additional knowledge such as the Prophet had not possessed. This knowledge, which was greater than the knowledge of the Prophet, was passed on by the imāms in the direct line of their succession. It was a knowledge with which they were born and which they had no need of being taught.²⁵⁰ Some Shī‘ah sect is said to have condemned as unbelievers and polytheists all those who dared to deny the equivalence of the imāms’ knowledge with that of the Prophet. In their view, too, the knowledge of the imāms, the descendants of the Prophet, who are “the life (*qaysh*) of knowledge and the death of ignorance,”²⁵¹ comes to them not through study, but they are taught their knowledge as an act of grace (*lutf*). It grows in them, “just as the rain makes the seed grow.”²⁵² Thus, it is only natural to assume that even the youngest among the chosen ‘Alids possess sufficient knowledge to qualify for the imāmate.²⁵³ While the Zaydīyah believed that the religious knowledge of true belief was shared by all the people,²⁵⁴ the exclusive status of the imām as the sole possessor and source of all knowledge was more generally recognized. It was, for instance, the pervasive theme in a work ascribed to an early Shī‘ite follower of the Imām Ja‘far as-Ṣâdiq, al-Mufaḍdal b. ‘Umar al-Ju‘ffī. “My Lord,”

²⁴⁷ Cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq*, ed. H. Ritter, 16 (Istanbul-Leipzig 1931, *Bibliotheca Islamica* 4).

²⁴⁸ Cf. al-Malāṭī, *Tanbīh*, 118.

²⁴⁹ Cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq*, 46.

²⁵⁰ Cf. al-Malāṭī, *Tanbīh*, 121.

²⁵¹ As ‘Alī is supposed to have said, cf. *Nahj al-balāghah*, 439 (Beirut 1382/1963).

²⁵² Cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq*, 49. On *lutf*, much information can be found in ‘Abd-al-Jabbār’s *Mughnī*.

²⁵³ Cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq*, 74.

²⁵⁴ Cf. an-Nawbakhtī, *Fīraq*, 50.

al-Ju‘fī addresses the Imām Ja‘far, “I have no knowledge except what you have taught me.”²⁵⁵

This phraseology, as well as some of the expressions employed in the other statements referred to before, was ordinarily used in connection with God’s knowledge and the Deity’s bestowal of His knowledge upon mankind. This does not necessarily imply that the Shī‘ah concept of the knowledge of their imāms involved any kind of deification. The knowledge of the imāms is both natural and supernatural. They may transmit to other human beings as much religious knowledge as they deem necessary and advisable. There is no way for ordinary mortals to acquire valid religious knowledge except through the imāms. However, the element of eternality so crucial for the concept of divine knowledge is absent in the individual manifestations of the imāms’ knowledge. The knowledge of the imāms passes through them and does not stay with them as individuals, at least, in their mortal state. Admittedly, the distinction is a rather subtle one, and its existence might not always have been acknowledged, and it might have even been expressly rejected in extremist circles. At any rate, with the incarnation in the imāms of “knowledge,” of a knowledge so absolute and superhuman, their supernatural standing is tremendously enhanced and approaches divine status as closely as possible. In the Shī‘ah view, knowledge of the highest kind exists continuously on earth with the existence of imāms. Knowledge, and the spreading of knowledge among deserving humans, is the ultimate reason of their being and, consequently, it can be said, of all existence. This surely constitutes an apotheosis of the concept of knowledge hardly matched elsewhere in the Muslim environment.

2. An unusually large number of early Shī‘ah works bears the title of *Kitāb al-Ma‘rifah*. The lifetime of the authors of these works covered the period from the second half of the eighth century through the early tenth century. Among them we find Shayṭān at-Tāq (or, as he was called in Shī‘ah circles, Mu‘min at-Tāq);²⁵⁶ Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-‘Aqīqī, a sixth-generation descendant of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī;²⁵⁷ Ismā‘il b. Muḥammad al-Makhzūmī of Mecca and Ismā‘il b. Muḥammad Qunburah of Qumm, apparently two different

²⁵⁵ Cf. al-Ju‘fī, *al-Haft wa-l-azillah*, ed. ‘Arif Tāmir and ‘Abduh Khalifé, 29 (Beirut 1960).

²⁵⁶ Cf. *Fihrist*, 176, l. 12 = 250; at-Tūsī, *Fihrist*, 158, l. 2.

²⁵⁷ Cf. at-Tūsī, *Fihrist*, 48, l. 9.

authors;²⁵⁸ ‘Alî b. al-Hasan at-Ṭâtarî;²⁵⁹ ‘Alî b. al-Hasan b. Faḍḍal;²⁶⁰ Ibrâhîm b. Muhammad b. Sa‘îd ath-Thaqafî;²⁶¹ ‘Abdallâh b. Muhammad al-Balawî;²⁶² Hishâm b. al-Ḥakam;²⁶³ Muḥammad b. al-Khalîl as-Sakkâk;²⁶⁴ and Abû Sahl an-Nawbakhtî.²⁶⁵ None of these works is preserved, as far as is presently known. Drawing conclusions from the title of a work as to its contents is always an uncertain enterprise. Thus, a reputed Shí‘ah author, ‘Abbâd b. Ya‘qûb ar-Rawâjinî (d. 250/864), is credited with a *Kitâb al-Mârifah*, but its subtitle, *fî ma‘rifat as-sâhâbah* mentioned at the same time, tells us that we are dealing here presumably with a work containing biographical information on early Muslims.²⁶⁶ However, most of the *Kitâb al-Mârifah* appear listed in conjunction with other titles clearly referring to works on topics from the religious law and theology. There can be little doubt that in some if not all of them, *ma‘rifah* is to be understood to refer to the knowledge about matters of Shí‘ah religious faith and dogma, possibly often with particular reference to the question of the imâmate and the problem of how the incumbent can be recognized as such by the faithful.²⁶⁷ From a period subsequent to that of the authors mentioned, we hear about a *Kitâb Hudûd al-mârifah* by the famous Ismâ‘îlî-Fâtimid Qâdî an-Nu‘mân. In another one of his works, the Qâdî an-Nu‘mân describes it as dealing with the Ismâ‘îlî explanation of the Qur’ân (*ta‘wil*) and the exposition of the *bâtin* in a polemical vein directed against those who do not

²⁵⁸ This was the opinion of at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 35, l. 9, 38, l. 9. *Fihrist*, 192, l. 28 = 273, lists only Qunburah. In the notes to Flügel’s edition, p. 82, he is considered identical with al-Makhzûmî. For this and other *Kitâb al-Mârifah*, cf. also an-Najâshi, *Rijâl*, 12, 22, 65, 163, 179, 182, 186, 235, 237, 305, also, 47, 152, 236.

²⁵⁹ Cf. at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 118, l. 6. *Fihrist*, 177 = 252, omits the title. This may be due to the defectiveness of the manuscripts on which the available editions are based.

²⁶⁰ Cf. at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 118, l. 13. The vocalization Faḍḍâl seems uncertain.

²⁶¹ Cf. at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 28, l. 8.

²⁶² Cf. *Fihrist*, 193, l. 6 = 273; at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 129, l. 9.

²⁶³ Cf. *Fihrist*, 176, l. 6 = 250; at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 204, l. 11.

²⁶⁴ Cf. *Fihrist*, 176, l. 16 = 250; at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 158, l. 6.

²⁶⁵ Cf. *Fihrist*, 177, l. 3 = 251; at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 36, l. 6.

²⁶⁶ Cf. at-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 146, l. 1.

²⁶⁷ The brief Druze treatise entitled *Dhîkr ma‘rifat al-imâm* deals merely with the “spiritual” and “corporeal” names and designations of the *Qâ‘im az-zamân* and the *hudûd*. Cf. Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes*, I, p. CCCCLXXVII (Paris 1838). I consulted the Arabic manuscripts in Yale University Library listed below, p. 151, n. 1 (L-733, fols. 103a–104b, S-46, fols. 60a–61a, and A-64, fols. 82a–83a).

believe in these matters.²⁶⁸ The Zaydî *Kitâb Ḥaqâ'iq al-mârifah* by the Imâm Alhmad b. Sulaymân (d. 566/1170) dealt with the entire spectrum of dogmatic theology.²⁶⁹ The *ma'rifah* of all these works is clearly related to the use of the word in the definition of “faith.”²⁷⁰ It constitutes a means to achieve “knowledge” (*ilm*) and is part of it, although it is not the fullness of *ilm*, which is the highest form of religious realization for the Shî'ah.

The recent emergence of more detailed information on the Mu'tazilah from Ibn an-Nadîm's *Fihrist* shows clearly that *Kitâb d-Mârifah* was the common title of works on the knowledge about God and related metaphysical data at the outset of Muslim theological discussion. It may not be beside the point here to mention the title of the *Kitâb as-Sabîl ilâ ma'rifat al-haqq* by Wâsil b. 'Atâ' of the earliest generation of Mu'tazilah.²⁷¹ The simple title of *Kitâb al-Mârifah* appears in the lists of the works of an-Nazzâm,²⁷² al-Jâhîz,²⁷³ al-Asamm,²⁷⁴ a certain Muhammad b. 'Abd-al-Karîm,²⁷⁵ and al-Husayn. b. 'Alî al-Bâsrî, called Ju'al.²⁷⁶ 'Isâ b. Şâbih al-Murdâr is credited with two *Kitâb al-Mârifah* against, respectively, Thumâmah and ash-Shâhîm.²⁷⁷ Thumâmah's own work seems to

²⁶⁸ Cf. an-Nu'mân, *Asâs at-tâ'wîl*, 26. The *Kitâb Hudûd al-mârifah* is said to be preserved (?), but it is apparently not listed in Sezgin, I, 575–78.

²⁶⁹ Cf. E. Griffini, in *RSO*, VII (1916–18), 573 f. For the author, cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 699.

²⁷⁰ Cf. above, pp. 99 f. We have here another indication that the use of *ma'rifah* in defining “faith” antedates that of *taṣdîq*. Extremist Shî'ah sets defined “faith” as the *ma'rifah* of the Imâm. “He who does not know bout (‘-r-f) him does not know about God,” cf. an-Nawbakhtî, *Firaq*, 42, 46. According to an apocryphal *hadîth*, “he who dies without clearly knowing about (‘-r-f) the contemporary Imâm dies a *jâhilîyah* death. “Faith” includes the knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of the *sâhib az-zamân*, cf. al-Maynaqî, *İâdâh*, 99 and 34.

²⁷¹ Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 293, also in the Houtsma fragment.

²⁷² Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 299.

²⁷³ Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 308, with related titles, already known from the biography of al-Jâhîz in Yâqût's *Irshâd*.

²⁷⁴ Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 313.

²⁷⁵ Cf. the fragment of the *Fihrist* published by J. Fück, in *ZDMG*, XC (1936), 309.

²⁷⁶ Cf. *Fihrist*, 175, ll. 4 f. = 248. As against the suspect dates, 308/920–21 to 399/1008–9, given for Ju'al in the edition of the *Fihrist*, the seemingly correct dates, 293/905–6 to 369/980, appear in *Tâ'rikh Baghîdâd*, VIII, 73 f. The date of death is indicated as 369 also in the Persian translation of the *Fihrist*.

²⁷⁷ Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 301. The vocalization Şâbih and the form Murdâr are uncertain.

have had the plural *ma‘rif* in the title,²⁷⁸ and a *Kitâb al-Ma‘rif* against al-Jâhîz was written by Ja‘far b. Mubashshir ath-Thaqafî.²⁷⁹ *Ma‘rif* is, also used in the twelfth part of ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr’s *Mughnî* that deals with ‘ilm generated by *naṣar* and its relation to the various aspects of knowledge about God (*ma‘rif*). The discussion in the *Mughnî* suggests that separate chapters on *ma‘rifah* were no doubt to be found in all relevant Mu‘tazilah writings,²⁸⁰ in addition to the monographs on the subject.

3. Allusions to knowledge in many disguises were found by Ismâ‘îlî thinkers in the Qur‘ân and elsewhere in the authoritative religious literature. Thus, the “property” (*mâl*) mentioned in the story of Nûh/Noah in the Qur‘ân 71:21/20 is to be interpreted esoterically as knowledge.²⁸¹ The “water” upon which Noah’s ark was floating is likewise to be understood as knowledge. Like as a ship saves its passengers from drowning, thus true believers are saved by the life of the spiritual, light-filled (*rûhâni*, *nûrâni*) knowledge from the death of unbelief. Like as the ship, in the exoteric meaning of the word, takes its course upon the waters and carries its passengers, thus the true call (*da‘wat al-ḥaqq*) takes its course upon knowledge and carries upon it those who enter into it and accept it. In Arabic linguistic usage, we are told, the interpretation of “water” as knowledge is confirmed by the common figure of speech that calls a man of vast knowledge an “ocean.” Moreover, the comparison of water and knowledge suggests that just as those who would sail the sea without a ship would drown in it, those who look for knowledge among those who do not have it will perish.²⁸² Again in connection with the story of Noah, we hear

²⁷⁸ Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 303.

²⁷⁹ Cf. *Fihrist*, Persian translation, 303. The *Kitâb al-Ma‘rifah fî l-ijmâ‘* by an-Najjâr, mentioned in *Fihrist*, 179, l. 28 = 255, may not belong here, neither, it seems, does the *Kitâb al-Ma‘rifah* that occurs among the titles of the works of Dâwûd b. ‘Alî al-Isfahâni az-Zâhîrî, cf. *Fihrist*, 217, l. 12 = 305.

²⁸⁰ Cf. also below, pp. 211 f.

²⁸¹ Cf. an-Nu‘mân, *Asâs at-tâ’wil*, 77. The comparison of *mâl* with ‘ilm, like that of *mâ‘* “water” with ‘ilm, is a recurring topic in the work.

It may be mentioned here that the divine throne (*kursî*) of Qur‘ân 2:255/256 was widely interpreted to mean God’s knowledge, cf. at-Tabârî, *Tafsîr*, III, 6f.; az-Zamâkshârî, *Kashshâf*, I, 278 f., etc. Abû Hâtim ar-Râzî, *Zînah*, II, 151, stressed the Mu‘tazilah origin of this interpretation, following Ibn Qutaybah. Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Ikhtilâf fî l-lâz*, ed. M. Zâhid al-Kawthârî, 38 f. (Cairo 1349) (where, however, it is not expressly stated that it was “knowledge” that was meant by *kursî*).

²⁸² Cf. an-Nu‘mân, *Asâs at-tâ’wil*, 78 f.

it said at a late stage of Ismâ‘îlî scholarship that the devil (*iblîs*) of Noah was Hâm who saw and showed to his brothers the private parts of his father Noah (the Qur’ân does not refer to this Biblical episode). This means that Hâm revealed to others the knowledge that had come to him from his father and which must not be revealed except to those fit to receive it.²⁸³ In connection with the Qur’ânic story of the Thamûd and their prophet Shâlih (26:155/155), it is stated that *laban* “milk” symbolizes esoteric knowledge.²⁸⁴ And once more the word *mâl*, in the apocryphal *hadîth*: “A sick man owns one-third of his property,” is explained to refer to knowledge. It is the spiritually sick man who is acquainted only with the knowledge of the ear (*al-‘ilm as-sam‘î*) but not with the two other *‘ilms*, the knowledge of the eye (*al-‘ilm al-bâsari*) and the heart’s knowledge of the realities (*‘ilm al-haqâ‘iq al-qalbî*). The ownership of all these three parts of knowledge constitutes full knowledge, the full “property” of man.²⁸⁵ Thus, as these examples show, if everything is properly understood and interpreted according to its real, inner meaning, knowledge is of an even more frequent occurrence than it anyhow is in the Qur’ân and the *hadîth*. In the Shî‘ah view, it is the true essence of life, human and superhuman.

4. Finally, it is significant for the Shî‘ah outlook on knowledge that it brought about a peculiar synthesis between its religious concerns and the by and large secular interest in the sciences. Again, this is a process which would seem largely confined to Ismâ‘îlism. With its strong ties to Hellenistic philosophy dating back to its early beginnings, Ismâ‘îlism appears to have been always eager to explain to its followers the supposed scientific basis upon which its religious beliefs rested. The prime example is the *Rasâ‘îl Ikhwâن as-safâ‘* and the reception the *Rasâ‘îl* received in Ismâ‘îlî circles. A peculiar religious epistemology of considerable originality was developed in Fâtimid-Ismâ‘îlî circles, of which the exposition by Hâmid-ad-dîn al-Kîrmânî, in his *Râhât al-‘aql*, furnishes us with an interesting example dating from the early eleventh century. To what extremes this trend could lead is well illustrated by the efforts made among the Druzes to tie the system developed for the classification of the sciences to their particular theology. Our evidence is a brief treatise included in the standard

²⁸³ Cf. al-Maynaqî, *Idâh*, 5, also, 74, for *mâ’ = ‘ilm*.

²⁸⁴ Cf. an-Nu‘mân, *Asâs at-tâ’wil*, 103. Cf. above, p. 80.

²⁸⁵ Cf. al-Maynaqî, *Idâh*, 78.

collection of Druze writings, entitled *Risálat Taqṣím al-‘ulúm wa-ithbát al-haqq wa-kashf al-maknún* “The Classification of the Sciences and the Establishment of the Truth and the Uncovering of what is Hidden.” If the attribution to Ismā‘il b. Muhammad b. Ḥámíd at-Tamímí is correct, it dates from the first half of the fifth/ eleventh century.²⁸⁶ At-Tamímí claims to have drawn all his knowledge from the founder of the Druze religion, Hamzah b. ‘Ali, who ordered him to compose the treatise and inspired him to accomplish a task, for which his own weak powers he felt would not have sufficed.

According to the Druze writer, the sacred number of five serves as the basic principle for the organization of all *‘ilm*. It is divided into five subdivisions. Two of them are concerned with religious matters (*dīn*), and two with physical data (*ṭabí‘ah*). One, the fifth and most important of all, is the true (*haqíqí*) knowledge. This true knowledge is the knowledge that is wanted (*murād*) and that is in keeping with the command of Our Lord al-Hákím. While the first four subdivisions are again subdivided into numerous specialties, which are too numerous to mention and there is no point in mentioning them, the fifth knowledge is a unique thing, unalterable, undiminishable, indivisible, and imperishable. The first four subdivisions are called “knowledge” only metaphorically. Reality (*haqíqah*) of knowledge applies to the fifth subdivision. The two subdivisions concerned with religious matters are the exoteric (outward, *záhir*) knowledge and the esoteric (inner, *báṭin*) knowledge. The representatives of the exoteric knowledge are the five “speakers” (*nátiq*), that is, Núh, Ibráhím, Músâ, Ísâ, and Muḥammad (Adam is not included), each of whom brought forth a “foundation.” The resulting five “foundations” are Sám, Ismā‘il, Yúsha‘ b. Nún (after the death of Hárún), Sham‘ún the Rock (St. Peter), and ‘Alí. Each “speaker” and the “foundation” brought forth by him form a pair, the earlier pair in each case pointing to the one succeeding it. The esoteric knowledge includes the divine mercy (*rahmah*), whereas the exoteric knowledge includes the divine punishment, in keeping with Qur’án 57:13/13. The “speaker” is the master of the exoteric aspect, while the “foundation” is the

²⁸⁶ Cf. Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé*, I, p. CCCCLXXIX. The manuscripts used are Yale University Library A-64 (Catalogue Nemoy 1070), fols. 110–114, S-46 (Catalogue Nemoy 1069), fols. 74a–84a, and L-733 (Catalogue Nemoy 1066), fols. 128a–148a.

master of the esoteric aspect. Neither by himself is what is wanted. Together they do indicate what is wanted, namely, the fifth knowledge, which also forms a third subdivision of the two subdivisions dealing with religious matters, and this is the esoteric (*al-bâtin*).²⁸⁷

A long excursus follows here. It is triggered by a question raised by the author, to wit, why “being an idea” (*ma’naviyah*) is claimed only for ‘Alî, and not for any of the other “foundations.” There were five ages (peoples) before Adam, at-Timm, ar-Rimm, al-Hinn, al-Jinn, and al-Binn. Adam and his children by Eve were the true believers in the oneness of God. Adam did not stray from the knowledge (*ma’rifah*) of the Lord, but he was unable to accomplish the establishment of an exoteric religious law (*shari’ah zâhirah*). Subsequently, there was much trouble on earth caused by Iblîs and his hosts, until the first “speaker” made his appearance and established a religious law. He was Nûh, and he was called the Second Adam.²⁸⁸ The following pairs of “speakers” and “foundations” all possessed worldly, that is, secular, knowledge and knew, for instance, medicine, philosophy, astronomy (and astrology) as well as speculative theology (*kalâm*), but they all believed in the recognition of the oneness of non-being (*tawhîd al-’adam*) and did not know (‘-r-f) the Lord. Their strength (understanding, intelligence) was comparable to the various stages of the embryo, reaching the stage of bone with ‘Isâ-Sham’ûn, and with Muhammâd-‘Alî and successive ‘Alid imâms the stage of bone covered with flesh in the erect form of man, but without spirit (*rûh*). The spirit is the gnosis of the divine oneness (*ma’rifat at-tawhîd*). Not having the spirit, even the last of the five pairs of “speaker” and “foundation” cannot be said to have known (‘-r-f) the Lord. All the while, the Universal Intellect and His “proof” (*hujjah*) gave them strength. At the end of the time of the sixth “speaker” and the rising of the seventh “speaker,” the form of the recognition of the divine oneness (*tawhîd*) reaches perfection. “Uniqueness” (*wahdâniyah*)

²⁸⁷ The author evidently found it difficult to make the concept of *bâtin* do for two kinds of knowledge. However, *bâtin* was the description that had to be applied to the highest, that is, the fifth, knowledge, and it would not have been possible to brand all religious knowledge (*dîn*) as exoteric (*zâhir*), since the Shi’ah always stressed *bâtin* as an aspect of *ilm ad-dîn*.

²⁸⁸ The honor of being the second father of mankind also fell to Seth, as discussed in a doctoral dissertation by T. Gluck on the Arabic legend of Seth (Yale University, 1968).

is to be claimed only for ‘Alî, in contrast to all the other “foundations.” During his heavenly journey, Muḥammad noticed someone looking like ‘Alî (who at the time was of course still alive). It was not ‘Alî. It was an angel or an appearance of the Lord, created to look like ‘Alî, because the angels felt a deep longing for ‘Alî.

After a description of the way in which the seven heavens are assigned to various saints from Fâṭimid pre-history, the author returns to his subject, the classification of the sciences. He recapitulates what he had said before about the metaphorical usage of the word “knowledge” for the religious knowledge of *zâhir* and *bâtin* and about the wanted knowledge being a combination of the two, the recognition of the divine oneness of the Lord (*tawhîd al-Mawlâ*), which was not attained by any “speaker” and “foundation.” In our time, he says, “speaker” and “foundation” are two servants serving Our Lord al-Hâkim, known to those who know them, and unknown to those who need no knowledge (*‘ulûm*).

The two subdivisions that are concerned with matters physical are physical medicine (*ilm tibb at-ṭabi‘ah*), which is not explained any further in detail, and the medicine of rational and irrational living beings (*ilm tibb al-hayawân*), that is, human beings and dumb animals. The one is practiced by physicians (*mutaṭabbib*), and the other by veterinarians (*baytâr*). Both are experimenters (empiricists, *mutajarrib*)²⁸⁹ rather than healers (*mu‘âlij*), because they treat (*‘âlaja*) what they have no knowledge of (*‘-r-f*). They have obtained their knowledge (*‘ulûm*) through blindly following (*taqlîd*) the ancient philosophers, in the same manner in which those concerned with exoteric religious knowledge have obtained all their knowledge from the “speakers.” The most physicians are able to accomplish is splitting the belly of man and observing what is inside it, which is not to be compared with the activity of live persons.²⁹⁰ Therefore, their judgment concerning living, rational human beings cannot be correct. Many physicians have killed people through their

²⁸⁹ On the many meanings of *tajribah* in medicine, cf. F. Rosenthal, in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, XL (1966), 233, n. 30. The distinction made here is one between the empirical practitioner and the medical theorist.

²⁹⁰ Lit., “the activity of one killed and dead and whose belly has been split is not like that of one who is alive.” Remarkably enough, the passage would seem to suggest that the Druze author considered all medical knowledge as derived from the dissection of corpses.

treatment. Eye doctors and surgeons have blinded many. Veterinarians have killed many of the animals they have treated. The judgment of physicians is swayed by chance and prejudice (*ahwâ'â*). For them, this constitutes the best possible argument, whereas in the gnosis of true realities (*ma'rîfat al-haqâ'îq*), it is the weakest argument there can be.

In sum, medicine, comprising the two subdivisions of physical knowledge, cannot claim to possess “realness” (*haqîqîyah*) any more than the two subdivisions of the religious knowledge, the esoteric and the exoteric. It is the third part of the latter two, or the subdivision of all knowledge, that is the only true knowledge. It is the recognition of the oneness of Our Lord. The fact that it must be the fifth subdivision which constitutes the greatest knowledge of all is confirmed by the superiority that attaches to everything that comes fifth, witness the four natures where the fifth nature is the greatest, the four “proofs” with the imâm himself as the fifth, and the combination of units up to four, which requires another odd (*fârd*) number to constitute five, the *tawhîd*, with the first four odd numbers constituting the two even pairs of *zâhir* and *bâ'în* and with the fifth subdivision outside of them, the knowledge of the recognition of the oneness of the Lord.

In this Druze treatise, “knowledge” is equated with the highest faith. The destiny of mankind is represented as a struggle for knowledge by means of the various scholarly disciplines. The treatise is a fanciful mixture of theosophy and scientific *Wissenschaftslehre*. Needless to say, from the point of view of science and meaningful knowledge, it is a step backward toward frightening primitivism. While pretending to be “esoteric”, it reflects in reality an attempt to popularize religious doctrine. But it exemplifies very well the forceful penetration of the concept of “knowledge” into every recess of Muslim thought and emotion.

CHAPTER SIX

KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT (Şûfism)

“Light” has always been a favorite concept of spiritual terminology.¹ In particular, it has served as a metaphor for knowledge as distinct from the darkness of ignorance. When it is dark, we cannot observe or recognize anything. We are kept in ignorance. But when there is light and day, we can find our way around—we know. This simple experience of man was transferred to matters of the mind and spirit at an early date of the most remote history of mankind. For better or worse (for there is always some potential danger in even the most natural and innocent verbalization of the human imagination), the memory of it has stayed alive in man’s consciousness to the present day.

Light was a common symbol in Biblical thought, and throughout later Judaism and Christianity. Light shows the way and provides guidance, as do wisdom and the religious law. “The light of knowledge” (*phôs gnôsêôs*) is the mistaken Greek translation, based upon a reading *nêr da’at*, of an Old Testament passage, Hosea 10:12.² The Hellenistic spirit, in its search for lucidity of expression, made much use of the imagery of light. From Heraclitus’ idea of the inescapability of the intellectual light³—though the Heraclitean context of these words, reported on his authority many centuries after his time, is doubtful—to the more complicated metaphor embodied in Plato’s myth of the cave, from the Aristotelian quotation of a statement by an unknown author describing the

¹ See, for instance, F.-N. Klein, *Die Lichtterminologie bei Philon von Alexandrien und in den hermetischen Schriften* (Leiden 1962), or the discussion on light and darkness in ancient Egypt (E. Hornung), archaic Greek poetry (M. Treu), early Greek philosophy (C. J. Classen), and ancient Iran and ancient Judaism (C. Colpe), in *Studium Generale*, XVIII (1965), 73–133.

² Cf. S. Aalen, *Die Begriffe “Licht” und “Finsternis” im Alten Testamente, im Spätjudentum und im Rabbinismus*, 69, 93, 188 (Oslo 1951, *Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademii, Hist.-filos. Kl.*, 1951, no. 1).

³ Cf. H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 3rd ed. (Berlin 1912), Heraclitus B 16. In Arabic tradition, Heraclitus speaks of “the true light” as the first principle, God (Zeus), cf. ash-Shahrastâni, 296, trans. Haarbrücker, II, 137.

intellect (*nous*) as a light kindled by the deity in the soul⁴ to the Neo-Platonists favoring a pervasive light symbolism, all the splendid magic of knowledge was evoked for the Greeks by this word. Dualistic religions centered around the opposition of darkness and light, contrasting man's low, material world of darkness with the glorious world of light on high. "Light," for them, was the element of salvation. The gnostic concept of the "Pistis Sophia," to give one specific example, was identified with light, its primal abode. In one sweeping statement that seems to encompass much of later Muslim mystical thought, we find Pistis ("faith") emanating a picture called Sophia ("wisdom," it would perhaps not be inappropriate in this context to think of "knowledge") which develops "work" that is similar to or identical with the first existing light.⁵

Speaking about "light" was thus entirely natural for the Prophet Muhammad at the beginning of Islam. Later Islam always faced, and at times succumbed to, the temptation of employing an extensive light symbolism, even in perfectly orthodox circles. The primeval "pen," for instance, is light, and the writing on the well-guarded tablet is a light of God,⁶ as the Qur'ân itself was frequently referred to as a light, on good scriptural authority. The light of

⁴ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1411b12. Cf. also A. Altmann, in *H. A. Wolfson Jubilee Volume*, I, 60 f. (Jerusalem 1965).

It may be briefly added here that in Islam, the intellect ('aql) is also frequently brought into connection with light. Al-Muḥāsibī, to give an example from mysticism, is said to have defined it as a light. It is a light that in human beings is subject to variation in intensity. Cf. also below, p. 172, n. 1. In reporting this view in his *Dhamm al-hawâ*, 5 (Cairo 1381/1962) (cf. also p. 273, n. 3), Ibn al-Jawzî expresses his own preference for a definition of 'aql which within a small compass reveals the truly marvelous capacity for syncretism characteristic of Muslim civilization: "The intellect is a natural ability (*gharîzah*) comparable to a light thrown into the heart (cf. above, p. 71). It (the heart as the repository of the intellect, or the intellect by virtue of its being a luminous human endowment) is thus prepared for the perception of things. It thereby knows that the things permitted are permitted and that the things forbidden are forbidden, and it looks at the consequences of affairs." Light mysticism, philosophical epistemology, theological "knowledge," and practical ethics—a hint of each one of these has been brought here together skillfully to make the intellect a fully naturalized citizen of Islam.

⁵ Cf. A. Böhlig and P. Labib, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus Codex II von Nag Hammadi*, 38/39, cf. also 42/43, 48/49 (Berlin 1962, Deutsche Akad. d. Wiss. zu Berlin, Institut für Orientforschung 58).

⁶ Cf. Ibn Kathîr, *Bidâyah*, I, 14 (Cairo 1351–58).

knowledge, or knowledge and learning being a lamp in the darkness of ignorance and sin came to be used as commonplace metaphors.⁷

According to the Qur'ân, light provides guidance and is given by God, and by God alone (24:40/40, 57:28/28). Knowledge, guidance, and a book giving light are the things that together provide for true religious insight (31:20/19). And a light accompanies the faithful, representing their perfect faith (66:8/8). Faith thus is a light in the heart, and a later mystic writer could very well describe the gnosis of God as a fire, and faith as a light.⁸ In a famous verse of the Qur'ân (24:35/35), it is said that “God guides to His/his light (*nûrihî*) whomever He wishes.” The explanation of the pronominal suffix in *nûrihî*, as referring either to God or to the believer, has caused much ink to flow on the part of Qur'ân commentators, and it also called forth explanatory glosses supposedly belonging to the Qur'ânic text itself.⁹ There were authoritative commentators who paraphrased the crucial word to mean, “...the light of the believer in whose heart are faith and the Qur'ân.”¹⁰

Moreover, the same verse speaks expressly of God as the light of the heavens and the earth. The alleged heretical imitation of the Qur'ân by Ibn al-Muqaffa^c in the eighth century is supposed to have begun with the words, “In the name of the Light, the Merciful, the Compassionate,” and to have continued with remarks in praise of light, presumably, under Manichaean, or, perhaps, also Zoroastrian, influence.¹¹ Shi'ah extremism as represented, we are told, by Hishâmi b. al-Hakam and Hishâm b. Sâlim al-Jawâliqî would quite literally describe God as “a bright light of sparkling whiteness.”¹² God's knowledge of what is underneath the earth is produced, it is said, by a continuous ray of light penetrating into the depth of the earth. Without such contact by means of radiation, God would not know what was there.¹³ According to al-Malaṭî's report, the Qarmatians held the belief that “God was a Light

⁷ Cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 49–61; al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ'*, I, 43, 54, trans. Faris, 126, 129; *idem*, *Mizân al-'amal*, 343.

⁸ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 63.

⁹ Cf. A. Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ân*, 65, 149 (Leiden 1937).

¹⁰ Cf. at-Tabârî, *Tafsîr*, XVIII, 95; Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *Tafsîr*, XXIII, 235.

¹¹ Cf. M. Guidi, *La lotta tra l'Islam e il Manicheismo*, intro., XVII, text, 8, trans. 14 (Rome 1927).

¹² Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 32, 43, 207, 209.

¹³ Cf. al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, 33, 221, 491.

Supernal (*‘ulū’i*), quite unlike the (other material) lights and not mixed with any darkness. From the Light Supernal, there was born the Light Diffused (*sha’sha’āni*), from which came the prophets and imāms... From the Light Diffused, there was born a Light Darkly (*zalāmī*), which is the light one sees in the sun, the moon, the stars, the fire, and the substances intermingled with darkness.¹⁴ For the early Shī‘ah sect of the Jārūdīyah, God was a light, and the spirits of the imāms and the prophets were born from it.¹⁵ The divine light, manifesting itself in successive incarnations or emanations, “the light of the imāmate,”¹⁶ is central to Shī‘ah doctrine. According to Druze theology, the light of the Creator, the Light Diffused, brings forth the Universal Intellect, which is foremost in knowledge and in the recognition (*ma’rifah*) of our Lord. “Light” was a sort of *leitmotif* in the description of the entire cosmological system.¹⁷ “The light of the heavens and the earth” of the Qur’ānic verse was understood by some Ismā‘īlīs to be the Universal Intellect.¹⁸

Needless to say, all this was quite unacceptable to the Muslim majority. Since light is nothing but the mode of seeing, it is inapplicable to God.¹⁹ With regard to the interpretation of the “light verse” of the Qur’ān, there was general agreement that “light” there had to be interpreted metaphorically according to one of a number of possibilities. Thus, it meant guide, administrator, giver

¹⁴ Cf. al-Malaṭī, *Tanbīh*, 15. The captivity of light particles in matter and their struggle for liberation is the main theme of Manichaeism.

¹⁵ Cf. al-Malaṭī, *Tanbīh*, 18. *Rūh* “spirit” was described by Ṣūfīs also as a light derived from the divine light and even taken to be the essential light of divinity, cf. as-Sarrāj, *Luma’*, 554. The Qur’ānic *rūh* was, however, also explained as *‘ilm* “knowledge,” cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Mīzān al-‘amal*, 333; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, III, 356, chapter 368.

¹⁶ Thus, for instance, ‘Alī b. Muhammad b. al-Walīd, in Strothmann, *Gnosis-Texte der Ismailiten*, 149 f., 166, 168.

¹⁷ Cf. C. Seybold, *Die Drusenschrift: Kitāb Alnoqat Wāldawārī* (Kirchhain 1902). A particularly neat description of the successive generation of the five *hudūd*, beginning with the Universal Intellect, from the divine Light Diffused and then from the light of each further emanation appears at the beginning of the *Risālah al-mawṣūmah bi-sabab al-asbāb*, Ms. Yale S-45 Catalogue Némoy 1068), fol. 98b.

¹⁸ Cf. Strothmann, *Gnosis-Texte der Ismailiten*, 24, Ar. text, 37, in a work dating from the nineteenth century.

For the designation of Muhammad and ‘Alī as the two lights in an apocryphal *sūrah*, cf. Nöldeke, Schwally, and others, *Geschichte des Qurāns*, II, 100 ff.

¹⁹ Cf. al-Baydāwī, *Anwār at-tanzīl*, II, 23.

of light (“lamp” *diyâ’*), adorner, owner of light, giver of existence, or the means for the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth of perceiving or of being perceived.²⁰

Moderate *Şûfîs*, too, understood God’s “light” in a metaphorical sense as being something immaterial, as being something serving the purpose of guiding mankind.²¹ As is only natural, there were others who found deep significance in a literal understanding of the word “light.” Abû l-Mansûr al-*Ḥallâj* interpreted the Qur’ânic phrase as “enlightener (*munawwir*) of the hearts,” but he also spoke of God in this connection as “the light of light, who guides whomever He wishes by His light to His power” and, in gradual steps, eventually to His uniqueness (*wahdâniyah*). Al-*Ḥallâj* further declared that “in the head, there is the light of revelation; in the forehead (between the eyes), the light of discourse with the divine (*munâjâh*); in the ear, the light of certainty (*yaqîn*); in the tongue, the light of clarity; in the breast, the light of faith, etc.,” all of them lights which may, or may not, influence each other.²² It is, however, somewhat strange to find al-*Ghazzâlî* strongly in favor of a literal understanding in the famous treatise entitled *Mishkât al-anwâr* which is devoted to commenting on the Qur’ânic verse. God alone is “light” in reality. There is no other true light. All other uses of the term “light” must be understood as metaphors. For the deficient sight of the human eye, the sun and the other heavenly bodies constitute the light of external vision, while the Qur’ân and other divine books serve as instruments for internal vision and thus come closest to the proper meaning of light. Light

²⁰ The first three interpretations are found already in at-*Ṭabarî*, *Tafsîr*, XVIII, 94. For the others, cf. al-*Baydâwî*, *Anwâr at-tanzîl*, II, 23. According to the Imâm al-*Haramayn*, *Irshâd*, 155, 158, *nûr* is to be understood as “guide.” Az-*Zamakhshârî*, *Kashshâf*, II, 312, considers *nûr* to mean “the owner of light,” and he interprets the light of the heavens and the earth as a metaphor for “the truth.” Even the Shî’ah commentator of the Qur’ân, at-*Ṭabarî*, *Majma’ al-bayân*, VII, 142, admits only of the metaphorical interpretation of “light” as either *hâdî* “guide,” or *munawwir* “enlightener,” or *muzayyin* “adorner.” *Diyâ’-ad-dîn* Ismâ’îl b. Hibatallâh (cf. Strothmann, *Ismailitischer Kommentar*, 268 f.) likewise explains “light” metaphorically as the *rîh* of the *mustaqarrâs* and *mustawda’âs*, which may, however, be not much more than a tautology, since *rîh* and *nûr* were occasionally considered to be identical.

²¹ Cf. as-*Sarrâj*, *Luma’*, 548.

²² From as-*Sulamî*, *Haqâ’iq at-tafsîr*, to Qur’ân 24:35/35, cf. Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 385 f.; A. Schimmel, *al-Ḥallâdsch*, 90 (Cologne 1968). The commentary of as-*Sulamî* (cf. below, p. 169, n. 4) can be assumed to contain further material of interest on this point.

is the metaphorical expression used to indicate (sense) perception and intellectual insight. Its real source in all cases is the Deity who is light *per se* and as such requires no external source of light but emanates light upon everything else in the appropriate quantity.²³ It is not surprising that later in the twelfth century, Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî felt strongly compelled to argue against such views. He went into great detail not only in his refutation of the literal interpretation which the anthropomorphists (*mujassimah*) gave to the word “light,” but he also demolished the attempts to equate “light” with the Deity according to the Manichaean doctrine that considered God as the “greatest light.”²⁴ Probably, Fakhr-ad-dîn was less concerned with the Manichaeans than with the great authority of a Ghazzâlî and, perhaps, with the religious views of various Shî‘ah groups. It must also not be forgotten that it was a contemporary of Fakhr-ad-dîn, who was but a few years younger, as-Suhrawardî *al-maqtûl*, who built up the concept of “light” into the guiding principle of the universe, for whom everything alive was pure light,²⁵ for whom God was “the Light of lights” and, following Plotinus, the pure light in the world of the intellect, the ultimate perfection,²⁶ and who constructed a coherent cosmology on the basis of the light manifestations of the first creative light (*an-nûr al-ibdâ‘i al-awwal*).²⁷ As-Suhrawardî himself found it opportune to distinguish between an alleged light-and-darkness doctrine of the ancient Persians, on which he pretended to have modeled his own, and the unbelief of the “Magians” and the Manichaean heresy.²⁸

²³ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mishkât al-anwâr*, trans. W. H. T. Gairdner (London 1924). For the problems of dating and the doubtful genuineness of the work, cf. Bouyges and Allard, *Essai de chronologie*, 65 f., but see also H. Lazarus Yafeh, in *Studia Islamica*, XXV (1966), 113.

²⁴ Cf. Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî, *Tafsîr*, XXIII, 223 ff. Ar-Râzî’s commentary on this verse is the most detailed of all the commentaries mentioned here. It includes a long discussion of the *Mishkât al-anwâr*.

²⁵ Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-ishrâq*, I, 117, l. 8.

²⁶ Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-ishrâq*, I, 162, l. 6, and Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV, 8, cf. the translation of the *Theology of Aristotle* by G. Lewis in the Plotinus edition of P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, II, 225–27 (Paris and Brussels, 1951–), and the German translation by F. Rosenthal, *Das Fortleben der Antike im Islam*, 212 f. (Zürich-Stuttgart 1965).

²⁷ Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Hayâkîl an-nûr*, ed. M. Abû Rayyân, 63 (Cairo 1957).

²⁸ Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-ishrâq*, I, 10 f. For the ancient Oriental inspiration of as-Suhrawardî’s “light” cosmology, cf. the introduction of H. Corbin to his edition, I, 39 ff. On his “light” theory, cf. also S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 69 f. (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), and the same, in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, I, 387 ff. (Wiesbaden 1963).

The identification of light with knowledge, or with wisdom, or with both knowledge and wisdom, was ancient and accepted in Islam at an early stage, as attested by Mâlik's statement using the expression "light of wisdom (or knowledge)."²⁹ Mâlik's Christian contemporary, John of Damascus, who had Biblical verses such as Eccles. 2:13 to guide him, had likewise said: "Nothing is more estimable than knowledge, for knowledge is the light of the rational soul. The opposite, which is ignorance, is darkness. Just as the absence of light is darkness, so is the absence of knowledge a darkness of reason."³⁰ The Damascene's words were soon echoed by Job of Edessa in his Syriac encyclopaedia: "If a wise man is likened to light, and an ignorant man to darkness,...it follows that knowledge of the created beings is light, and ignorance (of them) is darkness."³¹

Şûfism made use of the material provided by religious scholars that described knowledge as light.³² Going far beyond it, Şûfi thinking was pervaded by the symbolism of light in its manifold manifestations. An apocryphal prayer has the Prophet exclaim: "God! Place above me a light and underneath me a light, before me a light and behind me a light. God! Place in my heart a light, in my eye a light, and in my ear a light, in my flesh a light and in my bone a light."³³ All true spiritual insight is characterized here as light, a light that is inescapable for the devoted seeker after knowledge. Numerous were the Şûfîs who were ready to "see by the light of God"³⁴ and to describe the achievement of any given

²⁹ Cf. above, p. 71.

³⁰ Cf. John of Damascus, *Pégē gnôsēōs*, 529, trans. Chase, 7. For Philo's equation of "light" and "knowledge" (*epistêmê*), cf. Klein, *Lichtterminologie*, 16, 42, n. 2. A saying ascribed to Aristotle (Diogenes Laertius, V, 17) or to Zeno (*Gnomologium Vaticanum*, ed. L. Sternbach, no. 297 [reprint Berlin 1963]) states that vision takes light from the air, and the soul from the *mathêmata*, which, however, seems to mean not knowledge in general but mathematics as the most basic and enlightening of subject matters.

³¹ Cf. Job of Edessa, *Book of Treasures*, text, 297b, trans., 2. Cf. also above, p. 91, and, for instance, Ibn 'Arabî, *Futuħât*, III, 100, 276.

³² Cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qût*, I, 197, l. 7, citing the saying mentioned above, p. 71 (also above, n. 1), as a remark by a jurist.

³³ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 515. A variation of the statement forms part of the prayer recommended for use upon leaving one's house to go to the mosque, cf. Tâshköprüzâdeh, *Mîftâh as-sâ'âdah*, III, 105. As-Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-ishrâq*, I, 164, also contains a prayer of the Prophet to the "Light of lights." Cf. also Abû Nu'aym, *Hîlyah*, III, 210.

³⁴ Cf., for instance, al-Hâkim at-Tirmidhî, *as-Salâh wa-maqâsiduhâ*, ed. 'Abd-al-Ḥalîm Maḥmûd and H. N. Zaydân, 39 (Cairo 1965); al-Kalâbâdhî, *Tâ'arruf*, trans. Arberry, 8,

mystic state as owing to illumination, to various lights (in the plural) entering their hearts. In mystic ecstasy, an Abû Yazîd al-Bîstâmî might address God as his knowledge in his ignorance and claim to be God's light on earth.³⁵ He might go even farther and declare the light of God to be good only for knowing ('-r-f) what is beneath God, whereas he on his part knew ('-r-f) God Himself through God.³⁶ As-Sarrâj polemicized against this attitude, not because he considered the concept of the light of mysticism as erroneous, but because he felt that there was a tendency to consider this light as divine and uncreated. "Some Şûfîs think that they see lights, and they describe their hearts as containing light, in the assumption that it is one of the lights which God has mentioned Himself among His attributes. Moreover, they describe this light as comparable to the light of the sun and the moon, and they believe that it belongs to the lights of gnosis (*ma'rîfah*), the recognition of oneness (*tawhîd*), and majesty, believing further that these lights are uncreated." For as-Sarrâj, the true meaning of "lights of the hearts" was the cognition (*ma'rîfah*) of the *fûrqân* and clear insight (*bayân*) from God, as the word *fûrqân* in Qur'ân 8:29/29 was explained by the commentators as "a light placed in the heart, so as to decide between truth and untruth."³⁷ Already al-Muğâsîbî had proclaimed that "the light of knowledge" could enlighten only the pious (*ahl at-tuqâ*), just as the light of day was useful only for those able to see, and not for the blind.³⁸ And behavior unbecoming for a Şûfî like spending his time in the bazaar could be castigated as "gouging the eye of excellence and obliterating the light of knowledge."³⁹

Whatever its specific interpretation in a given case, "light" remained a current, constantly used, and somewhat trite term in

156; as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 156, l. 9; al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 105, l. 30, 106, l. 14, 110, l. 6; M. Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, 61 (London 1935); Abû Nu'aym, *Hîyah*, IX, 262. The phrase "seeing by the light of Our Lord" is employed as a formula in the beginning of the Druze treatises, *Nuskhât sijill al-Mujtabâ* and *Taqâlid ar-Ridâ*, Yale MSS. A-64, fols. 51b, 53b, and L-733, fols. 60a, 63a.

³⁵ Cf. as-Sahlajî, *Nûr*, 139.

³⁶ Cf. as-Sahlajî, *Nûr*, 129, 133.

³⁷ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 548.

³⁸ Cf. al-Muğâsîbî, *Risâlat al-mustarshidîn*, ed. Abû 1-Fattâh Abû Ghuddah, 84 (Aleppo 1384/1964).

³⁹ Cf. Ibn al-Fuwaî, *Talkhîs Majma' al-âdâb*, ed. Muştafâ Jawâd, IV, 4, 638 (Damascus 1962-67).

the Sūfi vocabulary. To quote once more remarks ascribed to Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī, it is the light of the divine essence (*nūr adh-dhāt*) that is needed to bring forth the knowledge of eternity (*ilm al-azal*). And it is said that each one of the numerous “stations” on the mystic path has a light of its own, and the mystic’s banner (*liwā’*) itself consists of light.⁴⁰ Sūfīs were only too willing to describe every desirable phenomenon as “light.” We thus find references to the light of obedience to God (*tā’ah*), the light of wisdom, which is a commonly employed phrase, the light of understanding (*fahm*), of *tawhīd*, of the realities of faith, of sincere devotion (*ikhlāṣ*) and truthfulness (*sidq*), of God’s holiness and mercy, and so on.⁴¹ For al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī, every word directed toward the Deity has a light. The lights of intellect, nearness to God, majesty or God’s face are, understandably, different in intensity. There is a light of *tawhīd*, a light of *īmān*, and so forth.⁴² By “the light” of insight, knowledge is meant.⁴³ “The lights of knowledge shine for the gnostic (*ārif*), so that he is enabled to see the miracles of the supernatural.”⁴⁴ Playfully, an unnamed scholar used to tell the inner circle of his followers when he was alone with them and wanted to discuss “the science of the duties of the heart,” to bring in “the inner light” (*an-nūr al-bātin*).⁴⁵ Later, in the knowledge-centered mysticism of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī, it was only natural to speak, as did Ṣadr-ad-dīn al-Qonawī, of knowledge (that is, the true knowledge of the mystic and of God) as “light,” as “the essence (*‘ayn*) of light,” as “pure light,” as “the light of divine being,” as “the uncovering light.” Outward knowledge constituted “the form of light,” while inner knowledge constituted “the idea of light.”⁴⁶

The “light” (or “lights”) of knowledge was, however, a phrase employed in Sūfism to a lesser degree than “the light of certainty” (“certain knowledge,” *yaqīn*). It is certainty that is described as

⁴⁰ Cf. as-Sahlajī, *Nūr*, 81, 63, 111.

⁴¹ Cf. as-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt*, 81, ll. 4 f., 149, l. 4, 311, ll. 4 f., 324, l. 2, 415, l. 6, 344, ll. 2 f., but all these were widely used expressions.

⁴² Cf. al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī, *Ṣalāh*, 13, 44, 65, 67, and his *Khatm al-a‘wliyā’*, 121, n. 18.

⁴³ Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Ri‘āyah*, 38, l. 11. For knowledge as a lamp, cf. *Ri‘āyah*, 46, l. 3.”

⁴⁴ Abū ‘Uthmān al-Maghribī, as quoted by al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 143, l. 9.

⁴⁵ Cf. Bahyā b. Pāqūdā, *Hidāyah*, ed. A. S. Yahuda, 14 (Leiden 1912).

⁴⁶ Cf. al-Qonawī, *Ijāz al-bayān*, 49 f., 52 f., 333.

a light in the heart, the true source of illuminative faith and piety.⁴⁷ Nor is another concept, “the light of gnosis” (*ma’rifah*), absent from mystic terminology. Dhû n-Nûn al-Miṣrî is said to have remarked that “the gnostic must not let the light of his gnosis extinguish the light of his asceticism, nor must he believe in any esoteric knowledge that destroys the exoteric law.”⁴⁸ In this case, the parallelism employed equates the light of gnosis with esoteric knowledge, even if the latter is not spoken of expressly as a light. This, however, was done by al-Hakîm at-Tirmidhî in his treatise on the meaning of knowledge (*Kitâb Bayân al-ilm*), in which he polemicized against those who accused the Ṣûfîs of working toward the abolition of “knowledge” in the sense of legal, traditionist knowledge. Certain people discuss religious matters only in order to gain prestige among their associates. They are certain to lose the spiritual benefits that must otherwise come to them as the result of their quest. The Ṣûfîs are opposed to those people. Everything the Ṣûfîs undertake to learn is approached in the understanding that it will provide them with insight and certainty. “For knowledge is a light. The more a person acquires of the fear of God, the greater is the amount of light he obtains. The more the heart is cleansed of any harmful matter, the more luminous (*anwar*) and the more abundant is the knowledge going to be.”⁴⁹ Light, knowledge, purity of heart, and the fear of God are all mixed together here, without any tangible rational distinction. It is certainly true that from its early beginnings through its entire existence, Ṣûfi speculation has always thrived on the arbitrary mingling or contracting of meaningful concepts. Light and knowledge, in particular, belonged together as a kind of conceptual foundation for mysticism, with the one being expressive of its essential emotional, inspirational, “illuminative” aspect, and the other, of its systematic, theoretical-scientific side that became an inseparable part of mysticism in Islam.

As we have just seen, with respect to its view of “knowledge,” early Ṣûfîsm was bothered by the specific connotation which *ilm* had acquired, referring to religious knowledge in the legal-traditionalist

⁴⁷ Cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qât*, I, 85, 176; al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 143, l. 9.

⁴⁸ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma’*, 551; al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 143, ll. 11 f. For *nûr al-ma’rifah*, cf. also al-Kharrâz, *Rasâ’îl*, ed. Qâsim as-Sâmarrâ’î, 37, 43, 47 (Baghdâd 1387/1967); as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 268, l. 6, 508, l. 5.

⁴⁹ Cf. al-Hakîm at-Tirmidhî, in the Ankara Ms. Ismail Saib, I, 1571, fol. 15a.

sense. Sufism as a whole was not hostile to this kind of knowledge, and wherever Sufism touched the Muslim masses, as it practically always did, could not afford to be. In the totality of the history of mysticism in Islam, the Sufis who deprecated traditionist *ilm* and who were ready to do away with it constituted a small minority, which, by this very fact, found considerable and well deserved attention for expressing unusual and non-conformist minority opinions. However, Sufism attempted to add something of its own, some new twist as it were, to the generally accepted concept of *ilm*. It was therefore unable and unwilling to identify itself with it without reservation. It is not by chance that Sufi authors stressed the traditions in which knowledge was defined in terms of light, or piety, or god-fearing activity, preceded by the statement that knowledge did not consist merely of a large amount of transmitted traditional material.⁵⁰ Yet, the very rivalry that existed between mysticism and traditionist *ilm* caused the theoreticians of Sufism to insist on labeling their own endeavors as *ilm*. With the growing prestige that rapidly accrued to the concept of knowledge in Islam, the Sufis showed themselves all the more anxious to make room for *ilm* in their own thinking. It is true, however, that the preemption by others of *ilm* as a technical term prevented the Sufis permanently from selecting *ilm* for employment as one of the numerous technical terms of their own mystic vocabulary and from using it to designate by it one of their specific states or stations. Since *ma'rifah* and *yaqin* lent themselves without much difficulty to doubling for *ilm*, they were indeed widely substituted for it.

Ma'rifah, as a technical term referring to knowledge about God, was in all likelihood shared originally by Sufis with other early Muslim religious thinkers who found the essential basis of faith in the knowledge about God in the first place and, thereafter, in

⁵⁰ Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, I, 197 (above, p. 161, n. 4), quotes two such remarks, one of them equating knowledge with the fear of God (*khashyah*), and the other equating it with light. For the equation with *khashyah*, see above, p. 140, n. 1, and below, p. 174; cf. also Ibn Rajab, *Fadl 'ilm as-salaf*, 36 ff. The continuation in al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 24, ll. 7 f., attributed to Ibrāhīm al-Khawwāṣ to the effect that "...the knower is rather he who follows up on his knowledge and employs it and follows the example of the *sunan*, even if he possesses little knowledge," expresses a thought which has nothing specifically mystic to it. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Iqtidā' al-'ilm al-'amal*, in al-Albānī, *Min kūnūz as-sunnah*, 169, quotes this statement from al-Qushayrī as indicative of the need for action.

⁵¹ Cf. above, pp. 99 ff.

the knowledge about a varying number of religious beliefs.⁵¹ As-Sarrâj thus states that the basic principles of religion include, in this order, the recognition of God's oneness, knowledge (*ma'rifah*), faith, certainty (*yaqīn*), and so on. *Ma'rifah* is used here in a way which would not have raised an orthodox, non-mystic eyebrow.⁵² A better argument in favor of the assumption that the *ma'rifah* of the early theologians and the original understanding of the term by the Sūfis were not far apart is obviously the time element. Both theology and mysticism came into being at the same time and, presumably, among the same kind of men, since, as far as we know, the dividing line between theologians and mystics was all but non-existent in the early Muslim community. It has already been shown that there was no real difference between *ma'rifah* and *'ilm* at the earliest stages of Muslim metaphysical thought,⁵³ and the same would seem to be valid for mysticism. Much later, such an influential figure in the history of Sūfi theory as al-Qushayrī returned to the beginnings by stating plainly that in scholarly usage, every *'ilm* was a *ma'rifah*, and every *ma'rifah* an *'ilm*, that every knower of God was a gnostic (*'arif*), and every gnostic, a knower or scholar (*'âlim*), and that the special use of *ma'rifah* as referring to certain metaphysical and ethical insights and practices was due to Sūfi theorizing.⁵⁴ Still later, the school of Ibn 'Arabî produced mystic thinkers such as Ṣadr-ad-dîn al-Qônawî who, in a work of his entitled *an-Nafahât al-ilâhîyah*, put the problems of *'ilm* squarely in the center of things. In his work, *ma'rifah* is almost entirely replaced by *'ilm* and plays only a very minor role. For al-Qônawî, it is *'ilm*, and not *ma'rifah*, that is the true goal of the mystic. It is not generally agreed upon by mystics what true knowledge is, but in his ecstasy, al-Qônawî sees himself as "the mirror of the true essence of knowledge": "I saw my guesswork to be knowledge; my knowledge, existence; my existence, non-existence; and my non-existence, I saw to be in control of all existence."⁵⁵

In keeping with the general semantic development of the two roots, *'ilm* remained the wider term also in Sūfism, covering in a

⁵¹ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 433. See above, p. 102, n. 4.

⁵² Cf. above, p. 134.

⁵³ Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 141, ll. 5 ff.

⁵⁴ Cf. al-Qônawî, *Nafahât*, fols. 12a, 13b–14a.

⁵⁵ Cf. Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 284, citing ash-Shâ'rânî's *Tabaqât*.

sense the entire, spectrum of mystic thought as part of the totality of intellectual life. *Ma'rifah* was often no more than a particular state or station. However, at its best, it also was a term expressive of the distinctive essence of mysticism. It was therefore possible for mystics to place the higher value either upon *ilm* or upon *ma'rifah*, depending upon the individual author's particular outlook, even if, it would seem, *ma'rifah* had a slight edge in many places. Abû Yazîd al-Bîstâmî supposedly placed *ilm* above *ma'rifah*,⁵⁶ whereas al-Hallâj took the opposite stand,⁵⁷ with such later authors as as-Suhrawardî *al-maqtil*⁵⁸ and Ibn 'Arabî⁵⁹ vacillating and occasionally coming out in favor of *ma'rifah* but mostly, it seems, leaning toward *ilm*. Abû Sa'îd al-Kharrâz, who was convinced that in the state of closeness to True Reality, the Şûfi did not feel any physical or intellectual emotion, including that of knowledge, also claimed that the knowledge (*ilm*) of God was something wider and deeper than the gnosis (or knowledge about, *ma'rifah*) of God, although both were infinite. The knowledge of God leads to the cognition of gnosis (*ma'rifat al-ma'rifah*) at the time of the passing of the (mere) knowledge of gnosis (*ilm al-ma'rifah*) and interpretation and the passing of comment and being cut off from union.⁶⁰ Poverty (*faqr*)—by the time of Ibn Sab'în (d. 669/1271), who relates these statements, a synonym of Şûfism—may be achieved by putting the religious law (*shar'*) to the right, the intellect to the left, and knowledge (*ilm*) in the middle, but it may also be defined as the first perfection together with knowledge (*ilm*) and the second perfection together with gnosis (*ma'rifah*), being, in fact, the sum of both, together with pure humanity.⁶¹ Both knowledge and gnosis are viewed here as indispensable for the mystic, although gnosis represents a posterior, higher stage. Thus, *ma'rifah* and the *ârif* were the specific goal of mystic endeavor and soared above the thoughts and opinions to which *ilm* and

⁵⁷ Cf. L. Massignon, *La Passion d'al Husayn-Ibn-Mansour al-Hallâj*, 776 f., 624 (Paris 1922).

⁵⁸ Cf. as-Suhrawardî, *Risâlat Sâfir Sîmurgh*, ed. O. Spies, *Three Treatises on Mysticism*, 19, trans., 32 (Stuttgart 1935, *Bonner Orientalistische Studien* 12).

⁵⁹ Cf. Ibn 'Arabî, *Futûhât*, IV, 55, with reference to his *Mawâqi' an-nujûm*, which is preserved in many important manuscripts, cf. Osman Yahia, *Histoire et classification de l'œuvre d'Ibn 'Arabî*, 375–77, no. 443 (Damascus 1964). But cf. above, p. 116, and below, p. 190.

⁶⁰ Cf. al-Kharrâz, *Rasâ'il*, 26.

⁶¹ Cf. Ibn Sab'în, *Rasâ'il*, ed. 'Abd-ar-Rahmân Badawî, 13 (Cairo 1965).

the *‘âlim* aspired but failed to live up. Knowledge is available to all believers but gnosis (*ma‘rifah*) only to saints, and Sahl at-Tustarî claims that “knowledge is established by gnosis..., while gnosis is established by its own essence.”⁶² For Ibn Yazdânyâr, “*ma‘rifah* is the soundness of the knowledge of God,”⁶³ and Abû l-‘Abbâs as-Sayyârî, playing on words, describes true gnosis (*ma‘rifah*) as giving up individual knowledge (*ma‘ârif*).⁶⁴ In the view of Hâtim al-Âsamm, *ma‘rifah* is the final fulfillment of all Sûfi virtues.⁶⁵ “The gnostic (*‘ârif*) is above what he says, while the knower (*‘âlim*) is beneath it.”⁶⁶

The relationship of *‘ilm* and *yaqîn* in Sûfism is different from that between *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifah* in that *ma‘rifah* became a special mystic form of *‘ilm*, whereas *yaqîn* took the place of *‘ilm* wherever *‘ilm* appeared to have become debased through its usurpation by legal-traditionalist theologians and thus unsuitable for expressing a knowledge based on feeling and emotion.⁶⁷ *Yaqîn* “certainty” was offered by the Qur’ân as a synonym for truth and essential insight but above all as a synonym for knowledge.⁶⁸ It was, however, generally if not always,⁶⁹ a higher form of knowledge, purified of the element of error and fallibility inherent in ordinary knowledge. This remained the Sûfi understanding of the term. While the opposite of *‘ilm* “knowledge” was *jahl* “ignorance,” the opposite

⁶² Quoted by al-Kalâbâdhî, *Tâ’arruf*, trans. Arberry, 50 f.

⁶³ Cf. Abû Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, X, 363; as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 409, l. 3.

⁶⁴ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 444, l. 12.

⁶⁵ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 94, ll. 4 f. For Abû Sa‘îd al-Kharrâz’ distinction between *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifah*, cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 230.

⁶⁶ Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 142, l. 30; as-Sahlajî, *Nûr*, 130, attributing the statement to Abû Yazîd al-Bîstâmî.

⁶⁷ Abû Madyan remarked that the study of mysticism required four qualities, asceticism, knowledge (*‘ilm*), trust in God, and certainty (*yaqîn*). For his seventeenth-century commentator, Ahmad b. Ibrâhîm b. ‘Allân aṣ-Ṣiddiqî, it was self-evident that *‘ilm* referred to the punctilious fulfillment of the external duties of the religious law, while *yaqîn* referred to the mystic’s knowledge gained through “state” and “taste” that everything in the world was created by God to serve Him, cf. *Sharh Hikam Abî Madyan*, in the Istanbul Ms. M. Arif-M. Murad 34 *mükerrer* (preserved in the Süleymaniye Library), fol. 4.

⁶⁸ Cf. above, pp. 23 ff. For a modern view of the difference between knowledge and certainty, cf. H. G. van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought 1630–1690* (The Hague 1963).

⁶⁹ Thus, al-Bâjî, *Hudûd*, 6, contends that *‘ilm* includes being certain (*tayaqqun*), but it is possible also to be certain without knowledge, and this then is believing (*i‘tiqâd*).

of *yaqīn* “certainty” was *shakk* “doubt.”⁷⁰ The common combination was “doubt and certainty.” The combination “doubt and knowledge” was rarely used. While knowledge is the firm belief that a thing is as it is, certainty is one’s satisfaction with and assuredness of what one knows. This, incidentally, means that in contrast to knowledge, *yaqīn* cannot be an attribute of God,⁷¹ a fact that perhaps contributed to the suitability of *yaqīn*, in preference to knowledge, as a term designating a mystic state. Certainty is the knowledge whose owner is not beset by any doubt (*rayb*) whatever.⁷² It is a knowledge which does not fall prey (?⁷³, *taftarisuh*) to doubts.⁷⁴ According to Abū ‘Abdallāh (Abū ‘Alī) al-Anṭākī, “certainty is a light God places into the heart of man,” so that he may be able to learn about the other world.⁷⁵ The least bit of certainty, upon entering the heart, fills it with light and drives out the slightest doubt (*rayb*).⁷⁶ This admits of being reversed: “A little certainty removes all the doubt from the heart, and a little doubt removes all the certainty from the heart.”⁷⁷ Knowledge apart from the quality of certainty is doubtful knowledge. Conjoined to certainty, it is knowledge without any doubt whatever.⁷⁸ The distinction between plain knowledge on the one hand, and certainty as knowledge without doubt, on the other, is interpreted to be one between acquired knowledge and intuitive knowledge. Certainty is knowledge deposited in the hearts, meaning that it is a knowledge that is not acquired.⁷⁹ Or it may be said that knowledge exchanges

⁷⁰ Cf., for instance, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, XVII, 349; al-Hakīm at-Tirmidhī, *al-‘Aql wa-l-hawā*, 122. On doubt, cf., further, below, pp. 299 ff.

⁷¹ Cf. al-‘Askarī, *Furūq*, 63. Among the definitions of knowledge, we find also the distinction between knowledge and certainty, cf. F-5, above, p. 64, also p. 63, n. 7.

⁷² Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 44, l. 5.

⁷³ Cf. as-Ṣulamī’s commentary, *Haqā’iq at-taṣfīr*, on Qur’ān, *sūrah* 102. The commentary on this *sūrah* consists almost entirely of Ṣūfi sayings dealing with *‘ilm al-yaqīn* and *ayn al-yaqīn*. I used a manuscript in the General Library in Rabat, no. 6y (Ibn Yūsuf collection), pp. 349 f., which, to judge from the excerpts in Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 110, does not contain the complete text.

⁷⁴ Cf. as-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt*, 139. Al-Anṭākī died ca. 239/853–54. According to *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 351, following Massignon, he died in 220/835. Sezgin, I, 638, has Abū ‘Ubaydallāh. Cf. definition L-3, above, p. 68.

⁷⁵ Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 83, ll. 7 f.

⁷⁶ Cf. Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, X, 318 f.

