

**The Islamization of Psychology:**  
Its “why”, its “what”, its “how” and its “who”  
By: Malik Badri

**Introduction:**

In preparing this keynote address, I have deliberately followed a simple easily comprehensible style that I hope would help to clear up the cloud of confusion that has fogged the concept of Islamization now for many years. In doing so I have referred to some illustrative personal experiences from my long years of teaching, researching and Islamizing of psychology. I assure the audience that I am mentioning these personal experiences only to make myself understood. I am already approaching my seventieth birthday and I am no longer the young person competing for academic superiority nor am I the one whose main motive is to seek applaud and aggrandizement. In fact during the last five or six years I have become progressively interested in areas other than psychology. Philosophy, the history of Islamic medicine and *Sufism* are gradually taking me away from my specialization and I am now being more frequently invited to attend and to read papers in medical conferences in comparison to those in psychology. The paper I am presenting is a summary of a book with the title, “*Out of the lizard’s hole*” which I am now writing in answer to my good friends who told me and wrote that, “Malik Badri, in his *Dilemma of Muslim psychologists* convinced us that we are in a lizard’s hole, but he did not tell us how to get out of it”. Having said that, let us turn to a summary of my paper on the “Why, what, how and who of Islamization”.

**The “why of the Islamization of western Psychology**

Why do we need to Islamize modern Western psychology? When I gave my first public lecture on the Islamization of psychology in the main auditorium of the University of Jordan in 1965, I was faced with a barrage of ridiculing questions wondering about the relationship between Islam and psychology. Some mocking questions and comments were: “Islam is a religion and psychology is a science”. “Do you speak of Islamic physiology, *fasiq* botany or *kafir* physics? Then why talk about Islamic psychotherapy or secular psychology?” “Science struggled for many years to reach maturity and to rid itself from the captivity of philosophy and religion; do you want psychological sciences to backslide to ancient religiosity or to antiquated philosophy?” Some of my friends in the Department of Psychology, which I headed at the time, confided to me with sincerity that if I continue to shove Islam into my specialization, I may eventually lose my respect as a scholar.

After eleven years I was invited by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists in America to read a paper on the Islamization of psychology. That was my famous article “Muslim psychologists in the lizard’s hole”. I was greatly surprised by the enthusiasm and applaud I got from my audience, particularly from the American psychologists who converted to Islam. One of them, Dr. John Sullivan, told me that after the delivery of my talk he discovered that he had been in a lizard’s hole during all his career without knowing it and that he decided to resign from his job as a counselor in a hospital to take up an employment

that gave him a chance to Islamize counseling. He wrote a very good book on Islamic counseling.

On my return to Saudi Arabia where I was professor and director of the psychological clinic of the University of Riyadh, I was asked by the deputy Rector of the university, Professor al-Nafi', who was himself a psychologist, to translate my lizard's hole lecture into Arabic and to give it as a public lecture to students, faculty and interested people from the public. I did so, and as I have expected the 13 Arab faculty members of the Department of Psychology were very skeptical about my suggestions on Islamization and they played the old record of psychology as a science which has nothing to do with religion. Some of them were very angry at my criticism of Freud. Only one of them, who was a committed Muslim, told me later that these lecturers depended fully on psychoanalytic theory and practices in their lectures. If you take away Freud, he said, they would not know what to teach. In effect they were receiving their salaries from him! This was of course more than 25 years ago. Those who loved the lecture were our students and the faculty members who are not teaching social sciences. The morning after the lecture I found my colleagues even angrier since students were loudly asking, "How many lizards do we have in our department"?

Numerous Muslim psychologists have boosted their egos by believing that they are *rescientists* who will eventually control and predict all forms of human behavior. They cannot do that now only because psychology is a new young science! In his excellent book, *Altaniheed fita'seel*, Dr. Abdullah al-Subbayih, a young Saudi associate professor of psychology has given us a very good example of such psychologists. He wrote (p.29) that one of his Arab colleagues stated strongly that he is not ready to Islamize psychology to his students until Islamization receives an international recognition! Here is an Arab professor in 1999 waiting for Western psychologists to recognize Islamization before he can do so.