⁷⁷ Cf. as-Sulamī, *Haqā’iq at-taṣfīr*. Read: *bi-lā shubhah*.

⁷⁸ Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 83, l. 13. Cf. also Dhū n-Nūn al-Miṣrī, in al-Kalābādhī, *Ta’arruf*, trans. Arberry, 94.

places with doubts. There may be knowledge where before, there was doubt, and there may be doubt where before, there was knowledge. But there is no doubt whatever in certainty. Consequently, knowledge is something acquired, and so is the knowledge of Ṣūfis at the beginning of their mystic journey, while certainty is intuitive and comes to the Ṣūfis at the end of their quest.⁷⁹ Whether there could be different degrees of certainty as there were of knowledge, was a problem posed by Ibn ‘Arabī on the basis of a tradition common among Ṣūfis which said that Jesus, if he were to gain an increase in certainty, could walk in the air, instead of merely upon water.⁸⁰ Ibn ‘Arabī also argued for the non-identity of *‘ilm* and *yaqīn*. He explains the three stages of *yaqīn* presupposed in the Qur’ān (*‘ilm/‘ayn/haqq al-yaqīn*) by a variation of the well-known geographical example for degrees of knowledge: The three stages are the undoubted knowledge, based upon hearsay, of the existence of the Ka‘bah, the visit to the Ka‘bah combined with the actual observation of it, and learning about the Ka‘bah’s real meaning.⁸¹

The relationship between *yaqīn* “certainty” and *īmān* “faith” seems to have appeared to Ṣūfi theoreticians in a somewhat ambiguous light. While patience (*ṣabr*) and gratefulness (*shukr*) constitute only one-half of faith, certainty is said to constitute the totality of faith.⁸² “The science (*‘ilm*) of certainty” is the end and entelechy of “the science of faith.”⁸³ But faith is also considered as better than certainty.⁸⁴ From a listing of the mystic’s “stations” in an ascending order, the impression might be gained that certainty is considered higher than the very first station, which is *ma‘rifah*, and again lower than *taṣdīq* (which is known to function as a synonym of faith), but then, it is stated that faith in reality com-

⁷⁹ Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 83, ll. 16 f.

⁸⁰ Cf. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūhāt*, II, 204, chapter 122. See also Pseudo-Ja‘far as-Ṣādiq on *yaqīn* (above, pp. 91 f.).

⁸¹ Cf. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūhāt*, II, 570 f., also, IV, 375.

On al-Ghazzālī’s understanding of *yaqīn*, see the monograph by Jabre, *Notion de certitude*, 131 f. and *passim*.

⁸² Cf. al-Kharrāz, *Ṣidq*, 9; Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, III, 17, also, III, 17, where certainty is dubbed the reality of faith. It may be on this basis that *yaqīn* is translated “faith” and *‘ilm al-yaqīn* “the science of religion” in N. A. Faris’ translation of al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā* I, 69, l. 20, 70, l. 17, trans., 208, 211.

⁸³ Cf. Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, I, 120.

⁸⁴ Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Luma‘*, 446.

prises all of the “stations.”⁸⁵ While faith may have *taṣdīq* as its synonym, certainty is “pure faith.”⁸⁶ Certainty apparently goes together with both *ma’rifah* and *īmān* in orthodox Ṣūfī thinking,⁸⁷ as does knowledge in the view of the theologians. This is another indication that “certainty” serves as a replacement for plain “knowledge” in Muslim mysticism. The superiority of certainty over knowledge in the Ṣūfī scheme of things found its clear expression in some such remarks as this one, credited to Abū Sa’īd al-Kharrāz: “Knowledge is what starts you upon action, and certainty is what carries you along.”⁸⁸ Or, as Abū Sa’īd’s younger contemporary, al-Junayd, put it: “Certainty is the firm establishment in the heart of a knowledge which does not undergo revision or transformation or change,”⁸⁹ while somewhat later, Abū Bakr al-Warrāq exclaimed that it was through certainty that God was known (‘-r-f).⁹⁰ A certain Ṣūfī, about whose identity the sources do not agree,⁹¹ spent sixteen days sitting at the side of a pool in the country without eating or drinking. When asked what he was doing there, he replied: “I am between knowledge and certainty, waiting which of them will come out on top, so that I can be with it.” Al-Qushayrī’s explanation for the cryptic remark is that when knowledge wins out, he would drink, and if certainty wins out, he would go along (*marartu*), meaning, it seems, he would go on with his fast. Whether this explanation hits the mark or not, the Ṣūfī no doubt hoped for the victory of certainty. Certainty would lift him above the uncertainties of mere knowledge, even though it was the knowledge needed by him on the mystic path.

⁸⁵ Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 83, l. 18. Al-Hakīm at-Tirmidhī, *al-‘Aql wa-l-hawā*, also places *yaqīn* a step above *ma’rifah*.

⁸⁶ According to al-Anṭākī, cited by Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 227.

⁸⁷ Cf. the chapter headings in Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qāṭi*, l. 195, III, 56.

⁸⁸ Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 84, ll. 26 f.

⁸⁹ Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 83, l. 32.

⁹⁰ Cf. al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 84, l. 14.

⁹¹ Both as-Sarrāj, *Luma‘* 407, and following him, al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 83, ll. 9 ff., report the story in the name of Abū Ja‘far al-Haddād, who belonged to the circle of al-Junayd and Ruwaym and thus lived around 900. However, the name of the interrogator is later on given as Abū Turāb an-Nakhshabī, who had died already in 245/859. *Tārīkh Baghḍād*, XIV, 412, does not connect Abū Ja‘far al-Haddād with Abū Turāb, although this may have been done by Ibn ‘Asākir, cf. the editor’s footnote in as-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt*, 234. Perhaps, the individual meant was not Abū Ja‘far al-Haddād but Abū Ḥafṣ al-Haddād, who died around 270/883 (cf. as-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt*, 116; al-Qushayrī, *Risālah*, 17)?

Ilm was thus forced to contend with *ma'rifah* and *yaqîn* in mysticism, but it remained a term of overpowering import for both *Şûfi* theory and *Şûfi* practice. The basic tenet of all Muslim ethics, the necessary combination of knowledge with action based on it,⁹² was adopted as a matter of course by most *Şûfîs* and extolled in a great variety of statements and discussions. Keeping company with men of learning was accepted as a fundamental condition for sound mystic training, and its desirability was constantly stressed. Biographical notices of *Şûfîs* usually describe their subjects as “scholars” (*âlim*). At times, the particular field of learning in which a certain *Şûfi* excelled is mentioned. This may be theology or other non-mystic subjects, or it may be the science of the realities (*ilm al-haqâ'iq*). In the latter case, the field of the *Şûfi*'s particular scholarly competence was understood to be mystic theory. A mystic described as *âlim*, with no further qualification, might thereby be intended to qualify as an *ârif*, a gnostic. Usually, however, it would seem that *âlim* in these cases was employed in the common meaning of being a learned, knowledgeable man. Like other Muslim intellectuals, the *Şûfîs*, too, complained about abuses committed by the learned, such as their drive for prestige and money on the strength of the scholarly recognition that was accorded to them,⁹³ and they also succumbed to the illusion of assuming that those evil tendencies were the product of modern times and had been unknown in the good old days. Already Dhû

⁹² See below, pp. 246 ff. *ilm* could be superseded by *aql* in this respect by describing the essence of intelligence as “a light in the heart that guides the soul toward the principles of action,” cf. al-Kharrâz, *Rasâ'il*, 47.

⁹³ The term used is *al-mubâhâh bi-l-ilm*. The censure of this kind of attitude is by no means restricted to *Şûfîsm*, cf., for instance, *Concordance*, IV, 328b54 f.; Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn al-akhbâr*, II, 119 (reprint Cairo 1963–64); Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 228; al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Iqtidâ'*, 193 ff. It was put into the mouth of Luqmân as the representative of pre-Islamic educational wisdom, cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 107, and the anonymous version in al-Mubashshir, 333; also Abû Nu'aym, *Hilyah*, VI, 62 f. For further use of the expression by *Şûfi* authors, cf., for instance, al-Muhsîbî, *Ri'âyah*, 130 ff., also M. Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 142 (overweening pride in knowledge: *Ri'âyah*, 240 f.); 'Abd-al-Muhsîn al-Husaynî, *al-Ma'rifah 'ind al-Hakîm at-Tirmidhî*, 97 f. (Cairo, n. y. [1968 ?]); Abû Nu'aym, *Hilyah*, VII, 10; as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 452, l. 6, = al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 28, l. 29.

The fear of *mubâhâh* was the principal force in the Malâmatîyah's rejection of the occupation with *ilm*, cf. as-Sulamî, *Risâlat al-Malâmatîyah*, ed. Abû l-'Alâ' al-'Afîfi, *al-Malâmatîyah*, 112 (Cairo 1364/1945), also, 116 and the editor's discussion, 65–67.

Cf. also below, pp. 256 and 315.

n-Nûn al-Miṣrî is said to have complained: “There was a time when a man of knowledge (*min ahl al-ilm*) by virtue of his knowledge acquired an increased hatred for this world and became more ready to renounce it. Today, a man’s knowledge instills in him an increased love for this world, and he becomes more ready to go after (material prosperity). There was a time when a man spent his property on the acquisition of knowledge. Today, he acquires property through his knowledge. There was a time when a man of knowledge (*sâhib al-ilm*) could be observed to grow, both inwardly and outwardly. Today, many men of knowledge can be observed to grow in corruption in both respects.”⁹⁴ This reproach is certainly directed not only to the traditionists but also to many of the Ṣûfîs of Dhû n-Nûn’s time.

The concept of knowledge constituted a kind of background music to all Ṣûfî thinking. A dissonant note was introduced by occasional reflections on the inferiority of “knowledge” not only, as we have seen, to the concept of *ma’rifah* but also, generally, to emotion and feeling. Abû Yazîd al-Bîṣṭâmî went through a long period of study under great scholars, in order to become both an *‘âlim* and an *‘ârif* (the *‘ârif* being here the higher stage). Then, he sought the company of devout men who punctiliously observed all the religious duties. But when God finally answered his question about true reality, the answer came not by means of the knowledge or the formal piety previously acquired but in a burst of emotion and inspiration.⁹⁵ “The novice must subject himself to the regimen of knowledge (*siyâsat al-ilm*), but the observance of the truth is something higher.” These were the words by which al-Junayd proclaimed the primacy of feeling and intuition over learning.⁹⁶ Or, as he expressed the same idea on another occasion: “The right and true novice does not need the knowledge of scholars.”⁹⁷

Knowledge was also subordinated at times to certain other qualities. In the view of Abû l-Ḥusayn an-Nûrî, Ṣûfism is not definitions (*rusûm*) and kinds of knowledge (*‘ulîm*) but ethical qualities (*akhlâq*).⁹⁸ Others said that “a little right behavior

⁹⁴ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 25.

⁹⁵ Cf. as-Sahlajî, *Nîr*, 126 f.

⁹⁶ Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 94, ll. 11 f. See also the dictum of Ibrâhîm b. al-Muwallad, cited by as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 411, ll. 6 f.

⁹⁷ Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 93, l. 34.

⁹⁸ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 167, ll. 5 f. For *rusûm*, see above, p. 49, n. 2.

(education, *adab*) is more needed by us than knowledge.”⁹⁹ Thus, “whenever Ibrâhîm b. Adham was asked about knowledge, he came up with *adab*.¹⁰⁰ And knowledge may be said to be just one of four qualities needed by the mystic, in addition to right behavior (*adab*), integrity (*amânah*), and modesty (*ifâh*).¹⁰¹ For the Sûfîs who were concerned with action more than with contemplation, ethics and morality were as important as thought.

However, it was knowledge that the angels themselves would feel called upon to discuss with the chosen mystic.¹⁰² It was knowledge that was as rare as it was valuable in the world: “All of the world is ignorance, except that which is knowledge.”¹⁰³ It was knowledge that first awakened the Sûfî to his task of searching after God, even if it then left him confused and bewildered.¹⁰⁴ Knowledge also lent itself to evaluative comparisons with various technical concepts of the mystic vocabulary. The “mystic state” (*hâl*) “is inseparable from knowledge, as it is irreconcilable with talk,” according to Abû Hafṣ an-Nîsâbûrî.¹⁰⁵ “Fear” (*khawf*, *makhâfah*) is the product of knowledge, just as tranquillity is the result of asceticism, and repentance that of *ma’rifah*, says al-Muḥâsibî.¹⁰⁶ In the view of ‘Amr b. ‘Uthmân al-Makkî (d. 291/903–4, or later in the same decade), knowledge and fear must combine as guide and driver in order to govern as well as frighten the unruly horse that is the human soul.¹⁰⁷ According to Abû ‘Abdallâh at-Turûghbadhî (first half of the tenth century), depending on the prevailing circumstances, knowledge might produce fear (*khawf*), apprehension

⁹⁹ Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 129, ll. 9 f., citing ‘Abdallâh b. al-Mubârak (d. 181/797). Although Ibn al-Mubârak cannot be considered a Sûfî, he was devoted to and interested in asceticism, on which he wrote several treatises. Cf. below, p. 316.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Abû Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, VIII, 27.

¹⁰¹ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 51, citing as-Sarâ as-Saqaṭî (d. 251/865–66, or 253).

¹⁰² Abû Yazîd al-Bîṣrâmi, in as-Sahlajî, *Nûr*, 112.

¹⁰³ This was the phrasing of the idea by Sahl at-Tustarî (ninth century), cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma’*, 188; H. Ritter, in *Oriens*, III (1950), 52. Ibn ‘Abd-al Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 53 f., quotes al-Hasan al-Baṣrî for the same remark with variant, “... except the sessions of scholars.”

¹⁰⁴ Cf. the verses of Summûn (ninth century), as cited by as-Sarrâj, *Luma’*, 321.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 119, l. 17.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 58, ll. 9 f. See also al-Muḥâsibî, *Ri’âyah*, 282, l. 17, 283.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 203, ll. 8 f. Contrast below, p. 262, n. 1.

(*wajal*), as well as calm assurance (*sakînah* and *tu'manînah*).¹⁰⁸ For Sufyân (presumably, ath-Thawrî), knowledge is asceticism (*wara'*), and asceticism is the search for the knowledge by which asceticism is recognized,¹⁰⁹ although for another mystic, Ibrâhîm b. Shaybân al-Qarmîsînî, knowledge serves exoteric education (*âdâb az-zâhir*), while *wara'* serves the higher goal of esoteric education.¹¹⁰ Like Sufyân, Yahyâ b. Mu'âdh (d. 258/871–72) considered asceticism as the source of the direct awareness, without symbolism, of the significance (definition, *hadd*) of knowledge.¹¹¹ In this respect, as Ibn Nuşayr (d. 348/959) reminds us, it is not unlike piety (*taqwâ*). When piety takes up residence in the heart, it causes the blessings of knowledge to descend upon it.¹¹²

The higher mysteries of the Şûfi path also called for comparisons with knowledge. In the state of sobriety, which is the counterpart of the state of drunkenness, the mystic faces the presence of knowledge under his own control by his own activity.¹¹³ For some Şûfîs, ecstatic experience (*wajd*) may be something apart from knowledge. Yet, for others, it may come through knowledge, and again for others, it is knowledge.¹¹⁴ Even “true reality” (*haqîqah*), the final goal of the mystic search for insight, may be equated with knowledge. Thus, Ruwaym (d. 303/915–16) called the most perfect of realities that which is connected with knowledge. Another mystic, Abû Ja'far aş-Saydalânî, distinguished between three kinds of realities in the approved Şûfi style: A true reality together with knowledge, a true reality accompanied by knowledge, and a true reality that turns away from knowledge. And still another Şûfi, al-Abharî (d. ca. 330/941–42), contended that “all true reality is knowledge, and all knowledge is true reality.”¹¹⁵ However, for

¹⁰⁸ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 496, ll. 8 ff. On knowledge *khashyah*, another word for “fear,” which does not qualify as a special term of mysticism, cf. above, p. 140, n. 1, and p. 165, n. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qât*, II, 8, ll. 15 f.

¹¹⁰ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 404.

¹¹¹ Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 54, l. 6.

¹¹² Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 28, l. 18.

¹¹³ Cf. al-Qushayrî, *Risâlah*, 38, ll. 34 f., apparently as al-Qushayrî's personal comment.

¹¹⁴ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 386. The author here appears to follow the *Kitâb al-Wajd* of Abû Sa'îd Ibn al-A'râbî (d. 341/953, cf. Sezgin, I, 660 f.).

¹¹⁵ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 286 f. For al-Abharî's remarks, cf. also as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 394, II. 11 f. It may be noted that for Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, *Qât*, II, 44, ll. 22 f., the knowledge that is identical with *haqîqah* is the legal-religious knowledge (*îlm ash-shâr'*).

Abû Yazîd al-Bîstâmî, a great gulf separates mere knowledge from the *haqîqah* of Divine Reality: “He who looks at people through (the eyes of) knowledge hates them, but he who looks at them through (the eyes of) True Reality (the Creator) shows mercy to them.”¹¹⁶ Clearly, perfect knowledge was unattainable, as expressed by Abû ‘Alî ath-Thaqafî (d. 328/939–40) in a paraphrase of the maxim about God’s unknowability: “The end and entelechy of knowledge consist in giving up all hope of reaching the bottom (*kunh*) of it.”¹¹⁷ Knowledge thus was not always accorded the highest rank in the Sûfi canon of mystic qualities, and it sometimes was pronounced a hindrance on the way toward full mystic experience, but it was a concept that haunted Sûfis of all descriptions throughout the entire history of Sûfism.

* * *

The principal concern of Muslim mystics with regard to the concept of *îlm* concerned another aspect of the term. It was the establishment of Sûfism in all its various manifestations as an *îlm*, and here the word is best translated as “science.” Indeed, Sûfism developed into a “science” all its own, so much so that al-Ghazzâlî was eventually able to maintain that the views of the various kinds of Muslim religious thinkers showed no real difference as far as practical methods and procedures (*tarîq al-‘amal*) were concerned, but there was a real and important difference between the theoretical methods (*turuq al-îlm*) of Sûfism as distinguished from those of the speculative theologians and the philosophers.¹¹⁸ In other words, Sûfism had become a “science” in its own right.

Beginning with the early ninth century, if not earlier, Sûfis showed a desperate desire to establish what they were attempting to do as an *îlm*. They wanted to prove that they were in no essential way opposed to the *îlm* of the traditionists, but in order to justify their attempts at providing an alternative to traditionist and rationalist theology, they felt that they had to prove that this alternative was no less of an *îlm* than what was done by the other side. For this was the age of science, the age in which systematic knowledge in a wide variety of clearly defined fields became the dominant form of expression for Muslim intellectual aspirations

¹¹⁶ Cf. as-Sahlajî, *Nûr*, 84.

¹¹⁷ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 363, ll. 14 f.

¹¹⁸ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mîzân al-‘amal*, 221.

and everything, from the Qur'ân to poetry, was provided with all the apparatus of specialized scholarly disciplines. The *'ilm* of the Sûfis tried very strenuously to appear as a “science” as well as keep in step with the various scientific views of the meaning of knowledge. Many terms in the mystic vocabulary came in the course of time to be described as *'ulûm* “scientific disciplines” in their own right. Helped by the atomistic element that was inherent in the original concept of *'ilm*,¹¹⁹ the Sûfis found no difficulty in speaking of every mystic term as a particular “knowledge” to be acquired by the mystic, and in establishing a hierarchy of such “knowledge,” whose usual apex was the knowledge of the realities of the mystic gnosis—unless preference was accorded to the opposite insight that all such various kinds of knowledge, however titled, meant in fact only one and the same thing, only one “knowledge.”¹²⁰

Already al-Muḥâsibî (d. 243/857) gave literary expression to this concern with setting up Sûfism as a “science,” with establishing its legitimacy in the Muslim scheme of things, and with delimiting it from other sciences. He did so in his brief essay entitled *Kitâb al-'Ilm* “Book on Knowledge.”¹²¹ In the *Ri'ayah*, his main work, al-Muḥâsibî showed himself more interested in the practice of the ethical virtues necessary for leading a life that would please God.

¹¹⁹ Cf. above, p. 12.

¹²⁰ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 457.

¹²¹ Despite repeated efforts, I was unable to gain access to the manuscript of the work preserved in the Ambrosiana in Milan, Ms. Caprotti 204, fols. 18a–21a (= Catalogue Griffini, 460, VI, in *RSO*, VIII [1919–20], 328 f.). (For a manuscript in Istanbul, see Sezgin, I, 641). I have had to rely on the brief description of the contents given by M. Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 57, 98 f. The correctness of the attribution of the *Kitâb al-'Ilm* to al-Muḥâsibî remains to be established.

Al-Muḥâsibî is further credited with a treatise explaining the meaning of *ma'rifah*, generally entitled *Sharh al-ma'rifah*. It is preserved in several manuscripts under different titles. According to the description given by M. Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 53, the author analyses *ma'rifah* in its various types, again applying what in his time was considered scientific procedure. For another manuscript of the work, cf. F. Rosenthal, *Die arabische Autobiographie*, in *Analecta Orientalia*, XIV, 11 f., n. 3 (Rome 1937). An excerpt from the work is contained in the Istanbul manuscript Köprülü, I, 1601, fols. 97b–99b. The anecdote reported by M. Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 11 f., that al-Muḥâsibî had once written a book on *ma'rifah* but destroyed it when his unpreparedness for a true understanding of the subject was driven home to him under questioning by a young Sûfi has, it seems, the purpose of exalting the difficulty of gnosis which even a Muḥâsibî was unable to cope with. This imaginary work has certainly nothing to do with the preserved and, indeed, very imperfect treatise.

Ilm is often paired with *'amal* in the generally accepted manner. It is employed largely in the common meaning of religious knowledge based upon the Qur'ân and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. It is the knowledge which permits the individual to recognize the religious duties and ethical practices considered by al-Muḥâsibî as incumbent upon his kind of seeker after God. It is one of the things that must be kept pure and free from such dangers as overweening pride and self-delusion. In the *Ri'ayah*, *ilm* also appears as a practical synonym of *ma'rifah* and occurs many a time in combination with it, without exhibiting anything more than the usual distinction between the two terms. While *ma'rifah* often expresses acquaintance, awareness, a first realization of or knowledge about something, *ilm* expresses the fullness of knowledge of any given subject. There is no special discussion of *ilm* in the *Ri'ayah*, even though the word itself is constantly present and its importance makes itself felt.

According to the discussion offered by al-Muḥâsibî in the *Kitâb al-Ilm*, knowledge falls into three parts. There is a legal knowledge which deals with what is lawful and unlawful in this world and constitutes therefore a kind of "outward" (exoteric) material knowledge. Then, there is a knowledge of the other world, which is "inner" (esoteric) intuitional knowledge. And there is a knowledge of God and of the divine rules as they affect this world and the other world, that is, the true inner meaning of the cosmos, the real goal of the gnostic.¹²² The seekers after knowledge should, of course, not seek worldly knowledge¹²³ and worldly gain but devote themselves to the denunciation of the world, to the knowledge that is light and intuition, that falls like the rain from heaven¹²⁴ and induces man to exhibit a greater fear of God. What we have

¹²² Muhammad b. al-Faḍl al-Balkhî (d. 319/931) expressed the idea of the three kinds of knowledge in the epigrammatic manner so beloved by Ṣūfis: "There are three kinds of knowledge, a knowledge of God (*bi-llâh*), a knowledge from God (*min Allâh*), and a knowledge with God (*ma'a Allâh*). The first knowledge is the knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) God's attributes. The second knowledge is the knowledge (*ilm*) of the exoteric and the esoteric, of what is allowed and what is forbidden, of what is commanded and what is prohibited by the law. And the third knowledge is the knowledge (*ilm*) of fear and hope, of love and desire." Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 215.

¹²³ For an eloquent passage on worldly knowledge, cf. the chapter dealing with al-Muḥâsibî's understanding of *ilm* in van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥârit al-Muḥâsibî*, 78–81.

¹²⁴ Cf. M. Smith, *An Early Mystic*, 100 f., 139.

here before us is the process of establishing categories of knowledge in what was considered the accepted scientific manner. By placing Sūfism as such, or, at least, as represented by its most obvious purpose, into one of them, al-Muḥāsibī attempted successfully to press mysticism's claim to being a scientific discipline, just at the right moment and in the right intellectual climate.

It is presently not clear whether or not others preceded al-Muḥāsibī in using the same approach. Possibly, there were others. There can, however, be no doubt that his lead was followed. In the same spirit and, it seems, strongly influenced by al-Muḥāsibī, al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī made his plea for the acceptance of mysticism among the "sciences" near the end of the ninth century, according to the most likely date. His treatise was entitled *Kītāb Bayān al-‘ilm* "The Explanation of Knowledge."¹²⁵ As the author explains it, he had been accused by some people of wishing to abolish *ilm*. Those people had been under the misconception that *ilm* was identical with jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In their opinion, jurisprudence was the only knowledge by which God is served and the religion of Islam maintained. Anything else was not knowledge but a waste of time and effort. This, al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī replies, just is not so. *Ilm* is rather a comprehensive term, for the Prophet has said: "Knowledge consists of three things, a clear verse (of the Qur'ān), a well-established *sunnah*, and a fair religious duty (*farīdah*)."¹²⁶ Also, Jesus has said: "There are three (kinds of) knowers ('ālim), a knower of God, a knower of the command of God, and a knower of the command of God who is at the same time a knower of God."¹²⁷ Consequently, there are three kinds of knowledge, namely, the knowledge of what is lawful and what is unlawful, which is the legal knowledge of the rules governing this world and which is exoteric material knowledge; the knowledge of the rules governing the other world, which is esoteric intuitive knowledge; and the knowledge of the divine rules as they affect God's creation in both this world and the other world. Each of these three kinds of knowledge has its own subdivisions (according to

¹²⁵ Cf. the Ankara Ms. Ismail Saib, I, 1571, fols. 12a–24a. For a note on *ilm*, cf. the edition of al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-awliyā'*, 115, n. 7. Cf. also the work by al-Ḥusaynī, cited above, p. 172. n. 2.

¹²⁶ Cf. below, p. 263.

¹²⁷ The text of the manuscript is corrupt and must be reconstituted as indicated in the translation. The statement is ascribed to Sufyān (ath-Thawrī) by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūṭ*, II, 8, ll. 13 f.

scientific Aristotelian procedure, which obviously came naturally to the author). The first knowledge, characterized by the expression “knowers of the command of God,” falls into the two subdivisions of 1. lawful knowledge and 2. unlawful knowledge. The second knowledge comprises all the good and bad ethical qualities, such as asceticism, piety, patience, fear, etc., with its most important basic ingredient being *niyah* “intention.” Those who possess this knowledge are apparently meant by Jesus when he speaks of “knowers of God,” meaning the sages (*ḥukamā’*). (Here, we are already well within the science of mysticism.) The third knowledge is the knowledge of God and of the way in which He governs His creation. This inexhaustible subject, when properly approached, secures the greatest possible spiritual benefits.¹²⁸ All these kinds of knowledge—elsewhere, al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī labels them knowledge of what is allowed and what is forbidden, *hikmah* meaning “wisdom” or “philosophy,” and *ma’rifah* meaning “gnosis”¹²⁹—were known to the companions of the Prophet. They preserved them in their memory and did not write them down. Later scholars forgot them in spite of the existence of books in their time, because they were concerned only with their worldly advancement and therefore not receptive to the light of wisdom. The third kind of knowledge is indicated in Jesus’ phrase of “the knowers of God and the knowers of the command of God.” Of them, it can be said that “they are the ones who combine all these kinds of knowledge. They thus know the lawful and the unlawful... They study the supernatural (*ilm* [read: *‘ālam?*] *al-malakūt*), and they are aware in their hearts of the majesty of God. Therefore, they serve Him with the knowledge of certainty, as God has said: ‘Indeed, were you to know the knowledge of certainty, you would see Hell’—that is, with their heart—then you would see with the eye of certainty’—tomorrow, in the other world (Qur’ān 102:5–7/5–7).¹³⁰ The knowledge of certainty lets one see things by way of

¹²⁸ Cf. above, p. 164. For a beautiful exposition of the true knowledge of the mystic sage (*ḥakīm*) as compared to the ordinary knowledge of the scholar (*‘ālim*), cf. al-Junayd, a contemporary of al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī, in his epistle devoted to this subject, in Abdel-Kader, *al-Junayd*, 7 ff., trans., 127 ff., also, 52 f., trans., 172 f.

¹²⁹ Cf. the introduction to the edition of al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-awliyā’*, 85.

¹³⁰ Cf. above, pp. 23 ff.

material perception (*taswîr*¹³¹), whereas the eye of certainty lets one see them by intuition (read: *bâdihat*¹³²?).

The desire to find a justification for Ṣûfism as an *îlm* then causes al-Ḥakîm at-Tirmidhî to turn back and make certain that the Prophetic tradition quoted above does in fact allude to three different kinds of *îlm*, and he tries to find out how the three phrases used in the tradition are to be equated with the three different disciplines. Another tradition speaking of *fiqh* is discussed. In the view of the author, *fiqh*, too, must be understood as referring to a particular scientific discipline, namely, the knowledge of God. In this connection, the reader finds himself referred to the Prophetic tradition that the beginning of knowledge (*ra's al-îlm*) is the knowledge of death and the knowledge of the Lord.¹³¹ The remainder of the treatise is mainly taken up with attacks against those who use *îlm* for worldly purposes.

In this way, al-Ḥakîm at-Tirmidhî, expanding upon al-Muhâsibî, succeeded in substantiating further the endeavors of mystics to claim possession of a scientific discipline of their own. Moreover, he contended that the Ṣûfis were the only ones whose scholarly efforts gave knowledge its due as something requiring completely unselfish devotion. Ṣûfism is not only a “science.” It is the only science deserving the name.¹³²

The desire to see Ṣûfism accepted as a “science” is still transparent in the opening pages of the *Luma'* of as-Sarrâj. As-Sarrâj speaks with notable emphasis of “the discipline of Ṣûfism” (*îlm at-tâṣawwuf*). He describes Ṣûfism as “the mine of all sciences.”¹³³ Finally, he claims for Ṣûfism to be “the science of the esoteric” (*îlm al-bâṭin*). By the tenth century, all this was generally current terminology. *Ilm* served as the label for a Ṣûfism considered to be no more and no less than a system of knowing, a “science.”

As-Sarrâj’s contemporary, Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî, devoted a quite lengthy

¹³¹ Al-Ḥakîm at-Tirmidhî also remarks that “the beginning of divine worship is knowledge. If you know, you have gnosis (‘r-f), and if you have gnosis, you worship.” This is the incipit of one of his *masâ'il*, preserved in a manuscript in Leipzig and cited in the edition of al-Ḥakîm at-Tirmidhî, *Khatm al-awliyâ'*, 58. The author then goes on to explain that all knowledge rests in the letters (sounds) of the alphabet. Cf. Abû Ḥâtim ar-Râzî, *Zînah*, I, 66, II, 8.

¹³² For various Ṣûfi references to mysticism as “the knowledge,” cf. also below, p. 244.

¹³³ Cf. as-Sarrâj, *Luma'*, 40.

chapter of his *Qūt* to the discussion of knowledge.¹³⁴ In it, he attempted to produce a synthesis between the “knowledge” of Sūfism and the legal-traditionalist knowledge of the religious scholars, a synthesis brought to a successful completion by al-Ghazzālī who used a good deal of his predecessor’s material. Al-Ghazzālī’s lasting influence and popularity which were denied to Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī no doubt were the result of the state of evolution Islamic culture had reached by his time. The most decisive factor in his success was, however, his much clearer and more interesting presentation. This made his ideas more acceptable, just as the better, more systematic arrangement of al-Qushayrī’s *Risālah* made it the authoritative handbook that as-Sarrāj’s *Luma’* could never be. The summary chapter heading in the *Qūt* for its thirty-first chapter “on knowledge” reveals much of its contents: “Knowledge and details (*tafsīl*, rather than *tafdīl* ‘preference’) about it. The qualities of scholars. The excellence of the science of gnosis (*ilm al-ma’rifah*) (and certainty) as compared to all other sciences, and an exposition of the path followed by the scholars among the good ancient Muslims. An explanation of the preference (*tafdīl*) shown for the kinds of knowledge consisting in being silent and the path of the two asceticisms (the one of restraint and the one of action?) with regard to knowledge. The difference between exoteric and esoteric knowledge and between the scholars of this world and the scholars of the other world (and the blameworthiness of) evil scholars who devour this world (and are out for worldly gain) with the help of their knowledge. A description of knowledge and the method of instruction (of the early Muslims) and the blame-worthiness of the stories and speculation (*kalām*) invented by more recent scholars. Statements and actions unknown to the early Muslims, invented by people in their contacts with each other. An explanation of the excellence of faith and certainty as compared to any of the other kinds of knowledge and a warning against independent opinion (*ra’y*). The meaning of the Prophet’s statement, ‘Seeking knowledge is a religious duty for every Muslim,’ or, ‘Seek knowledge, even if it be (as far away as) China, for seeking knowledge is a religious duty for every Muslim.’”¹³⁵ In fact, the first four pages of the chapter are devoted exclusively to a discussion of this statement of the Prophet. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī is eager to

¹³⁴ Cf. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt*, I, 191–II, 64.

¹³⁵ Cf. above, p. 89.

prove that no knowledge called “knowledge” only by courtesy, because it deals with certain objects of knowledge, such as medicine, astronomy, poetry, or even jurisprudence and dogmatics, could be meant by the word “knowledge” employed in the *ḥadīth*. What the Prophet had in mind when he used the word “knowledge” was “useful knowledge” (*nāfi* “useful” being much liked by Ṣūfi authors as indicative of their endeavors), the “esoteric knowledge,” the “knowledge of the hearts,” in short, the science of Ṣūfism.

Thereafter, and throughout his chapter on knowledge, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī tries to give additional support to the widely held theory that in early Islam, all knowledge was otherworldly knowledge and that the attribution of any other meaning to “knowledge” took place only at a later stage. Thousands of the men around Muhammad were “knowers of God,” seekers after faith and certainty, while only a handful among them were interested in legal matters. When they spoke of knowledge, they, as well as the men of the next generation, understood it to mean “the knowledge of certainty and the fear of God” (*ilm al-yaqīn wa-t-taqwā*) and “the knowledge of gnosis and right guidance” (*ilm al-ma’rifah wa-l-hudā*) and even their ordinary formulas of greeting had some pious significance.¹³⁶ Their concept of knowledge was eloquently expressed, for instance, by Mu’ādh b. Jabal (d. 18/639, one of the trusted lieutenants of the Prophet, and certainly no forerunner of Ṣūfism¹³⁷): “Study knowledge, for studying knowledge is the fear of God. Searching for knowledge is the worship of Him. Learning knowledge is the glorification of Him. Doing research in knowledge is a holy war in His behalf. Teaching knowledge to those who do not know is charity.¹³⁸ And lavishing knowledge upon those who deserve it is nearness to God. Knowledge is a friend in loneliness. It is company for him who is all by himself. It is a guide under any circumstances whatever, an ornament among friends, a relative among strangers, and a lighthouse on the road to Paradise. Through knowledge, God lifts up people and makes them guides toward the good (life) who serve as examples to be followed and whose actions are studied and imitated and whose opinions are accepted. Their friendship

¹³⁶ Cf. *Qūt*, II, 15 and 42.

¹³⁷ In the introductory remarks of his *Sīfat as-safwah*, I, 4 (Hyderabad 1355–56), Ibn al-Jawzī rightly protested against the efforts to claim the early Muslims for Ṣūfism simply on the ground of their asceticism, as Ṣūfism implied much more than mere asceticism.

¹³⁸ Cf. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, I, 558, l. 6. Cf. below, pp. 315 and 333, n. 2.

is desired by the angels who touch them with their wings. In consequence, everything wet or dry asks for forgiveness for them, down to the fish and the reptiles of the sea and the wild beasts and the domestic animals of the land, as well as heaven and its stars. Knowledge is the life of the heart after blindness (?), the light of the eyes after darkness, and the strength of the body after weakness. Through knowledge, man reaches the stations of the pious and the highest ranks. Reflecting upon knowledge and learning it are considered equivalent to the performance of fasting. It is an act of obedience to God, of worship of Him, and of declaring His oneness. It constitutes ascetic behavior. It accomplishes the strengthening of family ties. Knowledge is the leader, and action is its follower.¹³⁹ It is an inspiration given to the blessed. It is something that is denied to the unfortunate.”¹⁴⁰ Such general praise of knowledge is heard constantly throughout Muslim history, in almost the same words and phrases. Here, however, it is used as an argument, obviously fictitious and unhistorical, to prove the exclusive concern of the ancient Muslims with knowledge, in the *Şûfi* sense. Abû Tâlib al-Makkî in addition makes clever use of association, in order to bring any mention of knowledge into connection with mystic knowledge. Thus, he cites some well-known verses, which he ascribes to one of the sages but which (as in al-Ghazzâlî’s *Ihyâ*) are often ascribed to ‘Ali:

I have noticed knowledge to be of two kinds,
 Acquired through study (*masmû’*) and given by nature (*maṭbû’*).
 The kind acquired through study is of no use,
 If there is no knowledge given by nature,
 Like as the sun is of no use
 Where the light of the eye is denied,

and then interprets them as referring to the knowledge that is uppermost in his mind, by citing verses of the mystic, al-Junayd:

The science of *Şûfîsm* is a knowledge which can be known only
 By the possessor of natural intelligence in truth known (to possess it).
 He who does not witness it does not know it.
 How could the blind man witness the light of the sun!¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Cf. below, p. 249. See further as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 139, citing Abû ‘Ali (Abû ‘Abd allâh) al-Anṭâkî, who replaces the second half by describing “foresight” (*inâyah* = *pronoia*) as the leader of every kind of knowledge.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Qât*, I, 199.

¹⁴¹ Cf. *Qât*, II, 26.

On the other hand, Abû Ṭâlib al-Makkî devotes an equal amount of space to disputing the value of traditionist religious knowledge. He attacks the “evil scholars” who “devour this world with the help of their knowledge.” He uses the division of all sciences into objectionable and non-objective disciplines, in order to show that the non-objective disciplines were those cultivated by the early Muslims, who also had no need of writing down their knowledge and becoming authors of books,¹⁴² while the objectionable disciplines, such as grammar, prosody, mathematics, and even systematic jurisprudence, were later inventions not known to the ancients.¹⁴³ In sum, his chapter on knowledge serves the purpose of making it clear once more that Ṣûfism is a scholarly discipline and, in fact, the one and only original scholarly discipline in Islam. Consequently, it is the only true scholarly discipline that deserves cultivation by Muslims, with all the powers of the mind and of the heart at their command. Mysticism is light, and mysticism is a science.

A daring combination of scientific Peripatetic philosophy with mystic speculations on knowledge and, indeed, an adaptation of philosophical thought to basic mystic premises¹⁴⁴ was accomplished by as-Suhrawardî *al-maqṭūl*. His efforts led to a startlingly different system of thought. For the “science” of Ṣûfism, they remained rather inconclusive and superficial, inasmuch as as-Suhrawardî had no patience with historical antecedents and made short shrift of the fundamental Ṣûfism of earlier times. The most complete and successful attempt to incorporate the Muslim conception of knowledge, such as it had been developed since the ninth century, into the fabric of mystic thought was undertaken, as so many other things, by the fertile genius of as-Suhrawardî’s contemporary, Ibn ‘Arabî. While as-Suhrawardî came from the East of the Muslim world, Ibn ‘Arabî came, from the West, but the lives of both men came to an end in Syria, if under very different circumstances and half a century apart. For Ibn ‘Arabî, “gnostic-and-gnosis (‘-r-f) characterizes the one to whom the Lord has permitted to witness himself while gnosis is his state with (all the mystic) states having control over him,” whereas “knower-and-knowledge (‘-l-m) characterizes the one to whom God has permitted to witness His divinity

¹⁴² Cf. *Qūṭ*, II, 37 = al-Ghazzâlî, *Iḥyâ’*, I, 70, trans. Faris, 211.

¹⁴³ Cf. *Qūṭ*, II, 47.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. also below, p. 218.

and His essence while knowledge is his state with no (other mystic) state having control over him.”¹⁴⁵ This comparison of gnosis and knowledge would seem to indicate that the higher value is placed by Ibn ‘Arabî upon the latter. Both rank high on the scale of mystic values in his philosophy, but he seems to show a predilection for the wider implications of “knowledge.”¹⁴⁶ Every one of the divine manifestations in the world comes from the “treasure of knowledge.” “Knowledge is the Truth, and the Truth is knowledge,” and “(God’s) Book is His Knowledge.”¹⁴⁷ The recognition of the divine oneness is a knowledge; then, it is state; and then again, it is a knowledge.¹⁴⁸

In all his works, Ibn ‘Arabî often dealt with knowledge. He may even have written a monograph on the subject which remained unpublished.¹⁴⁹ However, we can safely assume that all he had to say has been spread over the many passages concerned with *‘ilm* of his massive *Futûhât*, a work, its author claims in his autobiography, such as had never been written before and would never be written again. Like all his books, it was not written like ordinary writings and composed in the manner in which ordinary authors compose their works. It had come down to him directly through divine inspiration. The *Futûhât* starts out with an epistemological discussion. Ibn ‘Arabî explains the different kinds of knowledge that he assumes exist, such as the knowledge of the intellect (*i.e.*,

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Ibn ‘Arabî, *Iṣṭilâh as-Ṣâfiyah*, 15, and *Futûhât*, II, 129. In the *Futûhât*, “himself” in the definition of gnosis and gnostic is replaced by “no other divine name.” The word “himself” (*nafsah*) does not refer to God but to the gnostic. This reflects the maxim on self-knowledge being the knowledge about the Lord (above, p. 137), and Massignon, *Lexique technique*, 127, for the spurious Sûfi claim of having originated it.

For a collection of definitions considered acceptable by Ibn ‘Arabî, cf. his *Kitâb al-Ilâm bi-ishârât ahl al-ilhâm*, 5 (Hyderabad 1367, in Vol. I of *Rasâ’îl Ibn ‘Arabî*). Ibn ‘Arabî refers to a *Kitâb al-Mârifah* by his pen in *Futûhât*, II, 66. For works of Ibn ‘Arabî that have the word *ma’rifah* in their titles, cf. Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, 296, 367 ff.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. above, pp. 116 and 167.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Ibn ‘Arabî, *Tarâjîm*, 50. According to his *Hilyat al-abdâl*, 2 (Hyderabad 1367/1948, in Vol. II of *Rasâ’îl Ibn ‘Arabî*), “*ilm* is the result of *ma’rifah*.”

¹⁴⁸ Ibn ‘Arabî, *Tâjâllyât*, 27 (Hyderabad, Vol. II of *Rasâ’îl Ibn ‘Arabî*).

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Ṣâlih-ad-dîn al-Munajjid, in his edition of Ibrâhîm b. ‘Abdallâh al-Qâri’ al-Baghdâdî, *Maṇâqib Ibn ‘Arabî*, 68 (Beirut 1959). A *Kitâb Madâr al-ilm*, which exists in a manuscript in Istanbul, Yahya Ef. 3701, fols. 17b–20a, has been identified by Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, 348, no. 383a, as identical with *Futûhât*, I, 34 ff.

rational knowledge), the knowledge of mystic states, attainable only through mystic experience called “taste,” and the knowledge of the secrets, which is a combination of the first two kinds and constitutes the highest form of knowledge in existence.¹⁵⁰ There is another division. It is said to stem from a conference of four learned men from the four directions of the compass who came together in fabled Uzayn in India. They arranged all knowledge according to the elementary features of which existence is composed, according to concepts claimed to go back to Greek philosophy.¹⁵¹ Ibn ‘Arabî speaks of the relationship between knowledge and the object known¹⁵² and of the various kinds of objects known,¹⁵³ of the various ways of attaining knowledge,¹⁵⁴ of the distinction between acquired and “given” knowledge,¹⁵⁵ and of the oneness of all knowledge,¹⁵⁶ taking for all of it his cue from the discussion of the speculative theologians. He also mentions the idea of an assured transmission by many authorities (*tawâtur*) which plays such an important role as a criterion of truth and as a means for the achievement of knowledge in the epistemological efforts of Muslim historians and the science, of *hadîth*.¹⁵⁷ For Ibn ‘Arabî, knowledge is a psychological human need greater than the physiological need for food.¹⁵⁸ The legal-religious knowledge can be compared to the food used by the body. Like food, it ought to be consumed only in moderate portions, because too much of it would be of no use and may cause harm. On the other hand, the knowledge that is concerned with the supernatural knows no limitations, and can and ought to be taken in unlimited amounts, if at all possible.¹⁵⁹

The four large areas of knowledge are logic, mathematics, physics, and metaphysics. Metaphysics is the highest knowledge of them all. All the other kinds of knowledge are subordinated to

¹⁵⁰ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 31, also, II, 598, 644 ff.

¹⁵¹ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 38 ff. *Qubbat Uzayn* = Ujjayn.

¹⁵² Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 43 ff., IV, 84, 403.

¹⁵³ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 118 f., III, 199.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 253 f., 279, II, 552.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 576, III, 75.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 253 f.: “The knowledge of things is one knowledge (cf. Aristotle), and more (than one) lies in the object of knowledge, and not in its essence.” Cf. also Ibn Sabîn, *Correspondence philosophique avec l’Empereur Frédéric II*, ed. S. Yaltkaya, 93 (Paris 1943).

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 34.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Abû Nu’aym, *Hilyah*, IX, 4.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 580, Cf. below, pp. 319 f.

it.¹⁶⁰ All this is, of course, the Greek (Aristotelian) division of the sciences that pretty largely dominated all Muslim scholarship. Life, among the four essential divine attributes, is a necessary condition for the existence of knowledge, which, in turn, outranks the other two.¹⁶¹ All other knowledge, Ibn 'Arabî says following Abû Yazîd al-Bîṣṭâmî, is dead knowledge, but Şûfi knowledge comes from the Living One who does not die. Thus, it is the only living, the only valuable knowledge.¹⁶²

Much more could be said about the scattered references from Ibn 'Arabî dealing with problems of knowledge in his *Futûhât*. Their sum and substance is given in the second section of the third chapter that has as its subject "knowledge, the object known, and the knower."¹⁶³ It may be offered here in translation, as it is a very learned and at the same time popular exposition of the mystic creed inasmuch as it was affected by the fundamental mysteries of knowledge. As was the custom of Ibn 'Arabî, a few verses, usually of his own composition, sound the keynote on which the discussion is to proceed:

"Knowledge, the object known, and the knower
Are three to be considered one.

If you wish, they may as they are be considered
In the eye of the witness as three.

But the Lord of the supernatural is seen as One.
There is nothing additional to Him in the heights.

Let it be known to you—may God give you strength!—that knowledge is the attainment by the heart of some matter corresponding to what it is itself, whether this matter is non-existent or existent.¹⁶⁴ Knowledge is the attribute that makes the attainment necessary for the heart. The knower is the heart. And the object known is the matter attained.

The perception (*taṣawwur*) of the reality of knowledge is a very difficult matter. However, with God's help, I shall give here useful indications to clarify the attainment of knowledge.

Know that the heart is a polished mirror, all of it a surface that

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 293.

¹⁶¹ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 293.

¹⁶² Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 31.

¹⁶³ Cf. *Futûhât*, I, 91 f.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. definition C-6, above, p. 57.

never rusts. If at some time it must be admitted that it has become rusty—in accordance with the *hadîth* of the Prophet, ‘Hearts may become rusty as does iron, etc.,’¹⁶⁵ which then goes on to say that they can be cleansed by means of the remembrance of God and the reading of the Qur’ân, inasmuch, however, as this belongs to “wise remembrance” (Qur’ân 3:58/51)—, such rust is not meant to be a film extending over the surface of the heart. When the heart closely concerns itself with the knowledge of the causes (of the material world) and is thereby diverted from the knowledge of God, such concern with something other than God constitutes rust upon its surface. It prevents the revelation of the Truth to the heart covered with it, because the divine presence continuously reveals itself as it cannot properly be imagined to be ever veiled to us. Now, when such a heart does not accept (the divine presence) by way of the praiseworthy address of the religious law, because it has accepted something else instead, one speaks of the acceptance of that other thing as “rust, cover, padlock, blindness, encrustation” (Qur’ân 83:14/14), and so on. However, you may truthfully assume that (such a heart) possesses knowledge. This, however, would be a knowledge of something else but God, whereas, in fact, knowledge for those who know God is the knowledge of God. Our interpretation is confirmed by the word of God: ‘They said: Our hearts are under cover from (and therefore not responsive to) what you call us to’ (Qur’ân 41:5/4). In particular, they were under cover from (and therefore not responsive to) that to which the Messenger of God was calling them. Not that they were really under a cover, but they were concerned with something other than that to which they were called. Therefore, they became blind to the perception of what they were called to, and did not see anything. By nature, hearts are always clean, polished, and clear. Every heart in which the divine presence reveals itself inasmuch as it is a Red Ruby which is essential revelation, is the heart of the beholder, the perfecter (or: the one perfected?), the knower, above which there is nobody in any self-revelation. Below it, there is the self-revelation of the attributes, and below these two, the self-revelation of the actions inasmuch as they stem

¹⁶⁵ Cf. F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd ed., 324, n. 5 (Leiden 1968).

from the divine presence. The heart of the one to whom they do not reveal themselves inasmuch as they stem from the divine presence is the heart that is neglectful of God, that is driven away from nearness to God.

Therefore, look—may God give you success!—at the heart in the light of what we have mentioned, and see whether you can assume that (the heart) is knowledge. This will be found not to be so. And if you say, its essential polish (is knowledge), this is not possible. Rather, (the essential polish) is the cause, just as the appearance of the object known to the heart is the cause. And if you say, the cause that causes the object known to be attained by the heart, this is not possible either. And if you say, the image (or: idea, *mithâl*) of the object known that is impressed upon the soul, that is to say, the perception of the object known, this, again, is not possible. Thus, if you are asked what knowledge is, say, ‘Knowledge is attaining the object perceived as it is itself, provided that attaining it is not impossible.’¹⁶⁶ The knowledge of what is impossible of attainment is precisely its non-attainment, as the Truthful Person (Abû Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddîq) has said, ‘the inability to attain perception is perception.’¹⁶⁷ He thus considered the knowledge of God the non-attainment of it. This should be realized. However, this means non-attainment of (the knowledge of God) as far as acquisition by the intellect is concerned, as something else may be known,¹⁶⁸ but attainment of (the knowledge of God) through His generosity, nobility, and spiritual gifts, as the gnostics, men of vision (*shuhûd*), may know (‘-r-f) Him, and not through the power of the intellect by way of its rational speculation.

Complementary remark: Since it has been established that knowledge (*ilm*) of something can be achieved only through a knowledge (*ma’rifah*) that is preceded by the knowledge about (*ma’rifah*) something else which provides the absolutely necessary relationship between two objects known (*ma’rifayn*), and since it has been established that between God and His creation, there does not exist any such relationship of genus, species, or individual as does exist between things, we have no previous

¹⁶⁶ Cf. definition C-3, above, p. 56.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. above, p. 141.

¹⁶⁸ It seems necessary to read *yu’lam*, instead of *ya’lamuh*.

knowledge of something whereby, through the relationship between the two, we could perceive the essence of the Truth. Take, for instance, our knowledge of the nature of the spheres as being a fifth nature. We could not have known it at all, if we did not have a previous knowledge of the four elements (lit., mothers). When we saw that the spheres did not form part of these (four) natures and had to be considered as different from these (four) elements, we realized that there was a fifth nature, this on the basis of the motion high up in the ether and the air, of the motion down below in the water and the earth, and of the relationship between the spheres and the elements as substances (*al-jawharīyah*), which constitutes a genus embracing the universe, as species (*an-nawīyah*), as they (the spheres) are a species just as they (the elements) are a species for a single genus, and also as individuals (*ash-shakhsīyah*). Without this relationship, on the basis of the natures (elements), we would not know anything about the nature of the sphere. There is no relationship between the Creator and the world in these respects. He can thus never be known through a previous knowledge of something else, as some assume by inference from the visible (*shāhid*) to the supernatural (*ghā'ib*) on the basis of knowledge, will, speech, and other (attributes), transferring all that upon the divine (lit., sanctifying it) in analogy to observations made on themselves.

Our opinion concerning our knowledge of God is confirmed by the fact that knowledge is graded according to the objects known and is distinguished in its essence by the distinctions existing within the objects known. The thing by which an object known becomes distinct can be either an essence on the basis of its substantiality, as, for instance, the intellect and the soul, or an essence on the basis of its nature, as, for instance, the heat and the burning of fire. As the intellect is distinguished from the soul on the basis of its substantiality, thus the fire is distinguished from other things, as we have mentioned. Or it can be distinguished by its essence but on the basis of what serves it as a substratum, either as situation (*hāl*)—for instance, the sitting of someone who sits, or the writing of someone who writes—or as formation (*hay'ah*)—for instance, the blackness of what is black, or the whiteness of what is white. This is as far as the perceptions of the intellect go in the opinion of intelligent persons. There is nothing that can be definitely known through it outside what we have described, only through our knowing by what it is distinguished from other things on the basis of its substance, nature, situation, or formation. Whatever does not include these things cannot be known through the intellect, and they do not exist in God. Therefore, the intellect cannot know God inasmuch as it speculates and investigates. How, then, could

the intellect know Him on the basis of its logical speculation (*nazar*, *burhān*) which relies upon¹⁶⁹ sense perception, necessity, or experience! The Creator cannot be perceived on the basis of these principles to which the intellect has recourse in its logical speculation (*burhān*), thus drawing correct existential conclusions (*al-burhān al-wujūdī*). And how could an intelligent person claim that he has come to know His Lord on the basis of logical proof, and that the Creator is known to him! If he were to look at all the technical, natural, and variously created (*takwīnīyah*, *inbi’āthīyah*, *ibdā’īyah*) products and notice how each one of them is ignorant of its producer, he would know that God can never be known through logical proof. It can be known that God exists and that the world needs Him essentially and inescapably. God says: ‘O people, you are the ones who need God, while God is unneeding and praiseworthy’ (Qur’ān 35:15/16).’

Thus far Ibn ‘Arabī on what knowledge is and how it can be attained, and, above all, why God cannot therefore be rationally known, while it is understood that He can be reached through gnosis. Ibn ‘Arabī is also aware, as we would expect, of the educational-societal view of knowledge, which he feels free to interpret according to his own theories. He praises the excellence of knowledge.¹⁷⁰ He cites Ibn as-Sid al-Baṭalyawṣī (d. 521/1127) to the effect that the higher the station is which a person reaches in the world, the less is his knowledge (*‘ulūm*), and whenever he gives up his high station in life, his knowledge widens.¹⁷¹ But the real teacher is God,¹⁷² and the number of *‘ulūm* in the world is almost infinite. The gnosis has its number of *‘ulūm*, and each one of the stations (*manzil*) on the mystic path can claim to be an *‘ilm*.¹⁷³

The power of the concept of “knowledge” is as easily perceptible in the work of Ibn ‘Arabī as it is throughout Sūfism. Opposed to the dominance of legalistic theological thinking and its view of knowledge and disinclined to any rationalistic determination of knowledge, Sūfism has always felt compelled throughout its great history to pay its respects, as it were, to both and, in addition, to

¹⁶⁹ Apparently, *yastanid ilā* is to be read, instead of the *yustanid ilayh* of the printed text.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. *Futūhāt*, I, 729, III, 532, IV, 502.

¹⁷¹ Cf. *Futūhāt*, III, 358.

¹⁷² Cf. *Futūhāt*, III, 399 f.

¹⁷³ Cf. *Futūhāt*, III, 34, 37, 40, 60, 63, 73 f., etc.

consider itself an *ilm* “systematic knowledge” in the first place, and anything else, such as gnosis and illumination, in the second place. For Sūfis, their *ilm* was the noblest knowledge of all: “If I knew,” said al-Junayd, “that there might be a knowledge nobler than ours underneath the sky I would make haste toward it and toward those who know it, in order to learn from them.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Cf. as-Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 239. However, as-Suhrawardi (above, p. 167, n. 3) replaces “ours” (*ilmindâ*) by “the true exponents of *ma'rifah*” (*muhaqqiqân-i-ma'rifet*).

CHAPTER SEVEN

KNOWLEDGE IS THOUGHT (Philosophy)

For the unsophisticated reader of the Qur'ân, it was sufficient to assume that numerous explicit statements in the Holy Book provided a satisfactory solution for the problems of the origin and character of knowledge. Muḥammad often says that knowledge "comes" to human beings, that it is "given" or "taught" to them by God, that, in fact, the only knowledge there is the knowledge God has taught mankind beginning with Adam, the first human being. For early Muslims, knowledge was the result of a process of learning, as expressed in the tradition that "knowledge is attained only through study" (*innamā l-ilm bi-t-ta'allum*).¹ This tradition is, for instance, worked into a verse ascribed to the early gnomic poet, Sâbiq al-Barbarî,² or used in a discussion with the caliph, Mu'âwiyah,³ or cited by the Ṣûfi, Abû Sa'îd al-Kharrâz,⁴ or paraphrased by the wise young prince, in the story cycle of Shimâs and Jalfâd preserved in the *Arabian Nights*.⁵ It was prized as an indication of the down-to-earth simplicity with which early Muslims had approached problems that had become extremely complicated, or, it was often thought, had been made so unnecessarily. However, already in the Qur'ân there are enough hints to show that in the environment of the Prophet, the problems of what knowledge was and how it could be acquired were familiar ones, even if they might not always have been consciously realized.⁶

Such realization came rapidly enough when Islam spread and learned not only about Christian theology based upon Hellenistic

¹ Among the "canonical" collection, this *hadîth* is to be found only in al-Bukhârî, cf. above, p. 79. It would not be correct to assume that *ilm* here is meant to be restricted to traditional knowledge. Cf. also Abû Khaythamah, nos. 114 and 115.

² Cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, II, 7.

³ Cf. az-Zubayr b. Bakkâr, *Žamharat nasab Quraysh*, ed. Maḥmûd M. Shâkir, I, 513 (Cairo 1381-/1962-), where the text has *min* for *bi*.

⁴ Cf. as-Sulamî, *Tabaqât*, 230.

⁵ Cf. *Arabian Nights*, ed. W. H. Macnaghten, IV, 399 (Calcutta and London 1839-42).

⁶ Cf. above, p. 31.

philosophy but also about Greek logic and epistemology which had conquered the East long before Muhammad, principally in the name of Aristotle. Aristotelian logic was probably among the earliest Greek materials made available in Arabic translation,⁷ and it might very well have exercised its influence at the very beginnings of the Muslim concern with knowledge. However this might have been, Greek logic became the foundation of all Muslim epistemology as the result of the translation activity of the ninth century. It stayed on to form the only systematic scientific framework available to Muslim scholars for intellectual expression from that time on. Religious opposition developed to it almost instantly and never stopped growing and gaining vocal supporters. But embattled as it was, logic always found its steadfast champions who defended its usefulness and, indeed, indispensability as a necessary instrument for all scholarly activity. Logic was considered and referred to as a “craft” or “technique” (*śinā’ah*) but also, and perhaps with greater frequency, as an *‘ilm*, a scholarly discipline.⁸ It was the science that produced certain knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-yaqīn*).⁹ Logic provided the justification and the system of classification for scholarly and scientific disciplines.¹⁰ It influenced the discussions of *hadīth* scholars and historians as to the possible ways of attaining to the “truth.”¹¹

The discussion of epistemology thus did not remain restricted to concerned philosophers and professional logicians. It spread to form the foundations of systematic theology and jurisprudence, and in this way penetrated right to the core of Muslim thinking. The philosophical view of the concept of knowledge was expressed primarily in the works of scholars directly concerned with the study of logic, but then again, it found expression in the works dealing with the *uṣūl al-‘ilm*, the “principles,” or, more literally, the “roots” of knowledge, that is, systematic speculative theology (*kalām*), and it also gained a strong foothold in the works on the

⁷ Cf. the discussion about the translation ascribed to Ibn al-Muqaffā‘, possibly a son of the famous littérateur, which was started by P. Kraus, in *RSO*, XIV (1934), 1–14.

⁸ Al-Farābī, for instance, made indiscriminating use of both *‘ilm al-mantiq* and *śinā’at al-mantiq*, and this was the usual state of affairs.

⁹ Cf. Ibn Sab‘īn, *Correspondence philosophique*, 31.

¹⁰ Cf., for instance, the specimens of translations of relevant texts in Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 77 ff.

¹¹ Cf. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 201 ff.

usūl al-fiqh, the principles of jurisprudence. The attitudes of the representatives of these disciplines toward the concept of knowledge are the main concern of the present chapter. Since, however, the starting point of it all was works written in Greek, it may be well first to compare briefly the Arabic terminology employed in translating Greek words for mental activity into a language very different from Greek in structure and conceptualization.

1. GRAECO-ARABIC TRANSLATION TERMINOLOGY

In the realm of abstract terminology, the consistent translation of a term from one language by another term in the second language is an obvious impossibility, as we have already often seen in the preceding pages. Not even those translators into Arabic from Greek or Syriac who preferred the word-by-word “transposition” method of translation would seem to have attempted it. Hunayn b. Ishāq and his school of translators, who dominated Arabic translation activity, were opposed to the transposition method. They preferred a method of translation according to the sense, and in it, there was certainly no room for pedantic consistency in reproducing the vocabulary used for mental processes. Yet, it was not only the overall method of translation which determined the attitude toward consistency in the choice of words. The subject matter of the works translated, too, quite naturally exercised a certain influence in this respect. Thus, the translations of the Aristotelian corpus show considerable consistency in translating crucial abstract terms, much more so than is evident in the more casual translations of works in other fields, especially if these were works of a more popular character. The particular problem that abstract epistemological terms posed for the understanding in their transition from one language to another did not remain unnoticed by Muslim scholars. Interestingly enough, it has found expression precisely in the case of “knowledge.” In eleventh-century Spain, Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr made the statement that “it has been said (*fi-mâ dhakarū*) that (the word equivalent to) *al-ilm* among people who do not use the Arabic language may be translated in Arabic by *ilm*,¹² or it may be translated by *ma’rifah*, or it may be translated by *fahm*.¹³ It is natural to assume that Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr’s authorities in this case were his own contemporaries

¹² “By *ilm*” (*ilm*) is omitted in the printed text.

¹³ Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmi’*, II, 37.

and that the foreign languages they had in mind were the Romance languages (including Latin). Statements of a similar kind were no doubt often made by the translators from Greek and Syriac, even if they have not been preserved.¹⁴

The following tabulations have been compiled from selected passages of Aristotle's *Categories*, translated by Ishâq b. Hunayn; the *Prior Analytics*, apparently translated by a certain Theodore and corrected by Hunayn;¹⁵ the translation of the *Hermeneutics* done by Ishâq b. Hunayn, for which the glossary added by I. Pollak to his edition has been used;¹⁶ and the first half of the *Physics*, also translated by Ishâq.¹⁷ Reference to all these Aristotelian sources is made by the siglum **Ar**. Further sources used are Galen's *Compendium of Plato's Timaeus*, probably translated by 'Isâ b. Yahyâ b. Ibrâhîm, of the school of Hunayn, here designated **G** and used in the glossary added to the edition of the text by P. Kraus and R. Walzer;¹⁸ the *Introduction into Arithmetic* by Nicomachus of Gerasa in the translation of Thâbit b. Qurrah (d. 288/901), called here **N**, following the glossary provided by the editor, W. Kutsch;¹⁹ the *Monosticha* of Pseudo-Menander translated by a certain Işîfan who is probably identical with Hunayn's pupil, Stephen, the son of Basilius, here called **M**;²⁰ and the *Tabula Cebetis* whose translator is not known but which in any case was translated before the middle of the tenth century and probably much earlier, here called **C**.²¹ It is obvious that the limited amount

¹⁴ Where there was no pressing need for doing translations, the problem of translation could be mixed up with that of interpretation. This was done by Ibn Taymîyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, ed. M. Hâmid al-Fiqî, 97 f. (Cairo 1370/–1951). Ibn Taymîyah speaks of word-by-word translation (and the interpretation of words), translation according to the sense (and the realization of the meaning intended), and, as a third step, the process of proving the correctness of the understanding reached. This is in connection with the proper understanding of the Qur'ân. It is interesting here to observe the connection of translation method with logic.

¹⁵ Both texts have been published by Badawî, *Mantiq Aristû*.

¹⁶ *Die Hermeneutik des Aristoteles in der arabischen Übersetzung des Ishâk Ibn Honain*, ed. I. Pollak (Leipzig 1913, *AKM* 13, 1).

¹⁷ Above, p. 54, n. 1.

¹⁸ *Galeni Compendium Timaei Platonis*, ed. P. Kraus and R. Walzer (London 1951, *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi, Plato Arabus*).

¹⁹ See above, p. 24, n. 1.

²⁰ See above, p. 101, n. 2.

²¹ Cf. *Tabula Cebetis Graece, Arabice, Latine*, ed. J. Elichmann (and C. Salmasius) (Leiden 1640); Miskawayh, *Jâwidhân Khiradh*, ed. 'Abd-ar-Rahmân Badawî, 229–62 (Cairo 1952).

of sources consulted makes it inadvisable and, in fact, impossible to draw any definite conclusions. This could come only from the systematic sifting of a large number of works translated by different translators. Moreover, the picture may be distorted to a certain degree by possible Syriac intermediaries. No attention has been paid here to the problems that could arise from this situation.