If this Arab psychologist were familiar with the modern criticism which Western psychologists level against their specialization, he would have found the international recognition he is looking for. But it is sad to say that many of our Arab and Muslim colleagues read only what is translated to Arabic or to their national language. Much of this literature is out of date and few authors are interested in updating themselves by reading current journals.

These personal experiences should make us realize that some of our colleagues who are still dubious about Islamization or who still believe that psychology is a pure science are probably being' more Western in their thought than the Westerners themselves. More Royal than the king as the saying goes. It is sad to say that Westerners, whether they are Muslim or not, are more understanding to the efforts aimed at the adaptation of their psychology to the needs of other cultures than many Arab and Muslim psychologists. The climate for Islamization now is very much more conducive than 23 years ago when I wrote *The dilemma of Muslim psychologists*. Many Western psychologists are beginning to realize that their field is largely culture bound and mainly influenced by American psychology and its emphasis on extrapolating from animal studies and its use of American students as subjects. Listen for example to the well-known British psychologist Eysenck as he writes in 1995 in the Journal of *World psychology* (Vo.1, No.4, p.13):

“Much of our psychology is based on studies of American college students, rats, pigeons, and mentally abnormal groups.. It must be clear that this is not sufficient as a basis for a science claiming universal status.”

Already French and German psychologists are complaining from this Americanization of psychology. They feel that the US is the superpower of psychology and their students are being influenced by the American culture instead of simply being awarded a degree in psychology. If even European psychologists are complaining from this “student-Americanization of psychology”, though their cultures are identical in most of their major tenets, how can we, Muslim, Asian and Arab psychologists refuse to Islamize and continue to swallow this ethnocentric culture bound stuff simply because they are sugar-coated with ‘science’.

My statement that those who reject Islamization are more Royal than the king and that even the West has come to appreciate the need for adapting psychology for other cultures is supported by an article in the same issue of the journal of World Psychology. In their well written paper titled, “But is it a science? traditional and alternative approaches to social behaviour”, one psychologist from Georgetown University, USA, Moghaddam, and a second psychologist from Oxford University, England, Harre’, has this to state. I have put this long quotation from their article since it says clearly how our mental slavery to “Americanized” Western psychology can only perpetuate exploitative traditions of colonialism:

*“...the most important factor shaping psychology in the international context continues to be power inequalities between and within nations. The inability of psychology to contribute to Third World development arises in large part from these inequalities... and surely this is an unethical issue. Putative psychological “knowledge” which is of highly questionable reliability and validity even in the Western context is being exported wholesale to Third World societies, as part of a large exchange system ultimately driven by profits. The United States has established itself as the only psychology Superpower.. Psychology continues to be exported from the U.S. to the rest of the world, with little or no serious attention given to the appropriateness of what is being exported-Similarly, Third World psychologists are trained in the U.S. and in other Western countries, without regard to the question of the appropriateness of their training. Indeed, the continued exportation ... and inappropriately trained personnel from Western to Third World societies strengthens ties of dependency and continues exploitative traditions established through colonialism” (1995, pp. 53-54, italics ours).*

From what has been said so far it should be clearly appreciated that without some form of adaptation, Western psychology can be harmful or at best it may be of no use to us and to our students. But if we accept adaptation, does this necessarily mean Islamization? Yes, indeed. Western psychology itself proclaims that human behavior is the result of the interaction of three major components: the biological, the psychological and the socio-cultural. Anyone who cannot see the very great influence of Islam as a religion and a way of life in shaping the psychological and socio-cultural aspects of a Muslim is a myopic who suffers from tunnel vision. In an often quoted research by Professor Shiabuddin Moghni (I do not have the reference)which he conducted during a sabbatical in Harvard University, he

has shown clearly how Islam as a worldview and way of life has molded the modal personality of the Muslim Ummah into a number of dominant personality traits or attributes which clearly differentiate them from other nations.