Greek	Arabic
<i>agnoia</i>	<i>jahl</i> (Ar, G, M), <i>al-jahl wa-qillat al-ma'rifah</i> (M), <i>ghurūb al-'ilm, ghurūb al-fahm</i> (C)
<i>agnóstos</i>	<i>'-l-m + negation</i> (Ar)
<i>akriboun, akribôs</i>	<i>yaqîn^{an}</i> (Ar), <i>'-r-f</i> and various other circumlocutions (N, p. 118)
<i>amathê̄s, amathia</i>	<i>'-l-m + negation</i> (C), <i>qillat (al-ma'rifah wa-)l-adab</i> (G)
<i>anaisthésia</i>	<i>sh-'-r + negation</i> (Ar), <i>ghayr hiss</i> (G)
<i>apistia</i>	<i>j-h-d</i> (Ar)
<i>aphrosynê, aphrôn</i>	<i>jahl, jâhil</i> (C)
<i>boulé</i>	<i>ra'y, fikr</i> (M)
<i>gignôskein</i>	<i>'-r-f</i> (Ar, M, C) ²²
<i>gnômê</i>	<i>ra'y</i> (M)
<i>gnôrizein</i>	<i>'-r-f</i> (Ar), <i>'-l-m</i> (M)
<i>gnôrimos</i>	<i>ma'rûf</i> (Ar, N)
<i>gnôsis</i>	<i>ma'rifah</i> (N)
<i>diaginôskein</i>	<i>'-l-m, 'r-f</i> (N)
<i>dianoia, dianoiesthai</i>	<i>dhihn, rawîyah, 'aql</i> (Ar), <i>fikrah</i> (Ar, cf. Walzer, below, n. 2), <i>afhâm</i> (N), + <i>theou</i> : <i>'ilm Allâh</i> (N), <i>w-h-m</i> V (G), <i>f-k-r</i> (N)
<i>didaskein, didaxis, didachê</i>	<i>'ilm</i> (G)
<i>dokein, doxa</i>	<i>z-n-n</i> (Ar, G, N, C), ²³ <i>r-'-y, w-h-m</i> V, <i>'q-d</i> VIII (Ar); <i>az-zann wa-l-hisbân, fi-mâ ahsibu, hâkadâh, ka-annahû</i> , also left unexpressed (C); true <i>doxa</i> : <i>fikr haqîqî</i> (G); <i>koinê doxa</i> : <i>'ilm muta'âraf</i> (Ar)
<i>eidenai</i>	<i>'-l-m, 'r-f</i> (Ar), <i>b-y-n</i> II (?) (N); <i>éidei . . . epistato</i> : <i>'r-f . . . ma'rifah</i> (C)

²² In the brief work of Galen translated by Hunayn, published by P. Bachmann, *Galens Abhandlung darüber, dass der vorzügliche Arzt Philosoph sein muss* (Göttingen 1966, *Nachrichten, Akademie der Wiss. in Göttingen, philol.-hist. Kl.*, 1965, 1), with a detailed comparative glossary, *gignôskein* is also once translated by *f-h-m*. The text is too brief to permit any generalizations, but it would seem that *f-h-m* was here a preferred term of the translator. *F-h-m* II is also once used to translate *didaskein*. Note further *exheuriskein* translated by *'r-f, ekmanthanein* by *'-l-m*, and the use of *sinâ'ah*, ordinarily translating *technê*, for *methodos* and *thèoria*, if combined with *manqîq*. Logic is also rendered *'ilm al-mantîq*.

²³ Cf. R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, 95–97 (Oxford 1962).

Greek	Arabic
<i>ennoein, ennoia</i>	<i>w-q-f 'alâ (G), w-h-m V (N), wahm (Ar), ma'nâ (N)</i>
<i>epignôsis</i>	<i>'ilm (N)</i>
<i>epinoein, epinoia</i>	<i>f-h-m, w-h-m V, w-j-d (N), wahm (Ar)</i>
<i>episkepein</i>	<i>'-m-l V (Ar), b-h-th (G), f-h-s, n-z-r (N)</i>
<i>epistasthai</i>	<i>yaqîn (Ar), 'l-m (N, C), 'r-f (M, C)</i>
<i>epistêmê</i>	<i>'ilm (Ar, G, N), (al-) 'ilm al-yaqîn, 'ilm al-haqq al-yaqîn (N),²⁴ fâhîm, ma'rîfat al-yaqîn, ma'rîfat al-'aql, ma'rîfat an-nafs wa-l-fâhîm (C); epistêmâi: al-'ilm wa-l-idrâk (N); hê epistême tón sympherountón: al-ma'rîfah wa-l-yaqîn wa-l-'aql (C)</i>
<i>epistêmôn</i>	<i>'âlim (Ar)</i>
<i>hêgeisthai</i>	<i>z-n-n (C)</i>
<i>thèorein, theôria</i>	<i>n-z-r, 'l-m (Physics, p. 265), 'q-l, -m-l V (Ar) (among many other translations)</i>
<i>theôrêma</i>	<i>'ilm (N)</i>
<i>katalepsis</i>	<i>idrâk (N) (see above, p. 56)</i>
<i>katanoein</i>	<i>'l-m (Ar)</i>
<i>legein</i>	<i>'q-d VIII (Ar); moi eipe: a'limnî (C)</i>
<i>logizesthai, logismos</i>	<i>fîkr (Ar, G), fîkrah (M), hisbân (N)</i>
<i>mathêma (mathématikos)</i>	<i>'ilm (ta'âlim, ta'limî, ta'âlimî) (Ar, N, C)</i>
<i>manthanein, mathêsis</i>	<i>'l-m V (Ar, N, M)</i>
<i>methodos</i>	<i>'ilm (Physics, p. 165²⁵) (Ar), tarîq (al-'ilm) (N)</i>
<i>mnêmoneuein</i>	<i>dh-k-r, yufakkira fa-ya'lama (C)</i>
<i>noein</i>	<i>w-h-m V (Ar, G, N), f-h-m (Ar, N), (dh-h-n) (Ar)</i>
<i>noëtos, noêma</i>	<i>ma'qûl (Ar, N), mafhûm (N)</i>
<i>nomizein</i>	<i>z-n-n (Ar, N, C), w-h-m V, 'q-d VIII (Ar), 'l-m (M)</i>
<i>nous</i>	<i>'aql, nafs (M)</i>
<i>oiesthai</i>	<i>w-h-m V (the common usage of Ar), z-n-n, r-²y (Ar, N), ('q-d VIII) (Ar)</i>
<i>horan (idein)</i>	<i>w-q-f 'alâ (Ar)</i>
<i>paideia, paideusi</i>	<i>'-d-b (M, C)</i>
<i>paradechesthai</i>	<i>'r-f VIII (Ar)</i>
<i>pistis, pisteuin</i>	<i>s-d-q (M), taşdîq (Ar), amânah (M)</i>
<i>pragmateia</i>	<i>'înâ'ah (Ar); pragmateia: fîmîn al-'ilm (Ar)</i>
<i>prosechein</i>	<i>f-h-m (C)</i>
<i>skeptesthai, skopein</i>	<i>n-z-r, b-h-th (Ar, N), f-h-s, 'm-l V (N)</i>
<i>skepsis, skemma</i>	<i>hîkma, hâkîm (C)</i>
<i>sophia, sophos</i>	<i>'r-f (N), ma'rîfah bi-n-nafs (M)</i>
<i>synidein, syneidêsis</i>	

²⁴ Cf. above, p. 24, n. 1.

²⁵ Hê methodos hêmin peri . . . : qasdunâ bi-hâdhâ l-'ilm.

Greek	Arabic
<i>synhienai</i>	‘-r-f, ‘-l-m, f-h-m (C)
<i>sôphrôn</i>	‘aqil (M)
<i>hypolambanein, hypolépsis</i>	‘-q-d VIII, ‘-l-m, w-h-m V, kh-ṭ-r bi-bāl—(Ar), <i>zann</i> (<i>Topics</i> 146b1 f. = Badawî, <i>Manṭiq Aristū</i> , 650), h-d-d (N)
<i>philosophia</i>	‘ilm (Physics: <i>darasū l-ilm</i>), <i>falsafah</i> (Ar)
<i>phronein, phronêsis</i>	f-h-m (G, M), ‘-l-m (N), ‘-q-l (M); <i>eu phronein</i> : <i>husn az-</i> <i>zann</i> (M)
<i>phronêma</i>	r-‘-y (M)
<i>phronimos</i>	‘aqil (M, C)

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Arabic	Greek
<i>adab</i>	<i>paideia, paideusis</i> ²⁶
‘-m-l V	<i>theôrein, episkopein, skopein</i>
<i>amânah</i>	<i>pistis</i>
<i>b-h-th</i>	<i>skopein, episkopein, skemma</i>
<i>j-ḥ-d</i>	<i>apistia</i>
<i>jahl</i>	<i>agnoia</i>
<i>hadd</i>	<i>hypolépsis, horos, logos</i>
(<i>h-s-s</i>) <i>ghayr hiss</i>	<i>anaisthësia</i>
<i>ḥ-s-b, hisbân</i>	<i>dokein, doxa, logismos</i>
<i>ḥ-k-m</i>	<i>sophos, sophia</i>
<i>idrâk</i>	<i>epistêmê, katalépsis</i>
<i>dh-h-n</i>	<i>dianoia; ra‘ynâ bi-dh-dhihn: noein</i> (Physics, p. 419)
<i>r-‘-y</i>	<i>oiesthai, dokein, doxa, boulê, gnômê, phronêma</i>
<i>rawîyah</i>	<i>dianoia</i>
<i>sh-‘r + negation</i>	<i>lanthanein, anaisthësia; layta shi‘nî: introduction to a question</i>
<i>ṣ-d-q, taṣdîq</i>	<i>pistuein, pistis</i>
<i>ṣinâ‘ah</i>	<i>pragmateia</i>
<i>z-n-n</i>	<i>dokein</i> (very frequent everywhere), <i>oiesthai</i> (three times in Physics), <i>nomizein</i> (once in Physics), (<i>eu</i>) <i>phronein, hêgeisthai, hypolépsis</i>
‘-r-f <i>ma‘rifah</i>	<i>gignôskein, gnôrizein, eidenai, epistasthai, diaginôskein, synidein, akriboun, gnôsis, syneidësis, epistêmê, synhienai; qil-lat al-ma‘rifah wa-l-adab: amathia, amathestatos</i>
<i>ma‘rif</i>	<i>gnôrimos</i>
<i>al-‘ulûm al-muta‘ârafah</i>	<i>koinai doxai</i>
‘-r-f VIII	<i>paradechesthai</i>

²⁶ Cf. also Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology*, 91 f.

Arabic	Greek
‘-q-d VIII	<i>nomizein, hypolambanein, legein</i> , (with <i>ra</i>) <i>lambanein</i> (<i>tēn doxan</i>), <i>oiesthai, doxa</i>
‘-q-l	<i>theōrein, phronein</i>
‘aql	<i>dianoia, nous, phronēsis</i>
‘aqil	<i>phronimos, sōphrōn</i>
ma‘qūl	<i>noētos, noēma</i>
‘-l-m	<i>eidenai, katanoein, hypolambanein, synhienai</i> (cf. also <i>mnēmo- neuein</i>), <i>diaginōskein, epistasthai, phronein, gnōrizein, nomizein, legein</i>
‘ālim	<i>epistémōn</i>
lā yu‘lam	<i>agnóstos</i>
‘ilm	<i>epistémē, methodos, theória, didachē, epignōsis, theórēma, (daraśū...) philosophia; ‘ilm Allāh: dianoia theou; funūn al-‘ilm: pragmateiai; al-‘ulūm al-muta‘rafah: koinai doxai</i>
ta‘līm	<i>didaskein, didaxis</i>
ta‘ālīm, ta‘līmī, ta‘ālīmā	<i>mathēmata, mathēmatikos</i>
‘-l-m V, ta‘allum	<i>manthanein, mathēsis</i>
ma‘nā	<i>ennoia²⁷</i>
f-ḥ-ṣ	<i>episkepein, skepsis</i>
f-к-r, <i>fikr(ah)</i>	<i>logismos, doxa, dianoeisthai, boulē, logizesthai</i> (cf. also <i>mnēmo- neuein</i>)
f-ḥ-m	<i>noein, phronēsis, phronein, epinoein, synhienai, prosechein, epistémē</i>
n-ż-r, <i>nażar</i>	<i>theōrein, skopein, skeptesthai, (n-ż-r... ‘-l-m) gnōrizein, episkopein, skepsis, theória</i>
w-ż-d	<i>epinoein</i>
w-ż-ż f-‘alā	<i>horan, ennoein</i>
wahm, w-ḥ-m V ²⁸	<i>noēsis, noein, nomizein, oiesthai, hypolambanein, hypolēpsis, epinoia, ennoia, doxa, dokein</i> (<i>Physics</i> , pp. 324, 405), <i>ennoein, epinoein</i>
yaqīn	<i>(al-)‘ilm al-yaqīn: epistémē; ya‘lamu yaqīnan: akribōs eisetai</i> (<i>Categories</i> , p. 28); <i>ḥāl al-‘ilm wa-l-yaqīn: to eidenai kai to epistasthai</i> (<i>Physics</i> , p. 1)

Lexical comparisons in such bare outlines are quite obviously of limited validity. A good deal depends on the context, both Greek and Arabic. The more unusual equivalents, in particular, may owe their origin to idiomatic and syntactic peculiarities of

²⁷ For some other equivalents, cf. Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology*, 115.

²⁸ For *wahm* = *phantasia*, cf. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, 96.

either the one language or the other. It must also not be forgotten that authors who wrote in Greek so widely apart in time and on such widely different intellectual levels differed markedly in their linguistic usage. The lists above are incomplete in that they do not convey the right impression as to the possible variety of equivalents, especially in the cases of more common words. The equivalents tabulated are only a selected few out of all the numerous possibilities. Furthermore, an important element to be considered carefully would be frequency figures. They have not been included here, because no useful frequency figures could be obtained without an exhaustive lexicographical study of all the material. As indicated, there are, for instance, many possible translations for *dokein*, but *z-n-n* is the one employed by far most frequently and most consistently, at least in the works of Aristotle.

Ilm most commonly renders *epistêmê*. *Ma'rifah* does not have any such clear-cut equivalent. Although '*r-f*' would seem to be the preferred translation for *gignôskein* and related words, both '*r-f*' and '*l-m*' are used to render *eidenai*. In the material sifted, *epistêmê* is never rendered simply *ma'rifah*, but some combinations with *ma'rifah* do occur in connection with the translation of the Greek word. However, it should be noted that in some translations from the Greek, *ma'rifah* may indeed take the place of *epistêmê*. Thus, the author of the *Kitâb as-Sâ'âdah* cites Socrates to the effect that "all virtues come into being only through *ma'rifah*; they just are *ma'rifah*."²⁹ This renders the statement found in both the *Magna Moralia* and the *Eudemian Ethics* (1182a16 and 1216b3 ff.) that Socrates had declared all virtues to be *epistêmai*. Aristotle considered this statement not true, but it was accepted Stoicism.³⁰

Ilm is used in Arabic more often than is *epistêmê* in the corresponding Greek texts. The Arabic word is needed for referring to the individual scholarly and scientific disciplines, for which Greek

²⁹ Cf. *Kitâb as-Sâ'âdah*, 412.

³⁰ Cf. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, ed. H. von Arnim, II, 30, l. 36 (reprint Leipzig 1923–24). For Plato's equation of virtue with knowledge, cf., for instance, N. Gulley, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (London and New York, n.y. [1961 ?, 1962 ?]). Western Hermeticism believed that "the wickedness of a Soul is Ignorance... the virtue of the Soul is Knowledge; for he that knows, is both good and religious, & already Divine," cf. C. L. Marks, *Thomas Traherne and Hermes Trismegistus*, in *Renaissance News*, XIX (1966), 126.

uses the feminine singular of the adjectival formation. The great favor the word *ilm* enjoyed in Arabic also shows itself in other ways. On p. 94 of the translation of the *Physics* 194a18, we find *ilm* four times as against the single occurrence of *gnôrizein* in the Greek passage. On p. 97, *ya'rifu* is taken up by *ya'lamu*, although only one verb is to be found in the Greek text. The root *'l-m* was also employed by the translator of the *Tabula Cebetis* in places where it did not have any counterpart in Greek.

The most impressive aspect of the tabulation is, however, something that is hardly unexpected. This is the tremendous variety of ways in which the vast realm of mental activity of some sort or other can be expressed in both Greek and Arabic. This means that no general rule for the identification of terms is applicable in any given instance. Only where a firm school tradition took root, as in the case of the translations of Aristotle and by Hunayn, is there a noteworthy amount of consistency. Even there, exceptions to the use of what seems to be the preferred equivalent are quite frequent. When the era of translation came to an end and contact with the original languages was completely lost, the process became stabilized inasmuch as the terminology employed in the existing translations by then was the only one available and no new variations were able to arise, except through the creative forces within the Arabic language. Individual authors were at liberty to make use of the terminological variety produced by the efforts of the translators and to interpret it according to their liking and insight. *Ilm*, of course, had acquired a life quite independent from whatever might have been the Greek term it served to translate.

2. LOGIC, "THE SCIENCE OF KNOWLEDGE"

Manṭiq (*nuṭq*) in Arabic means "speech." It was chosen to serve as a literal and artificial translation of the technical meaning of Greek *logos*. "The science of speech" (*ilm al-manṭiq*) thus became the Muslim term for logic. Scholars had occasionally to remind themselves as well as their readers that *manṭiq* had in fact two vastly different meanings and that it was important to know which of these was intended in a given discussion. Thus, Ibn Ḥazm says that "the *nuṭq* mentioned in this discipline is not speech (*kalām*). It is the discernment among things and the thinking about the

sciences and crafts, business enterprises and the management of fairs.”³¹

Logic was for the Muslims the “organ” or “instrument” (*âlah*), the instrument for logical speculation (*âlat an-nazar*),³² the instrument for each discipline (*îlm*) and the means enabling the student to get at its real meaning.³³ It explained, and stood for, every one of the disciplines of knowledge (?).³⁴ It was the canon (*qânnîn*),³⁵ providing the rules and norms that were applicable to all human knowledge and on which all human knowledge rested. It was the science of the scales (*îlm al-mîzân*),³⁶ weighing the correctness of every statement. It was compared to “an equilibrating standard (*‘iyâr mu‘addil*) by which the objects of knowledge are weighed.”³⁷ It was “the leader of the sciences” or “chief science” (*ra’is al-‘ulîm*), the study of which had to come first and was considered by some scholars as a religious duty obligatory upon every individual (and not only upon the community of Muslims), because it furnished the necessary evidence for man’s knowledge of his Creator.³⁸ It was, in a word, “the science of knowledge” (*îlm al-‘îlm*) or “the science of the sciences” (*îlm al-‘ulîm*).³⁹ Its purpose was to distinguish right from wrong, truth from falsehood. It was “to provide

³¹ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *at-Taqrîb li-hadd al-mantiq*, ed. İhsân ‘Abbâs, 33 (Beirut, n.y. [1959]). All the references given in this chapter could be multiplied *ad infinitum*. In fact, none would be necessary.

³² Cf. Ibn Kammûnah, in the philosophical treatise completed in Dhû l-Qa‘dah 676/April 1278 and preserved in the Istanbul Ms. Aya Sofia 2446, fols. 1–177b, cf. fol. 3a. In the Aya Sofya manuscript, the treatise precedes Ibn Kammûnah’s similar work, *al-Hikmah al-jadidah*.

³³ Cf. Ibn Hindû, *Miftâh at-tibb*, ch. 10, in Ms. Bursa Haraççı 1120, fol. 64b.

³⁴ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Taqrîb*, 202. The text is doubtful: *al-‘ibârah ‘alâ kull ‘îlm*. It should be *an*, instead of *âld*. The correct reading may be *al-‘iyâr* “standard.”

³⁵ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâsid*, I, 6, who combines *qânnîn*, *mîzân*, and *mîyâr* all in one sentence; Ibn Kammûnah (above, n. 2).

³⁶ Cf. Tâshköprüzâdeh, *Miftâh as-sâ‘âdah*, I, 243.

³⁷ Cf. al-‘Amîrî, *Ilâm*, 95.

³⁸ Tâshköprüzâdeh, *Miftâh as-sâ‘âdah*, I, 235. Contrast below, p. 206.

³⁹ Cf. Abû l-Barakât, *Mu’tabar*, I, 226, also, III, 11, 211, 214. When Ibn ‘Arabî, *Futîhât*, II, 282, speaks of *îlm al-‘îlm*, he has in mind the discipline dealing with mystic theory, as against the *îlm al-amal*, the discipline dealing with mystic practice. This appears to be meant also with *Kitâb Ilm al-‘îlm*, to which Şadr-ad-dîn al-Qônawî makes frequent reference in his *Nâfahât*. The vocalization *îlm al-‘îlm* is clearly intended by these mystics, but apparently it is *‘alam al-‘îlm* in the description of *bayâن* “good style” as “the banner of knowledge”, cited by ath-Thâ’âlibî, *Yâtîmah*, IV, 208 (Damascus 1304), as an epigram of Abû l-Fâth al-Bustî.

all the rules (*qawânnîn*) that have the task of setting the intellect straight and of directing man toward what is right and toward the truth regarding any of the *intelligibilia* with respect to which man may possibly err, all the rules that can preserve him from errors and mistakes with respect to the *intelligibilia*, and all the rules for checking on the *intelligibilia* with respect to which one cannot be certain that someone did not err in the past.” As the individual disciplines teach the particular rules applicable to their particular problems, thus logic supplies the general theoretical basis. If, for instance, grammar teaches the rules governing one particular language, logic teaches the rules applicable to all languages in general.⁴⁰ There is no end to the words of praise for the usefulness of logic which extends to every discipline.⁴¹ All of them have the same tenor: Logic is the very foundation upon which all human knowledge rests. And knowledge is the necessary stepping stone to eternal bliss.⁴²

The constant restatement of the fundamental importance of logic was in large part apologetic. Many other Muslims, who were not logicians themselves, among them the majority of the representatives of a simplistic religiosity and piety who grew steadily more numerous over the centuries, held a very different view of the position of logic in human civilization. Not infrequently, the occupation with it had thus to be a clandestine affair. Its intricacies were ridiculed by those unable and unwilling to master them. They were condemned as a mere juggling of words and meaningless gibberish. More ominous, they were “embodying unbelief and aiding heresy.”⁴³ Logic was un-Islamic and therefore no doubt forbidden by the religious law.⁴⁴ Its affinity to heresy—“he who does logic courts heresy” (*man tamâqâa tazandaqa*)⁴⁵—is the favorite theme of Ibn Taymiyah’s attacks on logic. His reference to a statement echoing or anticipating the proverb just quoted

⁴⁰ Cf. al-Fârâbî, *Ilâşâ’ al-‘ulâ’im*, ed. ‘Uthmân M. Amîn, 11 ff. (Cairo 1350/1931).

⁴¹ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Taqrib*, 9.

⁴² Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Maqâsid*, I, 6 f.

⁴³ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Taqrib*, 6 f.

⁴⁴ As-Subkî, *Fatâwî*, II, 644 f. (cf. Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 116), criticizes this attitude.

⁴⁵ Cf. I. Goldziher, *Stellung der alten islamischen Orthodoxie*, 24. Goldziher points out the much greater ambivalence in the attitude of Muslim theologians toward logic as compared to their attitude toward the other ancient sciences.

and attributed to Abû Yûsuf (d. 182/798), “He who seeks knowledge by means of speculative theology (*kalâm*) courts heresy,”⁴⁶ makes it clear that his attitude toward logic is that of the firm believer in the supremacy of revealed religion as the source of all true knowledge. He asserts emphatically that far from being an individual duty, the cultivation of logic could not even be considered a community duty to be discharged by some members of the community at all times.⁴⁷ No scholar in any scholarly discipline or science whatever has accomplished much through logic.⁴⁸ In short, logic, like all the other Greek sciences, had come into the world through the machinations of Satan, and it was one of the means by which the true faith of pious believers could be undermined and Islam, perhaps, eventually be destroyed. These attacks upon logic were at times effective in discouraging the study of and the writing on logic but only to a certain degree. They started out early in Muslim history, certainly as early as the ninth century, but by then, logic had already deeply penetrated into the inner recesses of Muslim civilization. Hostility did not succeed in dislodging it from its entrenched position, and the criticism directed against it even by champions of the sharp word and the bitter invective such as Ibn Taymîyah had to acknowledge, grudgingly to be sure, its inescapable virtues. If the study of logic seems often to have stagnated and to have moved along well-trodden paths, this was due more to the scholastic character of the discipline than to attacks from outside. On the contrary, those attacks stiffened the attitude of the proponents of logic whose claims for it as the necessary helpmaid of theology grew consistently bolder. The enemies of logic believed that there were other means to achieve true knowledge, and they denied the claim of logic that it alone held the key to it. Yet, their entire thinking was dominated by logical categories and operated within the forms developed by them. Above all, they, no less than the logicians whom they attacked, were concerned with the problem of human knowledge. For them, too, it was the central problem not only of human but also of divine existence. As far as “knowledge” was concerned, there was little difference between friend and foe.

⁴⁶ Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 141; Ibn Taymîyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, 54.

⁴⁷ Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, I, 155.

⁴⁸ Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, 169 f.

Logic in Islam was, of course, Aristotelian logic.⁴⁹ It is safe to say that it never broke through the basic configurations of its origin. The Aristotelian "Organon" does not bother with a formal definition of "knowledge." The result was that numerous as such definitions became in Muslim literature, they were not at home in works of logic as such, even if some of these works occasionally considered definitions of knowledge. The quest of what knowledge was assumed major significance in the religious realm, because much of the methodological approach to Muslim theology and law came to depend upon the answer to it. These fields therefore provided the home for definitions of knowledge carefully elaborated and placed in conspicuous positions.⁵⁰ Even there, however, such definitions were thought dispensable when a brief summary was intended. Thus, as-Şâbûnî devoted some space to definitions of knowledge in his fair-sized *Kîfâyah* on speculative theology, but these definitions were omitted by him, it seems as a matter of course, in his short basic treatise on the subject, the *Bidâyah* (on which the *Kîfâyah* is a commentary).⁵¹ By and large, Muslim works on logic convey the impression that their subject is the nature of knowledge more directly and forcefully than the logical works of the Stagirite themselves. In the Greek text of the "Organon" and much of the later Greek logical literature, a comparatively subdued use was made of the word "knowledge." It was taken for granted that the student knew what was involved in the difficult technical discussion of epistemology. In Muslim logical writing, on the other hand, it would seem to be the rare treatise long or short that does not start out with a reference to the various kinds of knowledge into which it was assumed knowledge could and had to be divided, with a declaration that knowledge consists of two parts and is either perception or apperception (*taṣawwur/taṣdîq*), accompanied by a constantly modified evaluation of the possible meaning of these two crucial terms; with a discussion of the difference between the changeable knowledge of particulars and the permanent unchangeable knowledge of universals; or with a survey of the various ways and means by which human beings are

⁴⁹ Remnants of Stoic logic, no longer recognized as such by Muslim scholars, have been isolated by modern scholars, cf. F. Jadaâne, *L'influence du stoïcisme sur le pensée musulmane*, 99 ff. (Beirut 1968).

⁵⁰ Cf. Chapter IV, above.

⁵¹ Cf. above, p. 48, n. 3. The Istanbul Ms. Laleli 2271 contains the *Kîfâyah* and the *Bidâyah* on fols. 1–92a and 108a–132b, respectively.

believed to be able to attain knowledge. The student, always assumed to be in need of elementary instruction, is never permitted to forget that the logician is concerned with only one thing, knowledge and how it can be acquired and its true character recognized and defended. It is in a way his best justification, since the word “knowledge” called for at least an initial attitude of respect wherever it was uttered.

The history of logical studies in Islam remains to be written. The preserved works are numerous. The production of logical treatises appears actually to increase in later centuries and, in particular, in the great expanse of Muslim territory located to the east of the Arab countries. These works increased in subtlety and technical refinement, the more speculative theology reacted upon them and the more inevitable it became to think of divine knowledge simultaneously with broaching any aspect whatever of human logic.⁵² How intricate matters did in fact become can easily be gauged by the summary of the various ideas advanced by religious logicians on the manner in which logic came to grips with the problem of knowledge, prepared in eighteenth-century India by at-Tahânwâî in connection with the article on *ilm* in his great dictionary of technical terms. Unfortunately, most of the literature on logic remains unpublished and unstudied.⁵³ The historical outlines can be dimly perceived, but they remain so broad as to be virtually meaningless. Major as well as minor details, which alone can give validity and value to a history of logic in Islam, have not yet been collected and classified in any meaningful way. It is clear, however, that regardless of changes in approach and method, Muslim logicians never lost sight of the fact that the primary function of their labors was to find out about “knowledge” and to contribute to a comprehensive epistemology for all aspects of Muslim intellectual endeavor, including theology and jurisprudence.

3. EPISTEMOLOGY AS A TOOL OF THEOLOGY AND JURISPRUDENCE

The development of Muslim dogmatics “can be characterized as that of a growing intellectualism...Muhammad is overshadowed

⁵² Examples are found, for instance, in Ibn Hazm's *Taqrib*. Ibn Hazm at times inserts seemingly uncalled-for discussions of theology, as when he enlarges the discussion of *ghayr*, *mithl*, and *khilâf* by a statement on God's complete difference, cf. *Taqrib*, 70.

⁵³ A usable bibliography of Arabic works on logic has been published by N. Rescher (above, p. 46, n. 1).

by Aristotle.”⁵⁴ These words of A. J. Wensinck are unexceptionable (at least if one disregards Ismâ‘ilî-Shî‘ah theory which strikes out more independently and gathers up a greater variety of philosophical and religious elements). They may be expanded. They need not be changed or be improved. In the few pages devoted by Wensinck to flesh them out, the principal evidence has been assembled. Little can be added to it, although the number of authors and works, most of them unpublished, is very large and presently not fully amenable to scholarly control. The task that remains to be done here is a description of some of the stages of this development—mentioning not all of the works known and referred to elsewhere in this book but restricting ourselves to the more conspicuous ones—, from the point of view of the importance placed upon the concept of knowledge as the starting point of theological insight. It could well be said with the Mu‘tazilah Abû l-Qâsim al-Kâbî al-Balkhî (d. 319/931), speaking of al-Junayd, that in Islam the speculative theologians were wedded to “knowledge” as were the government secretaries to the mastery of proper linguistic, usage and the philosophers to the discussion of subtle ideas.⁵⁵ About five and a half centuries later, the relationship between logic and theology was simply formulated by al-Kâfiyâjî (d. 879/1474) in commenting as follows on the opening words of at-Taftâzâni’s *Tahdhîb fi l-manṭiq wa-l-kalâm*: “Scholars customarily treat first of matters connected with logic and then of matters connected with speculative theology, because the former is an instrument for mastering the latter.”⁵⁶

The origins are clearly recognizable. Epistemology was acknowledged by eighth-century Oriental Christianity within the Muslim Empire to be the necessary foundation of theology. The best evidence available to us is again the famous *Pêgê gnôsêôs* “Fount of Knowledge” of John of Damascus. The work consists of three books, of which the first provides the philosophical underpinning, while the second and third deal with, respectively, sects and the orthodox faith. The title properly belongs only to the first book,

⁵⁴ Cf. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 248. For a detailed bibliography of ‘aqîdahs, cf. the introduction of H. Laoust, *La Profession de Foi d’Ibn Bâṭṭa* (Damascus 1958).

⁵⁵ Cf. as-Subkî, *Tabaqât ash-Shâfi‘iyah*, II, 28.

⁵⁶ Cf. al-Kâfiyâjî (above, p. 61, n. 4), quoted here following the Istanbul Ms. Laleli 2592 and the Bursa Ms. Haraççı 1378, with the full title, *at-Târghîb fî kashf rumûz at-Tâhdhîb*.

but it has been extended to designate the entire work, and no better comprehensive title is known.⁵⁷ John of Damascus was not interested in educational method as were the almost contemporary *hadîth* scholars of Islam. Nor did he intend to introduce “knowledge” as a synonym of religion, although in his view, the teaching of religion was the teaching of true knowledge and the elimination of false knowledge. The problem with which he was concerned was epistemological. He recognized that an understanding of the meaning of knowledge was essential to any attempt to clarify the true character of religion and faith, and this was what he set out to do.⁵⁸ The identical spirit manifested itself in Muslim speculative theology, and it would be far-fetched indeed to deny that the older cultural tradition here influenced the developing new religion through channels not quite tangible to us but none the less real.

It can be assumed that the more solid acquaintance with Greek logic which came through the translations gave Muslim theologians the opportunity to essay literary formulations of the idea of epistemology as the basis of theology. In all likelihood, they were not slow in adopting the procedure of providing their writings with epistemological introductions. This may have happened already in the later years of the eighth century or in the early ninth century. Since the early treatises are lost or not yet known, it is not possible for us to say who might have been the first Muslim authors to start the process that was completed during the tenth century. It has been stated, and seemingly with good reason as far as our present knowledge goes, that the *Kitâb at-Tawhîd* by al-Mâturîdî (d. 333/994–45) is the oldest treatise, on Muhammadian

⁵⁷ Cf. B. Kotter, *Die Überlieferung der Pege Gnoeos*, 1 (Ettal 1959, *Studia Patristica et Byzantina* 5).

⁵⁸ Cf. also the Syriac Christian work by Joseph Ḥazzâyâ, entitled *Rêshê dîda'â*, which has been erroneously placed into the seventh century but which apparently dates from the eighth century. It appears to have been a minor compilation dealing with edifying sayings and certain theological questions and to have been written somehow in the tradition of and in connection with the work of Evagrius Ponticus. It may have been in a way a forerunner of both the traditionist and the speculative theological occupation with knowledge among Muslims, although its concern with knowledge may have been restricted to its title. Cf. A. Scher, in *RSO*, 111 (1910), 45–63, in particular, 50–54; Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 222 f.; A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts, I: Syriac and Garshâni Manuscripts*, no. 601 (Cambridge 1933); Guillaumont (above, p. 25, n. 1).

theology that begins with an exposition of the theory of knowledge.⁵⁹

An earlier stage, however, can easily be deduced from the exposition of Mu'tazilah theology which we find in the *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamṣah* of Judge 'Abd-al-Jabbār, who died about ninety years old, in 415/1025. According to 'Abd-al-Jabbār, the first duty of the responsible Muslim, and a necessary duty at that,⁶⁰ is rational speculation, which leads to the knowledge of God.⁶¹ As becomes clear from repeated references, the existence of the five basic principles of Mu'tazilah dogmatics forms the subject, in each case, of a particular knowledge (*ilm*). There are various kinds of rational speculation which require explanation.⁶² Only then is "knowledge" (*ma'rifah*) defined. *Ilm*, as well as *dirāyah*, are equivalents (*nazā'ir*) of *ma'rifah*, meaning "that which brings with it satisfaction and restful assuredness" (*mā yaqtadī sukūn an-nafs wa-thalaj as-sadr wa-tum'anīnat al-qalb*), or rather, according to 'Abd-al-Jabbār's definition from his *Kītāb al-'Umad*, *ilm* is "the belief that satisfies the soul that its object (*mu'taqad*) is as one believes it to be."⁶³ "Knowledge" (*ilm*) is identical with "belief" (*i'tiqād*), although this was denied by Abū l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf who assumed that knowledge was a genus (*jīns*) by itself. However, it does not include belief based upon a blind adherence to tradition or haphazard guessing. It is a belief that satisfies (*sukūn an-nafs*) the believer.⁶⁴ The necessity of rational speculation is indicated by the belief that God is not known either of necessity or through observation by the senses,⁶⁵ nor is continuous information based on the reports of numerous reliable authorities a source of the knowledge of God.⁶⁶ The way to know something, unless it is known of necessity, is through argument and proof (*dalīl*, *dalālah*). This includes the Qur'ān, the *sunnah*, and the general consensus (*ijmā'*). But for attaining the knowledge of God, reasoning is

⁵⁹ Cf. J. Schacht, in *Studia Islamica*, I (1953), 41. For the text, cf. Yörükān (above, p. 103, n. 4).

⁶⁰ Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamṣah*, 68 ff.

⁶¹ Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, 39.

⁶² Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, 45.

⁶³ Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, 45 f., see above, p. 63.

⁶⁴ Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, 188 ff. Abū l-Hudhayl, of course, considered knowledge in general to be belief, as stated by Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī in his *Masā'il al-khildāf 'alā Abī l-Hudhayl*, cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, XII, 25.

⁶⁵ Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, 48 ff.

⁶⁶ Cf. 'Abd-al-Jabbār, 53.

required (*hujjat al-‘aql*).⁶⁷ Since ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr was not interested in knowledge as such, he did not have to concern himself expressly with those aspects of the theory of knowledge that deal with sense perception and its role in the acquisition of knowledge. His work represents a late stage of Mu‘tazilism. However, its treatment of knowledge as an introduction to the dogmatic exposition gives the definite expression of reflecting a stage prior to the work of al-Mâturîdî and the Ash‘arites. Thus, the need for rational speculation is stressed before the definition of knowledge is presented (as was done later still in the work of the Imâm al-Haramayn). “Knowledge” is not yet emancipated from its specific meaning of man’s knowledge of God, and *ma‘rifah* as against *ilm* is the preferred term, which appears to be the older way of referring to dogmatic theology. All this would seem to confirm the assumption that ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr has preserved the original approach to the subject as practiced by the ninth-century Mu‘tazilah and, presumably, expounded by them in their writings.⁶⁸

‘Abd-al-Jabbâr’s *Mughnî*, in its twelfth part devoted to speculation and knowledge, tells the same story in even greater detail. Throughout the *Mughnî*, “knowledge” plays a conspicuous and often fundamental role in the argumentation of whatever problem is under discussion. Whether the *Mughnî*’s concern with the significance of traditional information (*akhbâr*) as a source of knowledge (cr., especially, *Mughnî*, XV, 342 ff.) was shared by the earlier Mu‘tazilah literature seems, however, somewhat uncertain in the absence of direct evidence.

Another indication of an early date for the combination of epistemology and theology among Muslim writers is to be found in the noteworthy fact that in Jewish circles, Qaraite as well as orthodox, this combination appears in theological writings as early as the time of al-Mâturîdî. Sa‘adyâh (882–942) completed his famous “Book of Beliefs and Opinions” (*Kitâb al-Amândât wa-l-i‘tiqâddât*) in the year 933. The work contains a detailed discussion of Jewish theology on an intellectual level equal to that of contemporary Islam. As a scholar and theologian, Sa‘adyâh shows himself fully aware of the importance of secular learning as well as very conscious of the necessary character of the basic

⁶⁷ Cf. ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr, 88.

⁶⁸ For Mu‘tazilah monographs on *ma‘rifah*, cf. above, pp. 148 f.

material and spiritual/religious human urges.⁶⁹ The introductory remarks of his work lay the foundation for what is to follow by discussing the problem of doubt and the means for attaining knowledge. For Sa'adyâh, the scientific study of theology is commanded by Scripture and shunned by unbelievers and heretics. The existence of doubt is not due to a fault in divine planning. It is inherent in the fact of createdness. Perfect knowledge without any uncertainties would make man identical with God. The fact of their createdness makes it obligatory for human beings to perform all their actions step by step and within a given time span. This includes the activity of knowing. It requires a gradual progression from obscurity and confusion to greater clarity and a more assured insight. There are three sources of certain knowledge (*yaqīn, haqq*), namely, sense perception and observation (*'ilm ash-shâhid*), the intuition of reason (*'ilm al-'aql*), and knowledge derived from logical necessity (*'ilm mā dafa'at ad-darûrah ilayh*). Sense perception is the fundamental source upon which the other two must draw. We Jews, Sa'adyâh says, admit of a fourth source of knowledge, that is, sound traditional information (*al-khabar as-ṣâdîq*) based upon knowledge derived from both sense perception and reason. This, of course, is something not unknown also to Muslim theologians, even if the rationalists among them whom Sa'adyâh has in mind played it down, but in this respect, the Jewish theologian must naturally differ from his Muslim colleagues as to where authoritative tradition has to be sought. Sa'adyâh admits that various groups have rejected one or more of the three philosophical sources of knowledge. This has been a mistake on their part. There are factors that may vitiate each one of the three, but once the nature of such factors is known, they can be avoided. Since the necessary knowledge, the third of the three mentioned sources of certainty, is specially important with regard to matters metaphysical, the five factors that may vitiate its correctness require particular attention. Knowledge systematized in particular disciplines is often needed in order to place data

⁶⁹ Cf. Sa'adyâh's chapter on philosophy (*hikmah*), 309 ff. of S. Landauer's edition (Leiden 1880), trans. Rosenblatt, 393 f. The epistemological introduction covers pp. 1–30 of Landauer's edition and pp. 4–37 of Rosenblatt's translation. Cf. also A. Heschel, *The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy* (New York 1944, reprinted from *Jewish Quarterly Review*, N.S., XXXIII–XXXIV [1942–43]); G. Vajda, *Autour de la théorie de la connaissance chez Saadia*, in *Revue des Études Juives*, CXXVI (1967), 135–89, 375–97.

gained from sense perception upon a firmly established and convincing footing.

For the epistemological introduction to theology among Qaraites contemporary with Sa‘adyâh, al-Qirqisânî offers an example in his *Kitâb al-Anwâr wa-l-marâqib*. Al-Qirqisânî has an introductory chapter dealing in a summary fashion with the sects known to him, but then he enters into a discussion of the possible ways of gaining knowledge. Regrettably, the text of the relevant chapters happens to be lost, and we know about their existence only through the table of contents indicating the chapter headings.⁷⁰ However, it is certain that Jewish theology at the beginning of the tenth century at the latest was fully conscious of the fundamental importance of epistemology, and this would argue for an earlier date among Muslims.

Among Muslim authors, the *Kitâb al-Yâqût* by Abû Ishâq an-Nawbakhtî may be considered further evidence for the pre-Mâturîdian combination in scholarly literature of epistemology and dogmatics. Ibn Nawbakht’s lifetime is not known for certain, but he may have flourished not later than the first half of the tenth century. The original work is not preserved. It seems, however, that it can be reconstructed with reasonable certainty from the much later commentary written by the ‘Allâmah al-Hillî, entitled *Anwâr al-malakût fi sharh al-Yâqût*.⁷¹ Here again, the meaning and necessary character of rational speculation are discussed, as are its role in securing *‘ilm* and the role of traditional evidence (*ad-dalîl as-samî*) in connection with the achievement of certain knowledge (*yaqîn*). “Then, the author gives his definition of *‘ilm*,⁷² and the various aspects of *‘ilm* and its relationship to rational speculation are mentioned. All this precedes the treatment of the basic physical facts and the discussion of theological and dogmatic data, which includes a clarification of the concept of God’s knowledge as well as the character of human knowledge. There remains some doubt as to whether the arrangement of the topics in the original work, which was evidently quite brief, was the same as the one we find in the ‘Allâmah’s commentary. However, unless evidence to the contrary should be forthcoming, we may assume that this was indeed the case. Thus, in the *Kitâb al-Yâqût*, we find

⁷⁰ Cf. al-Qirqisânî, *Anwâr*, 64 ff.

⁷¹ Cf. above, p. 49, n. 3; *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 320.

⁷² Cf. definition B-2, above, p. 53.

a Twelver-Shī‘ah view of the situation that in its significant outlines is not different from the “orthodox” view as it developed and entered theological literature in the course of the ninth century.

The *Kitāb al-Bad’ wa-t-ta’rīkh*, which was written in 355/966, also contains an epistemological introduction discussing rational speculation and *ilm* and the various ways of attaining knowledge before discussing basic data of Muslim theology.⁷³ The remarkable thing is that this appears here, rather uniquely, within the framework of a historical study and is presented as a necessary preliminary for the understanding of the history of the world. Very likely, this combination of history and philosophical theology was the author’s own original idea. It is, perhaps, possible that the philosophical theology presented by him was something very modern and new when he hit upon utilizing it for gaining a deeper insight than existed before into the historical process. However, it would seem much more likely that the *Kitāb al-Bad’* followed the well-established scheme of considerably earlier theological works and can be adduced as evidence for the existence of the epistemological introduction to dogmatics at a date much before its time and that of al-Māturīdī.

The brief creed attributed to al-Māturīdī also starts with a simple remark on the three sources of knowledge, sound (sense) perception, right intelligence, and traditional information derived from trusted authorities. It also refers to the false assumptions of the “Sophists” who point to the alleged shortcomings of these sources of knowledge and maintain that knowledge is not possible.⁷⁴

The lasting formulation of the theory of knowledge as an introduction to theology was developed in Ash‘arite circles. Al-Ash‘arī himself, it was claimed by A. J. Wensinck,⁷⁵ does not appear to have suggested, let alone worked out, an epistemological foundation for his theological creed. His *Ibānah*, where we would be inclined to look for one, does not have an introduction dealing with the theory of knowledge.⁷⁶ However, al-Ash‘arī wrote many works where such an introduction would have been appropriate and

⁷³ Cf. above, p. 117, n. 1. For the work as history, cf. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 113 f., 200.

⁷⁴ Cf. Williams, *Islam*, 180 f. For al-Māturīdī’s *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, of which J. Schacht has prepared an edition, cf. M. Allard, *Le Problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d’al-Ash‘arī*, 421 ff. (Beirut 1965) Cf. below, p. 302.

⁷⁵ Cf. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 249.

⁷⁶ For the literary questions associated with the *Ibānah*, cf. Allard, *Problème*.

might very well have existed, and he may not have wished to repeat himself in several places. In fact, we are told by Ibn 'Asâkir that his "Fusûl on the Refutation of Heretics, etc.,," contained an introductory chapter devoted to the subject of rational speculation (*nazar*) which might very well have included al-Ash'arî's views on epistemology.⁷⁷ Official Ash'arite epistemology makes its full-blown appearance for us in the *Kitâb at-Tamhîd* by al-Bâqillânî (d. 403/1013).⁷⁸ How much of al-Bâqillânî's exposition is his own and how much he owed to his colleagues and predecessors, remains an open question at this stage of our knowledge. The author starts out with the definition of knowledge as "the cognition of the object known as it is," explaining that the term "object known" is required instead of the term "thing," because object known includes also the non-existent and may thus be either a thing or not a thing.⁷⁹ He recognizes the non-existent next to the existent as one of the two divisions of the objects of knowledge. There are two kinds of knowledge, just as there are two kinds of objects known. There is the primeval (un-created, *qâdîm*) knowledge of God, and the created (*muâhdath*) knowledge of all living beings, humans, angels, jinn, and others. The latter knowledge is again subdivided twofold, into necessary (*darûrî*) knowledge and speculative, deductive (*nazar, istidlâl*) knowledge.⁸⁰ Necessary knowledge, which is also needed knowledge, is a knowledge which adheres

⁷⁷ Cf. Ibn 'Asâkir, *Tabyîn kadhib al-muftârâ*, 128 f. (Damascus 1347). The passage was cited already, before the publication of the text, by W. Spitta, *Zur Geschichte, Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'arî*, 68 (Leipzig 1876), and it was cited again by R. J. McCarthy. *The Theology of al-Ash'arî*, 211 f. (Beirut 1953). The contents of al-Ash'arî's *Kitâb al-Mâ'rif* cannot be easily surmised. The suggestion of McCarthy, 222, that it deals with epistemology remains uncertain.

⁷⁸ Cf. al-Bâqillânî. *Tamhîd*, 6–14 (on knowledge and deduction), 15–21 (on the objects of knowledge). In the edition of M. 'Abd-al-Hâdî Abû Rîdah and Mahmûd M. al-Khudayrî, 34–44 (Cairo 1366/1947).

Al-Bâqillânî divides the existent into two subdivisions. It may be primeval (uncreated, *qâdîm*) or created. The latter is to be divided into composite bodies, isolated substances, and accidents. The non-existent admits of five categories. It may be 1. impossible or absurd, 2. possible but never actualized, 3. possible and existent in the future, 4. having existed in the past, and 5. possible in the sense that it may or may not be, while it is not known whether it will be or will not be.

⁷⁹ Cf. definitions B-2 and B-3, above, pp. 53 f.

⁸⁰ For the relationship of God's knowledge, which is not gone into further in this place by al-Bâqillânî as he discusses it later (*Tamhîd*, 197 ff.), and the two kinds of created knowledge, cf. above, p. 128.

so firmly to the soul of created beings that they cannot escape or doubt it in any way. Speculative knowledge is a knowledge that follows upon deduction and reflection. It is “acquired” (*kasbî*), that is, it is existing in the knower through a created potency. It rests upon necessary knowledge and sense perception. The necessary knowledge of the object known is attained by the perception of the five senses which provide necessary knowledge free from doubt, and it may be created originally (*ibtidâ’an*) in the soul. This includes psychological data and the like. It also includes knowledge derived from continuous reports of numerous informants (*tawâtur*), such as geographical information about remote countries, information about the prophets of old, and other historical knowledge. It may, or may not, be confirmed by sense perception. Knowledge based on these factors may be extended in numerous ways by logical deduction (*istidlâl*), which may also be applied to traditional (*samî*) sources of information. It requires an understanding of the meaning of what constitutes logical proof (*dalîl*).⁸¹

An extensive summary of the corresponding views expressed by ‘Abd-al-Qâhir b. Tâhir al-Baghdâdî (d. 429/1037–38) can be found in Wensinck’s work.⁸² A brief exposition of the epistemological foundation was given by the Imâm al-Haramayn as a preface to his *Irshâd*. The Imâm al-Haramayn also expressed himself at greater length on the problems of rational speculation in his *Shâmil fi uṣûl ad-dîn*.⁸³ His basic contention in the *Irshâd* is that rational speculation is the prime source of knowledge. Some of the ancients, he says, held the opinion that all knowledge is derived from sense perception, and they denied that rational speculation could lead to knowledge. He refutes this view. He maintains that *nazar* contrasts with the knowledge of the object speculated about as well as with the ignorance of it or doubt concerning it, but it leads to knowledge either sound or unsound, depending on whether it itself is sound or unsound. It guarantees or implies (*d-m-n* V) the attainment of knowledge but does not, as was the Mu‘tazilah

⁸¹ For a concise formulation of this theory of knowledge, “the causes (*asbâb*) of knowledge,” one may compare the translation of the introduction of the *Creed* of an-Nasâfi (d. 537/1142), which became highly influential, and its commentary by at-Taftâzâni, written in 768/1366–67, by E. E. Elder, 5–27 (above, p. 59, n. 5).

⁸² Cf. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 255 ff.

⁸³ Cf. Imâm al-Haramayn, *Irshâd*, 3–16, and *Shâmil*, ed. H. Klopfer (Cairo and Wiesbaden 1960–61).

view, generate it. The attainment of knowledge not known before by means of sound speculation is by way of compelling evidence (*adil-lah*), with the argument being based either upon reason or upon tradition. For the Mu'tazilah, rational speculation is necessitated by reason, whereas for the Imâm al-Haramayn, it is necessitated by the religious law (*shar'*). After having explained how knowledge is attained, the author proceeds to define knowledge, expressing himself in favor of the same definition as al-Bâqillânî but adding, as became henceforth the custom of speculative theologians, a discussion of a number of definitions by both Ash'arites and Mu'tazilah, which he feels compelled to reject. Again, knowledge is divided into the primeval knowledge of God and the newly arising (*hâdîth*, as against al-Bâqillânî's *muhdath* "created in time") knowledge of man. The latter is to be subdivided into necessary (*darûrî*), intuitive (*badîhî*), and acquired (*kasbî*) knowledge. The former two may be used interchangeably. All knowledge may be called speculative-acquired (*kasbî nażarî*). Knowledge possesses its opposites in concepts such as ignorance (*jahl*), doubt (*shakk*), or guesswork (*zann*). Reason (*'aql*) involves all the necessary knowledge there is.

In the next, eleventh century, we meet again with the most articulate spokesman for the need of combining another kind of theology, that of mysticism, with logic, the excessively intellectual, tragic figure of as-Suhrawardî *al-maqtûl*. The ordinary philosophical vision of all knowledge into logic, physics, and metaphysics was put by him into the service of his particular brand of theology. Half of his *Hikmat al-îshràq*⁸⁴ is devoted to the discussion of certain points of Aristotelian logic and physics. This discussion is brief but highly useful, as-Suhrawardî claims. It is not presented as an end in itself, nor is it destined for those who are concerned merely with objective scientific research. It is meant for those who are already on their way toward metaphysical illumination. Epistemology is pressed here into the service of mysticism, not for any compelling need to do so, but by then, the tradition of using epistemology as an introduction to systematic theology had become so strong that no system-builder, in particular one who was also indebted to philosophy for his theological system, could ignore it. Following the trend that secured for *îlm* a position in mysticism equaling

⁸⁴ Cf. above, pp. 160 and 185.

or surpassing that of *ma'rifah*, Sadr-ad-dîn al-Qônawî attempted to underpin the mystic interpretation of the Qur'ân with logical terms and concepts, as shown by his lengthy commentary on the first *sûrah*. "Knowledge," which for al-Qônawî is never very far from Sûfi gnosis, is "an abstract universal reality," or "a single universal reality." In contrast to rational knowledge, no perception-and-apperception (*taṣawwur/taṣdîq*) is involved in the visionary knowledge of the mystic, as believed by the great mass, but only perception. The Qur'ân is "the form of the knowledge that comprises the variety of possible conditions affecting existing things," or it is the form of the divine attribute of knowledge.⁸⁵ Another aspect of Muslim theology was thus invaded by logic in a rather intuitive, unsystematic manner which, however, further shows the desire to divert the powerful current of thought centering around "knowledge" into special channels.

With Sayf-ad-dîn al-Âmidî (551–631/1156–1233), a brilliant Syrian scholar greatly admired by those who knew the incisiveness of his mind and his impressive personality, the development reached what might be called its saturation stage. The material at al-Âmidî's disposal which he had to consider in the name of scholarship and which required preservation and evaluation had become massive enough to fill many pages of long and involved discussion, even if, as was the intention of al-Âmidî, an author tried to make his work neither too long nor too short. The problems had been looked at from all possible angles. However, the ingenuity of a scholar of al-Âmidî's caliber would hardly have been satisfied with merely repeating what had been said before. He would insist upon his own, and to some degree novel, conclusions. The basic assumptions were no longer questioned, and the circle within which even the most acute mind was forced to move had become narrow and was completely circumscribed by the need to prove the unprovable. For al-Âmidî, the end and goal of human existence was perfection. Perfection was identical for him with a comprehensive knowledge of the *intelligibilia* and of objects unknown. By his time, Muslim civilization had become fully conscious of the tremendous burden of knowledge with which it had been saddled and which could be dropped only at the risk of its very existence; therefore, this accumulated knowledge required constant study and

⁸⁵ Cf. al-Qônawî, *Ijâz al-bayân*, 48, 54, 57, 219. Cf. also above, pp. 163 and 166.

scholarly attention. Time and human life are too brief to master all the sciences and things worth knowing (*al-‘ulūm wa-l-ma‘ārif*). As these matters differ in importance, preference must be accorded to the most important and useful knowledge, that is, “speculative theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*) which investigates the essence, attributes, and connected circumstances of the Necessarily Existent One.” Al-Āmidī’s principal work on the subject, entitled *Abkār al-afkār*, shows the systematic arrangement and the predilection for classification which is so greatly characteristic of the ultimate stage of Aristotelian influence. A mere reading of the table of contents is now often sufficient to tell the reader what to expect.

Of the eight chapters (*qā’idah*) of the *Abkār*, the first four which constitute almost three-fourths of the entire work are devoted to questions considered to be related to epistemology. They deal with 1. knowledge and its subdivisions, 2. rational speculation and its subdivisions, 3. the methods which lead to the objects sought through rational speculation, and 4. the division of the objects of knowledge into existent, non-existent, and neither existent nor non-existent. The fourth chapter, which takes up over nine times the space of the preceding three chapters, is to a large extent devoted to a discussion of God’s being, actions, and attributes. Epistemological problems are also dealt with later on in the *Abkār* as, for instance, in the fifth chapter dealing with the problems of prophecy.

The discussion of knowledge and its subdivisions is, in turn, arranged in four sections. The first section discusses the meaning of knowledge and the definitions that have been proposed for determining this meaning. In this context, the opinion of the “Sophists” that there is no way of attaining any knowledge is mentioned as usual, but it is not discussed in detail. The schools, as al-Āmidī saw them, were those of the Mu‘tazilah, the Ash‘arites (al-Ash‘arī, Ibn Fūrak, and, in particular, al-Bāqillānī), the philosophers, and his own “colleagues” (*ashāb*). Over fifteen definitions of knowledge are discussed by him, including the opinions of those who denied the possibility of definition. Al-Āmidī’s objections centered principally around tautology, if a definition included, for instance, a reference to cognition or to the object known, and the like. Or they stress lack of comprehensiveness or failure to take due account of the peculiar character of the knowledge of God. His own preferred definition expectedly tries to avoid any such

pitfalls. It discards sense perception as a source of true knowledge and operates with the psychological category of discernment developing into a permanent habit able to decide that something must be so and cannot be different. The following attempt at translating al-Āmidī's discussion of the true nature and definitions of knowledge may stand here for the entire dogged effort of Muslim theology to derive the data of faith from epistemological premises:⁸⁶

“Scholars differ with regard to the notions that are indicative of the true meaning of knowledge.

1. Some⁸⁷ Mu‘tazilah say that ‘knowledge is believing the thing (to be) as it is.’⁸⁸ This is not correct in view of the object of belief in connection with the traditional belief (*taqlīd*) in the existence of God. For it⁸⁹ is something believed (to be) as it is, and belief in it is not knowledge. This cannot be refuted, even if one adds to the definition, ‘to one’s own satisfaction.’⁹⁰ Furthermore, the definition excludes a knowledge of the non-existent that is impossible of existence. For it is a knowledge (that is, something that can be known), but what belongs to it is not a thing, as is generally agreed.

Some add to the definition, ‘when it happens on the basis of necessity or proof.’⁹¹ While this addition removes the first difficulty, it does not remove the second difficulty. Those who think that knowledge does not go with the non-existent that is impossible of existence derive this idea by way of apperceptive knowledge (*ilm taṣdīqi*). Yet, apperceptive knowledge calls upon two kinds of perceptive knowledge (*ilm taṣawwuri*), and one of the two perceptions is the non-existent that is impossible of existence. Thus, they contradict their own assumption, in addition to slighting⁹²

⁸⁶ The three manuscripts of al-Āmidī, *Abkār*, used here (Aya Sofya 2165, fols. 2a–4a; Aya Sofya 2167, fols. 2b–4b; Ahmet III 1774, Vol. 1, fols. 2a–3b), show quite a few discrepancies in their text. Aya Sofya 2167 and Ahmet III 1774, appear usually to go together as against Aya Sofya 2165. For the Aya Sofya manuscripts, see above, p. 47, n. 1. (The date of al-Āmidī’s birth as given above may be too early).

⁸⁷ In the translation, I have tried to distinguish between the plural “some” and the singular “someone.” However, it is not always absolutely certain what al-Āmidī had in mind in each given case. The use of singular forms in the continuation is not decisive. The plural may still be meant.

⁸⁸ Cf. definition F-2, above, p. 63.

⁸⁹ That is, “the existence,” not “God” Himself.

⁹⁰ Cf. definition F-3, above, p. 63.

⁹¹ Cf. definition F-4, above, p. 64.

⁹² *Mukābir*^{an}: Aya Sofya 2157 *munkir*^{an} “denying.”

intuitiveness (*badihah*) and the knowledge, found by every intelligent person himself, of the impossibility of negation and affirmation occurring together, which is not a matter of perception (*ghayr mutaṣawwar*), with negation, moreover, being not knowable (*ghayr ma'lūm*).

2. Judge Abū Bakr (al-Bâqillânî) says that 'knowledge is the cognition of the object known as it is.'⁹³ This is not correct on two counts. First, God possesses knowledge, and there exists a general consensus to the effect that God's knowledge cannot be called cognition (*ma'rifah*). Thus, the definition is not all inclusive. Secondly, al-Bâqillânî defines knowledge (*ilm*) through the object known (*ma'lūm*). Now, *ma'lūm* is derived from *ilm*, and something derived from something is less obvious than the thing from which it is derived. It is impossible to define the more obvious through the less obvious. Also, the definition contains a superfluous addition, namely, 'as it is.' The cognition of the object known must always be 'as it is.'

3. The Shaykh, al-Ash'arî,⁹⁴ uses several notions for the definition knowledge. The first is: 'Knowledge is that which necessitates that he in whom it subsists is knowing.'⁹⁵ The second is: 'That which necessitates for him in whom it subsists the name of knower.'⁹⁶ And the third is: 'Knowledge is the perception (*idrâk*) of the object known as it is.'⁹⁷ The first two notions are adversely affected by the use of '*âlim*' ('knowing, knower'), which is less obvious than *ilm*, in connection with the definition of *ilm*. The third notion also adversely affected by the use of the less obvious *ma'lūm* for the definition of *ilm* as well as by the use of *idrâk* in this connection. *Idrâk* is basically a species (*naw'*) of knowledge, and it is impossible to define the genus by its species. Moreover, there is no need to add, 'as it is,' as stated before.

4. Professor Abû Bakr b. Fûrak says that 'knowledge is that through whose existence he in whom it subsists is enabled to act in an orderly fashion and to act well.'⁹⁸ This is not correct. If Ibn Fûrak means by it 'that through which acting well and in an orderly

⁹³ Cf. definition B-2, above, p. 53.

⁹⁴ The name is omitted in the manuscripts Aya Sofya 2167 and Ahmet III 1774.

⁹⁵ Cf. definition A-7, above, p. 52.

⁹⁶ Cf. definition A-6, above, p. 52.

⁹⁷ Cf. definition C-1, above, p. 56.

⁹⁸ Cf. definition J-1, above, p. 67.

fashion is possible by means of deductive reasoning,' this would be absurd, for acting in an orderly fashion not only depends on knowledge but on power (*qudrâh*) as well. And if he means that acting in an orderly fashion depends on it but not exclusively so, as power is also required for it, (power) would be in the same position, and it is not knowledge. Also, one of us may have a knowledge which has no influence upon the orderly execution of any action either subsisting in him or outside of him, since in our basic view he is not the one to bring (actions) into existence. Furthermore, in order to show the incorrectness of the definition, it has been said that there may be a knowledge of that through which acting in an orderly fashion is not possible, as, for instance, one's knowledge of himself, of God, or of the impossible. What belongs to that is neither an action nor something through which acting in an orderly fashion is possible. This argument, meant to prove the incorrectness of Ibn Fûrak's definition, requires the conclusion that (the definition would, in fact, be acceptable), if one were to say: 'Knowledge is that which makes the orderly execution of everything belonging to it possible.' However, if what is meant is that which makes acting in an orderly fashion possible in general, it is not (acceptable).

5. The Shaykh, Abû l-Qâsim al-Isfârâ'inî, says that 'knowledge is that through which one knows.'⁹⁹ This, again, means defining knowledge by something less obvious.

6. One of the colleagues says: 'Knowledge is the asseveration of the object known as it is.'¹⁰⁰ This is wrong in three respects. The first is that it defines *îlm* through *ma'lûm*. As stated above, this is wrong. The second is that if knowledge is the asseveration of the object known, the knower of the object known would be the one who asseverates the object known. This then requires the conclusion that our knowledge of the existence of the Lord is identical with asseverating it. This is absurd. The third is that *ithbât* (translated here 'asseveration') may be used in the meaning of 'bringing something into existence' or in the meaning of 'causing something to rest after motion,' or it may be used metaphorically for knowledge. Obviously, *ithbât* is meant to be understood here in the first sense. The second usage is impossible in our context. And the third usage would involve the defining of knowledge through knowledge, which is impossible.

⁹⁹ Cf. definition A-1, above, p. 52.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. definition D-3, above, p. 58.

7. Another colleague says that 'knowledge is the clear understanding (*tabayyun*) of the object known as it is.'¹⁰¹ The (superfluous) addition this definition includes is obvious, as is the fact that it defines *ilm* through something less obvious. Its particular (deficiency) is that *tabayyun* indicates appearance after concealment, clarity after obscurity. This makes it necessary to exclude the Lord's knowledge from the definition.

8. Someone else says that 'knowledge is the trust (*thiqah*) that the object known is as it is.'¹⁰² The (superfluous) addition this definition includes is obvious, as is the fact that it defines *ilm* through something less obvious. Moreover, knowledge as the trust with regard to the object known requires the conclusion that he in whom knowledge subsists be trusting. This would make it necessary for the Creator to be trusting with regard to what He is knowing. The employment of such a term for God is impossible according to the religious law.

9. The philosophers say that 'knowledge stands for the fact that the form of the object known has impressed itself upon the soul.'¹⁰³ The consequence would be that the form of heat and of cold is impressed upon the soul of a person who knows heat and cold. This requires the conclusion that he who knows them be hot or cold (just by knowing them). This is absurd. It may be contended that what impresses itself (upon the soul) is but the idea (*mithâl*) of the heat and the cold, and not the heat and the cold themselves. Against this contention, it may be argued that if the idea is equivalent (*musâwi*) in reality to what is represented by it,¹⁰⁴ the difficulty remains applicable. If not, it is not something like (*mithl*) it, and knowledge cannot belong to it.

10. Because it is so difficult to define knowledge, later scholars differ.¹⁰⁵ Some say that there is no way to define knowledge by means of (verbal) definition (*hadd*). It can be defined only through disjunction and example. Others say that the knowledge of knowledge is something intuitive (*badîhi*), since anything other than knowledge can be defined only through knowledge. Thus, if something else were to define knowledge, it would be a case of circular

¹⁰¹ Cf. definition D-1, above, p. 58.

¹⁰² Cf. definition F-1, above, p. 63.

¹⁰³ Cf. definition E-5, above, p. 60.

¹⁰⁴ Aya Sofya 4167 has *al-mumaththal*, against *al-mithl* of the other manuscripts.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. above, p. 48.

reasoning (*dawr*). Also, man knows of necessity his own existence. Knowledge is one of the two perceptions (*taṣawwur*) of this intuitive apperception. Whatever the intuitive depends upon is itself intuitive. Ergo, the perception of knowledge is intuitive.

Both views are not correct. The first statement is not correct, because, if the mentioned method of defining knowledge serves to attain the cognition (*ma'rifah*) of knowledge and its distinction from other (matters), (it is a legitimate method, since verbal) definition (*hadd*) means just that, and nothing else. If it does not serve to distinguish knowledge from other (matters), it does not define knowledge.

The second statement is not cogent. Circular reasoning requires (for its presence) that the process of defining (*tahdīd*) is not taking place through some matter outside knowledge. This does not make the process of defining absolutely impossible, since definition is more general than definition through some matter outside the thing defined, as is obvious—unless knowledge is something simple, which it is not, since it is a species of the category of quality, according to one view, or of the category of relation, according to another. Thus, it is something compound. Moreover, it is not circular reasoning, since circular reasoning takes place only, if there is dependence upon one and the same aspect (*ma'a ittihād jihat at-tawaqquf*). Now, the other-than-knowledge depends upon knowledge not inasmuch as knowledge is an attribute distinguishing it, but inasmuch as it perceives (*mudrik*) it. And knowledge depends upon the other-than-knowledge through the contrary. Consequently, there is no circular reasoning at all.

Even if man's knowledge of his own existence (lit.: the existence of his soul) is intuitive, it does not follow that the various kinds of perceptive knowledge (*al-‘ulūm at-taṣawwuriyah*) are intuitive because of the existence of the intuitive relation between the two. The only meaning there is to the intuitive proposition (*al-qadīyah al-badīhiyah*) is that, if knowledge of its details is attained, the intellect proceeds to (establish) the relation necessary for them without depending upon rational speculation or deductive reasoning, and no matter whether the details in question are known through intuition or through rational speculation. Thus, the soul is one of the perceptions in the example mentioned (concerning man's knowledge of his own existence, the existence of his soul), and the knowledge of the meaning of the soul is not intuitive.

11. The most likely way of defining knowledge is the statement: 'Knowledge stands for an attribute through which the soul of him who possesses this attribute attains the discernment of some reality not perceptible by the senses in the soul, thus guarding himself against the *sensibilia*, at which he arrives in a way that does not leave open the possibility that it could be different from the manner in which it has arrived.'¹⁰⁶ This includes the knowledge of asseveration and negation and of simple (*mufrad*) and compound. It excludes beliefs and guesses, inasmuch as the possibility that objects of belief or guesswork are present in the soul in a manner different from the manner in which they have arrived in the soul is not excluded with regard to the soul.

It is positive (*wujūdī*), and not negative (*salbī*). If it were negative, its negation would be an asseveration, because a double negation is an asseveration, and if this were the case, it would not be possible to negate the knowledge of the non-existent which is impossible of existence, because this would entail describing pure non-existence in an asseverative manner. This would be absurd.

It may be said that even if this proves that knowledge is asseverative, it conflicts with that which proves that it may be negative. Simple ignorance is contradictory to knowledge, and simple negation is not a negative matter. Otherwise, its negation would be an asseveration, as you have mentioned.¹⁰⁷ If it were an asseveration, it would not be possible to negate ignorance of the non-existent which is impossible of existence, because it would entail establishing a description in an asseverative manner of the pure non-existent. This would be absurd. And if simple ignorance is asseverative, the knowledge contradictory to it is negative. We reply: It requires the assumption that simple ignorance is contradictory to knowledge. This is not so. It is contrary (*muqabil*) to it. Contraries are more general than contradictory (matters). From the fact that one of two contraries is asseverative, it does not necessarily follow that the other is negative. Thus, they may be found together in what is false (*kadhib*) through (*bi-n-nisbah ilâ*) what does not accept knowledge. If they were contradictory, they could not be found together in what is false.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. definition D-5, above, p. 58.

¹⁰⁷ "You" in the plural, the usual form in *kalām* discussions where the author wishes to indicate that he is dealing with various schools or with an opponent and the latter's followers.

12. It has been said that 'knowledge is an attribute expressing the relationship between the knower and the object known.'¹⁰⁸ This is debatable. If it is assumed that relationship is non-existence (*'adam*), the negation of relationship must be an asseveration. This requires the conclusion that a negation of a relationship between pure non-existences requires the description of pure non-existence in an asseverative manner. This is absurd. If, on the other hand, it is assumed that relationship is existence (*wujūd*), it follows that relationship between the prior and the posterior can in both cases be described in an asseverative manner, although the one is non-existent. It would also require that relationship through contrariness (*taqâbul*) between negation and affirmation (*ijâb*) can in both cases be described in an asseverative manner, whereas negation is pure non-existence. Now, if both assumptions are absurd, knowledge cannot be an attribute expressing a relationship.

If the concept (*ma'nâ*) of knowledge can be defined, (knowledge) is truly real (*hâsil mutâhaqqiq*), as intelligent men generally agree. Only the Sophists differ in this respect. They will be discussed later on."

Al-Âmidî goes on to speak about the different kinds of knowledge. For him, they are three in number, as they were for his predecessors. The primeval knowledge of God does not come under consideration at this juncture, since this subject, the author states, will come up again in connection with the divine attributes, which is the normal procedure. The newly arising (*hâdîth*) knowledge consists of two kinds, necessary (*darûrî*) knowledge and acquired (*kashî, muktasab*) knowledge. In connection with the necessary knowledge, the most important problem is whether or not it can be gained also by means of rational speculation. For the Jahmîyah, he claims, all knowledge is speculative, and no necessity is involved. Such extreme views are naturally not acceptable to al-Âmidî. However, he cannot avoid drawing quite close to them by agreeing to the statement that necessary knowledge does exist but is attained through rational speculation.

The acquired knowledge is closely allied to speculative knowledge. One of the problems here is whether or not there is such knowledge that can be present without rational speculation and deductive reasoning. Of the five definitions of acquired knowledge, the one

¹⁰⁸ Cf. definition A-14, above, p. 53.

acceptable to al-Āmidī is the definition he ascribes to al-Bâqillânî, which is also that of the Imâm al-Haramayn, defining this knowledge as the knowledge that is guaranteed by sound speculation. While agreeing to it, he finds it a bit obscure and proceeds to suggest some modification for greater precision.

The nine subsections of the fourth section of the discussion of knowledge deal with the *ahkâm al-ilm*, that is, the classification of the various aspects of epistemology. Al-Āmidī discusses here once more the attitude to be taken toward the problem of the relationship of necessary knowledge to rational speculation as well as the problem of whether it is permissible to relate a kind of necessary knowledge to another kind of speculative or necessary knowledge. Then, five much debated points as to the relationship of knowledge and object known are elucidated. The eight subsection refers to the philosophical division of all knowledge into universals and particulars and to the suggested location in the human body of the powers of perception. For the universals, it is the soul. For the particulars, the outward organs are the five senses. The inner powers are also five, all of them located in various parts of the brain. According to al-Āmidī, the more recent philosophers considered the soul the only percipient of both the universals and the particulars, with both the outward and the inner powers of the body being mere instruments for the soul's activity. The ninth subsection, finally, considers the opposites of human knowledge. They are ignorance simple and compound, doubt, conjecture, neglect and forgetfulness, sleep, speculation (*nazar*, as it implies the absence of knowledge with respect to the object speculated about), and death.¹⁰⁹ Traditional knowledge is not mentioned by al-Āmidī as a source of knowledge. It is clear that he feels strongly that wherever possible, the articles of the Muslim faith can and must be explained rationally without any reference to tradition.

Al-Āmidī's approach won the day, particularly in the eastern part of the Muslim world, in Iran and India, where philosophy in the tradition of Ibn Sînâ and as-Suhrawardî *al-maqṭūl* continued to retain its strong appeal. Hardly more than a century after al-Āmidī, the famous Persian theologian, 'Aḍud-ad-dîn al-Ījî (d. 756/1355), compiled a handbook of speculative theology in the

¹⁰⁹ Cf. the list of the Imâm al-Haramayn, above, p. 218. For death as the opposite of knowledge, cf. above, p. 70, n. 2, p. 126, n. 5, and below, p. 321.

tradition of 'Abd-al-Qâhir al-Baghdâdî and al-Âmidî, his much studied and discussed *Mawâqif* “Stations.”¹¹⁰ This is a very systematic and, considering the enormous amount of material accumulated by that time, brief work. Everything here is neatly stated, paragraphed, and numbered in what had become the accepted “philosophical” school tradition. The author’s introduction (*khutbah*) comes right out with the customary presuppositions that were no longer questioned. Man is gifted with innate reason (*aql gharîzî*), necessary knowledge (*îlm darûnî*), and the capability for speculation and deductive reasoning (*nazaâ; istidlâl*). His chief task is to reflect upon God’s creations, so as to attain knowledge of the existence of an eternal Maker. And again we hear that seeing that scholarly disciplines differ in value, the discipline possessing the greatest value for man deserves most to be studied. This discipline, of course, is speculative theology (*îlm al-kalâm*).

The first “station” (*maqwif*) lays the groundwork by discussing the sources of knowledge. Philosophical tradition required al-Îjî to start out by describing the discipline under discussion according to the categories that apply to it as well as any other scholarly discipline. They are definition, object, use, rank, problems, and designation. Then, the opinions on “knowledge as such” are passed in review. Knowledge has been considered necessary, or not necessary and hard to define. Knowledge is attainable through rational speculation. The various definitions attempted in this connection are enumerated and subjected to a searching critique. Then, the divisions of knowledge come under the scrutiny of the author. There are *taṣawwur* and *taṣdîq*, distinguished by the absence or the presence, respectively, of judgment (*hukm*). Newly arising (*hâdîth*) knowledge is divided into necessary and acquired (*muktasab*) knowledge. Both *taṣawwur* and *taṣdîq* are in part, necessary through instinct (*wâjdân*). The school opinions that every knowledge is necessary, that *taṣawwur* is not acquired, that the belief requiring asseveration of the existence and attributes of the Creator is necessary knowledge, and that every knowledge is derived from rational speculation are discussed.

The goal of speculative theology is the establishment of necessary

¹¹⁰ The publication of van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, makes the following few remarks on al-Îjî’s work largely superfluous, but I have decided to retain them in view of the importance of the *Mawâqif* as a significant station in the history of theological “knowledge.”

knowledge (pl. *‘ulūm darūriyah*). All kinds of necessary knowledge may be divided into knowledge acquired instinctively (*wijdāniyāt*), which is of little extent and consequence, and knowledge through sense perception (*hissiyāt*) and through intuition (*badīhiyāt*). With regard to sense perception and intuition as sources of knowledge, there are four different views. The majority recognizes both as sources of knowledge. Then there are those who disparage the role of sense perception, as was done by Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy, and Galen. There are others who disparage the role of intuition. Some, finally, such as the Sophists and I-do-not-knowers (*lā-adriyah*), deny that either, or anything else for that matter, can provide knowledge.

Expectedly, the discussion continues with the discussion of rational speculation as the means to attain the desired goal. Rational speculation is defined and described as either sound or wrong. The former provides knowledge. However, there are dissenters. Thus, the Sumaniyah, of Indian provenience, deny categorically that speculation can lead to knowledge. The “geometricians” (*muhandisūn*) are of the opinion that rational speculation can lead only to scientific mathematical knowledge (*handasiyāt*), but not to metaphysical knowledge.¹¹¹ In this respect, the most it can achieve is the formulation of guesses and opinions that are relatively speaking more likely. And the “heretics” (*malāhidah*, referring to the Ismā‘ilī Shī‘ah) deny that speculation without a teacher or guide (*mu‘allim, imām*) can lead to the knowledge of God. This is followed by a discussion of the methods by which knowledge can be attained through rational speculation, and of the conditions necessary for the exercise of such speculation. There is general agreement that rational speculation as a means to attain knowledge

¹¹¹ The Sumaniyah and the *muhandisūn* are also cited by the ‘Allāmah al-Hillī, *Anwār al-malakūt*, 5, who refers to the latter as “a group of the ancients.” They assume allegedly that only observation by the senses can produce knowledge. Cf. also, for instance, al-Ghazzālī, *Mustasfā*, I, 85; aş-Şābūnī, *Bidāyah*, in the Bursa Ms. Haraççı 1296, fol. 3b; Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Rāzī, *Muhaṣṣal*, who apparently does not mention the Sumaniyah by name, but cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Lubāb al-Muhaṣṣal*, ed. P. Luciano Rubio, 15 f. Tetuán 1952; Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-İjī, in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 220; and, in particular, van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, 257 ff., 274 ff.

For a very different modern elaboration of the theorem that “neither observation nor reason can be described as a source of knowledge,” cf. K. R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (New York and London 1962).

about God (*ma'rifat Allâh*) is a duty of every Muslim. It is a duty either on the basis of reason, as maintained by the Mu'tazilah, or on the basis of tradition (*sam'*), as argued by al-Îjî himself. In fact, it is the first duty of every responsible Muslim. After the discussion of three more problems concerning the application of rational speculation, analogical reasoning is briefly mentioned as the successful method of rational speculation. Only very briefly is the role of traditional evidence in achieving knowledge touched upon. It is considered very restricted, and highly disputed as to its effectiveness in intellectual matters.

In the following three "stations," al-Îjî continues his epistemological reflections with the customary survey of the situation as regards the objects of knowledge. The remaining two "stations"—followed by a brief concluding section, principally on the various Muslim sects—deal with metaphysics, God and His attributes, and with traditional religion, prophecy, resurrection, faith and unbelief, and the imâmate. They cover only two-fifths of the entire work. This is not without significance. The theological purpose of *kaldâm* is always present, and it constitutes, of course, the *raison d'être* for the labors of the author. But it has here been pushed into the background by the intense interest of al-Îjî and his environment in the problem of knowledge. On the other hand, the premises posited in connection with the theological purpose have gained a position of undisputed acceptance. This fact finds its principal expression in the role attributed to "necessary knowledge" which, as we have seen, has taken the place of "knowledge" as such in the *khutbah* of the *Mawâqif*. Theology, it turns out, is forever based upon "knowledge," but knowledge has been tailored to fit the needs of theology.

* * *

Following the theologians, the writers on "the principles of jurisprudence" also came to adopt an epistemological introduction in their works. In their case, this was a slower process than the corresponding development in theology, and for good reasons. Theology was inspired, as we have seen, by precedents outside Islam. Moreover, unlike jurisprudence, it was not primarily directed toward action and the practical needs of society. Its fundamental concern was with metaphysical data, and it aimed at achieving insight and inner certainty (which is not to deny, of course, the

practical consequences inherent in the work of the theologians). Concerned as it was with practical affairs, jurisprudence might have managed to stay away from any theoretical speculation about knowledge to a large extent, if not entirely. However, this was not the course it was to take. Muslim jurisprudence started out as “knowledge” (*ilm*). The fact that the word employed for jurisprudence (*fiqh*) was indeed one of the general terms in Arabic indicating mental activity and assumed its restricted technical meaning only in Islam continued to give some linguistic support to the identification of jurisprudence with knowledge. Just as the traditionists considered *ilm* pure and simple to mean the kind of knowledge that formed the subject of their particular discipline, the jurists claimed *ilm* by preference to be legal knowledge, although they happened to be somewhat less successful than the traditionists in this endeavor.¹¹²

Already ash-Shâfi‘î’s *Risâlah* shows a deep concern not only with what constitutes legal knowledge and demarcates its extent but also with the more demanding and searching subject of how legal knowledge can be obtained and its correctness and propriety explained and justified.¹¹³ It may, however, be noted that his brief discussion of the sources of knowledge still remains buried within the context of the work. It is not given the prominent position in the beginning which would have proclaimed it to be the basis for the entire subsequent discussion. Moreover, it is fully obvious that ash-Shâfi‘î rejected the possibility of, and certainly did not feel compelled to adduce, logical reasoning in order to establish the general character of knowledge and to show how this might affect the sources of legal knowledge. For the jurist, the close observation of linguistic usage is another indispensable tool for finding legal knowledge and plays a much larger role than it does for the theologian. Thus, it is not surprising that ash-Shâfi‘î already includes repeated references to the importance of an accurate knowledge of the Arabic language for those who wish to understand the processes leading to the formation of the law.

The state of affairs reached by ash-Shâfi‘î and observable in his famous *Risâlah* underwent a marked change soon after his time. However, the results of this change become tangible for us

¹¹² Cf. also below, pp. 243 ff.

¹¹³ Cf. ash-Shâfi‘î, *Risâlah*, trans. Khadduri, 81, 289 f. Cf. above pp. 72 f.

only about two centuries later. The course taken by the jurists concerned with the principles of jurisprudence can be surmised with reasonable certainty. *Ra'y* “opinion,” *ijtihâd* “independent judgment,” and *qiyâs* “analogical reasoning”—all three terms, and, in particular, *ijtihâd* and *qiyâs*, originally being synonyms¹¹⁴—were, as J. Schacht has shown, the basic source of legal knowledge for early Islam. The task of defining their role in jurisprudence and of restricting this role to a greater or lesser extent was undertaken by the legal schools which achieved predominance with the ninth century. Mu'tazilah theologians who were concerned with the law naturally stressed the paramount and nearly exclusive importance of analogical reasoning and the methodology, out of which it grew, which was *nazar* “rational speculation.”¹¹⁵ Their attitude was fought by their dogmatic opponents in their concern with the law with all the means at their disposal. However, modified and deprived of its uncompromising insistence upon reason, it was taken up by subsequent “Ash'arite” theologians, and it thus managed to get into the mainstream of Muslim legal thought. As al-Âmidî saw quite correctly in retrospect, one of the disciplines that nourished the science of the principles of jurisprudence was the *ilm al-kalâm*.¹¹⁶ The quarrel with the Mu'tazilah/Mutakallimûn resulted in the urgent necessity for jurists to give attention to the problems of knowledge, and, ultimately, it led to the unshakable habit of stating their attitude toward the sources of knowledge in the philosophical sense and doing so at the very outset of their discussion. The fact that *qiyâs* also served as a central term in formal logic as the Arabic term rendering Greek *syllogismos* apparently had no direct bearing on the connection of legal theory with epistemology. However, another avenue leading jurists to the discussion of the problems of the attainment of certainty in knowledge was opened up to them by the science of *hadîth*. For *hadîth* scholars, the requirements governing the transmission of traditions so as to give sufficient assurance of their truthfulness were a matter of constant concern.¹¹⁷ The writers on the principles of jurisprudence took over this discussion as far as was needed for their purposes, but it stayed within the treatment of the Prophet's

¹¹⁴ Cf. ash-Shâfi'i, *Risâlah*, trans. Khadduri, 288.

¹¹⁵ Cf. J. Schacht, *Origins*, 128.

¹¹⁶ See below, pp. 238 f.

¹¹⁷ Cf. above, p. 195.

sunnah as one of the sources of legal knowledge. It did not push itself forward to the head of the exposition as did the *kalām*-derived epistemology.

The development outlined makes it unlikely, and indeed impossible, that works on the principles of jurisprudence could have had introductions dealing with “knowledge” before such introductions had made their appearance in works on speculative theology. The relevant legal material that has been preserved is large and has not yet been adequately studied. When it becomes available, much of what has been stated here as based upon inference may be confirmed—or refuted. Presently, however, it would seem probable that legal authors did not get around to writing such introductions before well into the tenth century. Even thereafter, these introductions were not as standardized in form and contents as were their counterparts in works on speculative theology, and they seem always brief in proportion to the usually massive size of the work of which they form part. They differ considerably in size, and their size would seem to be a measure of the weight they were intended to carry. Al-Ghazzālī went so far as to state expressly that his introductory remarks on intellectual perception according to the elements of logic at the beginning of the *Mustasfā* could be safely omitted by copyists who wished to do so, because they applied to all scholarly disciplines in general and were not restricted in their application to the principles of jurisprudence.¹¹⁸

Ibn Ḥazm's¹¹⁹ principal motive as an author of works on jurisprudence and theology was the refutation, often undertaken in very bitter terms, of the Ash'arites and, in their forefront, al-Bâqillâni. As is well known, Ibn Ḥazm was opposed in principle to the use of *qiyâs* as a source of law. But he was also convinced of the validity of evidence resulting from the intellect and deductive reasoning, and he believed in innate, necessary knowledge: “We

¹¹⁸ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mustasfā*, I, 7.

¹¹⁹ Judge 'Abd-al-Jabbâr's *'Umad* on the principles of jurisprudence (cf. Ibn Khaldûn, *Muqâdimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 29) has not yet been recovered, or is preserved only in part, if the identification in Sezgin, I, 625, is correct. The beginning of the seventeenth section of his *Mughnî* which dealt with the principles of jurisprudence is also not preserved in the manuscript described by M. El-Khodeiri, in *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire*, V (1958), 421, cf. also the edition of Vol. XVII of the *Mughnî* (Cairo 1962).

The works of ad-Dâbûsî (d. 430/1039, cf. Sezgin, I, 456), which should have been consulted, were not accessible.

are forced to recognize (*ma'rifah*) that the things are realities (*haqâ'iq*) and that they do exist as they are, and that nobody knows how this (insight) came to him . . . This knowledge (*ma'rifah*) that is ours of necessity and created by the Creator in our souls after they have joined the body when we first show understanding (*fahm*) constitutes the origin for the discernment of true as distinguished from untrue data (*haqâ'iq/bawâtil*) and the elementary basis for every knowledge (*ma'rifah*).¹²⁰ In his *Ihkâm* on the principles of jurisprudence, he refers to his previously published *Taqrib* on logic for a more detailed exposition of the logical foundations on which his discussion rests.¹²¹ For his introduction, he chooses as his first topic the various powers given by God to man, such as justice, wrath, desire, understanding (*fahm*), ignorance, intelligence (*'aql*), and “the power of discernment which the ancients have named logic (*mantiq*), through which God has opened up a path toward understanding His divine, address, toward the knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) things as they are,¹²² and toward the potential achievement of understanding (*im-kân at-tafahhum*), through which man mounts the ladder of understanding (*fahm*) and is delivered from the darkness of ignorance. This power brings into being the knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of truth as distinguished from untruth.”¹²³ Ibn Hazm subjects to his critique the four views concerning the sources of knowledge, that is, that all knowledge is derived 1. from inspiration (*ilhâm*), or 2. from the teachings of a religious leader (*imâm*), or 3. from transmitted information (*khabar*), or 4. through a blind trust in tradition (*taqlid*). These do not admit the possibility of evidence gained through reasoning, which Ibn Hazm upholds.¹²⁴ On the origin of language, he does not want to commit himself, but he tends toward the view that the single original language of mankind, from which all other languages were derived, owes its development not to convention but to divine teaching (*tawqîf*). Very sensibly, he argues against those who feel that there are qualitative differences between the various languages, and who claim that theirs is the best (*afdal*) language.¹²⁵ The subject

¹²⁰ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Ihkâm*, III, 9. See also Ibn Hazm, *Taqrib*, 156.

¹²¹ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Ihkâm*, I, 8, 36, also, IV, 71, V, 82, 107.

¹²² Cf. definitions B-3 and B-4, above, pp. 54 f.

¹²³ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Ihkâm*, I, 4.

¹²⁴ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Ihkâm*, I, 13.

¹²⁵ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Ihkâm*, I, 33.

of language leads to a long list of definitions for the technical terms of rational speculation, including definitions of the two terms for definition (*hadd* and *rasm*).¹²⁶ This is immediately followed by the definition of knowledge. In this connection, Ibn Ḥazm polemicizes expressly against Ash‘arite definitions of *‘ilm*. With reference to his *Taqrīb*, he states that knowledge may be necessary knowledge derived primarily from sense perception or intuitive knowledge, or it may be derived from primary rational and sensory data.¹²⁷ Or knowledge may be obtained by following an individual whom God has commanded other human beings to follow as the bringer of truth not on the basis of necessity or rational deduction. He discusses terms such as *i‘tiqād* “belief,” *burhān* “proof,” *dalīl* “evidence,” *ṣidq* and *kadhib* “truth/falsehood,” *haqq* and *bāṭil* “true/ untrue,” *jahl* “ignorance” (that is, “the absence of the reality of knowledge from the soul”), *aql* “intellect,” as well as *ma‘lūm* “known, object of knowledge.” *Ma‘lūm* includes as necessarily certain knowledge what is known through well attested tradition from the Prophet, or what is agreed upon by all Muslim scholars as going back to the Prophet, or what is transmitted by one reliable authority on the authority of other reliable scholars going back to the Prophet.¹²⁸ The explanation of technical terms is followed by an elaboration of the precise meanings of the particles of speech, as this is of supreme importance in many cases for finding the law.¹²⁹

Al-Ghazzālī expectedly takes a rather different approach in the preliminaries of his standard work on the principles of jurisprudence, the *Mustasfā*. His preface (*khuṭbah*) sets the tone with a long paean on knowledge. The intellect comes first, and knowledge follows it. However, knowledge clearly enjoys here much greater esteem and deserves particularly to be stressed in connection with jurisprudence: “Praised be God,” al-Ghazzālī starts out, “who made the intellect the most desirable of treasures, and knowledge the most profitable of merchandise, the noblest of high glories, the most honored

¹²⁶ As in Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrīb*, 19.

¹²⁷ Cf. also Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 65.

¹²⁸ Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 41 f.

¹²⁹ Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām*, I, 51 ff. See also Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 25 ff.

The *Kitāb al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh* by the Imām al-Haramayn is another of the works on the principles of jurisprudence which might help to round out the picture presented here, if it were preserved, but it seems that it has not yet been recovered.

of effective and praiseworthy accomplishments, and the most lauded result of everything, so that through its asseveration pens and inkwells have been ennobled, through its study prayer niches and pulpits have been adorned, through the tracing of its pages and fascicles have been embellished, through its nobility lesser men have gained precedence over bigger men, through its splendor secrets and hidden things have been illumined, through its lights hearts and eyes have been filled with light, in its brilliance the sun's shining brilliance has assumed insignificance for the revolving sphere, and in its inner light the outward light of eyes and glances has become puny, so that as a result through its brilliance the armies of the hearts and minds have been enabled to delve into the deepest abysses of obscurities, even though the eyes were too weak for them and they were thickly covered by veils and curtains." Obedience to God consists of knowledge and intelligence. In this respect, knowledge is again to be rated higher than the intellect. There are three kinds of scholarly disciplines (*ulūm*), namely, 1. those that are purely intellectual, 2. those that are purely traditional, and 3. those of the highest type, that is, those consisting of a combination of intellect and tradition, opinion and religious law. It is to the last mentioned category that the science of the principles of jurisprudence belongs. The introduction of the *Mustasfā* deals with epistemology, the attainment of speculative knowledge through definition and proof. It features a theoretical discussion of definition and its application to such terms as definition itself and knowledge, followed by a discussion of the theory of logical proof. There are no extended lists of defined terms nor any detailed speculation about language in the manner of Ibn Ḥazm. Al-Ghazzālī later on investigates the problem of the derivation of knowledge from well attested tradition. Such knowledge, he says, was denied by the Sumanīyah, while among the Mu'tazilah, Abū l-Qāsim al-Kā'bī al-Balkhī considered it as derived in fact from rational speculation.¹³⁰

Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Rāzī's influential *Mahṣūl* on the principles of jurisprudence¹³¹ first defines in some detail the meaning of *fiqh*. Then, the author argues that an explanation of the significance of the concepts of knowledge, guesswork, rational speculation, and

¹³⁰ Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Mustasfā*, I, 85.

¹³¹ For Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Rāzī, *Mahṣūl*, I used the modern copy in the Yale University Library L-643 (Catalogue Nemoy 1039).

religious law (*hukm shar'i*) is needed, and he proceeds to present briefly his theory of knowledge. There are various kinds of knowledge. We have knowledge derived from the five senses and knowledge derived from feelings such as pleasure and pain (*wijdānīyāt*), which are related kinds of knowledge. We have knowledge through intuition and knowledge through rational speculation. They fall into another category. Then there is knowledge derived from a combination of sense perception and reason. This knowledge is also of two kinds. There is knowledge derived from a tradition based on information transmitted by many authorities (*mutawātirāt*) which relies upon a combination of hearing (*sam'*, oral transmission) and reason, and there is knowledge based upon experience and conjecture (*mujarrabāt* and *hadsiyāt*) which relies upon a combination of reason and the other four senses. After knowledge, there come blind belief (*i'tiqād al-mugallid*), ignorance, doubt, guesswork, and estimation (*wahm*). As usual, more space is required for the subsequent explanation of rational speculation and evidence (*dalīl/amārah*). The obligatory chapter on language, which again is not very detailed, includes a remarkably clear exposition of the theory of the social origin of language as a means of communicating individual needs by members of a group.

Al-Āmīdī, who was born only a few years after Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Rāzī, wrote not only the important work on theology discussed before but also an impressive manual of the principles of jurisprudence, entitled *al-Ihkām*, or *Ihkām al-hukkām, fī usūl al-ahkām*. Like ar-Rāzī, he does not follow al-Ghazzālī's example with respect to the inclusion of a flowery *khutbah* with its popularizing praise of knowledge. For his starting point, he chooses the Aristotelian dissection of the subject matter of any given scholarly discipline. The items to be clarified are the meaning (*ma'nā*) of the subject by means of definition (*hadd* and *rasm*), its object, its end, its problems and conditions that bear investigation, and its foundations and basic principles on which to build (*istimdād*). The verbal definition of *fiqh* as simply meaning "knowledge" does not appear to be quite acceptable to the author. It seems that he on his part prefers that of "understanding" (*fahm*) (Fakhr-ad-dīn ar-Rāzī had more fancifully expressed himself to the effect that the lexical meaning of *fiqh* was to be defined as "a notion expressing the purpose of the speaker by his speech"). The foundations upon which the principles of jurisprudence build are three, speculative

theology, the Arabic language (*al-‘Arabiyah*), and the religious laws (*al-ahkām ash-shar‘iyah*). A separate chapter is devoted by al-Āmidī to each of them. The briefest chapter is the one discussing the foundation derived from theology. Definitions only of evidence, rational speculation, knowledge, and guesswork are said to be needed, and they are therefore presented. The discussion of language, and its origin is here somewhat more extensive but remains comparatively concise. Consideration of the questions whether a well attested tradition can provide knowledge and whether it could generate, knowledge comes as usual later in connection with the discussion of traditional information.¹³²

Innumerable lawyers, the political leaders of the Muslim community everywhere, were trained for their profession by the study of works of the kind described. They were thus thoroughly imbued with the idea that in their legal work, they were engaged in the application of “knowledge”. Theirs was a particular knowledge evolved from certain sources according to certain rules. However, it was by no means fundamentally different from what was implied in the basic understanding of the concept of knowledge. It was their particular task to evaluate human actions, and this they were trained to do according to the conformity or lack of conformity shown by those actions to a “knowledge” previously acquired in some sort of rational manner.

As medieval Muslims themselves might have put it, theology and law were the twin pillars of Islam responsible for the welfare of the Muslim community in the other world as well as in this. As we might say, they were the determinants of a social structure distinguishing Muslim society from other societies. What deserves to be stressed is that both were seen basically as “knowledge”, and they were labeled “knowledge” by preference. The “knowers” (*‘ulamā’*), first in the view of the representatives of theology and law but later on for the generality of Muslims, were, specifically, the members of the learned classes that controlled all religious life and the civilian aspects of political life. But it was not merely factual knowledge. It was also knowledge resting, or so it was believed, on a scientifically demonstrable epistemological basis.

¹³² Cf. al-Āmidī, *Ihkām*, I, 151, 156.

CHAPTER EIGHT

KNOWLEDGE IS SOCIETY (Education)

1. *Ilm-Amal-Adab: KNOWLEDGE, ACTION, GENERAL EDUCATION*

Information is the cement that holds together any human society, and a continuous process of education is necessary to assure its preservation and extension. The goal is always identical, but the stages may be marked by a different terminology, and thereby the value system sustaining a given society on its course is altered in appearance and reality. The specific problem confronting us here is the degree to which a generalizing abstraction such as "knowledge" has dominated the verbalization of the human striving for improvement through learning and education in Islam. As we have seen, the term "knowledge" itself represents different notions and values. Modern discussions of what type of knowledge and what kind of education are preferable clearly show that the knowledge desired by some may mean ignorance and stagnation for others. However, the complexion of a society cannot fail to impress its historian as different, if all its intellectual efforts and, indeed, all its educational efforts constantly stress the importance of the term "knowledge" and the terms "teaching" and "learning" which, among the languages of Muslim peoples, the linguistic structure of Arabic at least makes almost one and the same thing as knowledge, and if there is nothing, neither morality, nor piety, nor action, nor any other possible societal value that enjoys the same degree of exposure as is reserved to "knowledge." For medieval Muslim civilization, we have to rely upon the evidence of the preserved literature. Its abundance and variety make it virtually certain that the glorification of knowledge expressed by it extended to all phases of life and educational activity and to all classes of the population. It is hard to conceive of any place, no matter how remote, where there might have existed anyone, no matter how humble and uneducated, who was not filled with awe when he heard the word "knowledge." And it was generally recognized that any genuine betterment of an individual's standing in society depended on his share of knowledge, in preference to the uncertain avenues

of birth, power, and wealth, or as yet unverbalized values such as individual identity, usefulness to society, and the like.

There is pleasure (*ladhdhah*) in knowledge for the person who possesses knowledge.¹ According to Aristotle, the characteristic pleasure of man, the one he does not share with all other animals, is the pleasure of knowledge (*ladhdhat al-ma‘rifah*).² A littérateur and philologist such as Abū Hilâl al-‘Askarî tells us how deeply he felt this pleasure of knowledge, which comes after the long process of learning, and he puts his feeling into verse: “Since we have come to know about the pleasure of knowledge, neither the sweet nor the tasty pleases us any more.”³ Since knowledge secures access to happiness in both this world and the next, it is the greatest of pleasures, just as ignorance is the greatest of pains.⁴ In fact, one who has tasted the pleasure of knowledge would never think of finding pleasure in anything else.⁵ A veritable physical love (*ishq*) can be felt for knowledge. This is stated in a work on love by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah in the first half of the fourteenth century.⁶ The lovers of knowledge feel a stronger attraction and infatuation than do lovers for their beloved, and even the most beautiful human form may not be capable to divert many a lover of knowledge from his one true love. Scholars cannot be tempted into giving up their dedicated search for knowledge, even if strenuous study affects their health. Half a century before Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah, al-Anṣârî expressed what was also in the mind of the later scholar, namely, that the love of knowledge—al-Anṣârî uses the less sensual term *mahabbah*—is part of man’s innate love of any kind of inner perfection. In the Qur’ân, it is said that every group is pleased with

¹ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mîzân al-‘amal*, 191.

² Cf. *Kitâb as-Sâ‘îdah*, 43, 46 ff., 54, also, 84, where studying is described as a passive pleasure; *at-Tawhîdî*, *Imtâ’*, II, 36. On the Greek side, cf., for instance, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174b21; *Metaphysics* 1072b24. The *Mahâbhârata* also speaks of knowledge as the only pleasure, or rather, as something that makes pleasure superfluous, cf. L. Sternbach, in *JÂOS*, LXXXIII (1963), 52a.

³ Cf. al-‘Askarî, *Hathth*; also his *Dîwân al-ma‘âni*, II, 78 (Cairo 1352).

⁴ Cf. al-Kâfiyâjî, in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 575. In a more restricted sense, knowledge is one of the pleasures of this world. It becomes useful for the other world, only if it is acted upon, cf. al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Iqtîdâ’*, 169. See also above, p. 205, n. 3.

⁵ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 177, in the name of Plato.

⁶ Cf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah, *Rawdat al-muhibbîn*, ed. A. ‘Ubayd, 68 f. (Cairo 1375/1956).

⁷ Cf. Qur’ân 23: 53/55 and 30: 32/31, where a negative judgment is intended.

what it has,⁷ and the philosopher al-Kindî, following Hellenistic, and probably Stoic, tradition, had explained it as the result of habit that even harmful and despicable accomplishments such as those of the gambler, the female impersonator, the swindler and thief, were a source of joy and pride for those who could boast of them.⁸ It was known to the Muslims from the opening sentence of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that the desire for knowledge is a natural endowment of all human beings, and it was considered one of God's greatest gifts to mankind that he created them lovers of knowledge through their own psychological disposition (*min anfusihim*).⁹ For al-Anṣârî, too, it is a psychological need that makes man fall in love with whatever he happens to know, and the pleasure caused by such love grows in intensity, the more important the object of his psychological affection turns out to be: "The soul loves the objects of knowledge it has attained, whether they are noble or vile. However, the nobler a given object of knowledge is, the greater is the pleasure caused by his knowledge in the person who attains it. Nobody is entirely devoid of some pleasure caused by some knowledge. A child feels pleasure through his acquaintance with different games and is happy, if he is called efficient in those games and described as excelling his friends by his skill in them. The soul of a person who knows a craft rejoices at the realization that he alone knows it. Even a chess player is happy with his knowledge of chess. The pleasure it gives him diverts him from eating and drinking. He is pained, if he is called a poor player. Likewise, we find a man who knows the secrets of ruling a city and how to administrate it as nobody else does, rejoicing at his knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and his mastery over the conditions to be fulfilled by one who wants to be able to exercise political power. Now, assuming he knows the secrets enabling him to rule the entire earth, the pleasure given him by the feeling of being qualified for this task and being good at it would compare with no other pleasure.

⁸ Cf. H. Ritter and R. Walzer, *Uno scritto morale inedito di al-Kindî*, 33 f., 49 f. (Rome 1938, *Mem. R. Accad. Naz. dei Lincei*, VI, VIII, 1), quoted by al-Ghazzâlî, *Iḥyâ*, III, 51. In connection with the passage, M. Pöhlenz, in *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, CC (1938), 414, refers to Epictetus, *Encheiridion*, III, 1, 26 ff., ed. H. Schenkl, 235 ff. (reprint Stuttgart 1965), which, however, contains only an attack upon effeminacy. Cf. also Aristotle, *Problemata* 917a6 ff.

⁹ Cf. al-Āmirî, *Ilâm*, 86.

How great, then, must be the pleasure of the man who knows about (‘-r-f) God...!”¹⁰

The ways in which authors on all conceivable subjects as well as those dealing technically with the subject of education tried to benefit from the charismatic role they had helped to create for the concept of knowledge in Muslim society are innumerable and cannot be exhaustively presented. Only a few special aspects may be chosen here for discussion. It was only natural for an author to stress, however briefly, his conviction that he was making a contribution to knowledge, and this he did at the beginning of his work. More important, there was a rather general desire to present one’s own particular discipline as *the* knowledge. This reflects in part the fact that the word *ilm* also designated the individual scholarly discipline. Thus, while speaking of his own discipline, a scholar could very well refer to it by the abbreviated designation of “the discipline” (*al-ilm*). However, scholars were also inclined to consider the subject they cultivated the only true knowledge. The religious history of *ilm* in Islam constituted an especially strong challenge in this direction. As we have seen, the religious disciplines were in the forefront of those attempting to restrict the term “knowledge” to their own concerns. The device employed frequently was a bipartition of knowledge, with one part favoring a particular branch of learning, and the other being branded as useless, on the model of the Prophetic tradition stating that “Knowledge is of two kinds (lit., two knowledges), a knowledge in the heart and a knowledge on the tongue; the knowledge of the heart is the useful knowledge, while the knowledge of the tongue is God’s argument against His servants.”¹¹ Great fame and influence attached to a remark by ash-Shâfi‘î that “knowledge is of two kinds, the knowledge of religion and the knowledge of this world.” This was explained, apparently not by ash-Shâfi‘î himself, as referring to jurisprudence as the knowledge that goes with religion, and to medicine as the knowledge that goes with this world. “Every-

¹⁰ Cf. al-Anṣârî, *Mashâriq anwâr al-qulûb*, ed. H. Ritter, 49 (Beirut 1379/1959).

¹¹ Cf. *Concordance*, IV, 330b53 f., quoted, for instance, by Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 126; Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 227, where it is ascribed to al-Hasan (al-Bâṣrî); Ibn Taymîyah, *al-Ímân*, 17.

thing else, such as poetry or the like, is trouble and blemish.”¹² For Ṣūfīs, as is to be expected, this explanation was highly unsatisfactory. Abū ‘Uthmān al-Maghribī (d. 373/983–84) felt no hesitation to praise ash-Shāfi‘ī for what must have been very far from the latter’s mind, namely, that “the knowledge of religions” was the knowledge of the true realities and of gnostic insight (*al-haq̄iq wa-l-ma‘rif*), while “the knowledge of the bodies” was the knowledge of the various ways of political (?) guidance, ascetic training, and mystic exercise (*as-siyāsāt wa-r-riyādāt wa-l-mujāhadāt*).¹³ Other, earlier Ṣūfīs had similarly appropriated *al-ilm* for mysticism by stating, as al-Junayd is supposed to have done, that “knowledge is of two kinds, the knowledge of extension (*bast*) from the oneness of the One to the very end of multiplicity, and the knowledge of contraction (*qabd*) from multiplicity to (that) oneness.” For Ruwaym (d. 303/915–16), the two kinds of knowledge were “rational and traditional, the rational knowledge being eternal, and the traditional knowledge being time-bound; the rational knowledge being the root, and the traditional knowledge being the branch.” For Abū l-‘Abbās Ibn ‘Aṭā’ (d. 309/921–22, or 311), they were, in turn, “clarification and obfuscation, the former belonging to the hearts, and the latter belonging to the tongues.” Abū Sa‘id al-Kharrāz had already progressed from two to three kinds of knowledge, “the knowledge of technical skills (*sinā‘at*) applicable to the various species of compound objects, the knowledge of words (*lafz*) applicable to the composition of expressions, and the knowledge of management (*tadbīr*) applicable to the various kinds of political guidance (*siyāsāt*).”¹⁴

In his work on the literary fixation of knowledge (*Tagyīd al-ilm*), the Khatīb al-Baghdādī leaves no doubt that although the “knowledge” of the work’s title is supposed to include all worthwhile religious knowledge, his intention was to equate it with the science of the Prophetic traditions. The commonly accepted idea that the various branches of knowledge differed in importance and value

As an example of the rather typical narrow-minded approach to the subject of useful versus useless knowledge, one may compare Ibn Rajab’s *Fadl ilm as-salaf*.

¹² Cf. Ibn Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, *Āddāb ash-Shāfi‘ī*, 321 f. (Cairo 1372/1953). For ash-Shāfi‘ī’s statement, see also Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 208.

¹³ Cf. as-Sulāmi, *Tabaqāt*, 480. In this context, *siyāsāt* would seem to refer to individual “management,” training and self-control. However, in al-Kharrāz’ statement cited below, it appears to refer to group control.

¹⁴ The preceding four statements are to be found in Abū Hayyān at-Tawhīdī, *Baṣā’ir*, ed. I. al-Kaylānī, I, 466 (Damascus 1964). Cf. also above, p. 184.

was easily pressed into service for claiming exclusive title to “knowledge” for the discipline considered the most important one of all—one’s own. When Abû l-Layth as-Samarqandî in the tenth century spoke of the excellence of knowledge, he came out right away with the statement that the knowledge he had in mind was jurisprudence. “Knowledge is good, and the best and most important knowledge after the knowledge about God and God’s oneness is jurisprudence.”¹⁵ Some room had to be made for the knowledge of the Prophetic traditions, therefore, “knowledge is where there is the expression, ‘he transmitted to us’; everything else is the whispering of devils.” And “all the sciences except the Qur’ân and the traditions are heresy.”¹⁶

Scholars in the field of non-religious sciences were obviously not in a position to be as outspoken in their attempts to monopolize “knowledge” for their particular endeavors. When a representative of *adab* used the device of the two kinds of knowledge, he could praise the *‘ilm al-adab* as serving the important purpose of “cleansing and polishing the hearts,” yet, he had to acknowledge that preference was due to the other knowledge, the knowledge that prepared a person for his salvation in the other world.¹⁷ Esoteric disciplines such as alchemy claimed to be “*the craft*” (*as-ṣan‘ah*), and also “*the science*” (*al-‘ilm*), as in the title of a work in the Jâbir corpus, “On Confidence in the Soundness of the Science.”¹⁸ We also find, for instance, Fakhr-ad-dîn ar-Râzî in the beginning of his commentary on Ibn Sînâ’s *Ishârât* burst into the customary praise of knowledge: “All hearts agree, and all minds concur that knowledge is the most excellent happiness and the most perfect perfection and degree, and that the men of knowledge are the most distinguished and most outstanding of men.” Then, with the help of the expression “especially,” he inferred that this applied in particular to the true philosophical sciences, which therefore alone constituted real, worthwhile knowledge.¹⁹ However, the non-

¹⁵ A verse ascribed to ash-Shâfi‘î admits as *‘ilm* only the Qur’ân, the *hadîth*, and jurisprudence, while all the rest is Satanic twaddle, cf. as-Subkî, *Tabaqât ash-Shâfi‘iyah*, I, 157. This was, in fact ash-Shâfi‘î’s view, cf. above, pp. 72 f.

¹⁶ Cf. the Istanbul Ms. Topkapusaray, Ahmet III 1548 (Catalogue Karatay, III, nos. 5213 and 5230).

¹⁷ Cf. al-Qurashî, *Jamharâl ash-‘âr al-‘Arab*, ed. ‘Ali M. al-Bajâwî, 38 f. (Cairo, n.y.; [1968?]).

¹⁸ Cf. *Fihrist*, 357 = 502; Kraus, *Jâbir*, I, 70, no. 236.

¹⁹ Cf. above, p. 61, n. 6.

religious sciences had often to be satisfied with merely stressing the usefulness of all knowledge, including their own. Nonetheless, all their representatives liked to think of the term “knowledge” as preferably applying to their own specialties. There was no real value for society in any subject, unless it was called indispensable knowledge more useful than any other knowledge.

Of singular significance for the fate of the term *ilm* in societal organization and in education was its pairing with *'amal* “action.”²⁰ In their combined use, it may be noted, *ilm* usually precedes *'amal*. Knowledge comes before action. A *hadîth* of the Prophet that “it is charity (*sadaqah*) to learn (*‘-l-m*), to act accordingly, and to teach,” provoked the comment that here knowledge was mentioned before action.²¹ An exact quotation of Matthew 5:19 (*poiēsei kai didaxēi*) as a *hadîth* in at-Tirmidhî speaks of “acting and teaching” in this sequence,²² but elsewhere, it appears in the form of “studies and knows and acts.”²³ *Ilm* and *'amal* became a standard combination whose effectiveness was greatly enhanced by the similarity of the two words in sound and in their written forms. It is impossible to escape its impact in any work that touches even remotely upon individual or societal ethics in Islam.

The relationship of action and thought had long been a subject of intense speculation. Euripides, for instance, considered it the greatest evil to know the good but make no use of it, and Muslim scholars were familiar with the translation of his verse.²⁴ In the Greek tradition, the relationship was also discussed under the

²⁰ For the position of *hikmah* “wisdom” in connection with action, see above, pp. 38 f.

²¹ Cf. Abû Khaythamah, no. 138.

²² Cf. above, p. 89.

²³ Cf. Abû Khaythamah, above, p. 73.

²⁴ Cf. A. Nauck, *Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta*, 2nd ed., 635, Euripides, no. 841 (reprint Leipzig 1926): Stobaeus, III, 205; ‘Alî b. Rîdwân, *Fî t-tâtarraq bi-t-‘îbb ilâ s-sâ‘âdah*, in the Istanbul Ms. Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, 691, fol. 124a, citing Galen. *Fî ta’arruf al-insân ‘uyûb nafsîh*, for the verse: *Yâ laka min anrin mâ aqbahâhâ wa-arda’ahâ an ta’rifâ l-khayra wa-lâ ta’nalâ bihî*. The author’s name is given as “*wdyszes*, which, however, is hardly Odysseus but in all likelihood, a slight misspelling of Euripides. Galen’s *Peri tón idíon hekastóî pathón kai hamartématón tés diagnôséôs* does not contain the passage. For the various forms of the title of this work of Galen in Arabic translation, cf. G. Bergsträsser, *Hunain Ibn Ishâq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen*, no. 118, text, 48 f., trans., 39 f. (Leipzig 1925, *AKM* 17, 2).

aspect of the development of *thèôria* from *praxis*²⁵ or of the problem of the priority of *noësis*, *nous praktikos*, *thèôria* as against *praxis*. In this sense, Muslim thinkers such as Abû Ḥayyân at-Tawhîdî made statements to the effect that “Action (*fi'l*) is the source of knowledge.”²⁶ His contemporary, al-‘Âmirî, maintained that knowledge stood in the same relationship to action as cause to the thing caused, or beginning to end,²⁷ and he also put it this way: “Knowledge is the beginning (*fâtihah*) of action, and action is the end (*tamâm*, here = *energeia*, rather than *entelecheia*) of knowledge; a beginning without an end is futile, and an end without a beginning is absurd.”²⁸ In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, it was faith versus good deeds. A Church Father, however, spoke of deeds following upon knowledge (*gnôsis*), as the body is followed by its shadow.²⁹ Gnosticism saw man’s nature revealed in his *praxis* and his *gnôsis*.³⁰

In Islam, as we have seen, “faith” was originally equated with “knowledge,” and the most prominent and decisive element in the *ilm-‘amal* confrontation remained the Prophet’s view of the

²⁵ Cf. Snell, *Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens*, 19, n. 3. For the Stoics, *phronêsis* meant information about correct action, according to M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, I, 202 (Göttingen 1948–49).

²⁶ As quoted by Ibn al-Matrân, *Bustân al-âtibbâ'*, near the end (Ms. Army Medical Library).

²⁷ Cf. al-‘Âmirî, *Ilâm*, 125.

²⁸ As quoted in the Bodleian Ms. or Marsh 539, fol. 124a. The first half of the statement occurs also in al-‘Âmirî, *Ilâm*, 78, with the substitution of *mabda'* for *fâtihah*, and the continuation: “Excellent knowledge (*‘ulûm*) is desired only for the sake of good actions.” For wisdom as the combination of *ilm* and *‘amal*, cf. above, pp. 38 f., and, for instance, al-Mubashshir, 33 (Homer): “Wisdom means that the form of knowledge is attained through action.”

²⁹ Clement, as cited by Antonius Melissa, 933 f.

³⁰ Cf. Böhlig and Labib, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift*, 108/109; “Jeder wird durch seine Handlungsweise (*praxis*) und seine Erkenntnis (*gnôsis*) seine Natur (*physis*) offenbaren.”

For the Chinese view of the relationship of knowledge and action, cf. below, pp. 338 f. There seems to be little of it in India, where knowledge and action may occasionally be compared to the two wings of a bird which are both needed for flying, cf. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, II, 228 (Cambridge 1932). (The simile of the two wings is applied in Arabic to hearing and seeing, cf. al-Ḥuṣrî, *Zahr al-âdâb*, III, 115 [Cairo 1316, in the margin of Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *‘qd*]). In our time, a utilitarian, action-directed view of knowledge is held by some, such as V. G. Childe, *Society and Knowledge*, 4 (New York 1956): “To deserve the name, I contend, knowledge must be communicable and in that sense public and also useful, I mean, capable of being translated into successful action.” This sounds like a greatly impoverished version of attitudes encountered frequently here as Islamic.

necessary relationship of religious knowledge with good deeds and proper action. As the process of classifying the entire gamut of human actions in terms of religious obligations went under way, it was only natural for “actions” to be equated with religious duties such as prayer, charity, and so on. When religious scholars later on contrasted *ilm* and *‘amal*, they often seem to have had in mind the actions covered by the Muslim religious commitment. The *Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī* is particularly emphatic in his insistence upon the necessity of action in connection with knowledge in his instructive collection of statements entitled “Knowledge Requires Action.”³¹ He sees the greatest drawback of the disciplines he esteems most, that is, Qur’ān reading, *hadīth*, and grammar/philology, in the temptation to turn their back on action to which scholars learned in these disciplines are unavoidably exposed. The *Khaṭīb* seems to favor action as the only possible way “to lay in provisions for the Last Day” and to achieve salvation. Many of his strongest statements in favor of action go back to famous Ṣūfīs, for whom action was important, as they naturally esteemed it primarily as referring to the non-contemplative aspects of the mystic discipline. In the view of the philosophers in the Hellenistic tradition, on the other hand, action was often understood as the effort that had to be made in order to achieve receptivity for pure knowledge by cleansing oneself from all the impurities of man’s lower desires. The final synthesis of the philosophical and the Judeo-Christian-Gnostic traditions found expression in two statements contained in al-Ghazzālī’s *Mīzān al-‘amal*: *Ilm* and *‘amal* are the preparation for the other world, and the only way to happiness, the real goal of philosophy, is through the combination of *ilm* with *‘amal*.³²

It can be asserted with considerable assurance that in the Muslim view, knowledge by and large ranks higher than action.³³ The entire history of knowledge in Islam indicates this to be the case. The higher estimation of knowledge is, for instance, expressed in the constantly cited Prophetic tradition showing preference for the man who knows (*‘ālim*) as against the pious worshiper who fulfills all the religious duties (*‘ābid*). It may not be without interest

³¹ Cf. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Iqtidā’*, which covers about seventy-five pages.

³² Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Mīzān al-‘amal*, 180, 193 f., 328. The Ṣūfī, Bishr al-Ḥāfi even went so far as to claim identity for *ilm* and *‘amal* (*wa-l-ilm huwa al-‘amal*), cf. Abū Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, VIII, 340 f.

³³ Cf. also G. E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, 236 (Chicago 1946).

here to recall that following ancient Semitic tradition, the Arabic word *‘ibid* represents a specialized meaning of the root meaning “to work.” Understandably, the statement that “knowledge is the leader of action, and action is its follower”³⁴ came to be promoted to the status of a tradition of the Prophet. In connection with it, five reasons are given for the superiority of knowledge: 1. Knowledge without action is an action,³⁵ whereas action without knowledge is not an action; 2. knowledge without action may be useful, whereas action without knowledge is not useful; 3. knowledge is necessary, and action follows it like a lamp (which is as necessary as is knowledge, if there is to be light, or, like as a shadow follows the light of a lamp?); 4. scholars hold the same rank as the prophets; and 5. knowledge comes from God, whereas action comes from human beings.³⁶

The basic position of *‘ilm* as compared to *‘amal* is reiterated on every possible occasion. A particularly appropriate and effective vehicle for accomplishing this purpose was the wisdom literature of Hellenistic inspiration. It attributes, for instance, these sayings to Hippocrates: “Knowledge is the spirit, and action is the body. Knowledge is the root, and action is the branch. Knowledge is the father, and action is the child. Action came about because there was knowledge. Knowledge did not come about because there was action.” And again: “Action is the servant of knowledge, and knowledge is an end. Knowledge goes out (itself to do its own) foraging. Action is sent.”³⁷ An unnamed philosopher said: “The intellect is the tree whose root is knowledge, whose branch is action, and whose fruit is the law (*sunnah*).”³⁸ For al-Ghazzâlî, knowledge was indeed “the root of roots,” for “action can take on form (*yutâṣa’u war*) only through knowledge of the manner in which the action is to be undertaken,” and there is also some knowledge,

³⁴ Cf. above, p. 184.

³⁵ *Not* to be corrected to “knowledge.”

³⁶ From the *adab* work of a certain Maḥmûd b. Muḥammad to be dated in the late fifteenth century (cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, II, 57), cited here in the Istanbul Ms. Hasan Hüsnü Pasha 976, fol. 23b. No title is given in the manuscript, although in the beginning, the author refers to *‘ilm al-muḥādarāt wa-fann al-muḥāwarāt*, which is at the origin of the title indicated in *GAL*.

³⁷ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 51. Cf. also al-Jâhîz, *Hayawân*, I. 31 = I. 61; Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 121 (see below, p. 257), who cite a statement of Yûnus b. Ḥabîb, equating knowledge with the spirit, and property with the body. This is cited anonymously by al-Mubashshir, 334. The first sentence of the second saying above appears in al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Iqtidâ’*, 158.

³⁸ Cf. at-Tawhîdî, *Baṣâ’ir*, I, 389.

such as the knowledge of God and His attributes and His angels, which has nothing to do with action.³⁹ It is, therefore, very hard to conceive of any worthwhile action where there is no knowledge. Plato is supposed to have advised those who “miss the path of knowledge” that they “should not miss the path of proper action or the avoidance of evil deeds, as they would thereby stand in the shadow of the master of the world.”⁴⁰ Nothing more is meant here than the obvious fact that not everybody possesses scholarly ability. There are numerous human beings who act without knowledge, but they are no better than animals. Their actions are habitual and instinctive. There can be no useful, human action without knowledge.

Conversely, the general assumption was that there could be no useful knowledge without the existence of action resulting from it. Purely intellectual and inspirational knowledge not immediately connected with action might still be useful, because, it makes necessary the action which assures bliss in the other world, the fulfillment of the obligations of the religious law. We hear a good deal about extremist groups among the Shí'ah and among Şûfîs who allegedly thought it possible to dispense with action, because they were in the possession of knowledge or of gnosis. Occasionally, reference is made in the literature to obscure, and possibly non-existent, minor sects such as the one called Fikriyah “Reflectionists.” They are supposed to have championed the view that persons who study in order to acquire knowledge, and devote themselves to reflecting upon the knowledge acquired are thereby freed of action and of fear. Everybody else is obliged to comply with all their wishes and desires. They have a partner's share in the property of all the people of the world who commit a crime if they refuse them anything.⁴¹ In all such cases the “action” envisaged concerns

³⁹ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Mîzân al-‘amal*, 328.

⁴⁰ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 167.

⁴¹ Cf. ‘Uthmân b. ‘Abdallâh al-‘Irâqî, *al-Fîraq al-muflâiqah*, ed. Y. Kuthuay, 70 (Ankara 1961). In Hamîd-ad-dîn al-Kîrmâni's treatment of Fâtîmid-Ismâ‘îlî religious philosophy, “faith” is a combination of “worship through knowledge” (*al-‘ibâdah bi-l-ilm* or *al-‘ibâdah al-ilmîyah*) and “worship through action” (*al-‘ibâdah bi-l-‘amal* or *al-‘ibâdah al-‘amalîyah*). This is the *leitmotif* of his *Râhat al-aql*, cf., for instance, 30, 64, 68, 122, 248, 319 ff. On p. 154, he characterizes the “people of faith” as those who worship through knowledge as well as action, the “people of the *zâhir*” as those who worship only through action, and the “people of the *bâtin*” as those who worship only through knowledge. But the last mentioned

mainly the formalities of the Muslim ritual law which those groups were suspected to have despised and even to have suspended. A strictly contemplative life or a life devoted to pure science might have been desired by some individuals and considered by them the ideal way of life. However, they can always have been but few in number. Their ideal was never the ideal preached to, and accepted by, the vast majority of Muslims. Knowledge without corresponding action was undesirable and even unthinkable. “If there were no action, one would not search for knowledge, and if there were no knowledge, one would not search for action.”⁴² Society required that both knowledge and action were cultivated, and education saw to it that individuals strove to fulfill their duty with respect to both. The preference expressed frequently for knowledge seems to have stamped Islam as a social organism somewhat averse to action and more inclined toward intellectual pursuits. The state of a perfect balance between action and knowledge seems to be something of a utopia which cannot be achieved in human society, and it was not achieved in Islam. It is hard to say whether the Muslim weighting of the scales in favor of knowledge was the wiser course. However, all historical factors were clearly working toward that end and made it all but inevitable.

The relationship between knowledge and action and the expression it finds in the life of individuals constitute the true measure of the worth of any given society. There is another, more restricted and formal relationship shaping human civilization. That is the relationship between knowledge and education. In Islam, it is characterized by the combination of *‘ilm* with *adab* on the one hand, and with *ta‘līm* “instruction” and *ta‘allum* “study” on the other. Knowledge was conceived as the result of study and instruction in all its practical aspects. Thus, it is to be expected that the term “knowledge” and the root *‘l-m* are somehow at the core of all the technical educational writings in Islam. The role of knowledge in the large

category seems to have no justification for independent existence (except, perhaps, in the case of the imāms?). For just as the *zāhir* by itself is naturally unsatisfactory, “the omission to teach the right *zāhir* worship means the perdition of the religious group with (all) its people, since its forms (*rusūm*) are thereby broken and wiped out,” cf. *Rāhat al-‘aql*, 349. It must be concluded that knowledge alone is also unsatisfactory.

⁴² Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn*, II, 125 (an anonymous sage); Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 222; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Iqtidā’*, 158; al-Mubashshir, 51 (Hippocrates).

and diversified *adab* literature is much less clear-cut, due primarily to the wide range of the term *adab* itself. The *adib* was the “educated” man. To what extent this also meant the learned, knowledgeable man is the question that interests us here. Like *ilm* and *‘amal*, *ilm* and *adab* were also often paired with each other. In this case, however, no preference is apparent for giving precedence in speech to one of the two terms. The combination “*adab* and *ilm*” seems to be at least as frequently used as the combination “*ilm* and *adab*.” *Adab* here is clearly the wider term, as it includes matters of ethics, morals, behavior, and custom, in addition to those of learning. It also would seem to be the more ancient term, as far as cultural significance is concerned, having enjoyed this role already in pre-Islamic Arabia.⁴³ However, *ilm* was backed up by the vast power it acquired through Muslim religious developments, and somehow, *adab* had to join forces with it. It developed into a commonplace that both belonged inseparably together. “Knowledge without *adab* is like, fire without firewood. *Adab* without knowledge is like a spirit without a body.”⁴⁴

2. *Ilm* in *Adab* Anthologies

Adab works⁴⁵ are hard to classify. It was left to the individual authors which particular aspects of general education and culture they wished to deal with. Concentration at some length on some particular subject led to monograph essays. It would seem that such monographs constituted the earliest stage of *adab* literature

⁴³ Cf. F. Gabrieli, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s. v. *adab*.

⁴⁴ Cf. as-Sam‘âni, *Adab al-imlâ*, ed. M. Weisweiler, *Die Methodik des Diktatkollegs*, 2 (Leiden 1952).

⁴⁵ “*Adab* works” is used here in a restricted sense, referring to prose essays and the anthologies generally designated as such. Technical essays on, for instance, calligraphy, secretaryship, or literary criticism have not been considered and have only incidentally been mentioned. As a rule, their attitude toward *ilm* does not differ greatly from that of other scholarly disciplines. The entire realm of poetry, which is a province of *adab*, even if its vast extent makes it possible to put it into a category all its own, has also been excluded. The attitudes of the major Muslim poets toward “knowledge” would make an interesting subject of study. However, broadly speaking (and being fully conscious of my ignorance of most of the immense body of poetry produced in Islam), it would seem that poetry kept its inherited distance from “knowledge” (above, pp. 12 ff.). As a term of praise for rulers and statesmen and, of course, scholars, knowledge is often mentioned in poetry. The customary praise of the virtues of knowledge was also occasionally put into verse, as was, more rarely, the embittered criticism of the problems knowledge might cause for individuals.

in Islam. Very soon, almost simultaneously perhaps, large collections combining, as it were, a number of monographs, which in the view of their authors usually represented the entire spectrum of *adab*, were composed. This development found its completion already in the golden age of the 'Abbâsids. The *adab* literature never changed its basic forms of monograph and anthology, nor did the great popularity especially of the anthologies ever diminish. The anthologies remained a favorite arsenal from which all those longing for a general education, for the prestige going with being considered an educated person, could draw their ammunition. It can safely be assumed that the influence of what they had to offer was coextensive with the ability to read books. The choice and arrangement of topics in the *adab* anthologies varied. The expected increase of religious influence upon an essentially secular literature is perceptible but on the whole rather insignificant; it does not affect the degree of attention paid to the term "knowledge." The noteworthy marriage of religious and *adab* scholarship in the early ninth century as represented by the *Muṣannaf* of Ibn Abî Shaybah has previously been commented upon.⁴⁶ It appears to have remained without any genuine offspring. The manner in which the *Muṣannaf* brings together *'ilm* with *adab* shows substantial similarity with what we find in later *adab* works, but its spirit and intent were on the whole rather different. Greek philosophy may have been responsible for promoting the use of the concept of intelligence (*'aql*) in *adab* literature. The possession of intelligence as the first step toward the attainment of knowledge was rather naturally stressed in an *adab* context in the *ḥadīth* work of ad-Dârimî as early as the first half of the ninth century,⁴⁷ and no doubt even earlier than that. However, when the *'aql* of Greek philosophy seeped more deeply into general Muslim consciousness, it found its way into *adab* literature almost as naturally as *'ilm* did from the religious vantage point. This led to a kind of rivalry between *'aql* and *'ilm* and their opposites (mainly, *hamâqah* and *jahl* in the first case, and *jahl* in the second). The distinction between *'ilm* and *'aql* often tended to be obscured. On the level of *adab* in particular, whatever distinction was made between the two seems as a rule quite artificial.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Cf. above, pp. 74 f.

⁴⁷ Cf. above, p. 76.

⁴⁸ Cf. below, p. 273, n. 3 and p. 276, n. 2.

According to all we know, the term *ilm* played no great role in *adab* works during the eighth century. Still indicative of this early stage of the history of *adab* literature is the much later anthology of al-Bayhaqî, entitled *al-Mahâsin wa-l-masâwi*, which dates from around 900.⁴⁹ The theme of the work, the confrontation of the good aspects and the bad aspects of a number of human qualities of character and behavior, would not have prevented the inclusion of a separate chapter on knowledge. However, there is none. The introduction shows that the author thought of *ilm* and *adab* as belonging together but much less closely so than became the customary assumption of later times. Typically, most of the introduction is devoted to a discussion of books and writing. If the related *Kitâb al-Mahâsin wa-l-a'âdâd* is, as claimed, a work by al-Jâhîz,⁵⁰ a similar situation would be attested for the first half of the ninth century. The work begins likewise with a chapter on writing and the production of books and has no separate discussion of knowledge. In fact, more than the abstract idea of knowledge, it was the technical aspects of bookmaking which were of concern to the littérateurs who occupied themselves with the transmission of educational wisdom. Similarly the famous catalogue of book titles by Ibn an-Nâdîm, though arranged according to the various disciplines of science and scholarship, does not care to discuss knowledge as such. Here again, the introduction is concerned with various aspects of bookmaking and writing. In it, the author's attention is directed mainly toward the mechanics of literary and scholarly book production and publication. Encyclopaedias, too, devote hardly ever any space to the theoretical problems of knowledge or consider it necessary to enter into any extended discussion of the praiseworthy qualities of knowledge. And where knowledge is equated with *hadîth* as in the *Taqyîd al-ilm* of the Khatîb al-Baghdâdî, one does hardly expect to find much speculation on knowledge in general. There is a long section in praise of writing and of books.

However, a chapter on knowledge appears already in the second half of the ninth century in the great anthology of Ibn Qutaybah, the *Uyûn al-akhbâr*. The *Fihrist* lists this chapter as a part of

⁴⁹ Cf. al-Bayhaqî, *Mahâsin*, ed. F. Schwally (Giessen 1902).