The main attribute or trait is the spiritual dimension. Faith in Allah Ta'ala and the belief that He is the Creator and sustainer of this universe from the tiniest sub-atomic particle to the greatest galaxy in the heavens. He knows the secrets in the hearts of men and knows what is beneath the secrets (subconscious). Everything that happens to man must have ahimah or Divine Wisdom behind it. There is life after this life and man is accountable for whatever he had done during his brief stay on earth. These beliefs would make it necessary for any psychologist working with Muslim subjects to Islamize his work. Western psychology denies the soul in all its perspectives, whether they are behavioristic, psychoanalytic, humanistic, biological or cognitive. They are all erected on a secular worldview. From this perspective it would not be of much help to Muslims who believe in God and in the spiritual component in their own creation.

Whenever a Muslim psychologist taps these spiritual aspects in his patients or counseled, he would be rewarded with great successes in his work. During my thirty years of psychotherapeutic practice, I was, with the Grace of Allah, able to treat many patients through Islamic therapy when other secular and drug therapies have failed to bring them relief and tranquillity. In the Khartoum North Clinic for Nervous Disorders, where I served as a senior psychologist, most of the patients referred to me were the 'rejects' who failed to get any benefit from psychiatric drugs, ECT and other therapies. Whenever I combined my behavior and cognitive therapy with Islamic teachings and spiritual sentiments the improvement in my patients was beyond my expectations.

Before I conclude this section, I feel I must report an aspect of much optimism to me. I am very happy to state that the new generation of Muslim psychologists that I have met in conferences in different parts of the world, whether in the Arab world, South East Asia, Pakistan, South Africa, Europe, Australia and America are all very clearly seeing the need for Islamizing their profession. They can clearly see the "why" of Islamization but they also want to know about the "how". Those whom I have not met or discussed the issue with, continue to write to me. The sentences that repeat themselves in almost all their letters are that, "I have completed my higher degree in psychology but I find that my Western specialization is not helping me with my Muslim subjects. I have read your little book, "The dilemma of Muslim psychologists" and your recent book on contemplation. They were an eye opener to me. But do you know of any other books that specifically teach me how to deal with Muslim clients? Please advise me about a university or institute where I can be trained in this field. I am also happy to report that the number of young Muslim psychologists from different parts of the world who ask me to be their advisor or co-advisor in writing their masters or Ph.D. degrees is beyond my time and ability.

### **The "what" of the Islamization of Western psychology:**

Now that we have dealt with why we should Islamize we come to what parts of Western psychology we need to urgently Islamize and what parts we do not need to Islamize. We start first by asking ourselves whether psychology is really a science in the

precise meaning of the term and hence needs no Islamization or is it a complex mixture of philosophy, pseudo knowledge, art and a few pockets of exact sciences? I want to spend some time on this issue since I have been listening to much criticism of Islamization on the grounds that psychology is a science, and a science is neutral and has nothing to do with religion. Some of us, Arab and Muslim psychologists, may still be playing the old record of telling our students that psychology is a science because it uses the scientific method in arriving at its theories and practices, and that a science is really a science not because its specialists push buttons or use elaborate equipment; a science is simply a science because its subject matter is derived from empirical observation. I first heard this statement in 1953 from my American lecturer in my first course of general psychology (201) in the American University of Beirut and then I got tired of hearing it again and again with every course in psychology and the social sciences. Most Western psychologists however have by now stopped playing this overused record, but many of our colleagues are still playing it.

We must be aware of the fact that all the so called “exact sciences” such as chemistry and physics have developed so vastly because they deal with variables that can be strictly controlled. Compare in this respect between the density and exact temperature of metals, human physical disorders which are caused by specific chromosomal aberrations, or the alkalinity of liquids, compare them with some of the psychological variables we deal with like human anxiety, introversion, arousal or love. Behavior and mental processes, the claimed territory of modern psychology, are so complex that psychologists do not even agree about precise definitions for them. Secondly, sciences like physics and chemistry and even biology, because of their materialistic nature and the simplicity of their variables could develop units that facilitated a logical structure of their disciplines and comparatively much more exact methods and artifacts of measurements. It also enabled these sciences to develop holistic all embracing theories such as relativity in physics and evolution in biology. Without units like the atom in chemistry and physics, the cell in biology and the gene in genetics these sciences would not have exploded with creative discoveries and dazzling inventions that completely changed our lives.