⁵⁰ The edition at my disposal has no place or year (Beirut 1955?).

the *Uyín* under the title of *Kitâb al-‘Ilm*.⁵¹ In the *Uyín* itself, it is called *Kitâb al-‘Ilm wa-l-bayân* “On Knowledge and Eloquent Expression.” Less than one-tenth of it is devoted to knowledge proper. The remainder of the chapter consists of eloquent statements in prose and verse as well as interesting or curious items of information and witty anecdotes pertaining to books, to the Qur’ân and Qur’ân readers, to the transmission and the transmitters of Prophetic traditions, to the Shî‘ah, the Mu‘tazilah (Qadarîyah), and the Mutakallimûn (coupled with some praise of Abû Bakr and ‘Umar), to Arabic grammar and lexicography, to the proper approach to teaching, to the virtues of eloquence and of silence and of communication without speech, to poetry (“the mine of the Arabs for their knowledge...”), to clever repartees, to specimens of epistolography and chancellery documents, and to sermons of political leaders with the circumstances under which they were delivered. As the following summary shows, the section on knowledge as such, brief as it is, contains practically all the standard information on the subject which recurs in later *adab* works:⁵²

A statement by the Prophet warning against *ughlûtât*, which is interpreted to mean “difficult problems,” or “tricky questions” (as mentioned above, p. 84).

A story concerning Abû Muslim al-Khawlânî to the effect that the benefits to be derived from deserving men are never properly utilized by their compatriots and are as a rule better appreciated by strangers. A quite exact quotation of Mark 6:3 f. that a prophet is not honored in his own country.

Knowledge is acquired by asking and answering questions,⁵³ according to the genealogists Daghfal and al-Bakrî. The latter also states that the blemishes of knowledge are forgetting, making

⁵¹ Cf. *Fihrist*, 77, l. 23 = 115; G. Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba*, 156 f., 165 f. (Damascus 1965). See Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyín*, II, 117–259.

⁵² The passage analyzed on the following pages covers *Uyín*, II, 117–30. It may be said here that cross-referencing in the footnotes has been kept to a minimum throughout this book, but particularly, in the treatment of the *adab* material. It should be kept in mind that a rather limited number of ideas has found expression in a large number of statements which, while often formulated differently, say pretty much the same.

⁵³ *Adab* and *hadîth* constantly call attention to the fundamental role of asking questions in the educational process. For a philosopher such Ibn Bâjjah, *Fi n-nâfs*, 146, giving information and asking question are synonymous with, respectively, teaching and studying. Knowledge was described as rooted in the question after cause and evidence in the remark attributed to al-A‘mash: *al-‘ilm fî li-ma* “knowledge rests in why?,” cf. Abû Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, V. 47.

false statements, and spreading knowledge among those not qualified for it.

“A man remains knowing as long as he searches for knowledge and continues to study. When he thinks he knows, he has become ignorant.”⁵⁴

According to the Prophet, the four blemishes of knowledge are boasting of one’s knowledge and feeling superior on account of it to recognized scholars,⁵⁵ entering into contests with fools on the strength of one’s knowledge, trying through it to influence people in his favor, and attempting to obtain favors from leaders in powerful positions by means of it.

The Prophet has stated that extended worship makes the springs of wisdom flow from the heart to the tongue.

Luqmân admonishes his son that being a scholar or a student, listening or loving⁵⁶ are the only activities to which he ought to devote himself.

The Prophet has expressed confidence that there will be men who will stave off all attempts to pervert “this knowledge” (i.e., the Prophetic traditions).

Sayings of ‘Ali, including: “He who does not know must not be ashamed to learn,” and, “A person who is asked something he does not know must not be ashamed to say, ‘God knows.’”⁵⁷ The proper respect to be shown to scholars is described by ‘Alî in detail. He is credited with the constantly repeated statement that “Knowledge is better than property. For knowledge protects you, while you must protect property. Property is diminished by spending, while knowledge thrives on spending.”⁵⁸ ‘Alî’s celebrated remark: “A man’s value consists in what he knows or does well.”⁵⁹

⁵⁴ This expression of the idea that learning is a continuous process (cf. also below, p. 281) also appears in the section of anonymous sayings in al-Mubashshir, 333.

⁵⁵ Cf. p. 87 [at-Tirmidhî (5)], and p. 172, n. 2.

⁵⁶ *Mujîb*^{an} “answering” would seem an appropriate correction of *muhibb*^{an} “loving,” but cf. Abû Khaythamah, no. 2: “If you are able to be a scholar, be a scholar! If not, be a student! If you are not a student, love them! If you do not love them, do not hate them!”

⁵⁷ Cf. below, pp. 310 f.

⁵⁸ Cf. below, p. 326. This comes from ‘Alî’s exhortation of Kumayl b. Ziyâd an-Nakha’î, which appears in a more complete form in Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 120 f., and in the *fürstenspiegel* of aṭ-Turṭîshî, *Sîrâj al-mulûk*, ch. 22, 64 f. (Cairo 1289). Cf. also *Nahj al-balâghah*, 593 ff.; Ibn Abî l-Hadîd, V, 434–39; al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ*, I, 7, trans. Faris, 14; Abû Nu’aym, *Hilyah*, I, 79 f.

⁵⁹ Cf. below, pp. 281 and 323. The remark is highly praised in *Nahj al-balâghah*, 518 f., cf. also 624.

The fact that God has rejected a human being is indicated by His preventing him from acquiring knowledge.

The man who has knowledge is considered most outstanding among people,
 Even if he does not occupy a position of nobility among his people.
 Wherever he settles, he can make a living from his knowledge.
 A man who possesses knowledge is no stranger anywhere.

Buzurjmihr considers *adab* a man’s best inheritance, since it helps him to acquire wealth, while ignorance ruins it. (Note that *adab* is contrasted here with ignorance, as if *adab* were a synonym of *ilm*.)

A person who does not appreciate history and poetry and falls asleep while listening to poetry or historical anecdotes is like a donkey in human form. The idea that lack of knowledge makes a man a non-person is illustrated by an anecdote about the caliph al-Walid b. Yazîd who does not bother with concealing the fact that he has been playing chess from an ignoramus who comes in unexpectedly.⁶⁰

A book of the Indians (that is, *Kalîlah wa-Dimnah*) teaches that a scholar’s knowledge accompanies him and provides for him wherever he goes, and thus is comparable to the strength of a lion which always stays with him.⁶¹

“Knowledge is the highest nobility, just as love is the strongest of ties.” Four verses in praise of the usefulness of the stereotyped combination of *hilm* “kindness, gentility” and *ilm*.

Knowledge means true leadership. Honor paid to a man because of his wealth or his power ought not to please him, because it may pass with their passing. Honor paid to a man because of his *adab* or his religiosity is something to be pleased about. Muhammad: “The scholars on earth are comparable to the stars in heaven.” The value of knowledge is indicated by the fact that nobody likes to risk the loss of his share of it.

“Your knowledge belongs to your spirit. Your wealth belongs to your body.”⁶²

⁶⁰ Cf. the first two references of n. 2.

⁶¹ Cf. also al-‘Askarî, *Hathth*, in Ms. Asir Ef. 433, fols. 43b–44a; ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Muḥâdarât*, I, 17; az-Zamakhsharî, *Rabî‘*, in Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 172a; al-Ibshîhî, *Mustâraf*, I, 17. See F. Schulthess, *Kalila und Dimna, syrisch und deutsch*, text, 67, trans., 67 (Berlin 1911).

⁶² Cf. above, p. 249, n. 4.

“Kings exercise control over people, and scholars exercise control over kings.”⁶³

Buzurjmîhr esteems knowledge more highly than wealth, with reference to the anecdote cited below, p. 325.

According to the *hadîth*, flattery is permissible only in the search for knowledge.

Ibn ‘Abbâs: “I was humble when seeking (knowledge as a student), and I was mighty when sought (to give instruction as a teacher).” He shows great respect to the Anṣâr as bearers of the knowledge of the Prophet.⁶⁴

“The first part of knowledge is keeping silent; the second, listening; the third, memorizing; the fourth, reasoning; and the fifth, spreading it.” In the company of scholars, it is better to listen than to talk. “He who worships God in his youth receives wisdom from God in his old age” (cf. Qur’ân 28:14/13). A sage among the men around the Prophet represents wisdom as saying that it is with those who act in accordance with their best knowledge and avoid all that is very bad in their knowledge.

“A scholar (*‘âlim*) has no contempt for those who know less than he, and no envy of those who know more, and he does not use his knowledge to make money.”

Teachers must not be too severe, and students must not be bashful. According to Luqmân, a dignified quiet on the part of scholars makes people willing to learn. Loquaciousness repels them. On the value of asking questions in order to gain knowledge: “Put questions like a fool, and store up information like a genius.” Six verses ascribed to Ibn al-‘Arâbî. Another verse, elsewhere ascribed to Bashshâr b. Burd, which runs:

The cure of blindness (ignorance) is prolonged questioning.

Blindness materializes through prolonged silence in the state of ignorance.

Six further statements on the necessity of asking questions and of not being too bashful in this respect. Learning can bring it about that those who are young and insignificant among their own people are esteemed as old and important among others. Ignorance is particularly abhorrent in old people. One should teach those who

⁶³ Cf. below, p. 328, n. 3.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ibn Sa’d, *Tabaqât*, ed. E. Sachau and others, II, 2, 221 (Leiden 1905–40); Abû Khaythamah, no. 133; al-‘Askarî, *Hathth*, in Ms. Asîr Ef. 433, fol. 44a.

are ignorant, and learn from those who know. Buzurjmihr acquired his great knowledge by rising early like a raven, being greedy like a pig, and being steadfast and patient like a donkey. Knowledge ought to be acquired at a young age. As the standard simile (cited also elsewhere with some variations) puts it: That is like chiseling in stone, while studying in one’s old age is like beating upon water.

“Practicing *fiqh* without knowledge (that is, without an acquaintance with the Prophetic traditions) is like being a donkey working at a mill, going around without ever stopping.”

Scholars who have to spend their time among ignoramuses, or, even worse, are under their control, are to be pitied.⁶⁵

Knowledge, being more precious than pearls, must not be wasted upon the pigs who do not want it. This quotation of Matthew 7:6 is often repeated in *adab* works.

On obstinate (*mu’ānid*) and wicked (*fājir*) scholars, which is a kind of contradiction in terms.

“Skill (*hīrfah*) is found among scholars. Others have wealth.” “You are looking for something rare (lit., little) among the few. Thus, you will not find it. You are looking for wealth, which is rare among men, among the scholars, who are few among men.”

A verse by al-Khuzaymī apparently to the effect that pride in a long line of ancestors is a sure guarantee of a lack of brains and a lack of *adab*. Two verses by somebody else, apparently indicating that their author believes that his professional skill and his *adab* could not possibly be greater. A verse by Abū Tammām stating that “the mother of stupidity is fertile and has many children, while the mother of knowledge is barren, deprived of posterity.”

Seeking leadership through knowledge quickly means a great loss of knowledge, according to Sufyān ath-Thawrī.

On the relationship of knowledge and action: Knowledge, calling out for action, departs, if its call is not answered. An ignorant man is forgiven seventy sins, before one sin is forgiven to the person who possesses knowledge. Evil actions should not deter anyone from accepting good advice from the individual who commits them. This has been said by Bilāl b. Abī Burdah and is expressed in a famous verse, here ascribed to al-Khalil:

Act in accordance with my knowledge, and do not look at my actions.
In this way, what I say will prove useful to you, and my shortcomings will do you no harm.

⁶⁵ Cf. below, p. 332.

The light of knowledge must not be extinguished by dark sins. Knowledge is sought on account of action, and not vice versa.⁶⁶ Leaving the truth alone because of one's ignorance is better than doing so through inaction. According to Mâlik b. Dînâr, the exhortations of a man whose actions do not follow his knowledge roll off the heart like drops of water from smooth rocks.⁶⁷ This remark bears comparison with a statement attributed to Ziyâd that talk that comes from the heart goes to the heart, while talk that comes from the tongue does not go beyond the ear (a statement which has little to do with the subject under discussion). The knowledge scholars possess causes them to act. Eventually, they will be sought after by the people, but as true scholars, they will flee from all the worldly demands made on them. High praise is due to the man who speaks and knows, who listens and retains, who retains and acts. According to Ibn Mas'ûd, an error committed by a scholar (in his activities) may cause him to forget all he knows.

Ibn 'Abbâs considers it deadly for a scholar not to say continually, "I do not know." See below, pp. 310 f.

Verses to the effect that a poet never says more than he knows. Other verses starting out in the same vein but then going on to say that a man's actions suffice to reveal his secret thoughts.

'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭâb contributes the rather resigned insight that men are never as jealous of knowledge as they are of their wives.

Salmân indicates the need for teaching and publication in the words, "Knowledge which remains unexpressed is like treasure unused."

The *hadîth* about the two kinds of knowledge, discussed above, p. 243.

'Umar on the desirability of the combination of *hilm* and *ilm*.

Abû d-Dardâ' expresses himself on the burden scholars have to bear in these words: "An increase in knowledge means an increase in pain."

Statements by Plato and another sage to the effect that consciousness of not knowing indicates knowledge. An elaboration of this idea is attributed to al-Khalîl: "There are four kinds of men. There are men who know and know that they know. Put questions

⁶⁶ Cf. above, p. 251.

⁶⁷ As cited by al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Iqtîdâ'*, 192, Ja'far b. Mâlik maintained that he had read this statement in the Torah.

to them! There are men who know and do not know that they know. They are forgetful. Remind them! There are men who do not know and know that they do not know. They require guidance. Teach them! And there are men who do not know and do not know that they do not know. They are ignorant. Shun them!”⁶⁸

Buzurjmihr, reproachfully reminded by Kisrâ that his knowledge has brought him into prison and even endangered his life, denies that this has been the result of his knowledge, which he enjoyed in times of good fortune. He also remarks that as long as life is good, it is good to study and to learn. This prompts the insertion of a statement made by somebody else that since ignorance is shameful, learning and knowledge are good.

“Friendship (*tawaddud*) is the ornament of knowledge.”

‘Umar puts his awareness of the restlessness for more and more knowledge that possesses true scholars, in these words: “Scholars are more prone to sleeplessness and slower to have enough to eat than any guests.”

Mâlik b. Dînâr: Little knowledge suffices, if one wants it for himself, but it takes much to satisfy the many needs of people.

The first aphorism of Hippocrates about the abundance of knowledge and the brevity of life.⁶⁹

The Messiah (Jesus) says, “For how long are you going to describe the way travelers ought to take, while you yourselves are staying among those beset by confusion? Of knowledge, little is needed; of action, much.”⁷⁰

Salmân: “If I told the people all I know, they would say, ‘May God show mercy to the killer of Salmân.’” (The apparent meaning of this remark is that he possesses compromising information, or rather, that esoteric knowledge should not be spilled indiscriminately. It does not really belong into this context.)

⁶⁸ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ’*, I, 52 f., trans. Paris, 155 f. Cf. also Ibn Abî d-dunyâ, *al-‘Aql wa-fâdluh*, ed. M. Z. al-Kawthârî, 26 (Cairo 1365/1946); al-Qurashî, *Jamharah*, 39 f.; the anonymous Christian work entitled *al-Bustân*, in Ms. Paris ar. 4811, fol. 9b. See further below, p. 313.

⁶⁹ Cf. F. Rosenthal, in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, XL (1966), 226 ff. The passage in the *‘Uyîn* furnishes another example of the pre-Hunayn translation of *ho de kairos oxys* as *az-zamân hadîd*, as against Hunayn’s *dayyiq*.

⁷⁰ The statement may well have some basis in the Gospels, but it is not contained in them in this form. “Knowledge” would seem here to correspond to “faith.” Cf. al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Iqtîdâ’*, 178: al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ’*, I, 52, trans. Paris, 155. Paris thinks of a combination of Luke 6:39 and 7:32(?)

If a person says something he does not know, it casts suspicion upon what he knows.

The soul, being refractory, needs the collaboration between the leader—knowledge—and the driver—the intellect.⁷¹

The difference of opinions alone makes a person aware of possible mistakes of his teacher.

“The intellect is female by nature, and knowledge acquired is male. Only together can they thrive.”

The Messiah (Jesus) says: “God shows the greatest hatred for a scholar who loves to be remembered when being abroad, who is given much room in gatherings, who is (often) invited for dinner, and who has bags of provisions poured out for him (?). In truth, I say to you, ‘Those have taken their wages in this world, and God will double their punishment on the Day of Resurrection.’” Strange as this may seem at first glance, the passage may reflect Mark 12:38 f. (Luke 20:46 f.)

Ibn ‘Abbâs remarked at the funeral of Zayd b. Thâbit that it was in this manner that knowledge disappeared—through the death of scholars.

God’s love is earned by a man through being a scholar and at the same time behaving as inconspicuously and modestly as if he were an ignoramus.

A facetious verse on scholars meeting: “If elephants meet and crowd together, what must be the condition of a mosquito in the middle!”

Verses by Ibn ar-Riqâ⁷² to the effect that he has accumulated such a large amount of pleasant and unpleasant experiences in his life that he could no longer learn an iota from any scholar.

Among the four things a noble person need not be ashamed of is serving a scholar in order to learn from him.

‘Atâ’ b. Muṣ‘ab’s remoteness from and indifference to the Barmecides made him popular with them, although others possessed more *adab* than he did.

Good understanding and good listening are necessary for appreciating a good *ḥadîth*. This is in a way illustrated by two verses of Abû Tammâm.

⁷¹ The edition of the *‘Uyîn* has “action,” instead of “intellect.” This does not make good sense. The reading “intellect” appears elsewhere. In an-Nuwayrî (below, p. 273), it is the only justification for citing the saying. See also above, p. 174.

⁷² Cf. R. Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe*, 475 f. (Paris 1952–66).

The difference between scholars and men of education and general culture: Scholars specialize in one subject. Educated men pick the best part of everything.

Verses by Ibrâhîm b. al-Mahdî which admit the haphazardness of the distribution of worldly goods but contend that nobody would deny that worldly goods most consistently elude those who possess *adab*, that they are tied up inextricably with stupidity, and that they cling to fools.

The *môbedh*, the chief priest, wins praise from Anûsharwân for his remark that a pure nature is satisfied with a whiff of *adab* and a hint of knowledge and that wisdom can grow only in the proper soil.

At the end of time, there will be scholars who will not practice what they preach. They will preach abstention from this world and a desire for the other world, but they will practice neither. They will forbid approaching the men in power, but they themselves will approach them. They will prefer the rich and keep the poor away. They will hold back when they are together with lowly individuals, and they will be expansive when they are in the company of important persons. They will be tyrants, enemies of God.⁷³

‘Abdallâh b. ‘Umar is credited with the saying that “Knowledge consists of three things, a book that speaks, a *sunnah* that comes from the past, and (admitting one’s ignorance by saying) ‘I do not know.’”⁷⁴

This is the end of the remarks dealing with knowledge proper in the chapter on knowledge of the *‘Uyûn*. The length of the preceding summary is due to the impossibility of combining individual items into any coherent groupings. A grouping according to authorities is absent, except for the single case of some remarks ascribed to ‘Alî. Clusters of sayings on the same topic are found more frequently, but the same topic may again be taken up in later passages. A particular problem is posed by the first three statements whose connection with the subject of knowledge is not easily explained. No simple solution suggests itself. Perhaps, the reference to the lack of regard for prophets and pious men in their

⁷³ The remark is ascribed to Jesus in Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 227.

⁷⁴ Cf. Abû Tâlib al-Makki, *Qât*, II, 3, Ibn Hazm, *Ihkâm*, VII, 30; ar-Râghib al-İsfahânî, *Muħâdarât*, I, 28 (attributing it to an unnamed jurist). Instead of “that comes from the past” which seems the appropriate translation of *mâdiyah*, we find elsewhere *qâ’imah* “well-established.” Contrast above, p. 179.

own countries is meant to indicate that scholarship and scholars are often not appreciated as much as they deserve to be and that they should be considered as being on the same level as prophets and saints. Mention of the Prophet's expressed aversion to "difficult problems," as the term *ughlūṭāt* is explained,⁷⁵ appears all the more to be out of place here as subsequent sections of the chapter dealing with grammar and lexicography depend heavily on tricky and recondite material. It would seem that the Prophet's warning is to be understood here as being directed against problems that may cause doubt. Thus, the *hadīth* would recommend the necessity of cultivating certain and assured knowledge, which would be the same as simply "knowledge." Ibn Qutaybah could have found a more pertinent and straightforward Prophetic tradition to introduce his discussion of knowledge. He might have felt that the cryptic quotation was flattering to the intelligence of his readers and would in a way arouse their interest in what he was going to say.

In its connection with language, grammar, and rhetoric, "knowledge" is here conceived as the comprehensive term for the principal subject to be studied by the educated individual, the ways and means of proper and effective linguistic expression. Their mastery is the first as well as the last step in the curriculum of the *adīb*. "Knowledge" thus conceived is therefore fittingly claimed to be the *adīb*'s true and basic knowledge. In Ibn Qutaybah's presentation, the religious development which turned *ilm* into a synonym of *hadīth* and religious scholarship in general makes its influence already felt, and the term is often to be understood in this specialized sense. The repeated references to the Gospels is another indication of religious influence. Quotations from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures are frequent in Ibn Qutaybah's work and reflect the broad-minded concern of the educated layman no less than the theologian with religious and intellectual matters outside the boundaries of Islam. Ibn Qutaybah's guiding principle, however, is the consideration that in the realm of *adab*, "knowledge" refers to *adab*'s most important intellectual aspect, the ability to handle the magnificent and complicated tool of the Arabic language.

This is further confirmed by the position which the chapter on knowledge and eloquent expression occupies in the *Uyūn* as a whole. It is part of a trilogy that itself has its place between the

⁷⁵ Cf. Ibn Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 225.

discussion of the political and military leadership to be exercised over large or small groups of human beings and the discussion of the behavior required of individuals in material matters. Within this trilogy, it is preceded by a treatment of the behavior of men and animals resulting from their physical makeup and their character qualities (including stupidity). And it is followed by a chapter on the recommendable aspects of religious piety in daily life. Consequently, it can be said that in Ibn Qutaybah’s view, “knowledge” stands for the only approach to everything to some degree abstract and intellectual that is permissible in *adab* education which in general has the cachet of materialism and practicality. This would seem to be a somewhat restricted role, but it is clearly one of special significance in an environment that had so much reverence for abstract thought. In a way, its connection with *ilm* pulled *adab* into the orbit of a specifically Muslim culture.

About half a century after Ibn Qutaybah, the Spaniard, Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, compiled the famous *Iqd*, his great *adab* anthology. The *Iqd* has a long chapter entitled “The Ruby on *Ilm* and *Adab*.⁷⁶ Much of Ibn Qutaybah’s material is duplicated here. However, it often appears in a somewhat fuller form which all but excludes the possibility of a direct dependence for at least part of the material common to both authors. The general position of the chapter on *ilm* and *adab* is after the discussion of political leadership, and is thus the same as that of the corresponding chapter in the *Uyūn*. The *Iqd*’s treatment of *ilm* itself is considerably more systematic than that of the *Uyūn*. In other respects, the coherence of Ibn Qutaybah’s general arrangement is not preserved. The title of the chapter indicates that *ilm* and *adab* are to be considered as forming an inseparable pair. As suggested also by the philosophical scheme of the classification of the sciences, the preceding treatment of political science might be taken to constitute a subject in itself, rather than a part of *adab*. For all the remaining aspects of *adab*, *ilm* functions as a necessary foundation. Both together, as Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih explains in his introductory remarks, are “the two poles around which the religion and the world revolve

⁷⁶ Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 206 to III, 62 (the reprint of volume III used here is dated Cairo 1372/1952). The section dealing with *ilm* constitutes about one-tenth of the entire “Ruby.” Cf. F. Tūqān, *Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih’s Book on Statecraft* (Diss. Yale University 1968), for a balanced discussion of Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih’s relationship to Ibn Qutaybah.

and which separate human beings from animals, the angelic nature from the beastly nature. They are the matter of the intellect, the lamp of the body, the light of the heart, and the support of the spirit.” The intellect and the imagination work together, the former in conjunction with knowledge and the latter in conjunction with the senses, in order to produce, in this sequence, memory (*dhikr*), thought (*fikr*), will (*irâdah*), and, finally, action. The intellect exists through knowledge (pl. *‘ulîm*),⁷⁷ just as the senses exist through the sense perception they attain. “Knowledge is of two kinds, a knowledge that is carried (stored), and a knowledge that is employed (put actively to work). Knowledge carried is harmful. Knowledge employed is useful.”⁷⁸ It would seem, although it is not expressly stated, that *adab* belongs to the action side of knowledge. After the discussion of knowledge and scholars, Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih speaks about the intellect as well as wisdom, adding aphorisms, many of which have also something to say about knowledge. It sounds like an echo from the *Uyûn* when he goes on to define and analyze eloquence.⁷⁹ Thereafter, however, he treats a profusion of *adab* topics dealing with human emotions and behavior of a kind Ibn Qutaybah would have preferred to include in the earlier chapter on physical features and character qualities. Like Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih has sections on eloquent speech and silence, on heretics and sectarians, and on grammatical problems and anecdotes. All this, however, is subordinate to the overall view of *adab* as comprising all aspects of human behavior. The various kinds of material related to language are treated by Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, in contrast to Ibn Qutaybah, at much greater length outside the chapter on *‘ilm* and *adab*. It is clear that Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih considers *‘ilm* to be something that must primarily be identified with the sciences concerned with language. *‘Ilm* appears in his work as the basis for all *adab*, as it is, we have seen, in the ethical religious view the basis of all action and in the view of the speculative theologians the basis of all theology.

It would certainly be instructive to see what elaboration this theme had found, presumably another half a century later, in the hands of the great philologist and littérateur, al-Marzubânî (d.

⁷⁷ Cf. below, p. 273, n. 3.

⁷⁸ Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 206.

⁷⁹ Cf. ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Muḥâdarât*, I, 33.

384/994). His *Kitâb Talqîh al-‘uqûl* “The Fertilization of the Intellects” appears to have been an *adab* work, starting out with a discussion of the intellect. This is followed by chapters on *adab* and on *ilm*, in this order. In view of the stress the *Talqîh* apparently placed on matters intellectual, it is rather strange to find *adab* preceding *ilm*, but since the work is not preserved and its contents not known, it would be idle to speculate on possible reasons.⁸⁰

From the end of the tenth century, we have a different type of *adab* anthology containing a special section on *ilm*. This is the collection of *Maqâmât* by Bâdi‘-az-zamân al-Hamadhânî (d. 398/1008). It goes without saying that the *Maqâmât* literature cannot be simply equated with the usual *adab* anthologies. In a sense, it is more like prose versions of collections of poems, but in contrast to poetical *dîwâns*, it has a coherent theme. Like *adab* anthologies, it serves to illuminate all the varieties and foibles of human behavior, usually under one particular heading at a time for each. The Bâdi‘’s *Maqâmah al-‘ilmîyah* is very brief. Yet, it does surprisingly well in covering all the accepted notions of the difficulties and rewards of the search for knowledge:

“Being abroad, I once heard a man asking someone else how he had obtained knowledge, and this was the reply he received: I looked for it and found it far away, not within the reach of hunting arrows, not to be obtained through divination, not to be seen in one’s sleep, not to be retained with a bridle, not to be inherited from paternal uncles, and not to be borrowed from generous men. I got it by tramping through muddy soil and leaning upon rocks, by rejecting annoyance and taking risks, by the assiduous spending of sleepless nights and liking to travel, by much speculation and the application of thought. I found it to be something good only for planting, and only for being planted in the soul, an animal to be hunted that is caught but rarely and trapped only in the bosom, a bird that is deceived only by the snare of words and enmeshed only in the net of memory. I set it upon the spirit and bound it upon the eye. I spent (my) livelihood (on it) and hoarded (it) in the heart. I checked (on its accuracy) through research, and I went from speculation to the assurance of thorough understanding, and from thorough understanding to writing and authorship, relying

⁸⁰ The available information on the work derives from *Fîhrîst*, 133, ll. 6 ff. = 191.

upon the support of (divine) success. Thus, I heard words that impressed the ear, went to the heart, and seeped into the breast. I said: Young man, whence does the sun rise, and he started to say:

“Alexandria is my home, even though I do not remain there for long,
But in Syria I spend the night, and in the ‘Irâq, my day.”⁸¹

The plethora of allusions contained in the Arabic text is perforce absent from the translation. Even so, the ceaseless hunt for knowledge, its elusive character, its conflict with material values are superbly expressed in a few words. It may be noted that the most famous of all the *Maqâmât*, those written a century after the *Bâdi‘* by al-Harîrî, do not include a *maqâmah* devoted expressly to knowledge.⁸² However, the *Maqâmât* of az-Zamakhsharî, which are intended mainly to illustrate the right religious behavior, have a “*Maqâmah on Action*” which, in fact, deals with the problem of the relationship between knowledge and action. It has its place between the discussion of sincere devotion (*ikhlâs*) and the recognition of the oneness of God (*tawhîd*). A man learned in grammar and all the other branches of philology may boast of his knowledge and education—*îlm* and *adab* are used here indiscriminately—but the true scholar is one who uses his knowledge to gain religious merit. Strong knowledge is useless where action is slack. “Knowledge without action is like a bow without a string.” A relationship as close as blood relationship must be established between knowledge and action. Knowledge is acquired, because it is a ladder leading up to action, which is true action only if it leads to God.⁸³ The synthesis of religious knowledge and *adab* knowledge, which had been achieved by that time, is clearly observable here. It does indeed make this *maqâmah* one on action rather than on knowledge. The stress on action accentuates the dominant role of practical piety and religious observance in the society of az-Zamakhsharî’s time.

⁸¹ Cf. *Bâdi‘-az-zamân al-Hamadhâni*, *Maqâmât*, ed. M. Muhyî-ad-dîn ‘Abd-al-Majîd, 312–15 (Cairo 1381/1962), ed. Beirut 1965, 202, trans. W. J. Prendergast, *The Maqâmât of Bâdi‘ al-Zamân al-Hamadhâni*, 152 f. (London and Madras 1915).

⁸² Nor is there anything special on *îlm* in the *Maqâmât* of Ibn Nâqiyâ and the other material published by O. Rescher, *Maqâmât al-Hanâfi wa-Ibn Nâqiyâ* (Istanbul 1330/1914, *Beiträge zur Maqamen-Litteratur* 4).

⁸³ Cf. az-Zamakhsharî, *Maqâmât*, 98–103 (Cairo 1335). In his translation, Rescher correctly enlarges the heading of the chapter to read, “(Wissen und) Handeln,” cf. O. Rescher, *Die Maqâmen des Zamakhsharî*, 45–48 (Greifswald 1913, *Beiträge...6*).

Among the conventional *adab* anthologies, we encounter a somewhat different organization of the traditional material in the *Kitâb Adab ad-dunyâ wa-d-dîn* of al-Mâwardî (d. 450/1058).⁸⁴ The five large chapters of the work deal with 1. the excellence of the intellect and intelligence and the blameworthiness of instinctive desire and blind prejudice (*hawâ*); 2. the *âdâb* of knowledge; 3. the *âdâb* of religion (dealing mainly with the negative aspects of the material world); 4. the *âdâb* of this world; and 5. the *âdâb* of the soul. As the plural *âdâb* indicates, the various ways in which intellectual, religious, practical/material, and spiritual/ethical behavior is to be practised are illustrated by preferably brief and aphoristic statements in prose and, quite often, in verse. As is to be expected, the chapter on knowledge shows no systematic arrangement. It starts out with strong expressions of praise for knowledge and the appropriate Qur’ânic citations and statements by the Prophet and early Muslim authorities. Evidence is presented for the superiority of knowledge over ignorance. The impossibility of attaining complete knowledge is explained, and the need to acquire knowledge of all kinds wherever possible is stressed. The relationship between knowledge and material possessions is explored in the usual manner. It is recommended that the process of studying begin at an early age. Knowledge is difficult to acquire. Again, the prevalence of ignorance is discussed. The objectionable character of using knowledge for ulterior purposes comes in for customary mention. There are sayings explaining the best methods of study and instruction, the qualities students ought to possess, the need for long and strenuous study, and the drawbacks of forgetfulness. Then, we read remarks about handwriting, about the usually bad handwriting of scholars, and about their constantly being engaged in writing. Remarks on the qualifications of students, the *hadîth* that “good questions are one half of knowledge,” and sayings about the character qualities of scholars complete the part of the work devoted to knowledge. Its predominantly secular outlook is indicated by the fact that knowledge here continues to precede the discussion of religion and ethics. The basic role conceded to

⁸⁴ Cf. al-Mâwardî, *Adab* (Cairo 1315). A defective but rather old manuscript of the work is preserved in Manisa 1117. It was briefly mentioned but not identified in *Une Liste des manuscrits choisis parmi les bibliothèques de Manisa, Akhisar*, 9 (Istanbul 1951). Its scribe was a certain Muhammad b. Şadaqah (al-Hâr?)rânî, who completed his task at the end of Sha'bân 534/April 19, 1140.

the intellect with respect to both intellectual/educational and religious/ethical activity is formally acknowledged by placing the chapter on it at the beginning, as was also the case in the work of al-Marzubâni.

A similar attitude is to be found in the large *adab* anthology by ar-Râghib al-İsfahânî. His *Muḥádarât* may be dated in the opening years of the twelfth century. The general tendency is toward identifying *ilm* not only with *adab* but also with *‘aql*. In his dedication, ar-Râghib speaks of the contents of the work as “polish for the understanding and substance matter for knowledge,” and this, he says, befits his sponsor’s “concern with intelligence and the protection of excellence.”⁸⁵ As in al-Mâwardî, the discussion of intelligence and stupidity is linked with the blameworthiness of following one’s instinctive desires and prejudices. Indicative of the possession of intelligence are such qualities as prudence, energy, cleverness, and self-reliance, as well as the skilful utilization of the intelligence possessed by others by seeking their advice. Knowledge comes next. It is likewise viewed principally as a result of intelligence and experience, a way of living a successful life. The usual topics are treated always briefly and usually according to both their good and their bad aspects. *Ilm*, or rather, as it turns out, *adab*, is the equivalent of rank and nobility (*hasab*) and of wealth. This appears to favor the usefulness of knowledge for worldly advantage. But, as is customary, the use of knowledge merely for gaining material success is scored. The connection of knowledge and action is mentioned. A strange assortment of scholarly disciplines is briefly considered. In conformity with the religious claim to an exclusive title on “knowledge,” it starts out with *hadîth*. Then, the philological disciplines such as grammar and prosody as well as entertaining anecdotes are considered. This is followed by speculative theology and jurisprudence, and then, there come counting, riddles, and genealogy. We have here the ordinary range of disciplines with which an educated man ought to be acquainted.

Memory and forgetfulness and the writing of books are discussed, followed by paragraphs on the good and bad qualities of scholars as well as the tribulations they have to endure at the hand of

⁸⁵ Cf. ar-Râghib al-İsfahânî, *Muḥádarât*, I, 2. The first chapter on “The Intellect, Knowledge, Stupidity, and Related Subjects” covers pp. 5–96, of which pp. 5–16 are devoted to intelligence and related qualities, pp. 16–24 are devoted to knowledge, and pp. 24–32, to study and teaching.

ignorant persons, who by nature are hostile to the learned.⁸⁶ A section of equal length deals with learning and teaching in the manner of the technical educational literature. Topics discussed that take care of the student's side are the need for spreading knowledge while at the same time being selective in the choice of qualified students, the best age for studying, the merits of memorized knowledge versus written knowledge, the usefulness of asking questions and of admitting one's ignorance, the difficulties encountered in acquiring knowledge, and its great diversity. The teaching side is illustrated by remarks on the value of education (*ta'dîb*), by examples of admirable instructions given by important men to teachers of the past, by anecdotes about the success or lack of success of teachers with intelligent or stupid pupils, and by statements on the bad qualities of teachers and the drawbacks of the teaching profession. Thereafter, ar-Râghib turns his attention to eloquence, speaking and keeping silent, disputation, poetry, and writing—all these, we have seen, being part of the philological side of the ‘ilm of *adab*. In fact, this also applies in a way to the concluding sections dealing with truth and untruth, keeping secrets, giving honest advice, being receptive to the exhortations of preachers, sermons and the recitation of the Qur’ân, and making use of the “Arab” disciplines of drawing conclusions from facial expression, skilful hints, various ways of divination, and popular superstitions.

All this material constitutes the first chapter of ar-Râghib's long work. He adopts the view of the precedence of *‘aql* in the ‘ilm/*adab* scheme. More remarkable is the fact that in contrast to the older stage represented by Ibn Qutaybah and Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, the *Muḥādarāt* moves the discussion of these subjects to the very beginning.⁸⁷ The discussion of political science no longer forms the starting point. It follows upon the chapter on the intellect and knowledge, and is in turn followed by a very extended discussion of human behavior and a comparatively brief discussion of religious topics, including the views on dying and the customs connected with it. At the end, space is given to a loosely attached section on the physical world of nature and on angels, devils, and jinn as well as animals, in order to satisfy the claim generally made for *adab*

⁸⁶ Cf. below, p. 322, n. 2.

⁸⁷ Cf. also in this connection the *adab* work in the Ambrosiana in Milan described by E. Griffini, in *RSO*, IV (1911–12), 1032.

that it constitutes the blue print for a complete education in all worthwhile subjects.

The natural world makes the beginning in another, very successful and immensely popular *adab* anthology from the first half of the twelfth century, az-Zamakhsharī's *Rabī' al-abrār*. This strikes us as making better sense than having the discussion of nature tacked on at the end. Otherwise, however, the *Rabī'* is to all appearances much less logical in its construction than ar-Rāghib's *Muḥādarāt*. Its sixtieth chapter deals with "knowledge, wisdom, *adab*, writing (books), pens, and related topics."⁸⁸ The precedence accorded earlier to political science appears to be reflected in the fact that this chapter is preceded by a chapter dealing with nobility, rank, leadership, and fame. However, there seems to be no precedent in the literary tradition for the immediately following discussion of raids, killings, martyrdom, the arts and implements of warfare, courage, and cowardice. There is also no discernible internal order within the chapter on knowledge itself. The topic of the relationship of *ilm* and *'amal* crops up repeatedly. The material presented is expectedly more or less identical with what is found elsewhere. However, az-Zamakhsharī shows an inclination to enliven his subject with anecdotes of famous jesters such as Muzabbid and Ash'ab. In addition to Prophetic traditions, some space is allotted to jurisprudence, in particular, that of Abū Ḥanīfah. Verses are cited rather profusely. The *adab* part of the chapter consists of remarks on grammar, writing, and books. The *Rabī'*'s lack of interest in *ilm* is understandable, but it is to some degree indicative of the comparatively minor significance of *ilm* as a theoretical concept in many *adab* works. They were satisfied with the silent assumption that *ilm* was their domain and that they were in their entirety devoted to knowledge.

The large *Tadhkirah* of a near contemporary, Ibn Ḥamdūn (495–562/1102–66), has no special section on *ilm*, as far as is known. Interestingly enough, the *Tadhkirah* pays tribute to the concern that had finally captured all Muslim intellectual endeavor by putting a chapter on religious exhortations and religious *ādāb* at

⁸⁸ Cf. az-Zamakhsharī, *Rabī'*, in Ms. Yale L-5, Vol. II, fols. 182b–204a, and in Ms. Fatih 3894, fols. 22a–34a. Questions concerning the original text of the work and which of the many preserved manuscripts contain it, as well as the relationship of the various abridgments to the original text and similar matters, remain to be answered.

the beginning. "Worldly" *âdâb* and political science are removed to second place; in this connection, we find a passage quoting al-Ma'mûn and an unidentified philosopher on the topics of the inexhaustibility of knowledge and the degrees of importance of the various scholarly disciplines as well as the need for gradual progression in studying.⁸⁹ Chapter thirteen of the *Tâdhkirah* deals with intelligence and stupidity. This chapter, however, is unlikely to have said much if anything on "knowledge."

This is quite clear from a later *adab* work, the *Nihâyat al-arab* of an-Nuwayrî (d. 732/1332). It, too, has no special section on *îlm*, but it includes brief sections on intelligence and its opposites, stupidity (*humq*) and ignorance (*jahl*). These sections make only incidental mention of *îlm* and its derivatives. An-Nuwayrî cites, for instance, the remark about the refractory soul's need of knowledge and intelligence,⁹⁰ or the statement ascribed to Wahb b. Munabbih that a fool is not helped by his own knowledge nor can anybody else's knowledge help him, or the definition of the speculative theologians of *'aql* as "a designation for kinds of knowledge (*'ulûm*) whose attainment by man assures the soundness of his commitment."⁹¹ But these sections concentrate on *'aql* and always use the term, even though it could conveniently be replaced in most cases by *îlm* without any great change in meaning. An-Nuwayrî uses a different and quite scientific scheme for the arrangement of his encyclopaedic information. He starts out with the

⁸⁹ Cf. Ibn Hamdûn, *Tâdhkirah*, in the Istanbul Ms. Topkapsaray, Ahmet III 2948, Vol. I, fol. 150b, cf. Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, *Tqd*, II, 207. I have not seen the thirteenth chapter. It is, I believe, not to be found in the extant volumes of the *Tâdhkirah* in the set of the Topkapsaray.

⁹⁰ Cf. above, p. 262, n. 1.

⁹¹ Cf. an-Nuwayrî, *Nihâyah*, III, 230–37, 353–59, in particular, 232 f., 356 (Cairo 1342–1374, reprint, n.y. [1965?]).

Ibn al-Jawzî, *Dhamm*, 5, in addition to the definition of *'aql* cited above, p. 156, n. 1, refers to three definitions of *'aql* insisting on its connection with *îlm*: 1. "It is a kind of the necessary kinds of knowledge (*al-'ulûm ad-darûrîyah*)."⁹² 2. "It is a natural ability which makes it possible to attain the sciences (*al-'ulûm*)."⁹³ And 3. "It is a potency through which distinctions in preference can be made between the realities of the objects known."⁹⁴

Ardashîr is credited with the remark that "the growth of intelligence is through knowledge," cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjat al-majâlis*, ed. M. Mursî al-Khôlî and 'Abd-al-Qâdir al-Qutî, I, 534 (Cairo, n.y. [1967?]).

In connection with a statement by al-Muâsibî that the intellect does not belong to the *'ulûm*, as-Subkî. *Tabaqât ash-Shâfi'iyah*, II, 42, discusses al-Ash'âri's presumed opinion that it is a knowledge, as well as the views of al-Bâqillâni and the Imâm al-Haramayn.

physical world, then goes on to discuss man, animals, plants, and, finally and at great length, history. The discussion of the intellect and intelligence belongs to the world of man. There is no need to discuss "knowledge" as a natural or acquired endowment. Everything discussed belongs to the realm of natural or social science, meaning that it is *ipso facto* "knowledge."

At the end of the development, if we can indeed speak of a development, there are works such as the *Mustaṭraf fi kull fann mustazraf* by al-Ibshīhī who lived in the first half of the fifteenth century. Among the numerous earlier works al-Ibshīhī says he used, he mentions in particular the *Iqd* and the *Rabi'*. His use of the latter work is quite apparent also in his chapter on knowledge. The religious identification of all secular learning manifests itself in an introductory chapter on the five basic pillars of Islam. Only after the necessary respect has thus been paid to the ruling force in Muslim civilization does the author consider the subject of intelligence and stupidity, making it clear that for him, the intellect ranks in importance below the duties of the religious law. There follows a chapter on the Qur'ān, and this is before the author presents his chapter on knowledge. This does not mean that he considers "knowledge" exclusively the equivalent of *hadīth* which would ordinarily be discussed right after the Qur'ān. Al-Ibshīhī intends to make it clear by this arrangement that as the intellect and reason come after the religious law, thus all other scholarly concerns of man should come only after the study of the Qur'ān. The full title of the fourth chapter dealing with knowledge is "On Knowledge, *Adab*, and the Excellence of Scholar/Teacher and Student." It is in turn followed by a few pages of aphorisms and proverbs. The subsequent discussion of eloquence leads over to the main contents of the *Mustaṭraf*, which is the detailed treatment of the usual great variety of philological, literary, ethical, and political topics. The first four chapters occupy only a minute portion, less than five percent, of the entire work.⁹² The six and a half large pages on knowledge and *adab* reveal a pronounced slant toward the religious meritoriousness of knowledge. This shows in the manner in which the subject of the potential faults of scholars is played down. The value of memorized knowledge is stressed, and the authorities cited in this connection are mainly religious scholars.

⁹² Cf. al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, I, 6–29. The chapter on knowledge occupies pp. 23–29, trans. G. Rat, 52–68 (Paris and Toulon 1899).

A good deal of space is taken up with proving the unlimited extent of God's knowledge with the help of a parable of al-Khiḍr, Moses, and the sparrow, and a number of other statements. Sayings attributed in az-Zamakhsharī's *Rabi‘* to ancient Greek authorities such as Plato, Galen, and Aristotle, are omitted, or no ascriptions are mentioned. This is also the case with regard to an anecdote on divorce which the *Rabi‘* cites in the name of Muzabbid; the omission of the famous jokester's name completely masks the humorous character of the anecdote. A more secular outlook is preserved in the brief section dealing with *adab*. The transition from *ilm* to *adab* is made by remarks on correct speech, a subject, skirting both *ilm* and *adab*. The material usefulness and worldly advantages offered by *adab* are the main thesis of al-Ibshīhī's quotations, and in this connection, it does not appear inappropriate to him to insert statements bearing the names of Greek authorities such as Hippocrates and Galen. In his discussion of knowledge, the author adds another element not found in the earlier literature discussed here. Close to the beginning of the chapter, he has a definition of knowledge.⁹³ This shows his awareness of the role played by knowledge in speculative theology. Still, *ilm* remains a rather minor concept for him. His concern with impressing upon his readers the religious and morals virtues of knowledge is understandable and inevitable in the intellectual climate of his time.

The preceding discussion of some *adab* anthologies, limited as it is, will have provided a general idea of the position the concept of *ilm* has over the centuries occupied in the large realm of *adab*. It is correct to maintain, as did al-Ibshīhī, that “each (of the many earlier works he used in the compilation of the *Mustatraf*) stood alone with valuable items of information not contained in the other works.”⁹⁴ However, there is an extensive overlapping of information, and apart from it, the choice and import of ideas are largely the same all over, even if the words differ. Only the general organization and arrangement can give some indication with regard to the specific attitude toward knowledge taken by the various authors. On this basis, it is clear that “knowledge” made occasional attempts to work its way to the top, that is, to a conspicuous position at the beginning of a given work. However, it did so neither consistently nor very convincingly. Moreover, *ilm* was at times almost

⁹³ Cf. al-Ibshīhī, *Mustatraf*, I, 23, see definition C-4, above, p. 56.

⁹⁴ Cf. al-Ibshīhī, *Mustatraf*, I, 2.

totally disregarded. In all, it must be admitted that “knowledge” had little life of its own in the *adab* literature. On the other hand, knowledge was silently acknowledged all around as basic in connection with *adab*, and it was treated as almost synonymous with *adab*, in spite of repeated attempts to nail down the difference between the two concepts.⁹⁵ In the *adab* view, knowledge is also closely allied with, and hardly distinguishable from, intelligence which, understood as a sort of *Lebensklugheit* or practical wisdom, became the password that opened the world of *adab*. Different shades of opinions existed here, too. For the men concerned with *adab*, the intellect certainly enjoyed precedence over knowledge,⁹⁶ but it was not possible, nor was the attempt made, to shake the conviction that knowledge provided the theoretical basis for all practical intelligence. Learning from life, experience, was generally thought to be the preserve of the intellect, and not that of knowledge.⁹⁷ In pre-Islamic times, it was often knowledge that was conceived as the sum total of numerous bits of experience.⁹⁸ In

⁹⁵ Cf. Ibn Qutaybah’s statement, above, p. 263. This statement was also quoted by as-Şafadī, *Ghaylī*, I, 3 (Cairo 1305/1888), cf. F. Rosenthal, in *Orientalia, N.S.*, XI (1942), 263.

⁹⁶ This was also the view of the philosophers, but it was against the innermost convictions of the religious scholars. For a religious-mystical assessment of the superiority of knowledge over the intellect, cf. the five folios contained in the Ankara Ms. Ismail Saib, I, 4120, entitled *Fi tafsīl al-‘ilm ‘alā l-‘aql*. The manuscript was written in 704–706/1304–6. I do not know its author (as-Sulamī?). It is followed by an essay on the nobility of the intellect (by the same author?). A late essay comparing *‘ilm* and *‘aql* was al-Kāfiyājī’s *Kāfi*, Ms. Atif Eff, 2828, fol. 169b–173b.

The *‘aql* clearly was valued more highly in the widespread view that knowledge without intelligence might be harmful. “If a man’s knowledge is greater than his intelligence, he is liable to suffer harm from his knowledge,” cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjāt*, I, 533. In particular, men of suspect religious views were often accused of possessing more knowledge than intelligence. It may be noted that in the Greek orbit, we find, for instance, Chrysostomus (?) pondering the fact that “there is knowledge (*gnōsis*) without reason (*logos*) as well as knowledge together with reason, and there are many who have knowledge but do not have reason,” cf. Antonius Melissa, 927 f.

⁹⁷ Cf., for instance, Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 240 ff.; al-Ibshīhī, *Mustatraf*, I, 17 f. A statement attributed to Plato in the *Kītāb as-Sā‘adah*, 167, explains that “experience” goes with the intellect, as does action with knowledge. Similarly, in the Greek view, “experience” belonged together with wisdom, as indicated, for instance, in a saying attributed to the musician, Lasus, calling experience (*peira*) the wisest thing (*sophōtaton*) there is, cf. Antonius Melissa, 935 f., as it was also considered “the best” (Theognis).

⁹⁸ Cf. above, pp. 14 f.; Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn*, II, 191. The verse of Tarafah cited above, p. 15, is explained as referring to “wisdom,” which is hardly

poetry, this idea seems to have lived on more directly than in prose. Thus, al-Mutanabbi sang:

I have tasted the bitter and the sweet of affairs
 And walked over the rough and the smooth paths of days.
 I have come to know all about time. It cannot produce
 Any extraordinary word or any new action.

Elsewhere, he said:

I knew the nights before they affected me,
 And when they afflicted me, it gave me no additional knowledge.⁹⁹

At least for the many who listened to the voice of poets,¹⁰⁰ knowledge continued to signify also something gained not through study or inspiration but through practical experience and the hard school of life. But like logic which is all about knowledge and therefore can dispense with much discussion of the concept as such, *adab* also deals with knowledge in its totality and therefore does not have to make many words about it, while being fully conscious of its dependence on it.

3. MONOGRAPHS IN PRAISE OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE

The ambiguity surrounding the position of the concept of *ilm* in *adab* literature would make us suspect that monographs on knowledge from the *adab* point of view might not have existed at an early stage, in contrast to what was the situation with other *adab* topics. Therefore, it deserves notice that a brief essay on the excellence of knowledge (*Risâlah fî faâl al-ilm*) addressed to Ahmad b. Abî Du'âd (d. 240/854) is preserved in an eleventh-century manuscript.¹⁰¹ The name of its author is not indicated. From the

correct, cf. Ishâq b. Ibrâhîm al-Kâtib, *al-Burhân fî wujûh al-bayân* (formerly known as Ibn Qudâmah, *Naqd an-nâthr*), ed. A. Maâlûb and Khadîjah al-Hadîthî, 172 (Baghdâd 1967).

⁹⁹ Cf. ath-Thâ'âlibî, *Yatîmâh*, I, 98.

¹⁰⁰ However, we also find prose statements such as: "Experience is knowledge, and education (*adab*) is help. Dispensing with it (*adab*) is harmful to the intellect," cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Bahyah*, I, 110.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Muhsin al-Amîn al-Husaynî, in *Revue de l'Académie arabe de Damas*, XIX (1944), 74. The manuscript containing the essay is dated in 420/1029. It was used by a certain Abû n-Najîb 'Abd-ar-Râhmân b. Muhammad b. 'Abd-al-Karîm al-Karkhî in 528/1133–34. On the basis of a copy of the same manuscript, the present whereabouts of which are not known to me, Ibn 'Abbâd's *Uwâl al-mâ'rif* was published by M. H. Âl Yâsîn, *Nafâ'is al-makhtû'ât*, I (an-Najaf 1372/1953). I do not know whether it may have been part of a larger work and whether the possibility of al-Jâhîz' authorship has been considered.

available description of its contents, it would seem that its principal purpose was to glorify the written word. Knowledge, the most precious and sought after merchandise in the world, is preserved in books whose authors themselves perish, while their written works remain. What we have in this essay, therefore, is not really the praise of knowledge but an expression of admiration for the great wonder of the technique of its literary preservation which excited the littérateurs of early 'Abbâsid times. In their forefront was al-Jâhîz, who was on intimate terms with Ibn Abî Du'âd and who himself is credited with a (related?) book of the same title.¹⁰² The praise of books had a certain polemical sting to it. It concealed an attack against the aversion for an exclusively written fixation of their particular knowledge professed by "orthodox" religious scholars. The anonymous essay thus deals with one of the technical educational aspects of the transmission of knowledge. That the subject was soon accepted generally into the educational literature even where the stress was on memorized knowledge, is hardly surprising in view of the fact that paper made Islam a civilization of the written word to a degree not possible before.

Bibliographical indications concerning early monographs on knowledge are neither numerous nor unambiguous. Some can be assumed with some assurance to have dealt with knowledge from the religious traditionist point of view.¹⁰³ If a title ascribed to Wâsil b. 'Atâ', the Mu'tazilah speculative theologian, reads, "The Classes of the People of Knowledge and Ignorance,"¹⁰⁴ the subject dealt with in such a work was most probably a confrontation of Wâsil's dogmatic views with those of his adversaries. No early eighth-century monograph especially devoted to *adab* and *'ilm* can be suspected here. An early Mâlikite, 'Abd-al-Malik b. Hâbîb (d. 238/853, or 239), wrote a *Kitâb al-Wara' fî l-'ilm* "On Austerity in Knowledge." Since he is also credited with a companion treatise on "Austerity in Wealth", it would seem that he was dealing

¹⁰² Cf. the Persian translation of the *Fihrist*, 308, and the biography of al-Jâhîz in Yâqût's *Ishâd*.

¹⁰³ Cf. above, p. 77, and, for the Shî'ah and Mu'tazilah *Kitâb al-Mârifah*, cf. above, pp. 146 ff. Cf. also above, p. 94, n. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. the Houtsma fragment of the *Fihrist*, in *WZKM*, IV (1890), 217–35. Another fragment of the *Fihrist* mentions a *Kitâb Idâfat al-'ulûm* by a certain speculative theologian, Humayd b. Sa'id b. Bakhtiyâr, cf. J. Fück, in *ZDMG*, XC (1936), 309. If the title is transmitted correctly, the work may have dealt with the interdependence of the various sciences, with a view to proving that their apex is constituted by speculative theology.

with educational aspects of knowledge meant to inculcate the proper attitude toward study and scholarship in the student.¹⁰⁵ The *Kitâb Fadâ'il al-îlm* “On the Merits of Knowledge” by another Mâlikite, the judge of Toledo, Yahyâ b. Zakarîyâ b. Muzayn (d. 259/873, or 260), was probably concerned mostly with religious knowledge, since Ibn Muzayn is also credited with a work on the merits of the Qur'ân.¹⁰⁶ And the *Targhib fi l-îlm* “Encouragement toward Knowledge” by the Shâfi'ite, al-Muzanî (d. 264/878), almost certainly dealt with Shâfi'ite jurisprudence, the “knowledge” of the title.¹⁰⁷

A further element of confusion comes in through the similarity in Arabic writing of *îlm* and *qalam* “pen.” The fifty folios by a certain Ahmad b. Muhammâd b. Abî 1-Asbagh, who possibly flourished in the second half of the ninth century, could no doubt have dealt with “Knowledge and the Nobility of Writing and Secretaryship,” as the published text of the *Fihrist* says,¹⁰⁸ for we have seen that a discussion of knowledge might be added to that of writing; however, originally, it might rather have been “pen” instead of “knowledge.” The same applies to the title of a work by Ibn Abî Sarh.¹⁰⁹ In the case of “The Book on Knowledge” by a certain 'Alî b. Muhammâd ash-Shimshâfi (not as-Sumaysâfi), who lived under the Hamdâniids, the reading “knowledge” found in the edition of the *Fihrist* does indeed not appear in the edition of Yâqût's *Irshâd* where we find “pen.”¹¹⁰ Either reading could be correct. The only thing we can say is that in view of the other titles accredited to the author, it must in any case have been an *adab* work. On the other hand, “The Festivals of the Souls on Knowledge” by the philologist 'Abdallâh b. Muhammâd al-Khazzâz, who wrote under the wazîr 'Alî b. 'Isâ and may therefore be dated approximately in the early tenth century, would seem to have been a monograph

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Ibn Farhûn, *Dîbâj*, 155. His *Kitâb al-Wara'*, now preserved in the Escorial, 5146, 6 (cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 231; Sezgin, I, 362), deals with “austerity” in practical and ethical behavior. It may well be the *Kitâb al-Wara'* *fi l-îlm*, *îlm* meaning traditional information, in which case it has nothing to do with the subject under discussion here.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Ibn Farhûn, *Dîbâj*, 354. For Ibn Muzayn, cf. Sezgin, I, 473.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. as-Subkî, *Tabaqât ash-Shâfi'iyah*, I, 238.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Fihrist*, 128 = 184. The Persian translator of the *Fihrist* indicates preference for “pen” in all the cases mentioned.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. above, p. 77.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Fihrist*, 154 = 220, and Yâqût, *Irshâd*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, V. 376 (Leiden and London 1907–27, *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series* 6) = XIV, 241 (Cairo, n.y. [1355–57]). For the author, cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 251.

on knowledge such as we are looking for here.¹¹¹ And the same may have been the case with “The Protection of Knowledge and the Government of the Soul” by a certain Abû l-Qâsim al-Bustî whose name and date are uncertain, although he, too, may belong into the early tenth century.¹¹² Monographs from later centuries on the excellence (*fadl*) of knowledge also do not seem to have been written in appreciable numbers, and unless they are preserved, their indicated titles leave their contents in doubt, as in the case of the work of this title appearing among the literary output of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah.¹¹³ In the *adab* context, there was too much incidental reference to knowledge, and the relevant material was much too familiar, to justify monograph treatment.

The educational element in the *adab* discussion of knowledge is unmistakable in a monograph entitled “The Encouragement of Seeking and Being Eager to Gather Knowledge” by Abû Hilâl al-‘Askarî.¹¹⁴ The brief work is distinguished by the comparative originality of its contents and the author’s willingness to give his own views and comments on the sayings and stories he cites. His aim is to show that while the acquisition of knowledge calls for hard work, industriousness, and great sacrifice, the rewards both material and spiritual are worth the effort required. The two basic ideas are rather skilfully interwoven, with the principal stress on the necessity of relentless labor. Knowledge means perfection or, as the author puts it, “perfect among men is he who realizes the excellence of knowledge and then is able to study, in order to obtain knowledge,” and, as a result, to taste the sweetness of the incomparable pleasure it provides.¹¹⁵ As far as the praise of knowledge is concerned, al-‘Askarî otherwise restricts himself to some of the more ordinary statements, such as the *hadîth* affirming the Prophet’s

¹¹¹ Cf. *Fihrist*, 82 = 122.

¹¹² Cf. *Fihrist*, 133 = 199. The other titles listed in connection with this author seem to indicate that he was principally interested in natural science, presumably from the point of view of the philologist. He has nothing to do with the Zaydi theologian, cf. Sezgin, I, 626; S. M. Stern, in *JRAS*, 1961, 18.

¹¹³ Cf. the editor’s introduction to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah, *Rawdat al-muhibbîn*, p. *sh*, no. 50.

¹¹⁴ Cf. al-‘Askarî, *Hathth*. The undated fourteenth-century Ms. Asir Ef. 433, contains the text on fols. 31a–49a, the Ms. Hamidiye 1464 on fols. 50a–65b. The latter has a collation note on fol. 26a, dated in Jumâdâ I 1010/1601. It looks as if the text of the work in Ms. Hamidiye extends to fol. 68b. However, fols. 66a–68b contain fragments of one or two hitherto unidentified treatises.

¹¹⁵ Cf. above, p. 241.

permission to use flattery and show envy in connection with knowledge, or 'Ali's famous remark that a man's value consists in what he knows or does well.¹¹⁶ Comparatively little space is given to the specific religious connotation of knowledge, although it is not entirely disregarded. At one point, it rather strangely intrudes upon the author's strong concern with literature and philology, when he quotes a statement to the effect that a student "should postpone the study of history (*akhbâr*) and poetry to the time he is tired (*malâl*)."¹¹⁷ The importance and influence of knowledge are greater than that of political power (*sultân*). Therefore, the best among rulers try hardest to acquire knowledge.

Al-'Askarî gives examples of the high esteem shown to scholars and the important position in society they occupy, often in spite of their lowly origins which ordinarily would not have allowed them to advance far beyond their fathers' menial situations. Much more numerous, and more interesting, are the anecdotes and remarks on the difficulties that must be overcome on the road to knowledge. He cites the statement concerning the six qualities needed: a penetrating mind, much time, ability, hard work, a skilful teacher, and desire (or, in the parlance of our own time, "motivation," *shahwah*). On his own, he adds the very elementary need for "nature," that is, an inherited physical endowment, such as Muslim philologists of al-'Askarî's type always claimed as essential for their intellectual pursuits. The search for knowledge must be unselfish. As the author repeats over and over again, it is a never ending process. Persistent study sharpens the natural faculties. The hunger for knowledge is never stilled, as proclaimed by traditions ascribed to the Prophet. Stationariness means ultimate failure, according to the widely quoted saying that "man does not cease knowing as long as he studies, but once he gives up studying, he is the most ignorant of men."¹¹⁸ Constant travel in search of knowledge and regular attendance at the teacher's lectures are mandatory. The prospect of learning something not known before should make a man forget his home and his family and endure all possible hardships, as illustrated by an anecdote about al-Asma'i. Scholars refrain at times from certain foods as too luxurious or as harmful to the powers of memory. They study all night long.

¹¹⁶ See above, p. 256, and below, p. 323.

¹¹⁷ For the sentiment expressed, cf. also, for instance, Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 324.

¹¹⁸ See above, p. 256, n. 1.

Ash-Shâfi‘î paid no attention to a slave girl given to him by friends who wants to sleep with him. Abû Hanîfah, asked about the manner in which memorized knowledge can be acquired, exclaimed, “Lamp oil, lamp oil” (*al-bîzr al-bîzr*), and a poor student later to become a famous scholar, Abû Hâtim (as-Sijistânî?), being unable to buy lamp oil, used the watchman’s lantern to study at night in the streets. Scholars continue their studies even in the bath. They are so absorbed in their work that they do not notice what is going on around them, that they do not care to waste time on eating, that they do not bother when a hemorrhage occurs during their all-night study. In the last case, a warning note is sounded for the benefit of the reader: Studying is done for the good of one’s soul (life). If the soul is destroyed, the knowledge acquired is of no use. “Overstepping the right mean in studying may lead to the loss of knowledge.”

Again as a philologist, al-‘Askarî uses a good deal of the latter half of his treatise to argue in favor of the superiority of memorized knowledge. In his eyes, memorized knowledge is the most difficult and, at the same time, the most useful and rewarding kind of knowledge, the kind of knowledge that swims with you when your ship sinks.¹¹⁹ Among the many good anecdotes he reports in this connection, there is one of Abû ‘Ubaydah and al-Asma‘î and the caliph Hârûn ar-Rashîd. The caliph asked the two scholars to instruct him in the names of the various parts of the body of horses. Abû ‘Ubaydah referred him to his book on the subject. Al-Asma‘î, on the other hand, impressed the caliph favorably by asking for a horse and a pointer and pointing out the various parts.

For al-‘Askarî, *ilm* is the equivalent of *adab*. He uses the two terms interchangeably, as, for instance, when he says in versifying the Prophetic tradition about the envy of knowledge: “I do not envy a man’s money, but I envy his *adab*.” It is philological knowledge that interests him most. That it is not knowledge in general, is also indicated by the very few lines devoted to ignorance and the low status of ignoramuses. Works of this type tend, in fact, to concentrate on some particular discipline rather than knowledge as a whole. Already al-Kindî wrote a work of an almost identical title where “philosophy” is substituted for al-‘Askarî’s

¹¹⁹ In Greek tradition, this saying was ascribed to Antisthenes or to Aristippus, cf. F. Rosenthal, in *Orientalia, N. S.*, XXVII (1958), 38.

“knowledge.”¹²⁰ The purpose is not merely to praise the idea of knowledge but to do the psychological conditioning essential in the process of education, to provide the incentive for the student to learn the subject or subjects he is supposed to acquire. In this sense, a treatise such as that by al-‘Askarî is part of the technical educational literature, even if it deals with a field as general and broad as *adab* education.

* * *

The technical educational literature is again something that is devoted in its entirety to questions of knowledge. Like logic and general *adab*, it does not always have to use the term *‘ilm*, in order to indicate its concern with knowledge. It deals with the practical aspects of how to acquire and spread knowledge. It does not require any theoretical discussion of what knowledge is. All knowledge, all the individual scholarly and scientific disciplines, are subsumed under it. In addition, the ethical and psychological conditions necessary for the learning and teaching process come within its purview. All this means that there is an immense ground to be covered, with the result that individual works are able to deal only with specific aspects and view the educational process on different levels. On the highest scholarly level, we thus have the encyclopaedias which attempt to bring order into the totality of the accumulated positive knowledge of their times and to provide the student with a capsule description of the essential features of all or the main disciplines. On the highest social level, there are the educational works known as *fürstenspiegel* which attempt to distill the knowledge needed for the top layer of society. The existence and rather wide spread and popularity of both types of literature constitute another testimony to the importance of the role of knowledge in society, even if they make short shrift of any abstract theoretical concerns. For this reason, however, they require no special attention here.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Cf. *Fihrist*, 256 = 358.