These fundamental aspects which underlie any real science have provided these disciplines with the means to logically arrange their subject matter in a homogenous hierarchical manner in which the facts and theories of one chapter of a textbook leads logically to the next. The reader cannot comprehend the material in chapter 2 without first understanding the content of chapter 1. For example, all books on physiology start with the cell; a group of similar cells make a tissue; a number of tissues form an organ; and several organs responsible for a similar function are classified as a system. The textbook runs smoothly from chapter to chapter as if it were a book of Euclidean geometry.

As psychologists we must confess that we do not possess and cannot possess such fundamental concepts, particularly when we are dealing with human beings. Listen to Denmark and Eisenburg in their very recent study in *World Psychology* (1995):

*“It is simply unfair to place upon psychology the burden of adhering to the same scientific guidelines as, say, physics or chemistry. Psychology deals with people, and unlike the laws of matter which remains basically consistent, people are inconsistent almost by definition. The human mind is the ultimate confounding variable—no matter how subjects cooperate with their experimenter, control over a psychological experiment is severely limited” (p.32).*

Accordingly, we should not fool ourselves by saying that we are a new science and that it is a matter of time before such units of behavior can be 'discovered'. Western psychologists have wasted much time looking for such units and have finally given up the useless search.

We must confess as psychologists that because of the lack of these fundamental underlying concepts and the nature of our object of study, we cannot have a holistic general grand theory. We have a number of competing theories and practices non of which can produce the evidence that convinces other competing perspectives about the correctness of its broad claims. That is why we may find our students at times more confused when they graduate from us than when they first registered in our departments. Thomas Kuhn (1970), the famous author of *The structure of scientific revolutions* and the philosopher who popularized the concept of "paradigm" is quoted by Marx and Hillix (1979, p.7) to have stated that "developed sciences had paradigms but psychology didn't ". In developed sciences a "paradigm shift" results in new paradigms overthrowing and replacing old ones; in psychology and other social sciences new paradigms, if we can call them so, generate much enthusiasm and lots of followers, but old ones continue to survive and sometimes to flourish again after the passage of a few years. That is why contemporary philosophers of psychology are already voicing their dissatisfaction with psychology's aping of pure sciences and its inability to help solve human problems. Sigmund Koch who calls the aping of psychology to Newtonian physics as "The idolatry of science that is characteristic of our age" goes on to bitterly state:

*Whether a 'science' or any kind of coherent discipline devoted to the empirical study of man, psychology has been misconceived. Though a massive hundred-year effort to erect a discipline given to the positive study of man has here and there turned up a germane fact, or thrown off a spark of insight,...their sum-total over time is overwhelmingly counterbalanced by the harvest of pseudo-knowledge... I should like to ask what is the meaning of the one hundred-year history of that endeavour since its formal institutionalisation as 'science' "(in Brown, 1974, pp. 4- 6).*

Because of this natural confusion in our specialization, the subject matter of our discipline cannot be arranged in any logical order. Look at any textbook on general psychology and you will find that each chapter is a self contained unit which is not built on any previous material and at times it has no dependency relation with other chapters except the fact that it discusses a very different aspect of human or animal behavior or even that it is simply bound up in the same cover of the textbook. The student can start with any chapter and understand its content without necessarily referring to earlier material.

Accordingly one would find different authors following very divergent arrangements of subject matter in their textbooks. As a young lecturer in psychology I have always found that to start with biological psychology and statistics may dishearten the Arts students. Abnormal and social behavior, though they may be the last chapters of the textbook, can create more interest. Each lecturer has his way in dealing with this problem. That is why some psychologists call their discipline a 'salad'. I prefer to call it a *passer Malam* since a salad can be thought of in terms of one classification; vegetables. Different components of salad have a number of common characteristics other than the fact that they are vegetables. They are rich in vitamins but not in calories and their water content is high; they