¹²¹ On encyclopaedias, informative surveys are M. Plessner, *Die Geschichte der Wissenschaften im Islam* (Tübingen 1931, *Philosophie und Geschichte* 31, cf. also Plessner, *Die Bedeutung der Wissenschaftsgeschichte für das Verständnis der geistigen Welt des Islams*, Tübingen 1966. *Philosophie und Geschichte* 82), and M. Plessner, *Der Oikonomikos des Neupythagoreers 'Bryson'* (Heidelberg 1928, *Orient und Antike* 5). On *fürstenspiegel*, we have G. Richter, *Zur Geschichte der älteren arabischen Fürstenspiegel* (Leipzig 1932, *Leipziger Semitistische Studien*, N.F., 3). Fully comprehensive studies

The deep concern with education in the technical sense found expression in two different ways. A substantial number of works were written on learning and teaching in the service of the Muslim religious educational system, and there were philosophical reflections on the educational ideal and how it could be reached or at least approached. The first type is more originally Islamic. It is also earlier with respect to literary fixation, and although it continued to move along rather narrowly defined lines, it remained more productive throughout Muslim history.

The philosophical view of education entered Islam in connection with the Graeco-Arabic translation activity during the ninth century and, perhaps, the early years of the tenth century. It perpetuated its views by merging into general ethics of which it later on constituted a small part. Its brief history can be quickly summarized, as far as it interests us here.

Some inkling of a secular curriculum came to the attention of Muslims through Hunayn's *Nawâdir al-falâsifah*. In sporadic later attempts to substitute pedagogically more suitable courses of study for the all pervasive custom of making the beginning with the Qur'ân and also often making it the end of all instruction, it is possible to recognize an echo of Hellenistic influence.¹²²

Understandably, the philosophical view of education centers in its terminology around the terms *adab* and *ta'dib*, as these words render Greek *paideia*.¹²³ Here, *adib* signifies the person who possesses *paideia*. He is the *paideutos*, and the absence of *adab* marks him as *apaideutos*. No monographs devoted to philosophical education appear to have been preserved. However, there can be little doubt that a short treatise such as Plato's "Exhortation on the Education of Young Men," preserved by Miskawayh,¹²⁴ and the commented

are still lacking. A continuation of Richter's work, extending to later periods, would be especially desirable.

The *Kitâb Zâdânfarrûkh* (sic leg.) *fi ta'dib waladîh* "Zâdânfarrûkh on the Education of his Son," mentioned in *Fihrist*, 315 = 438, appears to be a *fürstenspiegel* like the 'ahd literature mentioned in the same chapter of the *Fihrist*.

¹²² Cf. Hunayn, as translated by Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 105, and Ibn Khaldûn, *Mugaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 303 f.

¹²³ Cf. above, p. 200.

¹²⁴ Cf. Miskawayh, *Jâwidhân Khiradh*, 270–78; F. Rosenthal, in *Orientalia, N. S.*, X (1941), 383–95.

Miskawayh states that he modeled his own work on the *Jâwidhân Khiradh* of Ushhanj, presenting it in translation. In the beginning, right after some

excerpts, most of them under the name of Plato, incorporated into the *Kitāb as-Sa'ādah*,¹²⁵ faithfully reflect once existing monographs. Together with the section on the education of children from the *Oikonomikos* of the Neo-Pythagorean Bryson, whose influence on later Muslim ethical discussions of education has been elucidated by M. Plessner,¹²⁶ these works contain the essence, of all the philosophical thought on the technical side of education known in Islam. The famous philosophical *Bildungsroman* of later times which attempts to show how mankind can acquire all the essential knowledge about the worlds of nature, mind, and metaphysics through its own intellectual powers is in no way a direct continuation of such Greek educational theory. Its origin in the problem of reason and revelation is rooted in what had become thoroughly Muslim soil. It serves to reinforce the conviction of the primacy of knowledge, but even where it deigns to admit the inevitability of societal organization, its premises require it to be totally unconcerned with educational realities actual or potential.¹²⁷

The “Exhortation on the Education of Young Men” is stated by Miskawayh to have been translated by Ishāq b. Hunayn. However, it is very probable that it also represents the work of the same title mentioned in the *Fihrist* as having been translated by a certain Abū 'Amr Yūhannā b. Yūsuf al-Kātib.¹²⁸ There is no good reason to disregard the statement that the entire treatise is a translation, even if it is possible that in the form in which it appears in Miskawayh, it has undergone some alterations. At any rate, these would appear to have been minor. The treatise falls into two parts. One deals with the ethical behavior to be expected in teachers. The other deals with the general precepts which a person who aspires to achieving an education and being considered educated would do well to follow. The principal task for education to accom-

metaphysical remarks, this alleged model has statements on knowledge (and action). Graeco-Islamic, rather than Persian, provenience is obvious for this material.

¹²⁵ Cf. *Kitāb as-Sa'ādah*, 351–88.

¹²⁶ Cf. Plessner, *Oikonomikos*.

¹²⁷ In addition to the famous *Hayy b. Yaqzān*, the *Philosophus Autodidactus*, of Ibn Tufayl, we now have also the *Risālah al-Kāmilīyah fi s-sīrah an-nabawiyyah* by Ibn an-Nafīs, ed., trans. M. Meyerhof and J. Schacht, *The Theologus Autodidactus of Ibn al-Nafīs* (Oxford 1968), which is principally concerned with an understanding of history.

¹²⁸ Cf. *Fihrist* 244 = 341.

plish is the formation of character and the acquisition of good manners and ways of behavior. The setting in which the educational process can reach fruition is indicated to be a strictly organized, authoritarian, and regimented, yet egalitarian group of teachers and students. All of them must be devoted to a life of high virtue and must faithfully believe in the wisdom of the master philosopher. He shows the way, having reached his insight through constant self-examination and a never ending search for wisdom. The students who desire to enter the realm of knowledge must possess unblemished purity, for the almost holy community of learners requires them to have the highest standards of intellectual honesty and to show sincerity, humility, and modesty in all their behavior and activities. In connection with the subjects of instruction, only the training in the arts of war and in music is mentioned. This blends well with the strictly aristocratic outlook of the community of scholars. It is possible that the original text contained more information on the course of study and the subjects to be studied, but this is not very likely to have been the case. It might have been understood that except for some basic aristocratic skills, no specialized knowledge was necessary or desirable. Philosophical contemplation and a code of behavior and action suitable for dedicated intellectuals were the true goal of education.

The *Kitâb as-Sâ'âdah* discusses politics and ethics and the contribution they must make to the achievement of the ultimate end of philosophy, which is the attainment of happiness. It agrees with the "Exhortation" as to the desirable goal of education. However, its concern is not only with the advanced age group considered by the "Exhortation" but also with children at the earlier stages of their education and development. Education must begin with the earliest years of childhood. The foundations must be laid early. These foundations are the firm belief that happiness and the good are achieved through obeying the laws (*sunan*) and one's elders (*akâbir*), so that in encountering a law or a command (*amr*), children welcome it as warmly as if they had found something good. All education is a continuing process. It is the way to the philosophical life or, what is the same, to happiness.

The material ascribed to Plato and the comments thereon are interspersed with other quotations, mainly in the name of Greek sages. Definitions of *adab* "education," *muta'addib* "the individual undergoing education," and *adîb* "the individual who is the product

of education”¹²⁹ make the beginning, as one would expect in a philosophical work that among other sources of inspiration also owes much to Aristotelianism. A first-person statement, possibly-expressing the opinion of the author of the *Kitâb as-Sâ'âdah*, or rather, that of the unnamed commentator (?), defines *adab* as the human wisdom which, in turn, is the observed and considered knowledge about (*ma'rifah*) the way of life leading to happiness. The purpose of *adab*, and here Plato is cited again, is to produce the good man who is able to refrain from physical and material pleasures and to show emotional stability in the face of joys and sorrows and all other happenings as well as remain undisturbed and inactive, except where reason and thought indicate the desirability or necessity of action. The person undergoing education and at an advanced stage of the educational process is identical with the man of reason (*nâtiq*); consequently, the absence of education is identical with the absence of reason (*nutq*). An uneducated person is like a dreamer awake—*enhypnia egrêgorota*—, here cited as a dictum of Plato, whereas Greek tradition ascribes it to Antisthenes.¹³⁰ The education of children must be attuned to their capacity. At first, they must be playfully coaxed into acquiring knowledge and understanding. Serious thought must be presented to them in the form of play. This can be done, for instance, by instructing them in myths which are untrue and fictitious on the surface but of serious educational content.¹³¹ It may take the form of poetry that praises virtue and modesty (i.e., *sôphrosynê*), as against poetry that advocates license and pleasure. As in the “Exhortation,” the serious stage of education requires purity at its very beginning, even for very young children. There ought to be an aversion to everything ugly and dirty. The “leader” (*sâ'îs*), a term which plays a large role also in the “Exhortation,” must banish all ugliness from the country and expel all those who do not refrain from doing evil. Love of what is good and useful, and hatred of what is ugly or evil and harmful are the conditions for success. Bashfulness (*hayâ'*, corresponding to Greek *aidôs*) and the avoidance of bad company

¹²⁹ *Muta'addib* is, however, understood not only as the person potentially ready for education, but he may also be identical with the *adib* who may be either a *muta'addib* advanced in his education or a person qualified to teach and educate others.

¹³⁰ Cf. *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 3. See also below, p. 320, n. 4.

¹³¹ Cf. Plato, *Republic* 376E–377A.

and of sloth are among the qualities strongly recommended for inculcation in the young.

The educational procedure is described next. It is important that it begins with the right principles. Constant training (*ta'wid*) must be employed to produce the proper moral and ethical habits of hard work and endurance, obedience to authority, abstinence from intoxicating beverages, disbelief in bugbears, fearlessness in the face of death, and so on. This training should follow gentle methods, and only where gentleness does not work, should severity be employed. After a brief interlude discussing the relationship between rulers and their subjects, higher education, that is, the study of philosophy, is described. Here the terms *mu'allim* and *muta'allim* replace the derivations from the root *'-d-b*. The age of twenty is suggested as the one in which youths have attained the proper physical and mental development for higher studies. However, they still have to show the same respect for their teachers as do younger children. If they are unwilling, they should not be forced to study, as this would not produce desirable educational results. The training of teachers should extend over the first fifty years of their lives. After reaching adulthood at the age of twenty, they are to study the various special disciplines for a period of ten years, acquire competence in the art of disputation (*jadl*) during another five years, and then, during another fifteen years, perfect the substantive knowledge acquired before. Only then are they ready to teach, and that only if they possess the right ethical attitude. The six disciplines enumerated in the name of Plato and to be studied, apparently, in sequence are arithmetic, geometry, the geometry of solids, astronomy, music, and logic.

The following discussion of the education of women leans heavily on quotations from a “female philosopher” of apparent (Neo-) Pythagorean connections. Although the name of Plato is in general invoked by the “Exhortation” and the *Kitāb as-Sa'ādah*, it is clearly Neo-Pythagoreanism with its penchant for education and for esoteric educational societies where we have to look for the Greek originals of the Arabic material. The Neo-Pythagorean origin of Bryson’s “Economics” is even less in doubt. For Bryson, too, happiness is the final goal. Since his work is concerned with what takes place within the home and the family, his section on education deals exclusively with small children and omits entirely the discussion of higher education, which as a rule took place

outside the family environment. In addition to good physical stock and native endowment, constant training with a view to implanting proper habits is the crucial task of education also for Bryson. Good manners in eating and appropriate habits of sleep are considered important. The avoidance of sexual activity is recommended. A habit of respect for one's elders, hardiness, simple tastes, and the occasional diversion of play are among the things belonging to educational training.

All the foregoing material entered the general current of Muslim thought through the devoted activities of the philosophical rear-guard of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement flourishing in tenth-century Iran. In another of his works, the *Tahdhîb al-akhlâq* "On Ethics," Miskawayh based his chapter on the education of children, as he states himself, upon Bryson. Miskawayh's exposition, in turn, served as the basis for later highly influential treatments of the subject. They were included in al-Ghazzâlî's *Ihyâ*¹³² and the Persian "Nasirean Ethics" by Naṣîr-ad-dîn at-Tûsî,¹³³ which became standard for all subsequent work. The form in which Bryson's Neo-Pythagorean ideas are restated shows rather noteworthy changes, but there is little change in the general conception. Miskawayh sees in Bryson's exposition the trustworthy guide toward all human ethical and intellectual ways and habits leading to true humanity and happiness. Naṣîr-ad-dîn at-Tûsî has in mind more advanced studies and the choice of a craft or profession on the basis of elementary education. Neither view is alien to Bryson, but the difference in emphasis we find in the works of Miskawayh and Naṣîr-ad-dîn at-Tûsî reflects the direction Muslim civilization had taken in the intervening years. Nevertheless, even for Naṣîr-ad-dîn at-Tûsî, the philosophical view of education remains decisive. *Adab-paideia* is principally a function of individual and collective ethics and of societal structure. Its knowledge contents are an integral but in a way less relevant part of it.

In this last respect, the situation is quite different in the literature inspired by and dealing with religion-related education. Here, "knowledge" and the praise of it reverberate in full force from beginning to end. Legal scholars, traditionists, and also mystics

¹³² Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ*, III, 62–64.

¹³³ Cf. the translation of the chapter in Plessner, *Oikonomikos*, 77–100, and the complete translation of at-Tûsî's work by G. M. Wickens, 166–80 (London 1964).

prepared monographs on education from their own particular vantage points. In their own minds at least, their ideas had general validity for all knowledge. The identification by their titles of works that are not preserved once more presents insuperable difficulties. The *Kitâb al-âlim wa-l-muta'allim* by Hâfi b. Salm al-Fazârî (Abû Muqâtil as-Samarqandî), who died in 208/823–24 rather than in 258/871–72,¹³⁴ was certainly a catechism, as was the famous work of the same title by Abû Hanîfah, if it was not indeed identical with it, al-Fazârî being merely its transmitter. When the same title appears again among the works of the prominent early tenth-century Shî'ah jurist, Muhammâd b. Mas'ûd al-'Ayyâshî, in a list which seems to refer to monographs on certain points of the religious law, it may indicate a work on the laws governing teaching, uncertain as this is.¹³⁵ It seems impossible to venture a sensible guess as to the contents of the *Kitâb al-Ilm wa-t-tâ'lim* mentioned by the author of the *Kitâb al-Bad' wa-t-tâ'rîkh* as another one of his works.¹³⁶ It is not likely to have dealt with the technical aspects of education.

Fortunately, the relatively early date of educational monographs is attested in the realm of Mâlikite jurisprudence.¹³⁷ The *Âdâb al-mu'allimîn* “The Behavior of Teachers” by Suhnûn’s son, Muhammâd (202–256/817–870), based on his father’s materials, is preserved.¹³⁸ It influenced the production of similar treatises among Mâlikites and may itself have continued what already in its time

¹³⁴ The title is mentioned in Ibn Hajar, *Lisân*, II, 323 (Hyderabad 1329–31). On the author, cf., for instance, Ibn Abî Hâtim ar-Râzî, *Kitâb al-Jârh wa-t-tâ'dîl*, I, 2, 174, 187 (Hyderabad 1941–53); Ibn Hajar, *Tâdhîb*, II, 397–99, and, for his role as the transmitter of the work of Abû Hanîfah, cf. Sezgin, I, 418.

¹³⁵ Cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 704; Sezgin, I, 42; *Fihrist*, 194 = 275. Another uncertain tenth-century Shî'ah title is the *Kitâb Uns al-'âlim wa-tâ'dîb al-muta'allim* by aş-Şâfîwânî, cf. aṭ-Tûsî, *Fihrist*, 159, l. 4; *Fihrist*, 197, l. 14 = 278. Cf. an-Najâshî, *Rijâl*, 248, 280, also, 238.

¹³⁶ Cf. al-Muâhhâr, *Bad'*, I, 19.

¹³⁷ The contents of the Ibâdîte *Qâsiyat adab al-mu'allim wa-l-muta'allim* is unfortunately not known to me, but unless it is a versified catechism, which is unlikely in view of the word *adab* in the title, the authorship of Aflâh b. 'Abd-al-Wâhhâb b. Rustam, who is placed in the first half of the ninth century, seems open to doubt. It would be by far the earliest treatment of the subject of education according to the law, and, moreover, in the form of verse. Cf. J. Schacht, in *Revue Africaine*, C (1956), 395, no. 121; Sezgin, I, 586.

¹³⁸ Ibn Suhnûn’s treatise was edited by A. F. al-Ahwâmî in connection with al-Qâbîsî, 2nd ed., 351–67; French trans. G. Lecomte, in *Revue des Études Islamiques*, XXI (1953), 77–105.

was a tradition. It is, however, quite brief, and this would tend to indicate that it was, in fact, the first effort, or at least a very early effort, to put out a monograph on the subject of elementary teaching. Such teaching is primarily the study of the Qur'ân. Therefore, traditions in praise of the merit of teaching the Qur'ân make the beginning. The technical details of Qur'ân teaching wind through the entire treatise. They concern such matters as how to wipe clean the slates of children studying the Qur'ân or how deeply to go with them into the subject. The possibility of the teacher teaching other subjects such as counting, poetry, grammar, and philology is mentioned only in passing. The teacher's duties vis-à-vis his young charges are discussed, among them the requirement of treating all of them equally, using corporal punishment within limits only, instructing them in the religious duties of Muslims, giving the children some holidays off, and employing the right ways of supervising them. The most prominent treatment, it would seem, is reserved for matters touching on the financial status of teachers. They have various obligations such as providing for the needed schoolroom and for equipment. Questions of compensation, gifts on special occasions, and ways of earning additional income are treated at some length. It is not unfair to maintain that more than anything else, Ibn Suhnûn's work is concerned with the economic position of teachers. From the legal point of view, this would, in fact, be the most important practical problem to be considered and to be provided with legal guidelines.

The later treatise "On the Laws Governing Teachers and Students" by the great Mâlikite authority, Ibn Abî Zayd (316–386/928–996), is known so far only from a quotation in Ibn Khaldûn.¹³⁹ No definite statement can be made about its contents. However, a younger contemporary of Ibn Abî Zayd and fellow Mâlikite, 'Alî b. Muhammâd al-Qâbisî (324–403/936–1012), also wrote a "Treatise Detailing the Conditions of Students and the Laws Governing Teachers and Students,"¹⁴⁰ which is preserved. It is a much longer work than Ibn Suhnûn's compilation. It starts out

¹³⁹ Cf. Ibn Khaldûn, *Muqaddînah*, trans. Rosenthal, I, 261, III, 306. The title is not mentioned in Ibn Farhûn, *Dibâj*, 137. Ibn Farhûn lists a *Kitâb Talab al-îlm*. This could be the same work, although this is by no means certain. The assumption that Ibn Khaldûn meant al-Qâbisî (cf. Sezgin, I, 481, n. 1b) is possible but cannot be proved.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. al-Qâbisî, 1st ed., 241–318, 2nd ed., 267–347. Al-Qâbisî also wrote a *Kitâb Rutab al-îlm*, cf. Ibn Farhûn, *Dibâj*, 201.

with a rather extraneous chapter discussing faith, *islâm*, and proper action (*ihsân*) and straightforwardness (*istiqâmah*) in religious life. Otherwise, there is no real difference between the two works. The prevailing impression gained from a study of al-Qâbîsî's work confirms the assumption that the economic concerns of the teacher were uppermost in the minds of these early Mâlikite jurists when they wrote their works.

Monographs in the same spirit composed by jurists belonging to other legal schools are not preserved from these early centuries, although some no doubt existed. However, such practical problems may not have been of equal appeal for scholars of the other schools in those days, and it may not merely be the fault of sources or insufficient knowledge which leaves us without any information on relevant titles. The contents of the *Kitâb Riyâdât al-muta'allim* "The Training of the Student" by az-Zubayr b. Ahmad az-Zubayrî from the early tenth century cannot be determined from its title. It is not likely to have been a work on education.¹⁴¹ In general, evidence for further legal works on education becomes available only for a much later period, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. We have rather short treatises of very limited interest, such as *Zakarîyâ' al-Anşârî*'s (d. ca. 1511–1521) *al-Lu'lû' an-nażîm*, which is nothing more than a list of sciences, each of them briefly defined and its usefulness indicated.¹⁴² Or the *Tâhirîr al-maqâl* by Ibn Ḥâjâr al-Haytamî, who died in 974/1567, which deals with elementary education and is in reality a long and interesting *fatwâ* on educational and administrative problems of orphanages. As a kind of background information, the author provides an introduction considering problems of Qur'ân teaching, traditions on the merits of it, the question of renumeration for it, the use of the Qur'ân for magic spells, the danger for teachers of looking at beardless boys, and the like.¹⁴³ These works contribute little or nothing to illustrating the position of knowledge in Islam, nor does the educational literature of Šûfîs as represented by the ninth-century *Adab al-‘âlim wa-l-muta'allim* of Abû Bakr al-Warrâq.¹⁴⁴ It briefly eluci-

¹⁴¹ Cf. as-Subkî, *Tabaqât ash-Shâfi‘iyah*, II, 224; *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 306; Sezgin, I, 495.

¹⁴² Cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, II, 117. I used the Princeton Ms. 498 H (Catalogue 788). For the form al-Haytamî, cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. Ibn Ḥâjâr.

¹⁴³ Cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, II, 527. I used the Princeton Ms. 499 H (Catalogue 789).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. the edition by M. Z. al-Kawthârî (Cairo 1358/1939); Sezgin, I, 646. The work has been listed repeatedly as one by al-Hâkîm at-Tirmidhî.

dates the proper religious and secular behavior and practice and is linked to *Šûfism* only by the person of its author. The need of *adab* in preference to *ilm* in the educational process was felt deeply by parents who saw their children leave home to devote themselves to religious studies of various kinds. Rather touchingly, we hear, for instance, about the mother of Mâlik dressing him in scholarly garments, putting the long hat with the turban wound around it upon his head, and sending him off with the advice to learn from the *adab* of his prospective teacher, Rabî‘ah, before learning from his *ilm*.¹⁴⁵

Hadîth scholars such as the Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî operated on a more advanced level in their educational efforts, and they were more concerned with the contents of their discipline than the elementary teaching of it. Still, the relationship between professor and student was an integral part of the process of the transmission of traditions, and since oral transmission as the basic procedure was hardly more than a fiction at that time, much emphasis was put on matters such as writing techniques and the production and handling of books. A good handbook on the organization of higher education in the science of traditions from the twelfth century is as-Sam‘âni’s *Adab al-imlâ’ wa-l-istimlâ’* “The Method of Dictating and Taking Down Dictation.”¹⁴⁶ Needless to say, the pervasive theme of the work was *ilm*, and this fact is repeatedly stressed. Later in the same century, the Spanish-Moroccan Jewish author, Ibn ‘Aqnîn, wrote interestingly on education, if not in monograph form. He inserted a long chapter on the subject in his *Tîbb an-nufûs* “Spiritual Medicine.”¹⁴⁷ As is to be expected from a non-Muslim author writing in Arabic, we encounter here a somewhat different outlook. It is not merely the fact that Ibn ‘Aqnîn always establishes a relation between his views on education and Jewish religious literature, which makes his treatment different; if this were so, not much attention need be paid to it. His treatment is distinguished by a more systematic method, a greater stress on essentials, and a more comprehensive view of education as a unified process from the most elementary to the highest stages. In a way, he succinctly

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Ibn Farhûn, *Dîbâj*, 20.

¹⁴⁶ Also, “being a professor’s assistant.” Cf. above, p. 252, n. 2.

¹⁴⁷ The chapter was edited and translated by M. Gudemann, *Das jüdische Unterrichtswesen der spanisch-arabischen Periode*, text, 1–57, trans. 43–138 (Vienna 1873, reprint Amsterdam 1968). On the much debated identity of Ibn ‘Aqnîn, cf. most recently, A. S. Halkin, in the introduction of his edition of Ibn ‘Aqnîn’s *Commentary on Canticles* (Jerusalem 1964).

combines the best practical thought of the religious-traditionist and the philosophical literature on education. In this respect, he may have been inspired by ideas current in the intellectual climate of Western Islam. His prime model, however, was obviously the discussion of the duties of students and teachers from the book on knowledge in al-Ghazzâlî's *Ihyâ*.¹⁴⁸ Ibn 'Aqnîn speaks about the teacher, the subjects to be taught, and the student, in this order. The seven conditions for the teacher are 1. complete mastery of his subject; 2. a life of action in accordance with knowledge; 3. the acceptance of no remuneration for his teaching; 4. the treatment of his students as if they were his children; 5. a deep conviction of the excellence of knowledge and of action informed by knowledge as well as the desire to inculcate this conviction in his students and thereby guide them toward happiness; 6. kindness and patience with his students; and 7. the use of a gradated curriculum tailored to the mental capacity and the stages of development of the students. The nine conditions for the student are 1. purity of character; 2. a readiness to ask questions and a critical spirit that does not accept blindly all that he is taught, but nevertheless acknowledges the greater experience of the teacher; 3. unconcern with financial and family matters; 4. mastery at first of the principles of a given discipline and then only of its details, so as to be able to face doubts and differences of opinion, even if, at the beginning, it is better for the student to shy away from them and to trust the teacher; 5. some degree of familiarity with all the various differences of opinion, since they clarify each other (as taught in Aristotelian philosophy); 6. constant reflection on the relationship of knowledge, virtuous action, and livelihood; 7. a selfless devotion to knowledge with no ulterior motives, from which no lack of progress in his studies should discourage him; 8. a willingness to seek out a good teacher (corresponding to the Muslim travel in quest of knowledge); and 9. a great respect for the teacher, bordering on reverence. The curriculum, finally, runs the full gamut from the Jewish religious sciences to all the disciplines in the Graeco-Muslim canon of the sciences.

At about the same time, around the end of the twelfth century,

¹⁴⁸ Cf. above, pp. 94 f. Classifications of the desirable qualities of teachers and students existed, of course, much earlier, cf., for instance, al-Asma'î, as quoted in al-Marzubânî, *Nîr al-qabas*, ed. R. Sellheim, 128 (Wiesbaden 1964, *Bibliotheca Islamica* 23a).

although not much is known about the life of the author, the standard paean on knowledge and the teaching process was composed by a Hanafite jurist, az-Zarnûjî.¹⁴⁹ A small work, it gained tremendous popularity, even if a fourteenth-century scholar thought it rare ('azîz) and was glad when he finally was able to secure a copy.¹⁵⁰ It was copied over and over again and frequently commented upon. Convinced that knowledge and action are the means through which the Creator has given mankind distinction and superiority over everything else in the world, and realizing that many eager students are frustrated in their desire for knowledge, because they do not know how to go about its acquisition, az-Zarnûjî has written a brief handbook for students on the basis of what he himself had learned on the subject from his teachers. Knowledge is a distinctive characteristic of man. It places Adam above the angels. There are various sciences. Some of them are useful, others are harmful. Understandably, az-Zarnûjî shows throughout a predilection for jurisprudence as the discipline most useful for the community and most highly regarded by him. The intention with which a student approaches the process of learning is as important and decisive here as in any other activity. Studying should be done for the sake of God. It is pernicious to do any studying for worldly purposes. It is imperative for the student to choose the right teacher, and he must always be intent upon keeping the right company. He must be aware of the value of asking for advice. Certain qualities are needed by the student as well as by the teacher. Students must have the deepest respect for knowledge, for their teachers, and for books. Studying is a never ending enterprise, and great and constant efforts must be spent on studying "from the cradle to the grave" (*min al-mahd ilâ l-lahd*).¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ I have used the edition of the Arabic text by C. Caspari (Leipzig 1838). The latest translation of which I have knowledge is the one by G. E. von Grunebaum and T. M. Abel (New York 1947). Az-Zarnûjî was born around 550/1155, since he mentions as his authorities, among others, Imâmzâdeh Muhammâd b. Abî Bakr (491–573/1098–1177 or 1178, cf. 'Abd-al-Qâdir al-Qurashî, *Jawâhir*, II, 36 [Hyderabad 1332/1913–14]) and Hâmmâd b. Ibrâhîm aş-Şaffâr (493–576/1100–1180 or 1181, cf. *Jawâhir*, I, 224). He ought to have been at least in his later teens when he studied with the Imâmzâdeh. In the case of aş-Şaffâr, it is not absolutely necessary to assume that az-Zarnûjî was born long before his death.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. 'Abd-al-Qâdir al-Qurashî, *Jawâhir*, I, 224.

¹⁵¹ Another similar phrase is applicable only to the accomplished scholar: *ma'a l-mahbarah ilâ l-maqbarah* "with the inkstand to the grave," cf. Ibn al-Jawzî, *Manâqib al-Imâm Alîmad b. Hanbal*, 31 (Cairo 1349).

Studying also requires great sacrifices, a rigorous training of the memory, a great measure of austerity, and a complete unconcern for worldly affairs and material well-being. Az-Zarnûjî, however, is desperately aware of the financial problems of students and the inevitable necessity of making a living. He even goes so far as to state expressly how advantageous it is for the student who wishes to be able to devote himself to his studies to have sufficient financial resources. “A rich father,” he reports, was the reply of a scholar who was asked what had enabled him to attain his scholarly eminence. In general, the ideas expressed by men such as al-‘Askarî and those of the scholarly representatives of religious knowledge have come together and merged in the work of az-Zarnûjî. It is slight in size and also in intellectual outlook, but it summarizes well the position of knowledge in Muslim societal thought and practice.

Of the subsequent educational literature, only one work may be briefly considered here, the *Tadhkirat as-sâmi‘ wa-l-mutakallim fî adab al-‘âlim wa-l-muta‘allim* by the Shâfi‘ite Ibn Jamâ‘ah (d. 733/1333).¹⁵² It is a systematic recapitulation of the views on higher education in the religious sciences (meaning, principally, the science of traditions), undertaken in the spirit of the Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî and al-Ghazzâlî and using, it seems, largely their material. The *Tadhkirah* does not deal at all with elementary education, except, perhaps, in some isolated instances such as the incidental admonition for students to sit before their professors as children do before the teacher of the Qur’ân.¹⁵³ By the time of Ibn Jamâ‘ah, higher education had long been fully institutionalized and was centered entirely in the *madrasah*. This necessitated a chapter on the choice of the right college as well as college administration and college life.¹⁵⁴ The dependence on the written word at all levels of instruction demanded another chapter on the production and handling of books.¹⁵⁵ Ibn Jamâ‘ah feels that *husn al-adab*, which for him is education in the widest sense including good manners and behavior and proper methods of teaching and studying, is particularly

¹⁵² Cf. the edition published in Hyderabad 1353. For the relationship of the *Tadhkirah* and al-‘Almawî, *Mu‘id*, cf. F. Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship*, 7 ff. (Rome 1947, *Analecta Orientalia* 24). Notice the somewhat strained effort to pick synonyms for “teacher” and “student” for use in the titles of both works.

¹⁵³ Cf. Ibn Jamâ‘ah, *Tadhkirah*, 97.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Ibn Jamâ‘ah, *Tadhkirah*, 193 ff.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Ibn Jamâ‘ah, *Tadhkirah*, 163, ff.

important for scholars and, in fact, is their prerogative.¹⁵⁶ The introductory remarks in praise of knowledge are brief and conventional. They include the customary warning against all studying undertaken for worldly gain and not for the love of God. Ibn Jamâ'ah carefully details one by one the personal qualities required in professors and in students and the attitudes and behavior of professors toward their students and of students toward their professors. The twin fundamental qualities a professor must possess are dignity and piety. He must observe great decorum in the way he dresses and the like and, indeed, in everything he does. But he must also be properly modest. Above all, he must always remain willing to learn even from those younger and of a lower status than himself, as confirmed by the fact that "a number of the ancient Muslims used to acquire knowledge they themselves did not have from their students."¹⁵⁷ It is the professor's duty to write and to publish.¹⁵⁸ In his teaching, he must follow a suitable gradated method of instruction. He must try to overcome the bashfulness of students, test their progress from time to time,¹⁵⁹ and, in general, show concern and consideration for them and for their welfare. Students must basically possess the same qualities of earnestness and piety as professors. In all their ways, they must guard the proper decorum, particularly in class or whenever they are in the company of their professors. They must choose the right company. While all frivolity must be avoided, they ought to allow themselves some occasional recreation.¹⁶⁰ More than anything else, they must have, and show, the greatest respect for their teachers in all conceivable situations. They may harbor doubts as to the correctness of the one or other statement made by their professors, but they always ought to try to resolve such doubts in the most tactful manner. Matters of the greatest importance for students are the acquisition of proper study habits and procedures, the selection of the proper course of study, and the punctilious observance of all the minutiae of a decorous class room behavior.¹⁶¹

The great interest of the *Tadhkirah* lies in all these details and in all the wise and pungent remarks on particular aspects of the

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 1 f.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 29.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 39 ff.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 52 ff.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 82.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Ibn Jamâ'ah, *Tadhkirah*, 112 ff.

learning process. Only a complete translation could bring out its richness.¹⁶² For the history of knowledge, it is interesting, though hardly surprising, to find Ibn Jamā'ah fully convinced that his work holds the key to the one knowledge deserving of the name and to the only thing that is of importance to the individual as well as to society. He is fully convinced of the supreme validity of the tradition stating that "the rank of knowledge is the rank of the heritage of the prophets" and that "the scholars are the heirs of the prophets."¹⁶³ The ways and aims of elementary education are established and no longer need much literary discussion. The ways and aims of higher education are also no longer in doubt, although they remain of interest to scholars who like to restate them from time to time. All education, having as it does "knowledge" for its beginning and its end, serves to assure the continuity of a truly Muslim civilization and a truly Muslim society.

4. MATERIALS FOR AN APPRAISAL OF KNOWLEDGE AS A SOCIETAL FORCE

Muslim authors showed a decided preference for stressing the positive role of knowledge in society. Negative factors were played down and ultimately rejected, but they were not entirely disregarded. The indispensability of knowledge for any human societal organization is obvious. We would, however, hesitate to assert without qualification that it can be usefully defined and believed in as the truly supreme force in society. An aura of utopianism clings to the powerful Platonic concept of the philosopher-king, and there is indeed reason to question whether under given human conditions, the triumph of "knowledge" could lead to the most viable of social orders. The reflections made by Muslim scholars do not resolve the quandary. A presentation of what appears to be some of the crucial features of the discussion may, however, help us in establishing the degree of insight reached by them with regard to the real or ideal position of knowledge in the material and intellectual struggle of man to organize his life.

¹⁶² In the absence of such a translation, al-Ghazzālī's book on knowledge from the *Iḥyā'* may be consulted. As always, al-Ghazzālī's treatment of the subject was pivotal for all subsequent discussion, but since it has been mentioned before and is easily accessible, it has been thought unnecessary to devote more space to it here.

¹⁶³ Cf. Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkīrah*, 27, 48.

The Attitude Toward Doubt

It has been said that the Greek religious view of the world was dominated by the antithesis of knowledge of the Gods and the lack of such knowledge, whereas the Christian antithesis was that of faith and doubt.¹⁶⁴ In Islam, both views contend with each other. However, even more than ignorance, doubt suffered from the stigma of religious connotations from which it was never able to free itself.

There are several words for doubt in Arabic, but *shakk* became the accepted technical term. *Shubhah* is also much used, and it is the favorite legal term for suspicion and indecision as to the legality of a given view or activity. *Shubhah* presents no real difficulty for its derivation from the Arabic root *sh-b-h* in its common meaning of being alike or similar; it is the similarity of two sides, of two possible answers, that leads to two-sidedness or ambiguity and the resulting attitude of doubt.¹⁶⁵ Another word, *rayb*, is easily etymologized through its occurrences in other Semitic languages such as Hebrew *rib* “strife”; the transition from strife, quarrel, being disturbed, and the like, to doubt is easily explainable (there is no quarrel concerning something = there can be no doubt concerning it). However, in the case of *shakk*, we are at a loss for a plausible etymology which could give us some insight into the psychological dimensions of the Muslim attitude toward doubt. The Arabic root has been connected with Hebrew *s-k-k* (= [?] *ś-k-k*) “to cover, to weave together (for screening purposes),” hence, to be complicated, to be stuck on something.¹⁶⁶ The root combination of sibilant followed by a doubled *k* or *g* in Semitic languages

¹⁶⁴ Cf. H. Dörrie, *Emanation*, in K. Flasch (ed.), *Parusia...Festgabe für Johannes Hirschberger*, 130 (Frankfurt a. M. 1965).

¹⁶⁵ 'Alī is credited with the curious statement that *shubhah* is so called because it resembles (*ushbih*) the truth, cf. *Nahj al-balāghah*, 97; Ibn Abī l-Hadid, I, 481. For the alleged difference between *shakk* and *irtiyāb*, cf. al-'Askarī, *Furūq*, 80.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen*, 90, n. 2 (Leiden 1886). Fraenkel's suggestion was noted with hesitant approval in the sixteenth edition, prepared by F. Buhl, of Gesenius' *Handwörterbuch über das Alle Testament*, 543a (Leipzig 1915). It was implicitly rejected by L. Koehler, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros*, 657a (Leiden 1951). It may be the same root, with the somewhat altered meaning of “to penetrate, to intermingle,” that was used by Muslim philologists to derive the meaning of “doubt,” cf. al-'Askarī, *Furūq*, 79: “*Shakk* ‘doubt’ comes from *shakata* something if you combine it with something you insert into it. Doubt is the combination of two things in the mind.”

expresses other concrete meanings that may be connected with “doubt.” The closest correspondence in meaning appears in Hebrew *sh'gāgāh* “error,” but the phonetic correspondence is somewhat remote. A combination with the root *w-sh-k* is not entirely excluded. Since the connotation of *w-sh-k* seems to focus on the idea of quickness, “doubt” may be something like rashness, instability, going astray. This would tally with the suggested derivation of *ilm*.¹⁶⁷ However, there is also the more appealing possibility that *sh-k-k* is a secondary root to be combined with Hebrew *s-k-h* “to look (at something, either expectantly or apprehensively),” Syrian *sakkî* “to hope,” Arabic *shakâ* “to complain.” This would provide a perfect parallel to Greek *skeptikos*.¹⁶⁸ But maybe, it is just too perfect to recommend itself to the skeptical linguist.

Doubt in whichever way indicated became the true pariah and outcast of Muslim civilization. It stands for all that is to be shunned like the plague. No worse fate can befall man than being tossed into the sea of doubts and left there to flounder and possibly to drown. Doubt in itself is a sufficient manifestation of ignorance.¹⁶⁹ It was unthinkable for the Prophet to harbor even the slightest of doubts. Therefore, when he said, “I am more liable to doubt than Ibrâhîm,” it could mean only that since the Prophet had no doubts, Abraham is even less likely to have had any doubts.¹⁷⁰ The *hadîth* occurs in connection with Abraham’s implied doubting of God’s ability to revive the dead (Qur’ân 2:260/262). The Qur’ânic passage naturally worried the commentators a good deal. According to az-Zamakhshârî, “necessary knowledge” admits of no expression of doubt, as against “knowledge arrived at through deduction,” which does.¹⁷¹ Ibn Hajar explains that doubt as understood in logic is incompatible with prophethood, but there is another kind of doubt which may be described as “unconfirmed ideas” (*al-khawâdîr allatî lâ tathbut*); such doubt could occur to prophets such as Abraham.¹⁷²

The principal weapon of heretics and unbelievers in their perpetual

¹⁶⁷ Cf. above, pp. 10 ff.

¹⁶⁸ Arabic *n-ż-ż, nażar* is also used to indicate that something is a matter of debate.

¹⁶⁹ *Kafâ bi-sh-shakk jahâl*, cf. az-Zamakshârî, *Mustaqâd*, II, 167 (Hyderabad 1381/1962). Cf. also above, pp. 169 f.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. *Concordance*, III, 166a1 ff.; Ibn al-Athîr, *an-Nihâyah fi gharîb al-hadîth*, II, 252 (Cairo 1322), and *Lisân al-‘Arab*, XII, 337, s.v. *sh-k-k*.

¹⁷¹ Cf. az-Zamakshârî, *Kashshâf*, I, 282.

¹⁷² Cf. Ibn Hajar, *Fâth al-bârî*, VII, 221 ff.

fight against the verities of Islam was the planting of doubt. Ibn al-Muqaffa' added "Burzôe's Introduction" to *Kalîlah wa-Dimnah*, in order to cause Muslims of weak faith to doubt Islam and to make them an easy prey to Manichaean propaganda.¹⁷³ Şâlih b. 'Abd-al-Quddûs, one of those suspected of being a Manichaean (*zindîq*), is said to have grieved about his dead son, because the latter's death had made it impossible for him to read Şâlih's "Book of Doubts" which made the reader doubt everything.¹⁷⁴ In the early tenth century, ar-Râzî possibly thought that he was stressing the positive character of his research if he used the title of "Doubts" concerning Proclus or Galen.¹⁷⁵ But much later, it was a witty way of striking a devastating critical blow to call the *Tâ'iyah* of the controversial mystic, Ibn al-Fârid, which had the title of *Nazm as-shulûk* "The Mystic Path Versified," by the slightly-changed title of *Nazm ash-shukîk* "Doubts Versified."¹⁷⁶ Whether engendered through human mischief or innate Satanic weakness, doubt was man's mortal enemy, depriving him of the certainty that his religion was intended and equipped to give him. If a troubled individual looked for a savior from error, as al-Ghazzâlî did in his spiritual autobiography, it was a search for deliverance from all nagging doubts and uncertainties.

Greek logic and philosophy taught its Muslim followers to think about doubt and to take it in stride as an ineluctable, if regrettable, stage of the dialectic process. Some information on the existence of an ancient philosophical school professing skepticism filtered down to the Muslim Middle Ages. Known as *al-Mâni'ah*, a translation, via Syriac *kâlôyê*, of *Ephētikoi*, one of the Greek designations for the Skeptics, it was defined as "a group which hindered and prevented people from (acquiring) knowledge." Its attitude toward knowledge was rather lengthily and, in a way, dispassionately

¹⁷³ Cf. al-Bîrûnî, *India*, ed. E. Sachau, 76 (London 1887) = 123 (Hyderabad 1377/1958), trans. E. Sachau, I, 159 (London 1910); P. Kraus, in *RSO*, XIV, (1934), 14 ff.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. the entry on Abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf in the *Fîhrîst*, Persian translation, 295, also in the Houtsma fragment.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. the bibliography of ar-Râzî by al-Bîrûnî, *Risâlah*, ed. P. Kraus (Paris 1936). For the preserved "Doubts concerning Galen," cf. S. Pines, in *Actes du VII^e Congrès International d'Histoire des Sciences*, 480-87 (Paris 1953); M. Mohaghegb, in *Majalle-i-Dâniškade-i-Adabîyât wa-'Ulûm-i-Insâni*, XV, (1967), p. 10 of the reprint. Cf., however, Hâmid-ad-dîn al-Kîrmânî, *Râhal al-'aql*, 363 f.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, 62.

discussed. The discussion of Skepticism, however, did not make use of the term “doubt” and therefore contributed only indirectly to the frequent warnings against the futility and perniciousness of doubt.¹⁷⁷ The speculative theologians¹⁷⁸ attached the label of “Sophists” to the representatives of epistemological skepticism. The problem of doubt as such was little involved here,¹⁷⁹ but the horrified condemnation of the Sophists’ stand applied just as well to the mortal danger caused by doubt. The views ascribed to the Sophists were thought so outrageous and impossible that it was seriously suggested, apparently by some traditionist religious scholars, that the Sophists were an invention of the speculative theologians in their efforts to undermine the simple true faith of Islam.¹⁸⁰

The speculative theologians did ponder the problems of doubt as one of the opposites of knowledge. They did so with a view to the particular doubt in the existence of God. The concept was defined, and the conditions governing its incidence (*ahkâm*) were discussed with all the customary subtlety. One of the ideas suggested in

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Abû l-Farâj b. at-Tâyyib, *Commentary on the Categories*, in Ms. Cairo hikmah 1m, fol. 3a-b. This passage is more detailed than the well-known brief enumeration of Greek philosophical schools mentioned by (Hunayn and) al-Fârâbî, in F. Dieterici, *Alfârâbî's philosophische Abhandlungen*, text, 50, trans., 84 (Leiden 1890-92), cited, in the subsequent literature, by Şâ'îd al-Andalusî, *Tabaqât al-umam*, ed. L. Cheikhò, 32 = 35 (Cairo, n.y.), trans. R. Blachère, 74 (Paris 1935), and al-Qiftî, ed. (A. Müller and) J. Lippert, 25 f. (Leipzig 1903). For Hunayn, cf. K. Merkle, *Die Sittensprücke der Philosophen*, 37 and 52 (Leipzig 1921). For the Syriac Pseudo-Olympiodorus, cf. G. Furlani, in *RSO*, VII (1916-18), 135 f., 139 f., where briefer Syriac notices are mentioned.

On the subject of Skepticism in Islam, cf., above all. S. Horovitz, *Der Einfluss der griechischen Skepsis auf die Entwicklung der Philosophie bei den Arabern* (Breslau 1915, *Jahres-Bericht des jüdisch-theologischen Seminars . . . für das Jahr* 1914). See also J. Kraemer, *Hawl al-falsafah ash-shakkîyah al-‘arabîyah*, in Şâlâh-ad-dîn al-Munajjid (ed.), *al-Muntaqâ min dirâsât al-mustashriqîn*, 209-24 (Cairo 1955). Kraemer stresses the religious foundation and orientation of Muslim skepticism, as contrasted to the secular skepticism of the West.

¹⁷⁸ With regard to the Sophists, the philosophers in Islam may have followed the lead of the speculative theologians, rather than *vice versa*. For a philosopher’s condemnation of the Sophists, cf., for instance, al-Fârâbî, *Ihsâ’ al-‘ulâm*, 23 ff., where their attitude is viewed in a completely negative light. Al-Kindî also wrote against them, cf. *Fihrist*, 256, 259 = 358, 362.

¹⁷⁹ According to ‘Abd-al-Qâhir, *Uṣûl*, 6 f., the Sophists fall into three groups, of which the first denies all reality and knowledge, and the third assumes that belief creates reality. The middle group are “the people of doubt” who profess agnosticism with regard to the reality of things.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Muḥâdarât*, I, 44.

this connection concerned the possible obligation to entertain doubts with regard to minor secondary problems left to independent judgment (*al-furū' al-ijtihādīyah*). However, the view of Abū Hâshim (al-Jubbâ'i) and, supposedly, Abū Bakr (al-Bâqillâni) that doubt concerning God is obligatory, because logical speculation which customarily has doubt as its starting point is necessary (*wâjib*), is considered subject at least to the qualification that it is not something about which man could have initially the power of decision. On the other hand, it is not impossible that he is under the obligation to continue doubting, because he has the power to decide to remove doubt through logical speculation, and it is, indeed, obligatory, because man is required to gain knowledge of God (which presupposes that at some stage, he does not have such knowledge, and doubting is the first step toward it).¹⁸¹ But apart from all such subtle reasoning, the common belief was that necessarily and simply, doubt in God was unbelief.¹⁸²

For a brief while, and with some lingering aftereffects, a more positive appreciation of the possible benefits of a skeptical approach marked by doubt found hesitant expression. The doubting attitude attributed to eighth-century figures such as Ibn al-Muqaffa' and Sâlih b. 'Abd-al-Quddûs resulted from sincere attempts to bolster or, at worst, to replace traditional Muslim beliefs through rational, critical methods. To the glory of the Mu'tazilah, it can be said that within their ranks, there existed convinced champions of doubt, as evidenced by a noteworthy passage from the *Kitâb al-Hayawân* by al-Jâhîz.¹⁸³ In connection with the need of scientists to be skeptical of all transmitted information and to check it always with all the means at their disposal, al-Jâhîz speaks of the more general applicability of the critical scientist's attitude to the problem of cognition as such, citing the opinions of contemporaries of his, among them the great an-Nazzâm:

"Recognize the occasions and situations necessitating doubt, so

¹⁸¹ Cf. al-Âmidî, *Abkâr*, in Ms. Aya Sofya 2165, fol. 13b (cf. above, p. 228). Cf. also Abû 'Alî al-Jubbâ'i, in 'Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Mughnî*, XII, 185, 501 ff. The *Mughnî* expectedly offers throughout much information on the attitude of Mu'tazilah theologians toward doubt.

¹⁸² Cf. Ishâq b. Ibrâhîm al-Kâtib, *Burhân*, 102. See above, p. 135, n. 2.

¹⁸³ Cf. al-Jâhîz, *Hayawân*, VI, 10 f. = VI, 35–37 (Cairo 1363/1944); Horovitz, *Skepsis*, 15, n. 30. It would not be an argument against al-Jâhîz rather favorable attitude toward the skeptical approach that his work begins with the words, "May God remove doubt (*shubhah*) from you."

Cf. the translation of the passage by C. Pellat, *Arabische Geisteswelt*, 281 f.

as to be able to recognize the occasions and situations necessitating certainty, and do study the doubts applicable to the doubtful. Were this to lead merely to realizing (the need for) hesitation and then to assurance, it would be something that is needed.

Realize further that all (scientists) are of the opinion that there are degrees of doubt. They are not agreed on (the existence of) degrees of strength and weakness in certainty.

When Abû l-Jahm said to al-Makkî,¹⁸⁴ 'I hardly have doubts,' al-Makkî replied, 'I hardly have certainty.' Al-Makkî wanted to show that he felt superior to (Abû l-Jahm), because he had doubts when doubts were called for, whereas Ibn al-Jahm wanted to show that he felt superior to (al-Makkî), because he had certainty when certainty was called for.

Abû Ishâq (an-Nazzâm) said: I have had disputations with both doubters and deniers among heretics,¹⁸⁵ and I have found that the doubters have a better insight into the essence of theological speculation (*kalâm*) than the deniers. Abû Ishâq also said: The doubter is closer to you than the denier. Never has there been any certainty, unless there was doubt before. Nor did anyone ever switch from one belief to another without an intervening situation of doubt.

Ibn al-Jahm said: I truly long for the conversion (that falls to the lot) of those beset by uncertainty (*mutahayyir*). For when uncertainty has cut off a man from certainty, the lost thing he goes after (successfully) is clarity,¹⁸⁶ and he who finds what he has lost rejoices...¹⁸⁷

The common people have fewer doubts than the elite, because they have no hesitation with regard to believing something to be true (or false), and they do not doubt themselves. They see no other choice except absolutely believing something to be true or absolutely believing something to be false. They exclude the third

¹⁸⁴ Abû l-Jahm is apparently identical with Ibn al-Jahm, as he is called later on. He was Muhammad b. al-Jahm, the brother of the famous poet, 'Alî. Muhammad al-Makkî is frequently cited in al-Jâhîz and other works by al-Jâhîz as one of his friends, cf. the translation of the *Livre des avares* by C. Pellat, 342 (Beirut-Paris 1951).

¹⁸⁵ This refers to the existence of God. Another reading: "with doubters and heretics," would remove the doubters from the category of heretics.

¹⁸⁶ The variant reading "certainty" seems more to the point, but the more difficult "clarity" deserves preference. The difference between the two words in Arabic writing is very small.

¹⁸⁷ The two statements that follow here have no apparent connection with the subject of skepticism.

possibility, that of doubt, which comprises the various degrees of doubt, according to the presence or absence of suspicion with regard to reasons for (taking or not taking a doubting attitude) and according to the various measure of likelihood.

A man with some experience in speculative thought heard scholars approve of some doubt. He extended this (attitude) to everything and finally assumed that the truth or untruth of every thing is knowable (not absolutely but) only according to a varying measure of likelihood. This man died, leaving no offspring nor anyone following his method. If I mentioned his name in this connection, I would do no wrong. But presently I do not like to mention with praise¹⁸⁸ someone who partook in the dignity of *kalām* and shared with the others the name of *mutakallim*, especially one who held the opinion of the precedence of *istiṭā'ah*.”

For al-Jāhīz who reported this discussion, and others whose lifetime fell into the period from the early eighth century to the middle of the ninth century, *shakk* obviously showed the way toward a well founded understanding of scientific data as well as the religious phenomena which were their prime concern. The aforementioned discussion of later speculative theologians on the applicability of doubt in connection with the existence of God contains echoes of this Mu'tazilah attitude. These men belonged among those who like Robert Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra* exclaimed, “Rather I prize the doubt,” considering it an instrument of intellectual vitality and growth. It would be unfair to deny them recognition and admiration for having seized upon the most effective approach to intellectual progress. Unfortunately, they chose, if they had a choice in this matter, the metaphysical realm for the testing ground of their ideas. The very fact of their faith in doubt as a means toward true religious faith all but obliterated their memory.

A longer lasting witness to a hesitant recognition of the effectiveness of doubt is a saying ascribed to a Greek scholar known as *llynes*: “Asked why he was always professing doubt, he replied: In defense of certainty (*dhabbān 'an al-yaqīn*).”¹⁸⁹ The remark occurs within a small group of sayings of which one can be securely related

¹⁸⁸ “Blame” would be easier, but al-Jāhīz seems to mean that he wants to forego here praising something that others might find deserving of blame.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Abū Sulaymān al-Mantiqī as-Sijistānī, *Siwān al-hikmah*, in the Istanbul MSS. Murad Molla 1408, fol. 52a, Beşir Ağa 494, fol. 57b, and Fatih 3222, fol. 39b.

to a Greek prototype.¹⁹⁰ Notwithstanding the absence of decisive proof, it is likely that the idea expressed by *yllnw* derived from Greek wisdom literature. This assumption is hardly refuted by the fact that the same remark, with only the replacement of *dhabb*^{an} by the synonymous *muhāmāt*^{an} but in the same question-and-answer form, appears in the *Uyūn* of Ibn Qutaybah where it is ascribed to an ancient Muslim transmitter of traditions, Raqabah b. Maṣqalah (or Masqalah), whose death is placed in 129/746–47.¹⁹¹ Both the authority to which it is ascribed, and the setting in which it occurs, make it likely that the remark was understood to mean nothing more than that a wary skepticism is indicated with respect to the acceptance of material transmitted as Prophetic traditions. General wariness as part of the prudent behavior of intelligent persons is also considered by ar-Rāghib al-İsfahānī as the meaning of the remark.¹⁹² His *Muḥādarāt* include a brief chapter entitled “Praise, and Blame, of Doubt and a Suspicious Attitude (*sū’ az-żann*).” It contains a versification of the remark by a certain Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin.¹⁹³

My doubting, even if I do much of it, is merely
Protection for things that are certain.

Ar-Rāghib further quotes the statement of an unnamed authority to the effect that “the comfort of certainty is obtained through the discomfort of doubt.” For the rest, he dwells on the need for skepticism before engaging in an undertaking or putting one’s trust into another individual. The interpretation given to the remark on doubt leading to certainty by a succession of Muslim scholars plays down its significance. Still, in its origin, it would seem to have been a strong endorsement of the value of skepticism in the search for knowledge, and its force may occasionally have been felt.

As *shakk* “doubt” was contrasted with *yaqīn* “certainty” and *ilm* “knowledge,” so was *żann* “guessing, guesswork.” The little esteem expressed for *żann* in the Qur’ān 53:28/29 was not universally shared later on, nor was the absolute unacceptability of *żann*

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 366, n. 36.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn*, II, 139; Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 216.

¹⁹² Cf. ar-Rāghib al-İsfahānī, *Muḥādarāt*, I, 12 f.

¹⁹³ Is he to be identified with Abū Muḥammad al-Hizāmī, one of the stingy individuals mentioned by al-Jāhīz in his book on the *bukhalā*? In this case, the verses would originally have been intended as facetious.

in the science of *hadīth*¹⁹⁴ generalized and extended to other fields. Some guessing was even hailed as being equal to certain knowledge.¹⁹⁵ Ptolemy is credited with the remark that “guessing is the key to certainty.”¹⁹⁶ Plato is represented as having said that “guesses are the keys to certainty, and visualizing things in the imagination provides the introduction to clarity.”¹⁹⁷ Another remark ascribed to Plato is added: “If you have doubts about something, leave it alone and act in accordance with what you do not have doubts about.”¹⁹⁸ Doubting (*irtiyâb*) certainty is sufficient information for you, and guessing gives you enough clarity.” The aphorism of “guessing being the key to certainty” was transformed into a verse by a poet who in one source remains anonymous and in another, is called Sa‘id b. Ḥumayd.¹⁹⁹ The poet’s direct model is claimed to have been: “Sound guessing is the beginning of certainty.” In the form, “guesses are the keys to certainty,” the idea is presented as a common saying in the *Uyîn*,²⁰⁰ but it was even attributed to Ardashîr.²⁰¹ The *Iqd* cites the caliph ‘Umar to the effect that “he who does not benefit from his guesses does not benefit from his certainty,”²⁰² and also reports the saying that “an intelligent man’s guesswork is divination.”²⁰³ Although Muslim authors tend to bracket *shakk* with *zann*, the terms hold approximately the same difference in meaning as do its English equivalents. While skepticism implies a fundamental attitude, guessing involves scientific methodology and does not reveal much about the attitude toward knowledge in a given society.²⁰⁴

It ought to be added here that the science of *hadīth* encouraged

¹⁹⁴ Cf. *Concordance*, IV, 87a30 ff.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. the verse cited in Iṣhâq b. Ibrâhîm al-Kâtib, *Burhân*, 92. Cf. also ‘Abd-al-Jabbâr, *Mughnî*, XI, 204, and *passim*, on the proposition that “preponderant opinion (*ghalabat az-zann*) takes the place of knowledge.”

¹⁹⁶ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 255. For Greek equivalents of *zann*, cf. p. 200.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. *Kitâb as-Sâ’âdah*, 420.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. the well-known *hadîth*: “Leave the things that puzzle you for those which do not puzzle you.”

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyîn*, I, 35, and Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 419. For Sa‘id b. Ḥumayd al-Kâtib, cf. *Fîhrîst*, 123 = 179, and the indexes to such works as Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, and *Aghânî*.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyîn*, I, 35.

²⁰¹ Cf. Iṣhâq b. Ibrâhîm al-Kâtib, *Burhân*, 91 f.

²⁰² Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 242.

²⁰³ Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 244; Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 419, who has “wise man”.

²⁰⁴ For a statement on the difference between *shakk* and *zann*, cf. al-‘Ashkarî, *Furûq*, 79.

a critical, doubting spirit for its technical aspects, and this approach spilled over into other fields such as the methodology of historiography.²⁰⁵ But after all has been said, the fact remains that doubting as an epistemological tool and, even more so, as a way of life was banned from Muslim society. The expression “no doubt” which was much used in medieval Arabic was quite frequently an emphatic and meaningful assertion that everything was all right, rather than the hesitant equivocation it almost always implies in our modern usage. One scholar could compliment another by saying that “I like your doubt better than my certainty,”²⁰⁶ in order to indicate the sure grasp of his knowledge which made doubts insignificant by comparison. Sectarians (*ahl al-hawâ*) were beset by doubt, something that brought them into being in the first place, and they were always disunited and lacked the monolithic strength that held the Muslim community together.²⁰⁷ Doubt was not prized, except by the few who by and large remained silent, or were silenced. In contrast to the belief of Xenophanes at the very beginnings of Greek philosophy,²⁰⁸ certainty (*al-yaqîn* = *to saphes*) with regard to matters divine and everything else did exist for Muslims and was apparent to man. Knowledge not affected by doubt was passionately believed to be within the easy reach of every believer. What this meant for the history of knowledge in Muslim society need not be spelled out for the modern Western observer.

Limitations on Individual Knowledge

Doubt in the existence of knowledge and in man’s ability to acquire it and make it useful for his purposes was not generally tolerated. However, the extent to which man as an individual was able to master the vast amount of knowledge in the world was another matter. In this respect, the prevailing mood was a moderate degree of realistic pessimism. Scholars learned in a given discipline

²⁰⁵ Cf. al-Îjî, in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 201 ff.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 139; Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Îqd*, II, 217. Ibn Qutaybah has: “. . . than the certainty of seven (scholars),” or is *sab’ah* “seven” a mistake of the editor or the printer and should it read *Shu’bah*, “Shu’bah’s (i.e., my own) certainty”? Cf. also Abû Nu’aym, *Hilyah*, VII, 212.

²⁰⁷ Cf., for instance, Ibn Taymiyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, 42 f. *Hawâ*, the arch-enemy of reason, was also mentioned as a cause of doubt, for instance, by Bahyâ, *Hidâyah*, 233. For the corresponding view expressed by Paul the Persian, cf. above, p. 99.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, I, 64, Xenophanes B 34, and, for the use made by the Skeptics of this passage, cf. Diogenes Laertius, IX, 72.

or in a number of disciplines occasionally thought of themselves as complete masters of all the knowledge in their respective fields, or were thought by others to be. Considering the limited state of development reached by many disciplines in the Middle Ages, this may often have been not all too far from the truth. However, the production of knowledge was viewed as a continuing process where the former generations always left much to do for the later ones,²⁰⁹ and it was pointed out already by al-Jâhîz,²¹⁰ as it was later on by Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr,²¹¹ that the prevalence of the opposite view that the early scholars had left nothing to be done for later scholars was harmful to scholars and scholarship. The totality of knowledge was known only to the totality of men,²¹² even if Muslims were customarily inclined to make an exception for the Prophet (and, perhaps, the Shi'ah imâms) and flattery was often expressed in a verse saying that God cannot be reproached for having concentrated the whole world in one person. The limitations of individual knowledge in certain well developed disciplines and vis-à-vis the totality of the constantly growing accumulation of knowledge were obvious, and the social significance of this fact was realized. While intelligence is a human characteristic and potentially active in every human being. Ibn Hazm's view that most people were stupid and that the number of intelligent men was very small²¹³ was probably shared by the majority. The remedy was education, but obviously, society as a whole was not prepared to spread education widely enough to cancel the factual truth of Ibn Hazm's observation. As we have seen, education had to be a continuous process through-

²⁰⁹ *Kam taraka l-aawalu li-l-âkhiri*. Disapproval was indicated by as-Subkî, *Tabaqât ash-Shâfi'iyah*, I, 113. Cf. also Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 63b, and *id.*, in *Osiris*, IX (1950), 559 f.

²¹⁰ Cf. Yâqût, *Irshâd*, VI, 58 = XVI, 78.

²¹¹ Cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 99.

²¹² Cf. al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 42. A verse of the *Mahâbhârata* says: "No one knows everything; no one is omniscient. Never is knowledge in its entirety concentrated in one person," cf. L. Sternbach, in *JAOS*, LXXXIII (1963), 65a.

²¹³ Cf. Ibn Hazm, *Taqrib*, 180. Cf. also the saying ascribed to Ptolemy: "Scholars are strangers, because of the great number of ignorant people," cited by Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Âdâb*, ed. I. Y. Krachkovsky, *Izbrann'e sochineniya*, VI, 51 (Moscow-Leningrad 1955-60); al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 23; al-Mubashshir, 252; also Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, II, 120. In a way, the famous *hadîth* that "knowledge begins as a stranger and ends as a stranger" (cf. above, p. 97), embodies the same idea. For the general identification of the 'âmmah, the common people, as the ignorant and stupid majority, cf. also Badrî M. Fahd, *al-'Âmmah bi-Baghdâd fi l-qarn al-khâmis* (Baghdâd 1387/1967).

out the lifetime of the individual. Both the vastness of knowledge and the natural dynamics of the process of learning required that it never stopped. If a Ṣūfi pointed out that it made as little sense for a warrior to spend all his life equipping himself as it did for a scholar to gather knowledge, he referred to the need for action.²¹⁴ He did not wish to imply that the search for more military equipment or for better knowledge should ever stop, but he felt that it was not possible for any single human being to wait for its completion, before he put his accomplishments to use. The saddest moment in the life of a philosopher such as Abū l-‘Abbās al-Lawkarī came when he realized that old age and physical debility made it impossible for him to go on learning and add to his knowledge.²¹⁵

We often hear scholars castigate the “compound ignorance” defined as a person’s not knowing that he does not know. Human failure with regard to the possession of comprehensive knowledge was most commonly and universally acknowledged by the constant repetition of the command to admit one’s ignorance, if such was the case. “Saying, ‘I do not know,’ constitutes one half of knowledge” is both a Prophetic tradition and a saying found in Graeco-Arabic wisdom literature.²¹⁶ The phrase most widely recommended for use was *lā adrī* “I do not know.” Aristotle was described as saying that he was so fond of using it that he used it also in cases where he possessed the required knowledge.²¹⁷ No educational device is omitted to hallow its constant employment.²¹⁸ A somewhat

²¹⁴ Cf. Dāwūd at-Ṭā’i, as quoted by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Iqtidā’*, 179.

²¹⁵ Cf. al-Bayhaqī, *Tatimmat Siwān al-ḥikmah*, ed. M. Shafī‘, 121 (Lahore 1935).

²¹⁶ Cf. Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 63a, n. 4; also, Hunayn, *Nawādir al-falāsifah*, in Ms. Munich ar. 651, fol. 14b; al-Mubashshir, 200. Al-Bayhaqī, *Ta’rīkh-i-Bayhaq*, 143 (Teheran 1317), quotes the Prophet as saying that the use of *lā adrī* is one-third of knowledge. The Prophet also told the author in a dream that he who says, ‘I do not know,’ when this is so, is the most learned of men. Cf. also al-Mubashshir, 303.

The remark that “asking questions is one half of knowledge” is accepted among the sayings of Luqmān in Ḥunayn, *Nawādir*, fol. 130a; al-Mubashshir, 273. Cf. above, pp. 255 and 269.

²¹⁷ Cf. Ibn Hindū, 77 f., and, anonymously, al-Mubashshir, 334.

²¹⁸ Among the authorities pressed into service as endorsers of *lā adrī*, we find, for instance, ‘Alī (cf. al-Yazīdī, *Amāl*, 141 [Hyderabad 1948]), ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar (cf. above, p. 263), and Abū Ḥanifah, who comments on “*lā adrī* is one half of knowledge” (cf. *Ta’rīkh Baghḍād*, XIII, 404). A number of ancient Muslims, among them the Prophet himself and, prominently, Ibn ‘Umar, are invoked for establishing the right attitude toward admitting lack of knowledge in Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jāmi‘*, II, 49–55; for part

less explicit admission of doubt and ignorance is the use of the phrase *Allâh a'lam* “God knows better (best).” The *hadîth* commands: “It constitutes part of knowledge to say, if one has no knowledge, *Allâh a'lam*.”²¹⁹ It is unusual to find someone deprecate the use of these words. 'Umar is depicted as having done so. He expressed anger at people who in discussing a passage of the Qur'ân made use of them, when in his opinion, they should have said either “we know” or “we don't know.”²²⁰ The use of *Allâh a'lam* might have been appropriate in the case of ordinary people and ordinary subjects, but scholarship and the importance of the subject matter made an unequivocal statement preferable in this case.

The unwillingness to admit one's ignorance and the perpetual scholarly exhortation to overcome this harmful attitude were, of course, not exclusively Islamic. The closest predecessor to Muslim civilization, the Syriac Church, knew about it, and the great Aphrem stated the case in these words: “But this which I have mentioned is found in the case of great sages, namely, that one confesses, 'I do not know.' For this is their great knowledge that if they do not know a thing, they confess that they do not know it.”²²¹ In Islam where knowledge acquired tremendous significance for an individual's social standing, the temptation to claim knowledge where there was none was a great danger for the entire fabric of society. It was constantly warned against in the educational literature and in the reflections of scholars about the alleged or real decay of their specialties. In its most succinct form, this warning finds its endlessly repeated expression in the numerous variations on the theme of the use of *lâ adî*.

Philosophy in the name of Plato and Aristotle popularized the notion of the general insufficiency of human knowledge. It impressed itself deeply upon Muslim consciousness, as indicated by

of its material, this rather exhaustive treatment of the subject refers to 'Abdallâh b. Wahb and his *Kitâb al-Majâlis*. It is clear that the basic canon of all these traditions was more or less fixed by the early eighth century. (Ibn Wahb 'an Mâlik is cited for the subject already in the *History* of Abû Zur'ah ad-Dimashqî, Ms. Fatih 4210, fol. 63b.)

²¹⁹ Cf. Abû Khaythamah, no. 49 ('Abdallâh b. Mas'ûd), also, no. 67; *Concordance*, IV, 317b38 f., 320b39 f., 337b49 ff.

²²⁰ Cf. I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*, 73 (Leiden 1920, reprint 1952). The reference is to at-Tabarî, *Tafsîr*, III, 47, *ad Qur'ân* 2: 266/268.

²²¹ Cf. C. W. Mitchell, *S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations*, text, II, 6, trans., p. III (London-Oxford 1921).

the many passages in literature where it is referred to in one or both of the two basic forms: “The only aspect of the excellence of knowledge I possess is my knowledge that I do not know,”²²² and: “Were my saying, ‘I do not know,’ not a confirmation²²³ of the fact that I do know, I would say that I do not know.” In Greek tradition, we find the idea basically reduced to the following three sayings, all of which have their prototype, it would seem, in a passage of Plato’s *Apology* 21D: “Heracitus, the physicist, said that as a youth (already) he had become the wisest man of all, because he knew that he knew nothing”;²²⁴ “Democritus said, ‘I only know that I do not know’”;²²⁵ and “Socrates believed that he knew nothing except that very fact, while all the others did not even know this much.”²²⁶ The Arabic tradition represents a conflation of all of them. The Democritean version appears in Arabic also in the form of the sage’s attribution of his great knowledge to “my recognition (*ma’rifah*) that my knowledge is small.”²²⁷ A rather close rendition of the Socratic version, but with some fancy trimmings, comes to us from Ibn Hindû: “Socrates said: I often used to dream that I was the most learned of my contemporaries. I could not find myself deserving of this description except by

²²² In addition to Plato, this saying is also ascribed to Hippocrates (in another passage of al-Mubashshir, 50), when it is not anonymous as, for instance, in Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyún*, II, 126; al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 44; ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Muhâdarât*, I, 23. Al-Mubashshir, 177, quotes the Platonic saying that Plato knew only that he did not know, during his entire stay in this world, cf. Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 63a, n. 3.

²²³ The only noticeable variation in the wording of this saying occurs in connection with this particular word. It is *tathbît*²²⁸ in a version going under the name of Plato, cf. al-Mubashshir, 167, and *al-Mukhtâr min kalâm al-hukamâ’ al-arbâ’ah*, in Ms. Aya Sofya 2460, fol. 33a–b. A minor variant, or rather, a mistake, is *tathabbut*²²⁹ in Hunayn, *Nawâdir*, fol. 56b. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyún*, II, 126, has *sabab*²³⁰, which must be corrected to *tathbît*²²⁸. However, in the case of the saying’s attribution to Socrates, the word used is *ikhbâr*²³¹, cf. al-Mubashshir, 125; Ibn Abî Usaybi’ah, *Uyún al-anbâ’*, ed. A. Müller, I, 49 (Cairo and Königsberg 1882–84). Where the saying is connected with Archigenes, *dalîl*²³² is used (cf. al-Mubashshir, 302; Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 179, no. 50). Thus, all three versions occur in al-Mubashshir in different places. It would seem a plausible assumption that they represent three different translations of the same saying as attributed to different authorities.

²²⁴ Cf. *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 310; Antonius Melissa, 959 f.

²²⁵ Cf. *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 264.

²²⁶ Cf. Antonius Melissa, 959 f. The first part only in Diogenes Laertius, II, 32.

²²⁷ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 297, see Rosenthal, *Fortleben*, 173, no. 5.

virtue of the fact that I often say, 'I do not know,' in reply to matters I am asked about." Ibn Hindû adds another version: "It was revealed to me that I was the most learned of men. I was surprised, because I was aware that I did not deserve this description, but revelation never lies. Thus, I deserve this description, because I know that I do not know, whereas other people do not know and do not know that they do not know."²²⁸ Ibn Hindû goes on quoting an Arabic verse to the effect that "the poor fellow does not know that he does not know." The verse rather castigates "compound ignorance" and does not aim at praising the philosopher's despair of achieving true knowledge. This is also the case in the verse cited by Usâmah b. Munqidh:

You are ignorant, and you do not know that you are ignorant.
I wish I could see to it that you know that you do not know.

Ibn Munqidh, however, also mentions a versification of the Socratic saying:

Is it not remarkable that I am a man
Mighty in disputation, subtle in the choice of words,
Who dies with his soul possessing as its only knowledge
The knowledge that he has no knowledge?²²⁹

It is understandable that this great Greek idea re-occurs in a passage allegedly of Persian origin that says that "it is part of knowledge to know that you do not know."²³⁰ On the other hand, it would have been most inappropriate to put this remark into the mouth of the Prophet, and this seems not to have been done. In fact, some resistance to its implications appears to have been current. It is missing in a good many *adab* works where it might be expected to have made its appearance. The reason for disregarding it could have been the triteness that must have accrued to it over the years, as well as the fact that it was so closely allied to Hellenism. However, an aversion to the moderate skepticism implied in it is more likely to have made it objectionable to many Muslims. Mere chance, or stylistic considerations, may likewise not have been the reason why the second half of the Mu'tazilah saying cited at the outset of the present book was omitted by some of the authors who reported it in later centuries.²³¹ While the diffi-

²²⁸ Cf. Ibn Hindû, 86.

²²⁹ Cf. Usâmah b. Munqidh, *al-Bâdi'*, 84 (Cairo 1380/1960).

²³⁰ Cf. Miskawayh, *Jâwidhân Khiradh*, 74.

²³¹ Cf. above, p. V.

culty of knowledge and the need for constant and full devotion to it were accepted facts, any doubts that knowledge might not yield itself even to the most ardent and intense pursuit were better suppressed. In a society which had come to accept the supremacy of the concept of knowledge, it was, perhaps, possible to harbor some misgivings as to the possibility of the realization in practice of full and certain knowledge, but many were naturally reluctant to admit the possession of such misgivings either to themselves or to others.

Personal Failings of Scholars

The educational literature never ceases repeating that scholars should be modest and humble. Haughtiness and conceit were generally considered the primordial danger and curse of scholarship. Iblîs, while he was still answering to the name of 'Azâzîl and was not yet the devil, was the strongest among the angels in independent judgment and possessed the greatest amount of knowledge. This was what made him haughty.²³² The angels in a body claimed to be, if not better than the newly created Adam, then at least more knowledgeable than he, because they had existed before him. While they were thus admiring their own knowledge, they suffered a grim setback. It was Adam who was taught by God all the names. Thus, he came into the possession of a knowledge vastly greater than theirs.²³³ Again, knowledge proved a temptation, this time for the new human race. Cain killed Abel, because he was envious of the knowledge that Adam had specifically entrusted to him. Therefore, Adam later on entrusted the book containing his last will and testament—and with it, apparently, the sum and substance of his vast knowledge—to Seth and ordered him to keep it concealed from Cain and his progeny.²³⁴ And so it went through all of history. The Qârûn (Korah) of the Qur'ân became overbearing because of his knowledge (Qur'ân 28:78/78). His behavior was all the more sinful and destructive, because he claimed to possess a kind of real knowledge which, in fact, he did not possess. When Jesus was hailed with the words, "Blessed be the womb that bore you," he retorted, "Blessed be the one whom God taught His Book and

²³² Cf. at-Tabarî, *Annales*, I, 83.

²³³ Cf. at-Tabarî, *Annales*, I, 99 f.

²³⁴ Cf. at-Tabarî, *Annales*, I, 159 f.

who did not be(come) a tyrant.”²³⁵ There is the famous tradition of the Prophet in which he censures those who seek knowledge in order to be able to contend and vie with scholars. It was extended to include, among scholarly failings, an attitude of hostility toward stupid people and the desire to draw attention to oneself.²³⁶ The tradition was part of the campaign directed against the tendency of scholars to “study for this world” which was blamed constantly. In adh-Dhahabî’s list of major sins, it was ranked as one, between hypocrisy and deceit.²³⁷ Knowledge should be studied for its own sake, but, alas, it seems there never was a period when this precept was widely practiced.

I have seen the people of our time
 Seek knowledge not for the sake of knowledge,
 But for vying with their colleagues
 And for being equipped for tyrannizing and wronging others.²³⁸

Studying for the world deprives scholars of their heavenly reward in the other world. In a more secular vein, it robs knowledge of its sweetness and splendor.²³⁹ In adh-Dhahabî’s list of major sins, it is combined with the equally grave sin of “concealing knowledge” which means the death of the social usefulness of knowledge. While knowledge must not be imparted to those who do not deserve it or are not capable of understanding it, it must also not be withheld from the deserving²⁴⁰ by some so-called scholar for selfish reasons, in order to promote his own standing in the world. The transmission and spread of knowledge bring it to fruition. Besides, it is also pointed out frequently that the communication

²³⁵ Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 438. The quotation is from Luke 11:27 f. Jesus’ reply there is, “. . . who hear the word of God and keep (it).” This, of course, is rather different from the Arabic text, which may have added some echo of Psalms 1:1. The use of *gibbôr* in Psalms 112:2 should be noted, but contrary to the *jabbâr* of the Arabic text, it is a positive term there.

²³⁶ Cf. above, p. 172, n. 2.

²³⁷ Cf. adh-Dhahabî, *Kitâb al-Kabâ’ir*, 140–43 (Cairo 1385/1965).

²³⁸ Cf. az-Zamakhsharî, *Rabî‘*, in Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 184b; Ibn al-Jawzî, *Manâqib al-Imâm Ahmad b. Hanbal*, 148; al-Ibshîhî, *Mustatraf*, I, 24. Az-Zamakhsharî mentions as the poet Bashîr b. ‘Abd-al-Rahmân b. Ka‘b b. Mâlik al-Anshârî, cf. *Aghâni*, XV, 27. M. Shâfi‘, *Analytical Indices to the Kitâb al-Iqd al-Farîd*, I, 204 (Calcutta 1935), lists him under Bishr. Instead of “tyrannizing” (*al-ghashm*), which appears to be the best reading, Ibn al-Jawzî has something like “winning disputes” (*al-khaṣm*), and al-Ibshîhî has “cheating” (*al-ghashsh*).

²³⁹ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 323, who speaks of knowledge and wisdom.

²⁴⁰ On this topic, cf., for instance, Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi‘*, I, 110 f.

of knowledge to others results in an increase of knowledge. “The charity tax (*zakâh*) to be levied on knowledge is teaching those who have not enough knowledge... Such a tax is even more necessary in the case of knowledge, as knowledge is increased by spending. Knowledge, it has been said, is like hair. Whenever some hair is shaved off, it grows back more strongly. If it is not shaved off, it retains its fixed size to which it grows back when it is clipped. Left alone, it does not go beyond it.”²⁴¹

Failures of this sort and faulty character traits make up the “evil scholar” (*ālim as-sū*). We hear much about the harm he causes to himself and, above all, to society. His harmfulness was stressed by the representatives of secular learning, too, but, basically, the figure of the evil scholar was one inspired by religion. Shades of the New Testament are unmistakable in the preference shown for statements ascribed to Jesus concerning evil scholars.²⁴² Scholars were expected to have the proper qualities as established in the generally accepted canon of ethics. Apparently in this sense, ‘Abdallâh b. al-Mubârak claimed that there was greater need among men of religion for a little *adab* than for much knowledge.²⁴³

The learned also have to observe society’s rules concerning morality. The “wicked scholar” (*al-ālim al-fâsiq*) was the frequent target of concerned educators. He is the worst of men, according to a remark ascribed to Jesus.²⁴⁴ Wâsil b. ‘Atâ, however, also warned against men who were pious but at the same time stupid. Together with wicked scholars, they belonged to the most harmful type of human beings. In the case of wicked scholars, knowledge suffered harm, because their knowledge was sure to be rejected on account of their wickedness. In the case of those who were pious and stupid, the harm was done through the spread of ignorance, since their piety was sure to make people accept their ignorance. Moderation in both directions was, according to Wâsil, what promised the best hope for future salvation.²⁴⁵ Here, as so often, the thrust is against piety and in favor of knowledge. However, *fisq* “wickedness,” that is, moral misbehavior in the widest sense, was considered a

²⁴¹ Cf. Ibn Buṭlân, *Da’wat al-atiyyâ*, 20 (n.p., n.y.).

²⁴² Cf., for instance, al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Iqdâdâ*, 195 f.

²⁴³ Cf. above, p. 174, and Usâmah b. Munqidh, *Lubâb al-âdab*, 231 (Cairo 1354/1935). Cf. also above, p. 293.

²⁴⁴ Cf. *Kitâb as-Sâ’âdah*, 149.

²⁴⁵ Cf. at-Tawhîdî, *Baqâ’îr*, I, 299; also, al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ’*, I, 52, trans. Faris, 153.

peculiar failing of scholars. A pious man could not be “wicked,” if he was to be deserving of being called pious in the first place. The socially unacceptable actions of a scholar nullify his usefulness for society.²⁴⁶

Constantly repeated warnings of this sort indicate clearly that the conditions warned against were thought to be quite prevalent, and probably were. The emphatic condemnations of “studying for this world” suffice by themselves to show that many scholars did just that. They also seem to clash strangely with the strongly held and frequently enounced thesis that knowledge brings worldly material success. As usual, a verse tells the whole story:

The search for knowledge (‘ulûm) means much humiliation.

The neglect of it means grievous affliction.

Thus, bear with the search for knowledge, for

After humiliation, it means high rank and position.²⁴⁷

The optimistic note was triumphantly sounded by *hadîth* scholars who already in the ninth century were confident of ultimately taking over political power, as did, in fact, happen, and they ascribed the defeatist negativism to their Mu‘tazilah adversaries. This situation was graphically illustrated by Şâlih Jazarah (d. 293/906, or 294) by means of an exchange of verses between a Mu‘tazilah who said:

Reading, writing, jurisprudence, and all scholarly occupation
Are the origin of discomfort, poverty, worries, humiliation,

and a *hadîth* scholar who responded:

Writing, study, the occupation with the notebooks of tradition
Are the origin of great piety and political ambition.²⁴⁸

The seeming contradiction can be easily resolved. The worldly success accompanying knowledge is a natural consequence, something that is inherent in the nature of knowledge as an intellectual

²⁴⁶ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 168, in the name of Plato: “The most unfortunate of scholars is the one whose teachings are invalidated when disapproved (traits) of his become obvious.”

²⁴⁷ Cf. al-Bayhaqî, *Târîkh-i-Bayhaq*, 104. Another poetic recital of the almost automatic rewards of strenuous study and a good education may, for instance, be found in Nîzâmî’s *Heft Peiker*, ed. H. Ritter and J. Rypka, 38 (Prague 1934), trans. C. E. Wilson, 35 (London 1924).

²⁴⁸ That is, the attainment of political power and leadership. Cf. *Târîkh Baghdâd*, IX, 323 f.; Ibn ‘Asâkir, *Târîkh Dimashq*, VI, 381 f. (Damascus 1329–51).

and spiritual force dominating society, which is bound to triumph over material things. It can do this by either disregarding material things or by pressing them into its service. But in order to harness this force, a person must rise above material considerations and show contempt for the ordinary goods and pleasures of this world. Naturally enough, the incidental result was often taken to be the intended goal, and the material rewards going with knowledge were misunderstood as its true and desirable consequences. As such a misunderstanding of the true nature of knowledge was harmful to knowledge as the stuff that keeps society going, it required clarification. This is why personal failings of scholars were the constant concern not only of professional educators in Islam but also of every thoughtful Muslim. And this is why it was necessary and unavoidable to have those interminable complaints that scholars of a given time no longer followed the straight and narrow path of an unselfish devotion to scholarship.

Knowledge as Life and as Food for the Soul

Attention was paid to the blemishes that might affect knowledge and scholars. Much more, however, was said in favor of a positive evaluation of knowledge as a force in society. Knowledge is useful. At least, all acceptable knowledge ought to be useful. Much depends on the way in which “usefulness” is conceived.²⁴⁹ Often, as we have seen, the label of usefulness was reserved exclusively for the metaphysical benefits which only certain types of religious knowledge and religious activity could guarantee. In contrast, there was the frequent observation that all knowledge was useful and should be cultivated. A certain bias against theoretical knowledge of no immediate practical usefulness was kept alive. Socrates “was asked why seawater had become salty. He replied: If you can indicate to me the use that will come to you from knowing the answer to this question, I shall give you the reason.”²⁵⁰ And Diogenes, “seeing a youth with a lamp, said to him: Do you know where this fire comes from? The youth replied: If you can tell me where it goes to, I shall tell you where it comes from, thus effectively silencing Diogenes, something nobody else had been able to do.”²⁵¹ These

²⁴⁹ Cf. Ibn Sînâ’s definition of usefulness as the true good, in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 61.

²⁵⁰ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 113.

²⁵¹ Cf. ash-Shahrastânî, 333, trans. Haarbrücker, II, 192.

anecdotes undoubtedly of Greek origin were meant to be sophisticated witticisms, rather than constitute a considered judgment on the nature of useful knowledge. But they illustrate a common human reluctance to accept the greatness of knowledge in its full dimension. This attitude continued in Islam and did its share of harm. However, on the whole, it was counteracted by the firm conviction that it was known what the usefulness of knowledge really was.

The all-sustaining power of knowledge is captured in the simile of knowledge being food for the soul. Various versions of it are met with in the Graeco-Arabic tradition, “Like as the body grows through food and becomes firm through exercise, thus the soul grows through studying and becomes strong through patiently enduring (the hardships of) studying.”²⁵² Diogenes, it seems, was supposed to have made this statement. Someone else, apparently Theognis, is said to have already played a variation on the theme: “Knowledge is not on the level of food which suffices to feed two or three but cannot feed many persons. Rather, it is like light which enables many eyes to see all at the same time.”²⁵³ Diogenes, or, according to another version, the Church Father, Basilius, admonishes us to take the appropriate measures against harmful knowledge in the same way in which we are used to protect ourselves against harmful foods, because knowledge is the food of the soul.²⁵⁴ According to Plato, the pleasure which the soul shares with the body is that of food and drink, whereas its incorporeal pleasure is that of knowledge and wisdom.²⁵⁵ For Pseudo-Apollonius of Tyana (Balinûs), proof of the incorporeality of the soul lies in the fact that it does not partake of material nourishment. “According to the Stoics,” he reports, “Socrates said that the soul eats; however, its food is something that is not corporeal, since the food of the soul is knowledge.”²⁵⁶ Knowledge is also described by Ibn Butlân as the thing that nourishes the intellect. It is for the intellect

²⁵² Cf. *Kitâb as-Sâ'âdah*, 170. At its first occurrence, “studying” should, perhaps, be corrected to “knowledge”.

²⁵³ Cf. Abû Sulaymân al-Mantîqi as-Sijistânî, *Siwâñ*, in Ms. Murad Molla 1408, fol. 44b; Themistius, *Peri philias*, in the Syriac translation edited by E. Sachau, *Inedita Syriaca*, 49 (Halle 1870, reprint Hildesheim 1968).

²⁵⁴ Cf. at-Tawhîdî, *Imtâ'*, II, 34; al-Mubashshir, 283.

²⁵⁵ Cf. at-Tawhîdî, *Imtâ'*, II, 36.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Balinûs, *Sîr al-khalîqah*, fol. 172a. It is a bit strange to find the Stoics mentioned in connection with incorporeality of the soul.

what food is for the body,²⁵⁷ since the two supplement each other and must exist together in human beings. Ibn Taymîyah states that “the arrival of knowledge in the heart is like the arrival of food in the body. The body is aware of food and drink. In the same manner, the hearts are aware of the sciences (*‘ulûm*) that establish themselves in them and which are their food and drink.”²⁵⁸ In the popular conception, knowledge and books have always been identified as spiritual food, down to the present day.

An even higher estimate of the value of knowledge is implied in the equation of knowledge with life itself. Theology had its own reasons for speculating on the relationship of life and knowledge.²⁵⁹ In popular lore, it was an idea often expressed. Long before Islam, ancient Oriental thinkers had conceived the idea of wisdom that gives life, and the Greeks spoke of those lacking education as the waking dead.²⁶⁰ The ancient tradition remained alive in Islam. Aristotle is credited with the saying that “knowledge is life, and ignorance is death.”²⁶¹ In Islamic terms, the life-negating character of ignorance is depicted in verses such as these:

In ignorance there is death for the ignorant, before they die.
Their bodies are tombs, before they are buried.

A man who is not given life by knowledge is dead.
He enjoys no resurrection till the Resurrection.²⁶²

Knowledge, according to the poet, restores people and quenches their thirst, like as rain falling upon wood gives it new life.²⁶³ Among

²⁵⁷ Cf. Ibn Batlân, *Da‘wat al-âtibbâ’*, 7. The same applies to *adab*, according to Miskawayh, *Jâwidhân Khiradh*, 268: “When the intellect matures, *adab* coalesces with it, like as food coalesces with a healthy body.” Aṭ-Turṭûshî, *Sîrâj*, 201, speaks of the *‘aql* as being more in need of wisdom and *adab* than is the body of food and drink. For Aristotle calling “wisdom and knowledge the food of the intellect,” cf. az-Zamakhsharî, *Râbi’*, in Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 185b.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Ibn Taymîyah, *Naqd al-mantiq*, 36. “Knowledge is for the heart like water for plants and like food for the body,” according to al-Bayâbânakî (d. 736/1336), cf. Ms. Veliuddin 1795, fol. 53b.

²⁵⁹ Cf. above, p. 126.

²⁶⁰ Cf. *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 55, in the name of Aristotle. “Those who do not understand something wise are not alive,” runs a verse by Chairemon, cf. Stobaeus, III, 222. Cf. also above, p. 287.

²⁶¹ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 216, and the *Liber de pomo*, see J. Kraemer, in *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida*, I, 502, n. 6 (Rome 1956).

²⁶² Cf. al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 17, citing the verses as those of a contemporary. As-Subkî, *Tabaqât ash-Shâfi’iyah*, IV, 27, says that their author was a man from al-Baṣrah and that al-Mâwardî recited them to Mahdî b. ‘Alî al-Isfârâ’înî. See also al-‘Almawî, *Mu’id*, 9.

²⁶³ As quoted by at-Tawhîdî, *Imtâ’*, III, 175.

the many predicates that are showered upon knowledge, we also find “the life of the dead, the ornament of the living, the perfection of man.”²⁶⁴ For az-Zamakhsharî, knowledge is the life of the heart after ignorance, as well as the light of the eyes.²⁶⁵ Correspondingly, Usâmah b. Munqidh cites an unnamed philosopher who called *adab* rather than knowledge “the life of the hearts.”²⁶⁶ The Jewish mystic, Bahyâ b. Pâqûdâ, speaks of the “knowledge which is the life of their hearts.”²⁶⁷ Wisdom and knowledge are truly the food of the heart which through them maintains its life, and if they are kept away from it for three days, it dies.²⁶⁸ However, from a more technical, philosophical point of view, Ibn Ḥazm argues against the idea, expressed, he says, by “the representatives of religious scholarship (*ahl ash-shari’ah*), that knowledge is the opposite of death. This is wrong, for the soul, after leaving the body, is more firmly grounded in knowledge than ever before, while the compound body does not know anything.”²⁶⁹

More peculiar is the remark ascribed to the sages that “a man’s knowledge is his everlasting child.”²⁷⁰ Eternal duration was more commonly associated with books, which were also equated with physical progeny. The thought that knowledge assured eternal life was indicated also in other sayings such as, for instance: “He who gives life to some kind of knowledge never dies,” and, “the guardians of wealth are dead, while they are alive. The guardians of knowledge live, while they are dead.”²⁷¹ This last saying appears in a version ascribed to ‘Alî as: “The guardians of wealth are dead, while they are alive. Scholars last as long as time (*dahr*).”²⁷² A varia-

²⁶⁴ Cf. at-Tawhîdî, *Maṭâlib al-wazîrayn*, ed. I. al-Kaylânî, 21 (Damascus 1961) = *Akhlaq al-wazîrayn*, ed. M. b. Tâwîl at-Tanjî, 28 (Damascus 1385/1965).

²⁶⁵ Cf. az-Zamakhsharî, *Rabi’*, in Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 182b.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Usâmah b. Munqidh, *Lubâb*, 234.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Bahyâ, *Hidâyah*, 4.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Muhammad b. Ibrâhîm b. Ahmad al-Bustî, *ar-Ri‘ayah bi-wâsiyat al-murîdîn fi makârim al-akhlaq*, in Ms. Bursa, Haraççı 765, fol. 4a. The manuscript is dated in 587/1191, and the author is unlikely to have lived before the twelfth century. However, I have been unsuccessful in my attempts to identify him. The work begins with a chapter on knowledge, which contains some of the common sayings on the subject cited here, and continues with chapters on *islâm*, faith, repentance, and so on.

²⁶⁹ Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Tagrîb*, 72.

²⁷⁰ Cf. ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ādâb*, ed. Krachkovsky, VI, 65; Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi‘*, I, 16.

²⁷¹ Cf. Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ādâb*, ed. Krachkovsky, VI, 87.

²⁷² Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Tqd*, II, 212.

tion on the theme that fathers give physical life, to their children, while teachers give their students the good life, speaks of “everlasting life.”²⁷³ Knowledge was indeed conceived as everlasting in Islam but this referred to the religious insights which were not a human creation. According to the Prophetic tradition, the only hazard to eternal life knowledge must overcome is the mortality of scholars; their disappearance is believed to foreshadow the Last Day and the end of the Muslim community. However this may be, knowledge as “food” or as “life” was considered a fundamental condition for the continued existence of the individual as well as society.

Knowledge in its Relation to Money and Power

Reflections on the material rewards of successful efforts to acquire knowledge and to achieve the rank and status of a scholar generally made these points: 1. The efforts are difficult and involve many hardships, humiliations, and deprivations. 2. They must be made regardless of any hope for material rewards. 3. They lead, however, to material rewards in the form of prestige which brings with it a position of high regard in society and a certain measure of affluence. But 4. knowledge by itself is a much more valuable possession than any material gain that may come to the scholar.

Nobility of birth was held in the lowest esteem of all the material advantages. It was certainly deemed by far less valuable than intellectual merit as proved by the possession of knowledge:

The learned, intelligent person who is his own man
Has no need of (noble) family origins by virtue of the quality of his knowledge.

Be whose son you want to be, and be perfect!
The outstanding keenness of his mind makes a man, nothing else.
How great is the difference between a man honored for his origin
And a man honored for his own sake!²⁷⁴

The verses echo the famous remark of 'Alî that “a man's value

²⁷³ Cf. al-'Almawî, *Mu'îd*, 7; F. Rosenthal, in *Orientalia, N.S.*, XXVII (1958), 42.

²⁷⁴ Cf. the Houtsma fragment of the *Fihrist*, in the name of Judge Abû Muhammad 'Abdallâh b. Ahmâd b. Zâbr, cf. the Persian translation of the *Fihrist*, 320. For Ibn Zâbr, see Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 512, n. 2.

consists in what he knows or does well.”²⁷⁵ Ignorance, on the other hand, lowers the prestige an individual may possess and annuls the advantages of noble birth:

Knowledge lifts the lowly person to the heights.
Ignorance keeps the youth of noble birth immobile.²⁷⁶

Rarely was there a point of view on which all the spokesmen of Muslim society agreed so unanimously and which they expressed so persistently. It would not do to suggest that there was a large residue of admiration for noble birth in Muslim society, once it had moved out of the Arabian peninsula, and that the intellectuals constantly and strenuously raised their voice against it, merely in order to combat a tendency dangerous in their eyes and detrimental to their particular interests. Noble birth had its advantages, but it could not compete with money, and certainly not with knowledge. The Muslims themselves were able to contrast the Muslim attitude toward social stratification determined by birth with what they believed had been the dominant characteristic of the Persian civilization preceding Islam, namely, its insistence upon social immobility as the prerequisite for a well-ordered society and upon birth as the decisive factor for the individual's position in and value to society.²⁷⁷ On our part, we may point out that in

²⁷⁵ Cf. above, pp. 256 and 281. There are innumerable references, cf., for instance, ar-Râghib al-İsfahânî, *Muhâdarât*, I, 17, or Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 99. A versification of 'Ali's statement, allegedly by al-Khalil, is often cited:

A high person is not like a low person.
No! Nor is the sharp-witted person like the dull-witted person.

....
A man's value is the extent of what he knows and does well.
As was decided by the imâm 'Ali.

²⁷⁶ Cf. ar-Râghib al-İsfahânî. *Muhâdarât*, I, 17; Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 18. Strangely enough, Ibn al-Fuwaṭî, *Tâkhîs Majma' al-âdâb*, ed. Muṣṭafa Jawâd, IV, 1, 467 (Damascus 1962), ascribes the verse to a certain 'Affîf-ad-dîn Abû Bakr Ahmâd al-İsfahânî, unless his authorship was meant to refer to the two following verses.

²⁷⁷ Cf. al-Āmirî, *Ilâm*, 160, trans. F. Rosenthal, in *The Islamic Quarterly*, III (1956), 52. (Contrast, however, above, p. 281, for the need for intellectual achievement, in order to be able to overcome restraints imposed by the stratification of society.) It is interesting to see that in Miskawayh, *Jâwîdhân Khiradh*, 42, the knightly virtue of bravery is compared to knowledge and found wanting. This is said to go back to the Sassanian ruler Qubâdh (Kavadh). The problem of the relative merit of bravery and scholarship might, in fact, have been discussed in pre-Islamic Iran, but its solution in

Christian Europe, the shift from the belief in the superiority of noble birth to the stress on personal merit was a slow development indeed. It began gathering strength only in the fifteenth century,²⁷⁸ inaugurating the “modern” era with its unprecedented flowering of human achievement.

A much larger remnant of doubt and vacillation affected the Muslim attitude toward money and property. Next to knowledge, commerce was the mainspring of the mobility of Muslim society. The power of money was fully understood by scholars. Their own relative poverty as contrasted to the wealth of the commercial and landholding segments of society remained for them an article of faith firmly to be believed in and constantly to be proclaimed.²⁷⁹ Not very many among them might have shown appreciation for the sentiment that the principal merit of knowledge was to help a poor man to be satisfied with his lot.²⁸⁰ As so many other vital concerns, the bitterness of the poorly rewarded intellectual was most vividly put into words by Abû Ḥayyân at-Tawhîdî in the tenth century.²⁸¹ From later times, we can document what no doubt had always been the actual situation, namely, that a certain middle-class prosperity based on commercial activity was the background from which scholars most commonly came (unless, perhaps, they happened to be born into a scholarly family of established standing, but even these usually possessed commercial connections).²⁸² Those who overcame grinding poverty to become prominent in scholarship were but a small minority, albeit a remarkable one. It would be difficult to venture any kind of general

favor of knowledge and scholarship again casts doubt upon the Persian attribution (cf. above, p. 284, n. 3).

The Greek attitude toward nobility of birth (*eugeneia*) was rather ambivalent. Coming from good stock was considered important and even indispensable for virtue, but the possession of virtue was the decisive factor.

²⁷⁸ Cf. C. C. Williard, in *Studies in the Renaissance*, XIV (1967), 33–48.

²⁷⁹ Cf., for instance, the verse by Abû l-Ḥasan ‘Alî b. Muḥammad al-Badîhî, cited in ar-Râghib al-Īṣfahâni, *Muḥâdarât*, I, 17: “Most followers of knowledge and education are humble and destitute,” or the verse on the scholar’s inkwell being the hideout of poverty, cited in Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 57.

²⁸⁰ Cf. ar-Râghib al-Īṣfahâni, *Muḥâdarât*, I, 17, in the name of the caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd-al-‘Azîz.

²⁸¹ Cf., for instance, the quotations from at-Tawhîdî’s works assembled in the biography of at-Tawhîdî in Yâqût, *Irshâd*.

²⁸² Cf., for instance, the article “Ibn Ḥadjar,” in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Cf. also above, p. 296.

statement on the social background of Muslim mystics. Whatever it was, they quite naturally rejected wealth in favor of spiritual values, at least in theory.

A certain respect for wealth was not considered incompatible with learning. Certain sayings expressing this view remained popular. "Why do wisdom and wealth not go together?", Plato was asked, and he replied: Because perfection is rare."²⁸³ Meant primarily to extol wisdom, the saying takes note of the fact that wealth, too, is an indispensable part of human perfection. An anecdote based on Plato's remark about "the wise going to the doors of the rich" (*Republic* 489B) is cited frequently: "Diogenes was asked why the rich did not go to the doors of the learned, whereas the learned went to the doors of the rich. He replied: Because the learned know the value of money, while the rich do not know the excellence of knowledge."²⁸⁴ The Persian sage, Buzurjmihr, was also credited with this saying, and it was expressly stated that it provided decisive proof for the superiority of knowledge over wealth.²⁸⁵ Its prototype is well known from Greek works. It does not appear there in precisely the same form as in Arabic, and it is not uninstructive to compare the differences. In one of the Greek versions, the reply Aristippus is said to have given to Dionysius reads: "Because the wise know what they need, while the rich do not."²⁸⁶ In another version, Eubulus tells Socrates that the fact that the wise sit or even sleep at the doors of the rich clearly proves the superiority of wealth over wisdom. Greek tradition in a way rejected this probably more original form of the witticism. In Muslim tradition, finally, it was completely superseded by the moralizing conclusion in favor of knowledge. Still, the anecdote retained some of its old flavor and suggested a

²⁸³ Cf. at-Tawhîdî, *Baṣā'ir*, in Ms. phot. Cairo adab 9104 (= Fatih 3695), IV, 116; al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 17 (anonymous); al-Mubashshir, 132; *al-Bustân*, in Ms. Paris ar. 4811, fol. 6a; Ikhtiyâr-ad-dîn al-Husaynî. *Asâs al-iqtibâs*, 48 (Constantinople 1298).

²⁸⁴ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 80, also, 19 (Hermes); Ibn Hindû, 102 (*Dyquemys*). In Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 213 f., the story is attributed to al-Khalîl, and "the rich" are replaced by "kings."

²⁸⁵ Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 122 (above, p. 258); al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 17; Ibn Abî l-Hadîd, V, 361.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Diogenes Laertius, II, 69; *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 6. The editor of the *Gnomologium Vaticanum* gives many other references and quotes the text of the other version. For the latter, cf. Schenkl, *Florilegium Ariston*, in *Wiener Studien*, XI (1889), 19; Stobaeus, V, 744.

certain appreciation of material prosperity as a human good to be appreciated even by scholars.

There was certainly no lack of embittered or cynical individuals who saw wealth as the only worthy object of human endeavors and who even went so far as to claim that all scholarly works were written only as a subterfuge for obtaining wealth, as stated in a verse by 'Uthmân b. Khumârtâsh (d. 619/1222).²⁸⁷ However, it was clear to the majority and impressed upon them by the books they were reading and the intellectual climate surrounding them that “wealth disappears, whereas knowledge remains.”²⁸⁸ Your knowledge cannot be taken away from you, but your wealth can, and often is.²⁸⁹ Knowledge is an inexhaustible treasure,²⁹⁰ while all other treasures are not inexhaustible. It is a possession which can be spent without thereby suffering any diminution. On the contrary, it rather increases with being spent, something which is certainly not true of material possessions.²⁹¹ It is like the fire of a lamp which is not extinguished by kindling another fire from it.²⁹² It gives protection, whereas property requires protection, and “it exercises control, whereas property is something over which control is exercised.”²⁹³

For Abû Hayyân at-Tawhîdî, the superiority of knowledge over wealth was a foregone conclusion, and he knew why the two never went together. Plato and his own teacher, Abû Sulaymân al-Manqî as-Sijistânî, were his authorities: “Plato says: To the degree God gives wisdom, He withholds sustenance.”²⁹⁴ Abû Sulaymân’s comment: This is because knowledge and wealth are like two

²⁸⁷ Cf. al-Kutubî, *Fawâ’î*, II, 62 (Cairo 1951–53).

²⁸⁸ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 18 (Hermes).

²⁸⁹ Cf. ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Muḥâdarât*, I, 17.

²⁹⁰ Cf. the verses to this effect cited by al-‘Almawî, *Mu’id*, 6 ff. Those ascribed there to Abû l-Aswad ad-Du’âlî apparently are not in his *Dâwâ’î*.

²⁹¹ Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyûn*, II, 120 (above, p. 256); Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 212; Miskawayh, *Tâdhîb*, 164.

²⁹² Cf. Ibn al-Mu’tazz, *Ādâb*, ed. Krachkovsky, VI, 58, and, similarly, Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 214 (in the name of Sufyân b. ‘Uyaynah). A saying attributed to Plato in the Ms. Paris ar. 3953, fol. 10a–b, adds that like the lack of firewood, non-communication of knowledge, “the stinginess of its bearers,” leads to its destruction. Hunayn, *Nawâdir*, fol. 60a, and Ibn Hindû, 22, add the further idea in the name of Plato that in contrast to everything else in the world, knowledge cannot be acquired with the help of servants. With respect to it, the individual is left to his own devices and capabilities. Cf. also al-Mubashshir, 132.

²⁹³ Cf. ‘Alî to Kumayl, above, p. 256; n. 5; al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 21.

²⁹⁴ “The more intelligence, the less sustenance,” was the way Sufyân b. ‘Uyaynah put it, cf. Abû Nu’aym, *Hilyah*, VII, 271.

wives (of the same man). They rarely go together and are reconciled to each other. Also, a man's portion of wealth results from the concupiscent and bestial soul, whereas his portion of knowledge results from the rational soul. These two portions oppose, and contradict each other. Further, a discerning and discriminating person must realize that a man who possesses knowledge is nobler in every conceivable respect than a man of wealth. If he is given knowledge, he need not despair of money, of which a little suffices, or greatly worry about the loss of it. Knowledge exercises control. Wealth is something over which control is exercised. Knowledge belongs to the soul. Wealth is corporeal. Knowledge belongs to a man in a more personal manner than wealth. The perils of the wealthy are many and sudden. You do not see a man who possesses knowledge robbed of his knowledge and left deprived of it. But you have seen quite a few people whose money was stolen, taken away, or confiscated, and the former owners remained helpless and destitute. Knowledge thrives on being spent. It accompanies its possessor into destitution. It makes it possible to be satisfied with little. It lowers a curtain over need. Wealth does not do that.”²⁹⁵

However, knowledge meant wealth as was indicated, for instance, in a remark ascribed to Muṣ‘ab b. az-Zubayr who was advising his son to acquire knowledge, for, he said, “if you have wealth, knowledge will be an ornament (*jamāl*) for you. If you do not have wealth, it will mean wealth for you.”²⁹⁶ It brought with it worldly advancement in the way described by the caliph ‘Abd-al-Malik to his sons: “Acquire knowledge, for if you are lords, you will thereby advance in power and rank. If you belong to the middle class, you will become lords. And if you are common people, it will enable you to make a living.”²⁹⁷ It was, of course, also realized that money constituted power and together with knowledge was the magic formula that insured leadership in human society. Again, this was an idea derived from Hellenistic wisdom. It found expression in a saying that reads: “In this life, seek knowledge

²⁹⁵ Cf. at-Tawḥīdī, *Intā‘*, II, 49. See also Yāqūt, *Irshād*, VI, 150 = XVI, 231, where at-Tawḥīdī and Ibn Sāsān agree that luck (*jadd*) and knowledge rarely go together and that effort and trouble (*kadd*) go with knowledge, while luck goes with ignorance.

²⁹⁶ Cf. al-Māwardī, *Adab*, 16; al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā’*, I, 8, trans. Faris, 17.

²⁹⁷ Cf. al-Māwardī, *Adab*, 16 f.

and wealth, and you will gain leadership, for there are two kinds of people, the elite and the common people. The elite will acknowledge your superiority because of your good knowledge and your ability to act correctly, and the common people will acknowledge your superiority because of your large property.”²⁹⁸

On the other hand, scholars were fascinated by the thought that knowledge by itself guaranteed political power and, what is more, the sound exercise of it.²⁹⁹ At the very least, it was considered one of the ways through which political power could be achieved. Platonism, as it became known to the Muslims in early ‘Abbâsid times, provided the foundation for this idea, although it had no doubt been around and in the air long before the formal acceptance of the Greek philosophical heritage. An apparently old and often cited dictum extolling the superiority of scholars over statesmen was attributed to the legendary grammarian of the seventh century, Abû l-Aswad ad-Du’alî, and couched in this form: “There is nothing more powerful (*a’azz*) than knowledge. This is shown by the fact that kings exercise control (*hukkâm*) over people, and scholars exercise control over kings.”³⁰⁰ If the scholars themselves cannot be in positions of political power, then at least, the rulers should have knowledge. “Knowledge,” Aristotle says, “is an ornament of kings.”³⁰¹ Again, Greek statecraft is transferred to Iran in the form of a statement ascribed to Anûsharwân: “When God means well for a nation, He places knowledge in its kings, and kingship in

²⁹⁸ Cf. Hunayn, *Nawâdir*, fol. 140a (*γνώσεις* = Aesop ?); Ibn Hindû, 24 (Plato); al-Mubashshir, 139 (Plato), 277 (Luqmân); at-Tawhîd, *Imtâ’*, II, 48 f. (Diogenes).

²⁹⁹ The idea was also turned around. Just as humanity would die out without man’s sexual instincts, “knowledge would be lost, were there no love of leadership,” cf. Mahmûd b. Muhammâd (above, p. 249, n. 3), in the name of al-Ma’mûn.

³⁰⁰ Cf., for instance, Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyîn*, II, 121 (above, p. 258); Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 215; al-Marzubânî, *Nûr al-qabas*, 12; Abû Ahmâd al-‘Askarî, *Masîn*, ed. ‘Abd-as-Salâm M. Hârûn, 137 (Kuwait 1960); al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ*, I, 7, trans. Faris, 14; Ibn Jamâ’ah, *Tadhkirah*, 10; also al-‘Askarî, *Hathth*, in Ms. Hamidiye 1464, fol. 55b.

Among scholars, the superiority of scholars over kings came to be taken for granted. An author of scholarly biographies (*tabaqât*) could begin his work with praising God who had raised the level (*tabaqât*) of scholars over the heads and crowns of kings, cf. as-Subkî, *Tabaqât ash-Shâfi’iyah*, I, 13.

³⁰¹ Cf. al-Mubashshir, 193. More commonly, it is said that knowledge is an ornament for all who possess it. Cf. also al-‘Ashkarî, *Hathth*, in Ms. Aşîr Ef. 433, fols. 47b–48a.

its scholars.”³⁰² The concept of the philosopher-king appears in Muslim *adab* under the name of Diogenes. “Asked when the world was in good shape, Diogenes replied: When its kings philosophize, and its philosophers are kings.”³⁰³ Abû Ḥayyân at-Tawhîdî tells us that Diogenes’ remark evoked a negative response from the wazîr in whose presence it was cited. With the political insight into human nature of the political realist, the wazîr doubted its validity. Philosophy, he argued, concerned as it is with the other world, implies an abdication from worldly affairs, “and how can a king abdicate from worldly affairs and have a dislike for them? He must lead and control the people of this world. This requires providing for material benefits (for them) and avoiding material harm (coming to them). He has friends whom he must guide, for whom he must set up houses and provide wealth, with whom he must eat and drink together and whom he must take care of, and whose private and public affairs he must oversee. A king is busier than a physician who must undertake many treatments with various drugs and diverse diets, and yet must first consider his own soul and his own body and avoid diseases and accidents (disease symptoms), inwardly and outwardly. How can a man of so many needs and concerns, and even more (than have just been described as falling to the lot of a king) be a king and also a sage (at the same time)? Considering this a possibility, someone could argue that a king may be gathering wisdom as (a champion of religious) propaganda, while directly and immediately taking care of his government duties. However, this would mean an intensely complicated state of confusion both for the kingdom and for philosophy, rather than putting the matter on a solid footing in principle and in detail. The wazîr added: Therefore, we are unable to find in Islam more than a small number of statesmen who governed abstemiously, piously, and with a view to piety and righteousness.” Referring to the Zoroastrians (Majûs), the author then switches from philosophy to religion

³⁰² Cf. the introduction of the great medical encyclopaedia of ‘Alî b. al-‘Abbâs al-Majûsî, *Kâmil*, I, 3 (Bûlâq 1294); al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 20, who cites “an ancient scholar” as his authority. Scholars naturally were aware that it served their own interest to recommend to rulers that they seek the company of scholars, cf., for instance, Miskawayh, *Āwâidhân Khiradh*, 47 (Buzurjmîhr), and all the other *fürstenspiegel*.

³⁰³ Cf. at-Tawhîdî, *Imtâ’*, II, 48 f. Cf. Ibn Hindû, 117: “(Crates), asked by Alexander who was fit to be king, replied, ‘Either a philosopher who rules, or a king who concerns himself with philosophy.’”

and discusses the ideal relationship between political leadership and the religious law, as he sees it. Ibn Khaldûn was later on to continue the debate about suitability or lack of suitability of scholars for political leadership on entirely secular grounds.³⁰⁴

The religious implications of the term “scholar” were also underlying the opposite view of the mutual role of knowledge and political power which far from proclaiming the dominance of scholars over kings considered any contact of scholars with the government as something pernicious and improper, at any rate for the scholars and for their scholarly status. The *adab* formulation of this view attributed to the Syrian jurist, al-Awzâ’î (d. 157/774), tended to be particularly emphatic, in order to achieve the greatest possible effect: “God hates nothing more than a scholar who visits an amîr.”³⁰⁵ There also is a saying credited to Sufyân (ath-Thawrî) that “there is a special valley in Hell inhabited only by Qur’ân readers who (while alive) were frequent visitors of kings.”³⁰⁶ Other pertinent statements run: “The worst amîrs are those most remote from the scholars, and the worst scholars are those closest to the amîrs.”³⁰⁷ And, “if you see a scholar who is constantly around the government, you should realize that he is a thief,”³⁰⁸ for the warning against contacts of scholars with the government was frequently coupled with imprecations against the evils of a scholar’s desire for wealth.³⁰⁹ The pious and the mystics considered all government as tainted by money, and any contact with political power as defiling. Many no doubt acted in accordance with this conviction,

³⁰⁴ Cf. Ibn Khaldûn, *Mugaddimah*, trans. Rosenthal, III, 308 ff.

³⁰⁵ Cf. al-Almawî, *Mu’id*, 32 f. Sezgin, I, 517, mentions a *Maqâm al-Awzâ’î ‘ind al-mulâk*, which may possibly have something to do with this saying. The statement was also made into a *hadîth* with the substitution of “Qur’ân readers” for “scholars,” cf. *Concordance*, I, 397b7, cited by Ibn Rajab (see below, n. 6) in Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 178, in his chapter on blaming scholars for seeking contact with unjust amîrs. It is significant that the remark is qualified here so as to refer only to *unjust* amîrs.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 165.

³⁰⁷ Cf. ar-Râghib al-İsfahânî, *Muhâdarât*, I, 18; az-Zamakhsharî, *Râbî’*, in Ms. Yale L-5, fol. 187b; Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 185, etc. Cf. also Abû Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, III, 243 f.

³⁰⁸ Cf. al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ’*, I, 54, trans. Faris, 159; al-‘Âmilî, *Kashkûl*, I, 180. Cf. also Abû Nu‘aym, *Hilyah*, III, 184.

³⁰⁹ Cf. the chapter of Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr’s *Jâmi’* just cited, or the short treatise by Ibn Rajab, commenting on the *hadîth*: “Hungry wolves let loose in a sheep enclosure could do no greater harm than the love of wealth and noble rank do to a man’s religion,” reprinted in the edition of Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi’*, I, 167–83.

and while saving their own souls and those of their followers, contributed to the undermining of effective government control and the weakening of the strength and vitality of the social fabric. Most scholars, while suspicious of the purely material aspects of government and wary of the all too obvious dangers always threatening men in positions of leadership,³¹⁰ were convinced that knowledge—their kind of knowledge, to be sure—was the key to an equitable and satisfactory management of society.

This conviction was matched by the hardly less meaningful conviction that the search for knowledge and the spread of knowledge constituted the most valid and effective incentives for formal social groupings on a more intimate individual or community level. “Knowledge” was the group activity *par excellence* leading to the formation of a nucleus with a great and desirable potential for growing and, hopefully, for dominating society. We do find expressions of the opposite view that knowledge is “a companion in loneliness” (*mu’nis fi l-wahdah*, and the like),³¹¹ that it serves as an escape mechanism and provides a refuge for the individual from the iniquities of this world to which he could repair at will, withdrawing into its shell. “A sage said to his son: You must concern yourself with knowledge, for the least benefit it confers upon the person possessing it is that he does not remain alone,”³¹² because knowledge is always there to keep him company.

I am happy with loneliness,
 Having taken knowledge for company,
 Having withdrawn from the people,
 And approving of forgetting and of being forgotten.³¹³

This sentiment was, however, more commonly voiced in connection with books, those best companions and friends a man could have.³¹⁴

³¹⁰ Cf. the statements on “seeking leadership” collected by Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi‘*, I, 143 f.

³¹¹ Cf. al-‘Askârî, *Hathth*, in Ms. Hamidiye 1464, fol. 54a. Cf. also above, p. 183.

³¹² Cf. al-Mubâshshîr, 33. It is not meant here that a scholar will never be alone because he will always find congenial company.

³¹³ The poet was Abû l-Faâl ‘Abd-ar-Râhîm b. Aḥmad b. al-Ukhûwah al-Baghdâdî, and the verses were quoted by his contemporary, the historian of Nisâbûr, ‘Abd-al- Ghâfir (d. 529/1134–35), cf. R. N. Frye. *The Histories of Nishapur*, fol. 46b (Cambridge, Mass., 1965).

³¹⁴ Verses cited by Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi‘*, II, 204, speak of knowledge as the best companion. The context shows that this must be understood as referring to books as usual.

The search for knowledge demands foregoing the pleasures of companionship, but this is usually understood to mean frivolous and unprofitable human relations.³¹⁵ Knowledge is rather something to be shared. It is restricted to an elite, since the ignorant are not only proverbially hostile to knowledge and those who possess knowledge,³¹⁶ but they also greatly outnumber the learned and always will.³¹⁷ This makes scholars always gravitate toward each other. Learned men never find themselves strangers anywhere.³¹⁸ They alone recognize each other, since the ignorant are unable to perceive the worth of learning, never having possessed any learning before.³¹⁹ And they enjoy only the company of their peers. There is nothing to be pitied more than men of knowledge who have to put up with ignoramuses.³²⁰ This often expressed view appears also

³¹⁵ Cf., for instance, Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadzhkirah*, 83 f.; al-'Almawī, *Mu'īd*, 61.

³¹⁶ Cf. above, pp. 270 f., and, for instance, Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 348. According to ash-Shāfi'i, "knowledge is ignorance for the ignorant, just as ignorance is ignorance for the learned" (cf. as-Subkī, *Tabaqāt ash-Shāfi'iyyah*, I, 158), but he thinks of knowledge mainly as jurisprudence.

³¹⁷ Cf. above, p. 309.

³¹⁸ Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn*, II, 121 (above, p. 257, n. 2). Contrast p. 309, n. 5. It has also been said that the 'āqil, the man of intelligence, is nowhere a stranger, cf., for instance, Ibn Abī d-dunyā, *Aql*, 23.

³¹⁹ The Greek original attributed to Xenophanes reads: "When Empedocles mentioned to him that a wise man cannot be found, he replied, 'Rightly so, for the person who wants to recognize a wise man must be wise himself'" (cf. Diogenes Laertius, IX, 20, and *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, no. 283, where the authority is Empedocles himself, also further references). The common Arabic version reads: "The man of knowledge ('ālim) recognizes the ignorant person, because he (himself) was ignorant (once). The ignorant man, however, does not recognize the man of knowledge, because he never was one." Cf., for instance, Hunayn, *Nawādir*, fol. 66a (Aristotle); Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ādāb*, ed. Krachkovsky, VI, 60, cited by al-Māwardī, *Ādāb*, 17; at-Tawhīdī, *Imtād*, II, 44, where the situation governing the relationship between physician and patient is adduced for comparison; al-Mubashshir, 190 (Aristotle).

A further generalization, which poses an unsolved logical problem unless knowledge is assumed to be natural or inspirational, states that knowledge can be recognized only through knowledge, and this makes it impossible for those without knowledge to recognize the worth of knowledge, cf. al-Māwardī, *Ādāb*, 17.

³²⁰ Cf., for instance, Hunayn, *Nawādir*, fol. 156b (*Dymqr?* Democrats), fol. 157a-b (anonymous [Socrates]); al-'Amīrī, *I'lām*, 179, who speaks of men of intelligence; Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Bahjah*, I, 135; al-Mubashshir, 102 (Socrates). Versification of the idea attests further to its wide appeal:

Nothing is more of a lost job than a man of knowledge
Whom the world forces to mingle with ignoramuses.

Cf. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīs*, IV, 1, 383. For an illustrative anecdote involving Thumāmah, cf. Ibn Abī l-Hadīd, V, 318.

in the form of a witty anecdote told of one of the Persian kings. He imprisoned a scholar who had angered him together with an ignorant man in the same room, as the worst punishment he could think of.³²¹ Thus, in defense against the world as well as on account of the intrinsic nature of knowledge, scholars must band together, in order to insure the persistence of knowledge in the world by communicating with each other and, above all, by transmitting their knowledge to others, if they are deserving. Nothing is more sterile than uncommunicated knowledge.³²² Nothing is more significant for society at large than the small groupings of teachers and students. Nothing, in short, has greater basic value for society than knowledge.

³²¹ Cf. Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 135. In Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Bâjâh*, I, 543. *'âqil* and *ahmaq* replace *'âlim* and *jâhil*. In al-Mâwardî, *Adab*, 11, it is *'âqil* and *jâhil*.

³²² Cf., for instance, Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyîn*, II, 126 (above, p. 260), or Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Âdâb*, ed. Krachkovsky, VI, 60: "A person who conceals some kind of knowledge is like one who does not know it." Further, Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, *Iqd*, II, 215; al-Ghazzâlî, *Ihyâ'*, I, 49, trans. Faris, 144 f., and elsewhere in the *Ihyâ'*; Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, *Jâmi'*, I, 3 ff., 122 ff. In Muslim terms, the duty to communicate knowledge is succinctly expressed in the words: "The charity tax (*zakâh*) on knowledge is the teaching of it," cf. ar-Râghib al-Îsfahânî, *Muhâdarât*, I, 64 f., and above, pp. 183 and 315. See also above, p. 326, n. 6.

CONCLUDING REMARK

The title of this book claims that in Islam, the concept of knowledge enjoyed an importance unparalleled in other civilizations. The preceding pages have proved, I believe, its domination over all aspects of Muslim intellectual, spiritual, and social life. “Knowledge” certainly triumphed among the educated classes, and they set the tone for all the others. It has been contended that the great masses of the people cannot have been immune to the inescapable impact of the veneration for knowledge displayed by their leaders. The question remains whether there is some direct means to measure their response. The willingness of ordinary people to let themselves be guided by slogans becomes obvious at certain periods in history and is easily accounted for. However, the endurance and effectiveness of slogans over long stretches of time or the entire lifetime of civilizations are difficult, if not impossible, to calculate and to explain. This applies with particular force to civilizations of the past where any documentation, however plentiful it may seem, is fragmentary in the extreme.

The so-called popular literature with its proven mass appeal may be of some help on this respect. Its outlook on the world is, in fact, not determined by its mass audience but represents a filtered and simplified version of the thought of the comparatively few who constituted the intellectual elite at one time or another. However, it is a reasonable gauge of popular feeling. Unfortunately, it so happens that only a very small part of the medieval literature of Muslim peoples can be considered to be of a distinctly popular type. The “conquest novels,” for instance, would seem to fall into this category. By way of fictitious historical examples, they depict the proper attitude of the fighter for the cause of Islam. He is represented as willing to die for his faith (*īmān*) and for the true religion of Islam (*ad-dīn*). He could hardly be expected to give his life for “knowledge.” The holy war was to be fought with slogans more elementary than “knowledge” could ever hope, or fear, to be. On the other hand, the edifying treatises holding up fictitious early conversions to Islam as models for later generations made every effort to show that the superior knowledge and insight of the representative of the Muslim side of the debate were essential

for its inevitable success. The famous “Questions” of ‘Abdallâh b. Salâm illustrate this point very clearly. Sermons were certainly preached for the masses, although it may be seriously doubted that the sermons which were set down in writing and constituted a productive branch of literature continued to serve as popular reading. If “knowledge” seems to play an insignificant role in the homiletic literature, it was the natural result of the general outlook of all Muslim preaching. It was orientated toward the other world and, to an even greater degree, away from the total evil of this world. Its recommendations were therefore all negative as far as this world was concerned. There was no good reason to recommend something like “knowledge” that had so many positive worldly aspects in addition to its religious value. In contrast, the fairy tale literature looked to this world. It reflects ordinary life with astonishing faithfulness, including the wishful thoughts and aspirations and hopes of ordinary people. Thus, in the peaceful bourgeois world of the *Arabian Nights*, knowledge together with *adab* has its secure place as part of the good life of man and is felt to be something that cannot be properly divorced from material and spiritual prosperity.

Altogether, the evidence from popular literature is inconclusive. We have to fall back upon the contention that the constant concern and occupation with “knowledge” in all fields of intellectual endeavor cannot have remained without eliciting a strong and positive response from the masses. It may be added that those unable to respond to the clear voice of their intellectual spokesmen hardly count as contributors to the determination of cultural values and attitudes. “Knowledge” was moreover the most stringent of conditions for admission to legitimate political leadership (“legitimate” as against the often illegitimate role assumed by the military in the political arena). Respect for it, as well as, on occasion, hatred and derision, can be assumed to have been shared by all members of the community, even those at the bottom of the social ladder. Admittedly, we have no statistics or positive evidence and are forced to rely on inference. Its weight, however, seems strong enough to support the view that what has been established as the intellectual attitude of Muslim civilization can be taken as representative of all Islam.

Another question remains to be answered. No special position can be claimed for “knowledge” in Muslim civilization, unless we

have at least some assurance that comparable societies elsewhere in the world did not accord to it an equally distinguished or even more powerful position. It need hardly be said that the comparison of different civilizations is always a very hazardous and questionable undertaking. Many unprovable presuppositions are required under any circumstances. Where general human values such as knowledge are involved, the variables become so many and so convergent that their comparison and distinction would seem to be an unmanageable task. Knowledge is at the root of every advance in human society. Our contention has been no more and no less than that in Islam, this fact has found its triumphant verbalization centering around the very word "knowledge." Consequently, we must rule out as irrelevant attempts to determine the significance of "knowledge" for other civilizations on the basis merely of the strength of the intellectual factors operative in them. Awareness of the fundamental character of knowledge has meant, and continues to mean, enormously much for the growth of modern Western civilization. Ours is a civilization wedded to knowledge. It also is a civilization of a variety and extent never seen before. Future generations will be left with the task to discover whether the concept of knowledge as such influenced the development of the modern world with greater force and effect than did other abstract ideas. In any case, it does not seem proper or instructive to compare a past as yet undisturbed by the miraculous advance of technology and communications with a present that is without its peer in human history.

Graeco-Roman philosophy had the deepest respect for thinking (*phronsein*) as the greatest of virtues, as stated by Heraclitus,¹ for pure knowledge (*thória*) as the sweetest and best of human endeavors, as it was in the view of Aristotle² no less than in that of his teacher, or for knowledge (*epistémē*) as the one and only virtue, as the Stoics proclaimed.³ Yet, nobody would wish to argue that the attitude toward knowledge in the Ancient World as a whole or in any particular region or epoch of it was inspired and sustained by the same single-minded devotion that existed in medieval Islam. In the merger of ethics with knowledge, ethics always retained the greater attraction for the minds and emotions

¹ Cf. Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, I, 99, Heraclitus B 112.

² Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1072b24, see above, p. 241.

³ Cf. *Stoicorum Véterum Fragmenta*, III, 60; Pohlenz, *Stoa*, I, 125.

of the Ancients and exercised greater power over them. Nor was the sphere of religion ever fused with that of knowledge as inseparably as happened later on in Islam.

When Christianity took over from the Greek and Roman world and created the Western “Middle Ages,” the concept of knowledge relinquished whatever privileged position it occupied in the Ancient World. Knowledge was cultivated, and wisdom cherished, but the medieval mind was not moved by any magic spell emanating from the word “knowledge” or a belief in its unsurpassed religious and worldly merit. A philosopher of the recent past, looking at knowledge in its Western habitat, divided the whole of it into *Bildungswissen*, *Erlösungswissen*, and *Herrschaftswissen* (or *Leistungswissen*). The last kind of knowledge, the effort of science to control nature and society, is assumed to have been undeveloped in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. Strong as both *Bildungswissen* and *Erlösungswissen* were in the past, *Bildungswissen*, the effort to improve the individual personality, is believed to be little cultivated now, and *Erlösungswissen*, the desire to learn about the divine order of the world and to achieve salvation, is, we are told, no longer of any real significance.⁴ If we look at Islam in this way, we find that metaphysical, ethical, and scientific knowledge, and, in addition knowledge as the power tool of society, were not all present in equal strength, but they were present and active. They were conceived as part of one human-divine attribute called “knowledge,” which held sway over all human and divine affairs. “Knowledge” did not convey any such feeling to the people of Christian Europe during their Middle Ages, regardless of what particular aim they sought most to accomplish through their intellectual efforts.

Islam may be compared or contrasted with the civilizations of Classical Antiquity and the Christian West. At the same time, however, these three are branches of the very same tree. In particular, they share the same roots of “knowledge.” It could be argued that any noticeable differences merely reflect stronger or weaker shades of the same color. The true test for the thesis that the concept of knowledge achieved its unique triumph in Islam must involve a comparison of Islam with the civilizations of India and China. Such a comparison requires the possession of a linguistic

⁴ Cf. M. Scheler, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*, 64 ff., 250 (Leipzig 1926), cited by Stark, *Sociology of Knowledge*, 117.

and historical equipment far beyond the grasp of this writer. In fact, I feel that if at all, it can be undertaken successfully only after studies of the attitudes toward "knowledge" in India and China have been undertaken along lines similar to those followed in the present work. As far as I know, this has not yet been done. However, the problem cannot be avoided in our context, and the brief glance of an uninformed observer—and moreover, one who is needs prejudiced in favor of his own thesis—may be of some interest, if only because of the absence of something better.

Chinese philosophy⁵ has attempted to give formal and abstract definitions of knowledge, although this appears to have been done only on quite rare occasions. We thus hear a Chinese thinker speak of knowledge as that through which one knows and knows something for certain as through illumination.⁶ Knowledge is something innate, but it also depends on the testimony of the senses. Confucius further noted that knowledge is the innate ability to distinguish one's possession of knowledge from one's non-possession of knowledge. He also made a point which was considered similarly as important by Muslim authorities, namely, that a combination of reason and knowledge is a necessary requirement and that the absence of the one or the other results in creating situations that are either useless or dangerous.⁷ However, Chinese and, in particular, Neo-Confucian thought was thoroughly dominated by the idea of the inseparability of knowledge from action. In the Chinese view, action, and not knowledge, is the chief concern of the individual and of society. Action was regarded "as more important, more trustworthy, more easily grasped, or more difficult, and hence of greater concern." The opposite view was occasionally expressed. The author of an essay on "Knowledge and Action," who lived in the third century A.D., argued that "a life of learning and the attainment of perfect understanding (was) more valuable than a

⁵ I wish to thank my colleagues, Hans Frankel and Arthur F. Wright, for some greatly appreciated advice.

⁶ Cf. A. Forke, *Geschichte der alten chinesischen Philosophie*, 2nd ed., 410 f. (Hamburg 1964). Cf. further his *Geschichte der mittelalterlichen chinesischen Philosophie*, 92, and *Geschichte der neueren chinesischen Philosophie*, 453. For "innate knowledge," cf. also Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions for Practical Knowledge and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming*, 107 ff., 132 ff., 198, 218 f., etc. (New York and London 1963).

⁷ Cf. Forke, *Geschichte der alten chinesischen Philosophie*, 129. See above, p. 276, n. 2.

life of action and the perfection of one's conduct.”⁸ This was clearly the exception.

Already the Confucian definitions just mentioned did not single out knowledge as occupying a position of particular significance. Knowledge was at best one among a number of important components constituting man and his world. It is true that “learning” was the beginning and end of all Chinese societal endeavor, but like knowledge, all study was directed toward action. Since the days of al-Jâhîz, Arabic literature has always maintained that skilled craftsmanship was the national characteristics of the Chinese: “In contrast to the Greeks, the Chinese engage only in practical work. They are men of the active life and, therefore, do not inquire into the motive powers behind their activities.”⁹ Simplifying and thus misleading as this statement obviously is, it is in a way confirmed by the stress placed in Chinese thought on action as man's overriding concern. “Knowledge” inevitably had to be a subject of discussion in Chinese civilization. However, it did not achieve there the status of a basic concept and even less so, that of an inspiring slogan of wide appeal and great efficacy, notwithstanding the fact that Chinese society put a premium on learning and education.