all aid digestion by providing roughage and they have some similarity in their taste. But in a pasar malam or a Malaysian night market, you cannot group the commodities under any one label. Clocks next to mutton and cakes next to undershirts. The only thing in common between them are that they are in the same wide open space of the market and they are all for sale ! In this psychological *pasar malam* one psychologist may specialize in social psychology and actually be very familiar with the works of sociologists in the sociology department next door but cannot understand any thing in the paper written by a colleague in his own department who has conducted a study on, say, " The medial-temporal-lesions and retrograde amnesia in monkeys" or "the influence of deoxyribonucleic acid on mating behavior in rats! ". The social psychologist may send his research to a journal in psychology, but it may also be published in a journal of sociology or even anthropology while his colleague, the specialist in behavior genetics or physiological psychologist, may publish in journals of psychology or pure genetics or physiology. A third member of the department of psychology is a statistician who is not interested in biology or social psychology, or for that matter, any other branch other than statistical psychology, but both of them desperately need his help in planning and executing their experimental studies. To both of them, terms like factor analysis and chi-square are as clear as Chinese to Arabs.

Still, other branches of psychology are more of philosophy and armchair speculations than any social science. Their theories and hypotheses cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed by any empirical observation and hence they are as far away from science as east from west. Take for example the whole field of psychoanalysis and its vague concepts such as "libido", "oedipal conflict", castration and "penis envy". I do not like to waste space in this paper to discuss the unscientific nature of psychoanalysis since I have already done so in a previous publication (Badri, 1978). I will only mention that we are told now by Thornton (1983) the author of the widely read book, *Freud and cocaine: the Freudian fallacy*, that during the entire period in which Freud wrote his major theories he was miserably addicted to cocaine. Much of the sexual stuff which we teach to our students as 'science' is in fact the incoherent narration of an ingenious drug addict !

Thus what is really "exact science" in psychology is in fact mostly limited to the "no man's land" with other pure sciences such as biochemistry, neurology, physiology, genetics and pharmacology. When these sciences are combined with psychology, we get disciplines like physiological psychology, neuropsychology, behavior genetics and psychopharmacology. Some aspects of clinical and medical psychology borrow from medicine and psychiatry. When we study psychology or teach it to our students we tend to mix up the exact sciences in psychology with philosophical issues and culturally bound aspects of Western modernity and the American way of life. Muslim psychologists, when teaching or training their students do not differentiate between scientific material concerning behavior genetics and brain neurotransmitters and theories in humanistic psychology and psychoanalysis. Some of them do not even care to do so.

In this respect psychology as a diffused discipline or a *pasar malam* is very much like Greek philosophy in the time of the great Muslim scholar Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. It was a conglomerate of sciences such as astronomy, physics, biology and mathematics, mixed up with metaphysics, logic, Greek mythology and theology, and other areas of philosophy such as epistemology and ethics. In Islamizing this, Ghazali meticulously differentiated in his *al-*

*Mungith rinal dalal* between the pure sciences and abstract philosophy such as logic, astronomy and physiology, and those areas based on Greek mythology and religiously deviant theology. The first group, al-Ghazali said, need not be Islamized at all since it has nothing that directly harm or support Islamic faith. It is the second that should be evaluated and its fallacies exposed from the Islamic point of view. He also pointed to the danger of confusing Muslim minds when these two groups of knowledge are not differentiated. He said that some people who read about the great achievements of the Greeks in astronomy and in predicting eclipses, may conclude that all of their deviant thought in their theology must also be of the same high standard. And that an Islamic “fanatic” who reads Greek theological aspects of philosophy may make a hasty generalization of condemning all Greek philosophy as Kufr. Such a person, without knowing it, may do a lot of damage to the religion he thinks he is defending. People who knew the contributions of philosophy to science and who think that this person represents the Islamic point of view may accuse Islam itself of ignorance and rigid thought. It is of interest to note that even today there are Muslim authors who attack psychology and other Western humanities as anti-Islamic and openly advise that their teaching should be prohibited and deleted from university curricula. I believe what Ghazali suggested centuries ago is probably the best approach in deciding what to Islamize and what to accept as it is in modern Western psychology. We do not need to Islamize psychophysics or the physiology of sight and hearing and the anatomy of the eye and ear. Nor do we need to Islamize studies about the role of the brain neurotransmitter serotonin in our sleep behavior and in adjusting our body clock, the role of the hormone noradrenalin in setting our energy level nor the influence of caffeine, alcohol or heroine on the human nervous system. We do not need to develop our own Islamic statistical psychology or to raise an ethical battle against neutral theories of learning. Such areas, as I said are “no man’s land” between psychology and other exact sciences. But when we come to areas such as the theories of personality, abnormal psychology, the whole area of humanistic psychology and its reliance on existential philosophy, psychoanalysis and most of the schools of psychotherapy and cultural psychology we find that without Islamization, whether we know it or not, we would be accepting and teaching anti-Islamic material based on a quasi-religion of secular humanism. I am using the term quasi-religion to describe the secular humanism of Western modernity because secularism can be an anti-religious religion. I have more to say about this in the next section.

Other than the “no man’s” branches of pure science and the fields obviously influenced by modernity’s secular worldview and the American and Western ways of life, there is a highly neutral big area in Western psychology that can easily be adapted to Muslims and subjects of third world countries. For example, the whole area of psychological testing with its intelligence and achievement tests, personality inventories and even some projective techniques that are not based on psychoanalytic theory. Some of the tests used in psychology labs such as those measuring memory, reaction time of dexterity do not even require much adaptation.

Thus we do not need to Islamize the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale or the Binet, we need to adapt them and to standardize them by develop suitable norms for our peoples. We need to understand the difference between adaptation and Islamization. All forms of Islamization are adaptations that necessarily include ideological aspects; however adaptations are only changes to Western psychological material to make it more suitable for

other cultures. All forms of Islamization are adaptations but not every adaptation an Islamization.

Before I conclude this issue of Islamic adaptation, I must draw the attention of the readers to beware of the misuse of biology and other exact sciences by Western secularization in propagating its ethical message. I have discussed this in some detail in my book *The AIDS crisis: a natural product of modernity's sexual revolution*. For example, the Western media created a loud hullabaloo about the discovery that the cells of the hypothalamus in the brains of homosexuals were found to be different from those of heterosexuals or that a gene for homosexuality has been found. Unbiased researchers falsified all of these 'discoveries', but the media and some textbooks in our field fail to report the falsification giving the naive readers the wrong impression that science has 'proved' that homosexuality is inherited. This can confuse Muslim young learners. They would wonder how can God punish people for something He has Created in them?! Thus when deciding on what to Islamize the Muslim scholar should not forget to scrutinize material based on exact sciences.

In concluding this section on what to Islamize, it should be obvious to the reader that we need to Islamize only the areas influenced by Western secularism and its ungodly worldview and its deviant conceptions about the nature of man. We are not after an Islamization of everything in psychology or the Western social sciences. I believe that much confusion has been eclipsing the face of Islamization because of putting up the misleading slogan of "The Islamization of knowledge". No one can claim to Islamize knowledge in its vast unrestricted form since much of knowledge is already Islamized. Knowledge from the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of our Blessed Prophet (PBUH) is not only already Islamized, but without it there would be no Islam.

Some of my friends who defend the slogan of the Islamization of knowledge say that from the beginning they had a vision of not limiting their Islamization to secular Western knowledge. They had also aimed at the Islamization of Fiqh and Islamic jurisprudence that was originally developed for Muslim societies of the past centuries thus failing to be of help in solving the modern problems of contemporary Muslims. To my mind this kind of argument fails to differentiate between Islamization and *ijtihad or tajdid*. The jurisprudence applied in early Muslim societies was Islamic and is still Islamic. If certain aspects of it need modernization or adaptation, this would not rob it of its Islamic nature. I believe that because of this confusion a great Islamic Institution such as IIU which devoted itself to Islamization, is not yet able to give its faculty a clear understanding of this blessed endeavor or to produce good Islamized textbooks in the area of the social sciences.

### **The "how" of the Islamization of Western psychology:**

To properly Islamize, the Muslim scholar should clearly appreciate the fact that modern psychology and other social sciences are progenies of the new secular worldview of Western modernity. Psychology in particular is the discipline that has given and continues to give the new worldview its justification and the 'priesthood' of counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists who preach the doctrines of the new "faith". Muslim Islamizers should know that no human society, ancient or modern, can or could have existed without a common

worldview uniting the majority of its population with respect to major philosophical or religious issues that give meaning to their very existence. These are critical questions concerning the nature of man, where he has come from and where he is going to. Questions relating to the nature of life in this world and whether there is life after death. Issues about the universe, how it has come to exist, who is sustaining it and whether it is everlasting or will perish one day. These are some of the momentous issues that form the worldview of all societies and govern their ideology and ethical practices.