The situation in India appears to have been totally different. Action fades into the background. Epistemology at its most abstract comes to the fore as an abiding preoccupation of Indian thinkers. Second-hand reading, which being based upon translation may be misleading, reveals occasional contacts with ideas also found expressed in Islam. Thus, for instance, the relationship of knower, knowledge, and object known was variously discussed.¹⁰

⁸ Both quotations are from D. S. Nivison, *The Problem of “Knowledge” and “Action” in Chinese Thought since Wang Yang-ming*, in A. F. Wright (ed.), *Studies in Chinese Thought*, 114 (Chicago 1953). Mencius had no theory of knowledge, and all his thinking was about action, cf. I. A. Richards, *Mencius on the Mind*, 61 (New York 1932). For the identity of knowledge and action or the superiority of action over knowledge in Confucian tradition, cf. Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions*, XXXV ff.

Nivison, 135, cites a nineteenth-century thinker as assigning to knowledge a higher value than to action and as saying that “religion is the means of pursuing knowledge.” This, however, is decidedly modern, and it cannot be compared with Islamic data.

⁹ Cf. Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 71 f.

¹⁰ Cf. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, I, 382 f. (Cambridge 1932): “All knowledge involves the knower, the known object, and the knowledge at the same identical moment.” Also, III, 146 (reprint Cambridge

We also find distinctions made between what is useful and what, like wealth, is useless,¹¹ or between false knowledge and true knowledge and the role of doubt in this connection.¹² Indian speculation, however, went deeper into the abstract problem of knowledge than Muslim scholars ever did, even in later centuries and in the eastern part of the Muslim world where Indian influence was always a possibility, and often a fact. In the nature of Sanskrit, this speculation involved a great variety of terms which were filled with specific meanings. There was no single dominating term. For us, this is the principal consideration. It effectively eliminates any Indian competition for Arabic *ilm* as a unique culture term. No matter how greatly imbued Indian civilization was with “knowledge,”¹³ it did not grant one term the free run of its entire intellectual and societal landscape.

In conclusion, the question may be asked: What does it mean for a civilization, and beyond it, for the history of mankind, if “knowledge” is made its central concern? It would seem doubtful whether an answer in terms of good or bad would have any validity whatever. For a given society, “good” is what it itself acknowledges as such, and “bad” is whatever it rejects. If two different civilizations were to hold the same value judgments on matters of central concern to them, they probably would not be really different. And if their value judgments differ, whatever their respective members think about each other is based upon different premises and must therefore appear highly subjective. Its insistence upon “knowledge” has no doubt made medieval Muslim civilization one of great scholarly and scientific productivity, and through it, Muslim civilization made its most lasting contribution to mankind.

1952): “All persons experience that knowledge is felt to be as distinct from the ‘I, the knower, as the object known.”

¹¹ Cf. D. H. H. Ingalls, *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry*, no. 1604, and commentary, p. 574 (Cambridge, Mass., 1965, *Harvard Oriental Series* 44), in connection with *vivekajñāna*.

¹² Cf. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, I, 193, and III, 4 f., also, I, 332, n. 3, on doubt (*saṃśaya*) as a part of ignorance (*avidya*). Cf. also Dharendra Mohan Datta, *Epistemological Methods in Indian Philosophy*, in C. A. Moore (ed.), *The Indian Mind*, 118–36 (Honolulu 1967).

An interesting passage on knowledge occurs in L. Hurvitz, *The Road to Buddhist Salvation as described by Vasubhadra*, in *JAOS*, LXXXVII (1967), 440. As translated from the Chinese, it recalls a good deal of the Muslim speculation on knowledge but appears to come closest to some Sufi views.

¹³ Cf. above, p. 241, n. 2, and p. 309, n. 4.

“Knowledge” as its center also hardened Muslim civilization and made it impervious to anything that did not fall within its view of what constituted acceptable knowledge. We can see how much can be achieved by the fusion of intellectual and spiritual values in one dominant concept, but the drawbacks of this process also are obvious. After all has been said, no one answer would seem possible to the question just asked, and it is, perhaps, enough merely to have posed it. However this may be, we may be satisfied with having analyzed a powerful, and, perhaps, the most effective rallying force in medieval Islam.

INDEX

The Index includes all personal proper names as well as some titles of works of unknown authorship and a very few pre-Islamic group names. A short title added in brackets after a page reference indicates that the work in question is as a rule cited repeatedly and bibliographical data are to be found on the page indicated. If work cited repeatedly is not mentioned in the Index in this way, the first page reference can be counted on to contain the needed bibliographical information. Cross-referencing among the various components of proper names has been kept to a minimum and is therefore necessarily arbitrary. Abbreviations: A. = Ahmād, 'Al. = 'Abd-allāh, and M. = Muḥammad.

Aalen, S. 155
 Aaron (Hārūn) 151
 'Abbād b. 'Abbād, Abū 'Utbah
 al-Khawwāṣ 77
 'Abbād b. Sulaymān 119, 122
 'Abbād b. Ya'qūb: ar-Rawājīm
 'Abbās, Ihsān (R.) 17, 44, 204
 'Al. b. (al-) 'Abbās: Ibn (al-) 'Abbās
 'Al. b. A. b. Zabr 322
 'Al. b. 'Amr (b. al-'Aṣ) 88
 'Al. b. Kullāb 120
 'Al. b. Maṣ'ūd 72, 140, 260, 311
 'Al. b. al-Mubārak 174, 316
 'Al. b. Salām 335
 'Al. b. 'Umar 263, 310
 'Al. b. Wahb 71 f., 311
 'Al. b. az-Zubayr 82
 'Abd-al-Azīz al-Kinānī 111
 'Abd-al-Baqī, M. F. 89
 'Abd-al-Ghāfir (historian of
 Nisābūr) 331
 'Abd-al-Jabbār (Judge) 51
 (Mughnī) 63, 102 (*Sharḥ al-ṣuūl*) 119,
 121 f., 125, 126 (*Mughnī*) 143, 145,
 149, 211 f., 234, 303, 307
 'Abd-al-Latīf al-Baghdādī 55, 60
 'Abd-al-Majīd, M. Muhyī-ad-dīn 268
 'Abd-al-Malik (caliph) 327
 'Abd-al-Malik b. Habīb 278
 'Abd-al-Qādir al-Qurashī 295
 'Abd-al-Qāhir (b. Tāhir) al-
 Baghdādī 19, 48, 53, 63 f., 66 f., 100,
 126, 217, 229, 302
 'Abd-ar-Rahīm b. A. b. al-Ukhūwah
 Baghdādī: Ibn al-Ukhūwah
 'Abd-ar-Rahmān b. M. b. 'Abd-al-Karīm,
 Abū n-Najīb al-Karkhī 277
 'Abd-ar-Razzāq Gilānī 91
 'Abdel-Kader, A. H. 139, 180
 Abel (Hābil) 314
 Abel, L. 17
 Abel, T. M. 295
 al-Abhārī, Abū Bakr 'Al. b. Tāhir 175
 al-Abhārī, al-Mufaḍḍal b. 'Umar 61
 Ābū 'd-Rabbī Nātānī 35
 Abraham (Ibrāhīm) 151, 300
 Abū l-'Abbās: Ibn 'Atā'; as-Sayyārī
 Abū 'Alī: al-Fārisī
 Abū 'Alī b. al-Kātib 140 f.
 Abū 'Alī ath-Thaqafī 176
 Abū l-Aswad ad-Du'ālī 326, 328
 Abū Bakr: al-Bāqillānī: Ibn Abī 'Aṣīm
 Abū Bakr aş-Siddīq 141, 190, 255
 Abū Bakr al-Warrāq 171, 292
 Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī 133
 Abū l-Barakāt Hibatallāh al-Baghdādī
 53, 55, 60 f., 64, 66, 116 f., 136, 138,
 204
 Abū Bishr Mattā 125
 Abū d-Dardā' 260
 Abū Dāwūd 42, 83–86, 88 f.
 Abū Dhu'ayb 17
 Abū l-Faraj al-İşfahānī (also Aghānī) 42,
 307, 315
 Abū l-Faraj b. aṭ-Tayyib 66, 98, 302
 Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Bustī 204
 Abū Ghuddah, Abū l-Fattāḥ 162
 Abū Ḥafṣ al-Haddād 171
 Abū Ḥafṣ an-Nisābūrī 174
 Abū Ḥanīfah 104, 113, 272, 282, 290,
 310
 Abū l-Hasan b. Abī Dharr: *Kitāb*
 as-Sa'ādah
 Abū Hāshim: al-Jubbā'ī
 Abū Ḥātim: ar-Rāzī
 Abū Ḥātim (as-Sijistānī?) 282

Abû Hayyân: at-Tawhîdî
 Abû l-Hudhayl al-Allâf 122, 126, 135, 143, 211, 301
 Abû Hurayrah 81, 88
 Abû l-Husayn an-Nûrî 173
 Abû Ishâq: an-Nazzâm
 Abû Ja'far al-Haddâd 171
 Abû Ja'far aş-Şaydalânî 175
 Abû l-Jahm: Ibn al-Jahm
 Abû Khaythamah 73–75, 89, 194, 246, 256, 258, 311
 Abû l-Layth as-Samarqandî 245
 Abû Madyan 168
 Abû Mansûr (= al-Mâturîdî?) 59
 Abû Mihîjan 17
 Abû Muslim al-Khawlânî 255
 Abû Nu'aym al-İsfahânî 38, 72, 91, 139 f., 144, 161 f., 168, 172, 174, 187, 255 f., 308, 326, 330
 Abû Rayyân, M. 160
 Abû Ridâh, M. 'Abd-al-Hâdî 39, 216
 Abû Sa'îd b. al-A'râbî 175
 Abû Sa'îd al-Kharrâz 118 (*Sîdq*), 139, 164 (*Râsâ'il*), 167 f., 170–172, 194, 244
 Abû Sulaymân: ad-Dârâmî
 Abû Sulaymân al-Manqî as-Sijistânî 305, 319, 326
 Abû Tâlib al-Makkî 68, 72, 85, 89, 98, 105, 120, 138, 141, 161, 164 f., 170 f., 175, 179, 181–185, 263
 Abû Tammâm 259, 262
 Abû Turâb an-Nakhshabî 171
 Abû 'Ubayd al-Qâsim b. Sallâm 100 f.
 Abû 'Ubaydah Ma'mar b. al-Muthannâ 282
 Abû 'Uthmân al-Maghribî 163, 244
 Abû Yazîd al-Bîstâmî 120, 140, 162 f., 167 f., 173–175
 Abû Yûsuf 206
 Abû Zur'ah ad-Dimashqî 311
 Adam (Adam) 151 f., 194, 295, 314
 Aesop 328
 'Affî-ad-dîn Abû Bakr A. al-İsfahânî 323
 al-'Affî, Abû l-'Alâ' 172
 Aftâh b. 'Abd-al-Wahhâb b. Rustam 290
 Afnan, S. M. 56, 200 f.
 Aghânî: Abû l-Faraj al-İsfahânî
 Ahîqar 71
 Ahlwardt, W. 14–17
 A. b. Abî Du'âd 277 f.
 A. b. 'Alî, Abû Bakr al-Marwâzî 90
 A. b. 'Atâ' ar-Rûdhâbârî 133, 141
 A. b. Ibrâhîm b. 'Allân aş-Şiddîqî 168
 A. b. M. b. Abî l-Aşbagh 279

A. b. Muştafâ b. Khalil: Tâshköprüzâdeh
 A. b. Sulaymân (Zaydî imâm) 148
 al-Ahwânî, A. F. 97, 290
 'Â'ishah 81 f.
 Aistleitner, J. 8
 al-'Ajâjî 15
 Âl Yâsîn, M. H. 144, 277
 al-Albânî, M. Nâşir-ad-dîn 73, 100 f., 165
 Alexander 329
 Alexander of Aphrodisias 55, 125
 'Alî b. al-'Abbâs al-Majûsî 329
 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib 82, 94, 132, 138, 143–145, 151–153, 158, 184, 256, 263, 281, 299, 310, 321–323, 326.
 See also *Nâhî al-balâghah*
 'Alî b. al-Hasan b. Faqîdâl 147
 'Alî b. 'Isâ (wazîr) 279
 'Alî b. al-Jahm 304
 'Alî b. M. b. al-Wâlid 144, 158
 'Alî b. Rabban at-Tabarî 138
 'Alî b. Ridwân 246
 al-'Allâf: Abû l-Hudhayl
 al-'Allâmah al-Hillî 49, 53, 55, 214, 230
 Allard, M. 142, 160, 215
 al-'Almâwî V, 72, 296, 320, 322, 326, 330, 332
 Altheim, F. 28
 Altmann, A. 39, 62 f., 156
lýmves, lýmves 24, 305 f.
 al-A'mash 255
 al-'Âmidî, Sayf-ad-dîn 47 (*Abkâr; Ihkâm*), 48 f., 51–53, 56, 58–60, 62–64, 67, 219–229, 233, 238 f., 303
 al-'Âmilî 114 f., 330
 Amîn, A. 58
 Amîn, 'Uthmân M. 204
 al-'Âmirî, Abû l-Hasan 57, 67, 204, 242, 247, 323, 332. See also *Kitâb as-Sâ'âdah*
 'Amr b. 'Uthmân al-Makkî 174
 Anawati, G. C. 40
 al-Anşârî, 'Abd-ar-Râhîm b. M. 241–243
 al-Anşâkî, Abû 'Alî (Abû 'Al.) 102, 169, 171, 184
 'Antarah 16 f.
 Antisthenes 282, 287
 Antonius Melissa 25, 36, 247, 276, 312
 Anûsharwân: Khosraw
 Aphrem 311
 Apollonius of Tyana: Balfînûs
 al-'Aqîqî, A. b. 'Alî 146
Arabian Nights 194, 335

Arberry, A. J. 38, 118, 130, 141, 162, 168 f.

Archigenes 312

Archytas 36

Ardashîr 273, 307

Arendonk, C. van 142 f.

Aristippus 282, 325

Aristotle, Aristotelian(ism), Peripatetics 40, 51, 54, 61, 64, 66, 99, 101, 109, 119, 136, 138, 155 f., 161, 180, 185, 187 f., 195–197, 199–203, 207, 209, 218, 230, 238, 241 f., 275, 287, 294, 310 f., 320, 328, 332, 336

Arnaldez, R. 120

Arnim, H. von 202

al-‘Asâfi, Khâlid 122

al-Asamm: Hâtim

al-Asamm, Abû Bakr ‘Abd-ar-Râhîm b. Kaysân 148

al-Ashâ’ (A’shâ Hamdân, Jillân, Maymûn) 15, 17 f.

Ash’ab 272

al-Ash’arî 47, 52, 56, 64 (*Maqâlât*), 66, 100, 102 f., 111, 113, 118–121, 122 (*Ibânah*) 123–127, 135, 143, 157, 215 f., 220 f., 273

Asín Palacios, M. 120

al-‘Askârî, Abû Ahmâd V 328

al-‘Askârî, Abû Hilâl V (*Hathth*) 63 (*Furîq*) 113 f., 169, 241 (*Dîwân al-mâ’âni*) 257, f., 280–283, 296, 299, 307, 328, 331

al-Asmâ’î 281 f., 294

Assyrian Dictionary 7

‘Atâ’ b. Muṣâb 262

Augustine 36 f.

Averroes: Ibn Rushd

Avicenna: Ibn Sînâ

al-Awzâ’î 330

al-‘Aynî 10, 48, 54, 59, 78, 83, 90 f.

al-‘Ayyâshî, M. b. Mas’ûd 290

Bâbây of Mount Îzlâ 25

Bachmann, P. 198

Badawî, ‘Abd-ar-Râhîm 46, 54, 64 (*Mantiq Arisîfû*), 66, 140 (*Shatahât*) 167, 197, 200

Bâdi‘-az-zamân al-Hamadhânî 267 f.

al-Badîhî, Abû l-Hasan ‘Ali b. M. 324

al-Baghdâdî: ‘Abd-al-Latîf; ‘Abd-al-Qâhir; Abû l-Barakât, etc.

Bahmanyâr b. al-Marzubân 60

Bâhyâ b. Pâqûdâ 163, 308, 321

al-Bâjî 53, 168

Bâkr (tribe) 17

al-Bakrî (genealogist) 255

al-Balawî, ‘Al. b. M. 147

Balînûs (Ps.-Apollonius of Tyana) 64, 66, 319

al-Balkhî: al-Kâ’bî; M. b. al-Fâdîl al-Bâqîlânî, Abû Bakr 47, 53 (*Tamhîd*) 54, 103, 120 f., 126, 128, 216 (*Tamhîd*) 218, 220 f., 228, 235, 273, 303

al-Barâdhi‘î, Abû Sa’îd Khalaf b. Sa’îd 93 f.

Barber, C. R. 32

Barmecides 262

Bashîr b. ‘Abd-ar-Râhîm b. Ka’b b. Mâlik al-Ansârî 315

Bashshâr b. Burd 58

Basilius 36, 319

al-Batâlyawî, Ibn as-Sîd 71, 120, 192

Baumstark, A. 25, 210

al-Bayâbânâkî 320

al-Bayâdâwî 133, 158 f.

al-Bayhaqî, ‘Alî b. Zayd 310, 317

al-Bayhaqî, Ibrâhîm b. M. 254

al-Bazdawî 48, 54, 56, 58, 63

Beeston, A. F. L. 8 f.

Bell, R. 130

Bellamy, J. A. 77

Bergh: van den Bergh

Bergsträßer, G. 246

Bertels, A. E. 57, 62, 143

Bible, Biblical, Old Testament, Torah, New Testament, Gospels 6, 10, 27, 29, 34, 134 f., 150, 155, 260, 264, 316. Passages mentioned: *Lev. 18:28* 35; *Numbers 33:46* f. 9; *Dt. 32:17* 6; *Joshua 21:18* 9; *I. 11:2* 27; *Hosea 4:6* 27, 10:12 155; *Psalms 1:1* 315, 111:10 140, 112:2 315; *Proverbs 1:7* 140; *I. Chron. 6:45* 9; *Matthew 5:19* 73, 89, 246, 7:6 259, 11:27 135; *Mark 6:3* f. 255, 12:38 f. 262; *Luke 6:39* 261, 7:32 261, 11:27 f. 315, 20:46 f. 262; *John 14:6* 28; *Acts 17:30* 34; *I Cor. 1:24* 37, 8:3 100, 12:28 98

Bibliander, T. 131

al-Bijâwî, ‘Alî M. 245

Bilâl b. Abî Burdah 259

al-Bîrûnî 301

Bishr b. ‘Abd-ar-Râhîm: Bashîr

Bishr b. Abî Khâzim 14

Bishr al-Hâfi 248

Bishr al-Marîsî 102, 111, 120

al-Bîstâmî: Abû Yazîd

Blachère, R. 130, 262, 302
 Blackburn, T. H. 41
 Böhlig, A. 156, 247
 Bolton, E. 41
 Botterweck, G. J. 7
 Bouyges, M. 142, 160
 Brockelmann, C. (also *GAL*) 52, 61, 72 f., 90 f., 117, 144, 148, 169, 214, 249, 279, 290, 292
 Browning, Robert 305
 Bryson 285, 288 f.
 Buddha 45
 Buhl, F. 299
 al-Buhlûlî 144
 al-Bukhârî 42, 78 (*Sahîh*) 80, 82 f., 85, 87, 90, 93 f., 96, 194
 Burzôê 301
al-Bustân 261, 325
 al-Bustî: Abû l-Fath; M. b. Ibrâhîm b. A.
 al-Bustî, Abû l-Qâsim 280
 Buzurjmîhr 257–259, 261, 325, 329

Cain (Qâbil) 314
 Caspari, C. 295
 Cebes 197, 203
 Chairemon 320
 Chan: Wing-tsit
 Charron, P. 142
 Chase, F. H. 54, 112, 161
 Cheikho, L. 302
 Chejne, A. 120
 Childe, V. G. 247
 Chrysostomus 25, 276
 Cicero 36
 Classen, C. J. 155
 Clement of Alexandria 101, 123, 137, 247 (?)
 Colpe, C. 155
Concordance 33, 70, 75, 89 f., 101, 125, 140, 172, 243, 300, 307, 311, 330
 Confucius, (Neo-)Confucian 338 f.
 Corbin, H. 124
 Corbon, J. 28
Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum 9
 Crates 329
 Cureton, W. 120

ad-Dabûsî 234
 Dâdîshô' 26
 Daghfal 255
 Daiberg, H. 36, 55
 ad-Dârânî, Abû Sulaymân 104 f.
 ad-Dârimî, 'Al. b. 'Abd-ar-Rahmân 76 f., 253

ad-Dârimî, 'Uthmân b. Sa'îd 121 f. 125
 Dasgupta, Surendranath 247, 339 f.
 Datta, Dharendra Mohan 340
 David (Dâwûd) 92
 David-Weill, J. 72
 Davies, W. D. 24
 Dâwûd b. 'Alî al-İsfahânî az-Zâhirî 77, 149
 Dâwûd at-Tâ'î 310
 ad-Dawwânî 109, 114
 ad-Daylamî 139
 Dederig, S. 104
 Democritus, Democrates 312, 332
 adh-Dhababî 73, 315
 Dhû n-Nûn al-Miṣrî 164, 169, 172 f.
 Dhû r-Rummah 23, 33
 Diels, H. 66, 154 (*Vorsokratiker*), 308, 336
 Dieterici, F. 302
 Diogenes 318 f., 325, 328 f.
 Diogenes Laertius 56, 161, 308, 312, 325, 332
 Dionysius 325
 Dirâr b. 'Amr 119
 Dörrie, H. 299
 Driver, G. R. 10
Druze treatises 147, 151, 158, 162
 Dunlop, D. M. 36
 Dunyâ, S. 52, 142
 D'yakonov, I. M. 10
Dyquemys 325

Elder, E. E. 59, 104, 217
 Elichmann, J. 197
 Empedocles 332
 Epictetus 242
 Ess: van Ess
 Ettinghausen, R. 91
 Eubulus 325
 Euripides 246
 Evagrius Ponticus 25, 210
 Eve (Hawwâ') 152

Fahd, B. M. 309
 Fakhr-ad-dîn: ar-Râzî
 Fakhry, A. 8 f.
 al-Fârâbî 36, 195, 205 (*İhsâd*) 302
 Faris, N. A. 54, 70, 72, 89, 95, 137, 157, 170, 185, 256, 261, 316, 327 f., 330, 333
 al-Fârisî, Abû 'Alî 10
 al-Fazârî: Hafî b. Salm
 Festugière, A. J. 140
 Février, J. G. 10
Fihrist: Ibn an-Nadîm

al-Fiqî, M. H. 197
 Firat, A. S. 105
 Flasch, K. 299
 Fleischer, H. L. (O.) 133
 Flügel, G. 73, 147
 Forke, A. 328
 Fraenkel, S. 299
 Frank, R. M. 121, 123
 Frankel, H. 338
 Frankenberg, W. 25
 Franz, M.-L. 139
 Friedländer, I. 104
 Frye, R. N. 331
 al-Fuḍayl b. Iyād 38
 Fück, J. 148, 278
 Furlani, G. 36, 302
 Fyzee, A. A. A. 94
 Gabrieli, F. 252
 Gairdner, W. H. T. 160
 GAL: Brockelmann, C.
 Galen 23, 197 f., 230, 246, 275, 301
 Gardet, L. 97
 Gesenius, W. 299
 Geyer, R. 15, 17
 Ghaylân 99 f.
 al-Ghazzâlî V (*Iḥyâ*) 40 (*Maqâṣid*), 48
 (*Mustasfâ*), 49 f., 52 (*Miṣâr al-ilm*), 53
 f., 60, 62 f., 65, 67, 70, 72, 89, 94–98,
 103, 110 f., 126, 136 f., 139, 142
 (*Mizân al-‘amal*), 157–160, 170, 176,
 182, 184 f., 204 f., 230, 234, 236–238,
 241 f., 248–250, 256, 261, 289, 294,
 296, 298, 301, 316, 327 f., 330, 333
 Ghurâb, A. ‘Abd-al-Ḥamîd 57
 Gluck, T. 152
Gnomologium Vaticanum 161, 287, 312,
 320, 325, 332
 Goeje, M. J. de 18
 Goichon, A.-M. 49, 64
 Goldin, J. 35
 Goldziher, I. 12, 32, 44 (*Stellung*), 121,
 205, 311
 Goliath (Jâlût) 34
Gospels: Bible
 Griffini, E. 148, 177, 271
 Grunbaum, G. E. von 248, 295
 Güdemann, M. 293
 Guidi, M. 157
 Guillaumont, A. 25, 210
 Gulley, N. 202
 Haarbrücker, T. 120, 155, 318
 al-Haddâd: Abû Ḥafs; Abû Ja‘far
 al-Ḥâdî ilâ l-Haqq; Yâḥyâ
 al-Hadîthî, Khadijah 277
 Ḥâfi b. Salm al-Fazârî (Abû Muqâtil
 as-Samarqandî) 290
 al-Ḥâkim (Fâṭîmid caliph) 151–154
 al-Ḥâkim at-Tirmidhî 38 (*Huqûq*), 68
 (*Khâṭm al-awliyâ*), 105 (*Aql*), 138, 140,
 161 (*Salâh*), 163, 164 (*Bayân*), 169, 171,
 179 (*Bayân*), 180 f., 292
 Ḥalkin, A. S. 293
 al-Ḥallâj, Abû l-Manṣûr 159, 167
 Halpern, B. 41
 Ham (Ḥâm) 150
 al-Ḥamadhânî: Badi‘-az-zamân
 al-Ḥamdânî, H. F. 12
 Ḥamîd-ad-dîn al-Kirmânî 127, 150,
 250, 301
 Ḥammâd b. Ibrâhîm aş-Ṣaffâr 295
 Ḥamzah b. ‘Alî 151
 al-Ḥarîrî 268
 Ḥârûn: Aaron
 Ḥârûn, ‘Abd-as-Salâm (M.) 70, 328
 al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alî al-Hulwânî 77
 al-Ḥasan al-Bâṣrî 174, 243
 Ḥasan, ‘Izzat 14
 Ḥâtim al-Āṣamm 168
 Hawwâ’: Eve
 Heer, N. 38
 Hell, J. 17
 Henning, M. 130
 Henry, P. 160
 Hense, O. 36
 Heraclitus 155, 312, 336
 Hermes, Hermetic(ism) 98, 135, 140,
 202, 325 f.
 Heschel, A. 213
 Hilâl, J. (G.) 53
 Hilîm, M. Muṣṭafâ 127
 Hippocrates 249, 251, 261, 275, 312
 Hishâm b. al-Ḥakam 121, 124, 147,
 157
 Hishâm b. Sâlim: al-Jawâliqî
 al-Ḥizâmî, Abû M. 306
 Hoche, R. G. 24, 56
 Höfner, M. 8
 Homer 247
 Hornung, E. 155
 Horovitz, J. 33 f., 37
 Horovitz, S. 302 f.
 Horten, M. 109
 Houtsma, M. T. 119, 148, 278, 301,
 322
 Huart, C. 117
 al-Ḥulwânî: al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alî
 Humayd b. Sa‘îd b. Bakhtiyâr 278
 Ḥunayn b. Ishâq 23, 196–198, 203,

261, 284, 302, 310 (*Nawâdîr*), 312, 326, 328, 332

Hurvitz, L. 340

al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib 144, 146

al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alî al-Baṣrî Ju’al 148

al-Ḥusayn b. Mukhâriq as-Salûlî 77

Husayn, M. K. 127

al-Ḥusaynî: Ikhtiyâr-ad-dîn

al-Ḥusaynî, ‘Abd-al-Muhsin 172, 179

al-Ḥusaynî, Muhsin al-Amîn 277

al-Ḥuṣrî 247

Hyamson, M. 96

Ibn ‘Abbâd 277

Ibn (al-)Abbâs 73, 79 f., 82, 258, 260, 262

Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr 55 (*Jâmi’*) 56, 58, 70–72, 77, 89, 97, 139, 157, 172, 174, 194, 196, 273 (*Balâyah*), 276 f., 307–310, 315, 321 f., 330–333

Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbih (also *Iqd*) 56, 172, 243 f., 247, 251, 256, 263–266, 271, 273 f., 276, 306–308, 321, 325 f., 328, 333

Ibn Abî l-Asbagh: A. b. M.

Ibn Abî ‘Âsim 90 f.

Ibn Abî Du’âd: A.

Ibn Abî d-dunyâ 261, 332

Ibn Abî l-Hadid 120, 138, 256, 299, 325, 332

Ibn Abî Hâtim ar-Râzî 244, 290

Ibn Abî (s-)Sarh 77, 279

Ibn Abî Shaybah, Abû Bakr 74–76, 101, 253

Ibn Abî Uṣaybi’ah 312

Ibn Abî Zayd 77, 291

Ibn Adham: Ibrâhîm

Ibn al-Akfâni 61

Ibn ‘Allân aṣ-Ṣiddiqî: A. b. Ibrâhîm

Ibn ‘Aqnîn 293 f.

Ibn ‘Arabî 43, 56 (*Futûhât*), 57 f., 60 f., 65 (*Târâjîm*), 68 (*İṣtilâh*), 71, 98, 104, 115 f., 138, 141 f., 158, 161, 163, 166 f., 170, 183, 185–192, 204

Ibn al-‘Arabî, Abû Bakr 42, 50 f., 83, 87, 89

Ibn al-‘Arâbî: Abû Sa’îd

Ibn al-‘Arâbî, M. b. Ziyâd 258

Ibn ‘Asâkir 171, 216, 317

Ibn ‘Atâ’, Abû l-Abbâs 244

Ibn ‘Atâ’llâh al-Iskandarî ash-Shâdhîlî 140

Ibn al-Athîr, Majd-ad-dîn 20, 300

Ibn Bâbawayh al-Qummi, M. b. ‘Alî 144

Ibn Bâjjah 64, 255

Ibn Bassâm 54

Ibn Buḥtîshû‘ 56, 60, 68

Ibn Buṭlân 316, 319 f.

Ibn Farhûn 77, 279, 291, 293

Ibn al-Fâriq 301

Ibn Farîghûn 55

Ibn Fûrak, Abû Bakr 67, 103, 128, 220, 222 f.

Ibn al-Fuwaṭî 162, 323, 332

Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalâni 71 (*Tâdhîb*), 77 (*Fâth*), 78, 83, 90, 290, 300

Ibn Hajar al-Haytamî 292

Ibn Ḥamdûn 272 f.

Ibn Hazm 37 (*Fîsâl*), 44, 49 (*Ihkâm*), 51, 53, 55, 64, 67, 104, 120–122, 125 f., 128, 131 f., 135, 203 (*Tâqrîb*), 204 f., 208, 234–237, 263, 309, 321

Ibn Hindû 115 (*al-Kâlim*, cited without title), 204, 310, 312 f., 325 f., 328 f.

Ibn Hishâm 27

Ibn al-Iyâdî 119

Ibn al-Jahm 304

Ibn Jamâ’ah V. 296–298, 328, 332

Ibn al-Jawzî 156, 183, 273, 295 (*Maṇâqib*), 315

Ibn Kammûnah 204

Ibn al-Kâtib: Abû ‘Alî

Ibn Kathîr 156, 169

Ibn Khaldûn 67, 140 f., 230, 234, 236, 284, 291, 330

Ibn Mâjah 78, 89

Ibn Mandah: Yahyâ b. ‘Abd-al-Wahhâb

Ibn Mas’ûd: ‘Alî

Ibn al-Maṭrân 247

Ibn al-Mubârak: ‘Al.

Ibn Munqidh: Usâmâh

Ibn al-Muqaffâ‘ 157, 195, 301, 303

Ibn al-Mu’tazz 309, 321, 326, 332 f.

Ibn Muzayn: Yahyâ b. Zakariyâ‘

Ibn an-Nâdîm (also *Fîhrîst*) 73, 77, 119 (Houtsma, Persian trans.), 146–149, 245, 254 f., 267, 278–280, 283–285, 290, 301 f., 307, 322

Ibn an-Nafîs 285

Ibn Nâqîyâ 268

Ibn Nuṣayr 175

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzîyah 52 (*Bâdâ’î*), 115, 122, 241 (*Râwîdâh*), 280

Ibn Qudâmah 277

Ibn Qutaybah 149, 172 (*Uyûn*), 206, 243, 249, 251, 254–266, 271, 276, 306–308, 312, 325 f., 328, 332 f.

Ibn Rajab 72, 165, 243, 330

Ibn ar-Râwandi 119

Ibn Ridwân: 'Alî
 Ibn ar-Riqâ' 262
 Ibn Rushd (Averroes) 56, 111, 120, 138
 Ibn as-Sâ'âtî 48
 Ibn Sab'in 46 (*Budd*) 53–55, 57 f., 60, 62 f., 65, 68 f., 167, 187 (*Correspondence*), 195
 Ibn Sa'd 258
 Ibn Sâsân 327
 Ibn as-Sid: al-Bâtyâwî
 Ibn Sînâ (Avicenna) 40, 50, 60, 64 (*Najâh, Shifâ*), 118, 228, 245, 318
 Ibn Suhmûn (Sâhñûn): M.
 Ibn Tâwît at-Tanjî, M. 321
 Ibn Taymiyah 44, 73 (*al-Ímân*) 100, 102 f., 144, 197 (*Naqd al-mantiq*), 205 f., 243, 301, 308, 320
 Ibn at-Tayyib: Abû l-Faraj
 Ibn Tufayl 285
 Ibn al-Ukhûwah, 'Abd-ar-Râhîm b. A. 331
 Ibn 'Umar: 'Al.
 Ibn Wahb: 'Al.
 Ibn Yazdânyâr 168
 Ibn Zabr, 'Al. b. A. 322
 Ibrâhîm: Abraham
 Ibrâhîm b. 'Al. al-Qârî al-Baghdâdî 186
 Ibrâhîm b. Adham 174
 Ibrâhîm al-Khawwâs 165
 Ibrâhîm b. al-Mahdî 263
 Ibrâhîm b. M. b. Sa'id ath-Thaqafî 147
 Ibrâhîm b. al-Muwallad 173
 Ibrâhîm b. Shaybân al-Qarmîsîn 175
 al-Ibshîhî 56, 71 f., 139, 257, 274–276, 315
 al-Ibyârî, I. 126
 al-Íjî, 'Aqûd-ad-dîn 48, 52 f., 56, 58 f., 61, 63, 65, 67, 109, 126 f., 228 f., 231
 al-Íjî, M. b. Ibrâhîm 230, 308
 Ikhtiyâr-ad-dîn al-Husaynî 325
 Ikhwân as-safâ': *Rasâ'il*
 Imâm al-Haramayn al-Juwaynî 19 (*Luma'*), 48 (*Irshâd*), 52 f., 58, 63, 67, 102 f., 110, 121, 123, 125 f., 159, 212, 217 f., 228, 236, 273
 Imâmzâdeh, M. b. Abî Bakr 295
 Imru'u l-Qays 17
 Ingalls, D. H. H. 340
Qd: Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih
 al-Íraqî, 'Uthmân b. 'Al. 250
 Ísâ: Jesus
 Ísâ b. Šabîh al-Murdâr 148
 Ísâ b. Yaḥyâ b. Ibrâhîm 197
 Ísâ b. Zur'âh 37
 al-Ísfarâ'iñî, Abû l-Qâsim 52, 223
 Ishâq b. Hunayn 197, 285
 Ishâq b. Ibrâhîm al-Kâtib 277, 303, 307
 Ishâq al-Isrâ'îlî 62
 Ishmael (Ismâ'il) 151
 Ismâ'il b. Hibatallâh, Diyâ'-ad-dîn 132, 159
 Ismâ'il b. M.: al-Makhzûmî; Qunburah; at-Tamîmî
 Işîfan: Stephen
 al-Ízniqî, M. b. Qutb-ad-dîn 117 f.
 Izutsu, Toshiko 32, 97
 Jâbir b. Hayyân 54, 245
 Jabre, F. 98, 139, 170
 Jadaane, F. 207
 Jaeger, W. 23
 Ja'far b. Mâlik 260
 Ja'far b. Mubâshîr ath-Thaqafî 149
 Ja'far aş-Sâdiq 91 f., 140 f., 145 f., 170
 al-Jâhîz V. 45 (*Hayawân*), 70 (*Bayân*), 148 f., 249, 254, 277 f., 303–306, 308, 339
 Jahm b. Şâfwân (also Jahmîyah) 100, 102, 119, 121–123, 125, 227
 Jâlût: Goliath
 Jamme, A. 8
 Jawâd, Muştafâ 162, 323
 al-Jawâlîqî, Hishâm b. Sâlim 157
 Jeffery, A. 34, 37, 157
 Jesus (Ísâ), Christ, the Son 37, 73, 92, 122 f., 135, 151 f., 170, 179 f., 261–263, 314, 316
 Job of Edessa 134, 161
 John of Damascus 54, 112 f., 161, 209 f.
 John the Hermit (John of Apameia) 26
 Jones, M. 18
 Joseph Hazzâyâ 25, 93, 210
 Joshua (Yûsha'b. Nûn) 151
 Ju'al: al-Husayn b. 'Alî
 al-Jubbâ'i, Abû 'Alî 64, 113, 119, 132, 135, 211, 303
 al-Jubbâ'i, Abû Hâshim 303
 al-Ju'fi: al-Muâfdal b. 'Umar
 al-Junayd 139, 171, 173, 180, 184, 193, 209, 244
 al-Jurjâni, ash-Sharîf 104, 115. See also *Mutammîd*
 al-Juwaynî: Imâm al-Haramayn
 Ka'b b. al-Ashraf 27
 al-Kâ'bî, Abû l-Qâsim al-Balkhî 63, 209, 237
 al-Kâfiyâjî 61, 209, 241

al-Kalâbâdhî 141, 161 f., 168 f.
 al-Kalanbawî 109
Kalîlah wa-Dimnah 42, 257, 301
 Karatay, Fehmi E. 75, 118, 245
 al-Kâshâni, Kamâl-ad-dîn 117
 Kasowski, C. J. 27
 Kaufmann, D. 37, 122 f., 141
 Kavadh: Qubâdh
 al-Kawthârî, M. Z. 149, 261, 292
 al-Kaylânî, I. 244, 321
 Khadduri, M. 38, 232 f.
 Khalifé, 'Abduh 146
 al-Khalîl b. A. V. 259 f., 323, 325
 Khalîl b. Kaykâdî al-'Alâ'i 47
 al-Khâllâl 73
 al-Kharrâz: Abû Sa'îd
 al-Khatîb al-Baghdâdî V (*Tâ'rikh Baghdâd*), 148, 165 (*Iqtidâ'â*) 172, 241, 244, 248 f., 251, 254, 260 f., 293, 296, 310, 316 f.
 al-Khatîbî 84
 al-Khawlânî: Abû Muslim
 al-Khawwâs: 'Abbâd; Ibrâhîm
 al-Khayyât 119, 122 (*Intîşâr*) 126
 al-Khâzin, Abû M. 306
 al-Khazzâz, 'Al. b. M. 279
 al-Khiâl 80 f. 275
 El-Khodeiri, Mahmoud: al-Khudayrî
 al-Khôlî, M. Mûrsî 273
 Khosraw Anôsharwân (Anûsharwân), Kisrâ 99, 261, 263, 328
 al-Khuâdayrî, Mahmûd M. 216, 234
 al-Khuzaymî 259
 al-Kinâni: 'Abd-al-'Azîz
 al-Kindî 39 (*Rasâ'il*) 45, 57, 63, 242, 282, 302
 al-Kirmânî: Hamîd-ad-dîn
 Kisrâ: Khosraw
Kitâb al-Bâd: al-Muâthhar
Kitâb as-Sâ'âdah 24, 52, 55, 61, 66, 68, 109, 202, 241, 276, 285–288, 307, 316, 319
 Klein, F.-N. 154, 161
 Klein, W. C. 122
 Klopfer, H. 217
 Koehler, L. 299
 Korah (*Qârûn*) 314
 Kotter, B. 210
 Krachkovsky, I. Y. 131, 309 (*Izbrann'e sochininenja*), 321, 326, 332 f.
 Kraemer, J. 302, 320
 Kraus, P. 38, 54 (*Jâbir*), 99, 195, 197, 245, 301
 Krotkoff, G. 11
 al-Kulînî 94
 Kumayl b. Ziyâd an-Nakha'i 138, 256, 326
 Kuthayyir 'Azzah 42
 Kutluay, Y. 250
 Kutsch, W. 24, 54, 56, 197
 al-Kutubî 326
 Labib, P. 156, 247
 Labîd 17
 Lactantius 140
 Lagarde, P. de 135
 Land, J. P. N. 99
 Landauer, S. 213
 Laoust, H. 209
 Lasus 276
 Lator, S. 46
 al-Lawkarî, Abû l-'Abbâs 60, 310
 Lazarus Yafeh, H. 160
 Lecomte, G. 255, 290
 Leeuwen, H. G. van 168
 Leiden, C. IX
 Leslau, W. 10
 Lewis, G. 160
Liber de pomo 320
 Lidzbarski, M. 27
 Lihb (tribe) 42
 Linss, H. P. 48
 Lippert, J. 302
Lisân al-'Arab 10, 12, 24, 169, 300
 Littmann, E. 8
 Luqmân 70 f., 172, 256, 258, 310, 328
 Ma'add (tribe) 17
 Macartney, C. H. H. 23
 McCarthy, R. J. 216
 Macnaghten, W. H. 194
 Macuch, R. 28
 Madkour, I. 51
 al-Maghribî: Abû 'Uthmân
Mahâbhârata 241, 309
 Mahdi b. 'Alî al-Isfârâ'inî 320
 Mahmûd b. M. 249, 328
 Mahmûd, 'Abd-al-Hâlim 161
 Mahmûd, Fawqîyah H. 19
 Maimonides, Moses 34, 95 f., 120 (*Guide*) 122, 126, 128
 Majûs, Magians: Zoroastrians
 al-Majûsî: 'Alî b. al-'Abbâs
 Makhûl 74
 al-Makhzûmî, Ismâ'il b. M. 146 f.
 al-Makkî, M. 304
 al-Mala'i 104, 125, 144 f., 157 f.
 Mâlik, daughter of 17
 Mâlik b. Anas 70–72, 88, 93 f., 161, 293, 311

Mâlik b. Dînâr 260 f.
 al-Mâ'mûn 273
 Mandaeism 28
 Manichaeans, Manichaeism 45, 157 f., 160, 301
 Mansoor, M. 27
 Margoliouth, D. S. 279
 al-Marîsî: Bîshîr
 Marks, C. L. 202
 Marmardji, A.-S. 11
 Marmura, M. E. 120
 Marracci, L. 131
 al-Marwâzî: A. b. 'Alî
 al-Marzubânî 266, 270, 294 (*Nûr al-qabas*) 328
 Masrûq 74
 Massignon, L. 89 (*Lexique technique*), 102, 159, 167, 169, 171, 186
 al-Mâ'sûdî 124, 140
 al-Mâ'sûmî, M. S. H. 64
 Maqlûb, A. 277
 Mattâ: Abû Bîshîr
 al-Mâ'tûrîdî 52, 59, 103, 210, 212, 214 f.
 al-Mâwardî 269, 309, 312, 320, 325–327, 329, 332 f.
 al-Maynaqî, Shihâb-ad-dîn 24, 132 f., 141, 143, 148, 150
 Mehmet b. Sulaymân b. Selîm 61
 Menander (Ps.) 101, 197
 Mencius 339
 Merki, H. 136 f.
 Merkle, K. 302
 Meyerhof, M. 23, 285
 Migne, J. P. 25, 36 f., 54, 123
 Mingana, A. 26, 134, 210
 Minovi, M. 24
Mishnâh Âbât 35
 Miskawayh 36 (*Tâdhîb*), 197 (*Jâwîdhân Khîradhî*), 284 f., 289, 313, 320, 323, 326, 329
 Mitchell, C. W. 311
 Mohaghegh, M. 301
 Moore, C. A. 340
 Moses (Mûsâ) 73, 80 f., 96, 151, 275
 Moses: Maimonides
 Mu'âdh b. Jabal 183
 Mu'amar 119 f.
 Mu'âwiya 94
 Mu'ayyadzâdeh 62
 al-Mubarrad 42
 al-Mubashshir 40, 70, 98, 130, 135 f., 172, 241, 247, 249–251, 256, 307, 309
 f., 312, 315, 317–320, 325 f., 328, 331 f.
 Müller, A. 302, 312
 Müller, C. W. 136
 al-Mufâdâl b. 'Umar al-Ju'fi 145 f.
 Muhammâd the Prophet *passim*
 M. b. 'Al. b. Murrah b. Najîh al-Andalusî 121
 M. b. 'Abd-al-Karîm 148
 M. b. 'Alî b. 'Al. al-Hindî 57
 M. b. al-Faqîl al-Balkhî 178
 M. b. Ibrâhîm b. A. al-Bustî 321
 M. b. al-Jahm: Ibn al-Jahm
 M. b. Karrâm as-Sijistâni 104
 M. b. al-Khalîl: as-Sakkâk
 M. b. M. b. Bilâl al-Hanâfi 61, 128
 M. b. Shâdaqâh (al-Harrâni?) 269
 M. b. Suhmûn 290 f.
 al-Muhâsibî 97, 129, 140 (*Rî'âyah*) 156, 162 f., 172, 174, 177–179, 181, 273
 Mujâhid 82
al-Mukhtâr min kalâm al-ḥukamâ' al-arba'ah 312
 al-Munajjid, Şâlîh-ad-dîn 73, 186, 302
 al-Muqaddamî 91
 al-Murdâr: Ȧsâ b. Ȧsabîh
 Mûsâ: Moses
 Mu'sâb b. az-Zubayr 327
 Musaylimah 115
 Muslim b. al-Hajjâj 83, 85 (*Sahîh*) 86
Mutammimât at-Ṭârîfât al-Ǧurjâniyah 61, 64
 al-Muṭâħħar b. Tâhir al-Maqdisî (also *Kitâb al-Bâd'*) 117, 215, 290
 al-Mutanabbî 277
 Muzabbid 272, 275
 al-Muzâni 279
 an-Nâbighah adh-Dhubyâni 14, 17
 Nader, A. N. 122
Nâhî al-balâghah 145, 256, 299
 an-Nâjâshî 94, 147, 290
 an-Nâjjâr 102, 127, 135, 149
 Najm, M. Y. 42
 an-Nâkhabâbî: Abû Turâb
 Nâllîno, C. A. 137 f.
 an-Nâsâfî 104, 217
 an-Nâsâ'i 78, 90
 an-Nâshî 119
 Nâsîr-i-Khosraw 57, 62, 143
 Nasîr-ad-dîn at-Tûsi 289
 Nasr, S. H. 160
 Nauck, A. 246

an-Nawawî 85
 an-Nawbakhî, Abû Ishâq 49, 53, 214
 an-Nawbakhî, Abû Sahl 147
 an-Nawbakhî, al-Hasan b. Mûsâ 145, 148
 an-Nazzâm, Abû Ishâq V 66, 119 f., 122, 148, 303 f.
 Nemoy, L. 61, 123, 151, 158, 237
 Nicomachus of Gerasa 24, 54, 56, 197
 Nikiprowetzky, V. 96
 an-Nisâbûrî: Abû Hâfî
 an-Nisâbûrî, al-Hasan b. M. 121
 Nivison, D. S. 339
 Nîzâmî 317
 Noah (Nûh) 140–152
 Nock, A. D. 140
 Nöldeke, T. 5, 10 (*Fünf Mo'allaqât*), 15–17, 33 (*Geschichte des Qurâns*), 158
 Norden, E. 134 f.
 Nûh: Noah
 an-Nû'mân (al-Qâdî) 94, 143 (*Asâs*), 147–150
 an-Nûrî: Abû l-Husayn
 an-Nuwayrî 262, 273
 Nyberg, H. S. 122

Odes of Solomon 26
 Odysseus 246
 Olympiodorus (Ps.) 302
 Osborn, E. F. 123
Oxford English Dictionary 41

Palmer, E. H. 130 f.
 Paret, R. 121, 131
 Paul, Pauline 98, 134
 Paul the Persian 99, 308
 Pellat, C. 100, 303 f.
 Pérès, H. 42
 Peter (Sham'ûn) 151 f.
 Philo 161
 Pines, S. 120, 122, 126, 128, 138, 301
 Plato, Platonic, Platonism, Neo-Platonic, Neo-Platonists 7, 64, 68, 115, 123 f., 136, 143, 155 f., 197, 202, 230, 241, 250, 260, 275 f., 284–288, 298, 307, 311 f., 317, 319, 325 f., 328
 Plessner, M. 283, 285, 289
 Plotinus 160
 Plutarch (Ps.) 36, 55
 Pohlenz 242, 247 (*Stoa*), 336
 Pollak, I. 197
 Popkin, R. H. 54, 142
 Popper, K. R. 230

Prendergast, W. J. 268
 Pretzl, O. 121
 Pritchard, J. B. 8
 Proclus 66, 301
 Ptolemy 230, 307, 309
 Pythagoras, Neo-Pythagorean(ism) 36, 130, 136, 285, 288 f.

al-Qabbâni, Muştafâ 115
 al-Qâbîsî, 'Alî b. M. 97, 290–292
 al-Qâri'i: Ibrâhîm b. 'Alî
 al-Qarmîsînî: Ibrâhîm b. Shaybân
 Qârûn: Korah
 al-Qasṭallâni 48, 59, 78
 Qays b. al-Khaṭîm 17
 al-Qiftî 302
 Qinâlîzâdeh, 'Alî Çelebî 61
 al-Qırqîsâni 123, 214
 al-Qânahî, Sadr-ad-dîn 50 (*Ijâz*), 68 (*Nâfâhât*), 163, 166, 204, 219
 Quatremère, E. 144
 Qubâdh (Kavadh) 323
 Qunburah, Ismâ'il b. M. al-Qummi 146 f.

Qurân passim. Passages mentioned: **2:3/** 2 106, 4/3 30, 9/8 6, 26/24 30, 32/30 29, 140/134 29, 197/193 29, 234/234 78, 244/245 130, 255/256 29, 112, 132, 149, 259/261 130, 260/262 300, 266/268 311; **3:7/5** 85 f., 29/29 29, 58/51 189, 71 ff./64 ff. 29, 79/73 38, 154/148 32; **4:157/156** 31, 166/164 121; **5:50/55** 32, 97/98 130; **6:59/59** 29, 89/89 38, 97–99/97–99 30, 148/149 31; **7:52/50** 29, 62/60 29; **8:29/29** 162, 60/62 114, 116; **9:101/102** 114; **10:93/93** 24; **11:14/17** 98, 31/33 29; **12:22/22** 38, 99/99 24; **17:36/38** 30, 85/87 81; **18:66/65** 80, 68/67 130, 91/90 130; **20:110/109** 121, 130, 132 f., 114/113 78 f.; **23:53/55** 242; **24:35/35** 157–159, 40/40 157; **26:155/155** 150; **27:84/86** 130; **28: 14/13** 258, 78/78 314; **30:32/31** 242, 56/56 29, 105 f.; **31:20/19** 157; **32:9/8** 30; **33:33/33** 32 f.; **35:11/12** 121, 15/16 192, 28/25 79; **39:9/12** 14, 33/34 107; **41:5/4** 189; **43:3–6/2–5** 30; **45:16/15** 38; **47:19/21** 79, 98; **48:26/26** 32, 35; **53:28/29** 306; **56:95/95** 24; **57:13/13** 151, 28/28 157; **58:11/12** 30, 78, 106; **59:2/2**

106; **64:11/11** 107; **65:12/12** 130; **66:8/8** 157; **67:23/23** 30; **69:51/51** 24; **71:21/20** 149; **74:47/48** 24; **83:14/14** 189; **96:14/14** 130; **102:5–7/5–7** 23, 169, 180

al-Qurashî, Abû Zayd M. b. Abî l-Khaṭṭâb 245, 261

al-Qushayrî 91, 141 (*Risâlah*) 162–166, 168–175, 182

Qustâs al-âjâkâr fî tahqîq al-asrâr 61

al-Quṭṭ, 'Abd-al-Qâdir 273

Rabi': az-Zamakhsharî

Râbi'ah 293

Rabinowitz, M. D. 96

ar-Râghib al-Isfahânî V (*Muhâdârât*) 19, 20 (*Mufradât*), 38 f., 56, 114, 134 f., 257, 263, 266, 270–272, 302, 306, 312, 323 f., 326, 330, 333

Rahbar, D. 28

Raqabah b. Maṣqalah (Masqalah) 306

Rasâ'il Ikhwân as-safâ' 60, 62, 70, 105–108, 150

ar-Rashîd, Hârûn 282

Rashîd-ad-dîn Faḍlallâh 144

Rat, G. 274

ar-Râwâjîn, 'Abbâd b. Ya'qûb 147

ar-Râzî: Ibn Abî Hâtim; Yûsuf

ar-Râzî, Abû Bakr M. b. Zakariyâ' 38, 301

ar-Râzî, Abû Hâtim 12, 39, 103, 149, 181

ar-Râzî, Fakhr-ad-dîn 48, 58, 60, 61 (*Sharh al-Ishârât*) 62, 64, 133 (*Tafsîr*), 157, 160, 230, 237 f., 245

R(é)pertoire d'É(pigraphie) Sémitique 8 f.

Rescher, N. 46, 208

Rescher (Reşer), O. 75, 268

Rice, E. F. 36

Richards, I. A. 339

Richter, G. 283 f.

Rignell, L. G. 26

Risâlah fî fâdil al-îlm 277

Risâlah fî tâfâdil al-îlm 'alâ l-'aql 276

Ritter, H. 52, 64, 137 (*Das Meer der Seele*), 141, 145, 174, 242 f., 317

Rodwell, J. M. 131

Rosenblatt, S. 122, 213

Rosenthal, F. 28, 33, 67, 91, 137, 140 f., 153, 160 (*Fortleben*), 177, 189 (*Historiography*), 195, 205, 215, 230, 234, 236, 241, 261, 276, 281 f., 284, 291, 296 (*Technique*), 306, 308–310, 312, 318, 322–324, 330, 332, 339

Rubio, P. L. 230

ar-Rûdhâbârî: A. b. 'Atâ'

Rudolph, K. 26

Ruwaym 171, 175, 244

Ryckmans, G. 8

Ryer, A. du 131

Rypka, J. 317

Sâ'adyâh 122, 212–214

Sâbiq al-Barbarî 194

as-Sâbûnî, A. b. Mahmûd 48 (*Kîfâyah*), 52 f., 59, 63, 65–67, 207 (*Bidâyah*), 230

Sachau, E. 258, 301, 319

Şadr-ash-Shârî'ah ath-thâmî, 'Ubaydallâh b. Mas'ûd 144

as-Şâffâr: Hammâd b. Ibrâhîm

as-Sâfâwânî, M. b. A. 290

Sahl at-Tustarî 168, 174

as-Sahlâjî 140, 162 f., 168, 173 f., 176

Sahnûn: Suhnûn

Sâ'îd al-Andalusî 302

Sâ'îd b. Humayd al-Kâtib 307

as-Sakkâk, Abû 'Alî 121

as-Sakkâk, Abû Ja'far M. b. al-Khalil 147

Sale, G. 131

Salibâ, J. 111

Sâlih (of the Thamûd) 150

Sâlih b. 'Abd-al-Quddûs 301, 303

Sâlih Jazarah 317

as-Sâlihî, Abû l-Husayn 119, 125

Salmân al-Fârisî 144, 260 f.

Salmasius, C. 197

Sâm: Shem

as-Sam'âni 91 (*Ansâb*) 252 (*Adab al-imlâ*) 293

as-Samarqandî: Abû l-Layth; Hafṣ b. Salm

as-Samarqandî, Shams-ad-dîn 61

as-Sâmarrâ'i, Q. 164

Sanchez (Sanches), F. 54

Sanders, J. A. 27

as-Sârî as-Saqatî 174

as-Sarrâj 120, 133, 141, 157–159, 161 f., 164, 166, 170 f., 174 f., 177, 181 f., 193

Savary, M. 131

as-Şaydalânî: Abû Ja'far

as-Sayyârî, Abû l-'Abbâs 168

as-Sayyid al-Himyarî 144

Sbath, P. 37, 56, 98

Schacht, J. 23, 38 (*Origins*) 73, 93, 97, 102, 211, 215, 233, 285, 290

Scheler, M. 337

Schenkl, H. 130, 242, 325

Scher, A. 210
 Schimmel, A. 159
 Schneider, A. 136
 Schreiner, M. 46, 48
 Schulthess, F. 257
 Schwally, F. 33, 158, 254
 Schwyzer, H.-R. 160
 Seale, M. S. 112 f.
 Seligsohn, M. 15
 Sellheim, R. 294
 Seth (Shīth) 152, 314
 Seybold, C. 158
 Sezgin, Fuat 57, 72 (*Geschichte*, cited without title) 73, 77, 88, 90 f., 93, 111, 119, 148, 169, 175, 177, 234, 279 f., 290–292, 330
 Shaff', M. 130, 310, 315
 ash-Shāfi'i 37, 38 (*Risālah, Umm*), 72 f., 232 f., 243–245, 282, 332
 ash-Shahhām 148
 ash-Shahrastānī 66, 120 (*Milal*) 155, 318
 Shākir, Mahmūd M. 194
 Sham'ūn: Peter
 ash-Sha'rānī 167
 Sharif, M. M. 160
 ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī: al-Jurjānī
 ash-Sharīḥī 23
 Shayṭān aṭ-Ṭāq (*Mu'min aṭ-Ṭāq*) 146
 Shem (Sām) 151
 Shem'ōn d'Taybūteh 26
Shimās and Jāli'ād 194
 ash-Shimshāṭī, 'Alī b. M. 279
 Shīth: Seth
 Shu'bāh b. al-Hajjāj 308
 Shukr, S. Mahmūd 144
 Shuraybah (Sharībah), N. 39
 Siddiqi, M. Z. 138
 as-Sijistānī: Abū Ḥātim; Abū Sulaymān Silvestre de Sacy, A. I. 147, 151
 Simplicius 66
Sīfrā 35
 Skeptics, Skepticism 51, 108, 301–304, 306, 308
 Smith, M. 140, 162 (*An Early Mystic*), 172, 177
 Snell, B. 7, 247
 Socrates 64, 202, 312 f., 318 f., 325, 332
 Solomon: *Odes*
 Sophists, Sophistic 51, 220, 227, 230, 302
 Spengler, O. 1
 Speyer, H. 29
 Spies, O. 167
 Spitta, W. 216
 Sprenger, A. 61
 Stählin, O. 101, 137
 Stark, W. 126, 337
 Stephen, son of Basilius 197
 Stern, S. M. 32, 39, 62 f., 67, 280
 Sternbach, Leo 161
 Sternbach, Ludwik 241, 309
 Stiehl, R. 28
 Stobaeus 36, 130, 246, 320, 325
 Stoics, Stoic 36, 55 f., 202 (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*), 207, 242, 319, 336
 Strothmann, R. 132 (*Ismailitischer Kommentar*), 144 (*Gnosis-Texte*), 158 f.
 as-Subkī, Tāj-ad-dīn 'Abd-al-Wahhāb 47, 103 (*Tabaqāt*) 209, 245, 273, 279, 292, 309, 320, 328, 332
 as-Subkī, Taqī-ad-dīn 'Alī 89, 205
 Sufyān ath-Thawrī 175, 179, 259, 330
 Sufyān b. Uyaynah 326
 Suḥnūn 93 f. 290
 as-Suhrawardī *al-maqṭūl* 61, 124 (*Hikmat al-ishrāq*), 160 f., 167, 185, 193, 218, 228
 as-Sulamī 39 (*Tabaqāt*), 140 f., 159, 162–164, 168 f., 171–176, 178, 184, 194, 244, 276
 Sulaymān b. Jarīr 123
 Sumanīyah 230, 237
 Sumnūn 174
 aṭ-Tabarānī 91
 aṭ-Tabarī: 'Alī b. Rabban
 aṭ-Tabarī 18 (*Annales*), 24 (*Tafsīr*), 98, 131, 149, 157, 159, 311, 314
 aṭ-Tabarsī 132, 159
 aṭ-Taftāzānī 59, 61, 104, 209, 217
 aṭ-Tahānawī 20, 48, 52 f., 56, 58–61, 63–67, 208
 aṭ-Tahāwī 97
 Tajaddud, M. Riḍā 119
Talmud (Babylonian) 27
 at-Tamīmī, Ismā'il b. M. b. Ḥāmid 151
 Tāmir, 'Ārif 24, 133, 143, 146
 Tarafah 15, 17, 276
Ta'rikh Baghdādī: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī
 Tāshköprüzādēh 44, 144, 161, 204
 aṭ-Tātarī, 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan 147
 aṭ-Tawḥīdī, Abū Hayyān 57 (*Muqābasāt*), 58 (*Imtā'*), 60, 65, 241, 244 (*Baṣā'ir*) 247, 249, 316, 319–321, 324–329, 332
 ath-Thā'ālibī 204, 277

Thâbit b. Qurrah 24, 54, 197
 ath-Thâlabî 70
 Thamûd 150
 ath-Thaqaffî: Abû 'Alî; Ibrâhîm b. M.;
 Ja'far b. Mubashshir
 Themistius 52, 319
 Theodore (translator) 197
 Theognis 276, 319
 Thumâmah b. Ashras 148, 332
 Tietz, R. 28
 at-Tirmidhî: al-Hakîm
 at-Tirmidhî, M. b. 'Isâ 42, 50, 86 f., 89
 f., 246, 256
Torah: Bible
 Torrey, C. C. 27
 Treu, M. 155
 Tritton, A. S. 130
 Tûqân, F. 265
 at-Turtûshî 256, 320
 at-Turûghbadî, Abû 'Al. 174
 at-Tûsi: Naşîr-ad-dîn
 at-Tûsi, M. b. al-Hasan 77, 144, 146
 f., 290
 at-Tustarî: Sahl

 'Ubâdah b. as-Şâmit 98
 Ubayd, A. 241
 Ullmann, L. 131
 Ullmann, M. 17, 101
 'Umar b. 'Abd-al-'Azîz 324
 'Umar b. al-Khaṭâb 12, 79 f., 255,
 260 f., 307, 311
 Umm ad-Dardâ' 139
 al-Urmawî 115
 Usâmah b. Munqidh 313, 316 (*Lubâb*),
 321
 Ushhanj 284
 Uthmân b. 'Al.: al-'Irâqî
 Uthmân b. 'Affân 79
 Uthmân b. Khumârtâsh 326
 Uthmân, 'Abd-al-Karîm 102

 Vadet, J. C. 139
 Vajda, G. 6, 63, 213
 Valiuddin, Mir 140
 van...: listed under the second
 component
 van den Bergh, M. 56, 111, 120
 van Ess, J. 48 (*Erkenntnislehre*), 97
 (*Gedankenwelt*), 178, 229, 230
 Victorinus, Marius 123
 Vitestam, G. 121

 von...: listed under the second
 component
 Vycichl, W. 10

 Wachsmuth, C. 36
 Wahb b. Munabbîh 273
 Waite, W. G. 54
 al-Walîd b. 'Ubâdah b. as-Şâmit 98
 al-Walîd b. Yazîd 257
 Walzer, R. 197, 198 (*Greek into Arabic*),
 201, 242
 al-Wâqidî 18
 al-Warrâq: Abû Bakr
 Wâsil b. 'Atâ' 148, 278, 316
 al-Wâsitî: Abû Bakr
 Watt, W. M. 100, 112, 125, 142
 Weisweiler, M. 252
 Wensinck, A. J. 33, 48 (*Muslim Creed*),
 104, 112 f., 125, 128, 209, 215, 217.
 See also *Concordance*
 Werkmeister, W. H. 63
 Wickens, G. M. 289
 Willard, C. C. 324
 Williams, J. A. 103, 215
 Wilson, C. E. 317
 Wing-tsit Chan 338 f.
*Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen
 Sprache* 5
 Wolfson, H. A. 24, 66, 99, 123, 134
 Wright, A. F. 338 f.
 Wright, W. 42
 Wüstenfeld, F. 27
 Wuthnow, H. 9

 Xenophanes 308, 332

 Yahia, O. 167, 186
 Yahuda, A. S. 163
 Yahyâ b. 'Abd-al-Wahhâb b.
 Mandah 91
 Yahyâ al-Hâdî ilâ l-Haqq 142
 Yahyâ b. Mu'âdh 175
 Yahyâ b. Zakâriyâ' b. Muzayn 279
 Yaltkaya, S. 187
 al-Yamanî, M. b. Husayn 42
 Yâqût 148, 278, 279 (*Irshâd*), 309, 324,
 327
 al-Yazîdî 310
 Yörükân, Y. Z. 103, 211
 Yûhannâ b. Yûsuf, Abû 'Amr al-Kâtib
 285
 Yûnus b. Habîb 249

Yûsha‘ b. Nûn; Joshua
Yûsuf ar-Râzî 39

Zâdânfarîkh 284
Zakarîyâ’ al-Anṣârî 292
az-Zamakhsharî 6 (*Kashshâf*), 19, 44,
70 (*Râbî‘*), 104, 132, 139, 149, 159,
257, 268, 272 (*Râbî‘*), 274 f., 300, 315,
320 f., 330
Zaoui, A. 96
az-Zarnûjî 295 f.

Zayd b. Thâbit 262
Zaydân, H. N. 161
az-Zayn, A. 58
Zeno (Stoic) 56, 161
Zeus 155
Ziyâd b. Abih 260
Zoroastrians, Magians, Majûs 45, 157,
160, 329
az-Zubayr b. A. az-Zubayrî 292
az-Zubayr b. Bakkâr 194
Zuhayr 15–17
az-Zuhrî 113