To ask such central questions is deeply rooted in the human fitrah that God has Created in man's nature so that he would seek Him and believe in Him, if he chooses to do so and live happily in this world and the Hereafter, or to reject Him and become a slave of his shahawat and die in agony and disbelief. Thus no human culture can avoid dealing with such major issues. In fact, looking for answers to such philosophical questions starts very early in the life of humans in all lands and cultures. Prompted by this deep-rooted fitrah four-year-olds all over the world surprise and amuse their parents with such questions which parents, particularly in pagan and religiously deviant cultures often can find no satisfactory replies for.

To laymen and even to many scholars the term "religion" refers only to a system of beliefs leading to the worshipping of a supernatural omnipotent being. Depending on one's attitude, people who staunchly adhere to their beliefs with strong devotion may be described as pious, devout, fanatic or even rigid and unthinking. However, this would restrict the definition to the major historical religions. I believe that, from at least the psychological point of view, the term should have been generalized to include any system of beliefs, spiritual or otherwise, that gives its devoted followers a worldview or a semi-religion. Worldviews that answer all the critical questions related to human life to their followers, offer them meaning for their existence and give them a strong conviction that their way of life is the only right one can act as substitute religions.

From this perspective, secular movements such as nationalism, Marxism and secularism can be viewed as 'religions' that enthrall its 'pious' followers to worship their race or their ideology or to worship science and technology or even to worship themselves and their material pleasures. Indeed, just as wars and conflicts broke out in the name of historical religions, the fanatics and devotees in the name of these quasi-religions waged similar hostilities and armed conflicts. So it is possible for a person or a group to be religiously irreligious!

It is only within such a conception of Western secularism that we can understand the background philosophy of most theories and practices of modern psychology. They are motivated by a new secular 'religion' that is now strongly preaching its message to 'convert' the whole world to adopt its ideology and its ethical standards. In a nutshell, this is what ethical globalization is all about. To appreciate the influence of this secular religion on its adherents one can refer to the conflict and heated arguments in United Nations Conferences such as the population conference in Cairo, the China women's conference and the recent UN conference on AIDS. All these meetings witnessed fighting and religious arguments between Muslim and Catholic delegates as opposed to the fanatics of secular

humanism who sought to 'liberate' people from the 'negative' influence of religion and family traditions in order to accept the new ethics of globalization.

In this new quasi-religion of secular humanism the earlier image of man as a chosen creature bestowed with a Godly spirit has been totally reversed. Historically, the extreme atrocities of the Catholic Church with its antagonistic stand against science and scientists, its inquisitions and burning of millions of innocent women as witches have been met with retaliatory extreme animosity towards religion. Thus the new picture of the modern Western man in the age of science has been transfigured into two seemingly different but really complimentary forms. One conception demotes man to the level of animals, the other bestow on him the attributes of a god.

The secular 'message' of denying the soul had its 'prophets' who helped Western modernity to do away with the difference between man and other animals. Darwin's evolution, Freud's psychoanalysis, Watson's behaviorism, Konrad Lorenz's ethology and the sociobiology of Desmond Morris are some of the major contributions in this endeavor. Modern social sciences have also played an important role in strengthening the new faith of 'animalizing' man. The denial of the soul has naturally led to the denial of three other essential aspects concerning the religious image of man. That he is responsible to God for his moral and religious duties in this world and that accordingly he has to have a free will and that there is life after this life for the final judgement. Finally, being an animal without a soul has helped to popularize the mechanistic conception of man. This was first postulated by the famous French philosopher Descartes and has since had its great influence on the contemporary Western conception of man. The whole school of behaviorism with its S-R psychology is clearly influenced by this mechanistic picture of man.

What was the outcome of all that? The outcome was a denial of God Himself or at least rendering Him a powerless being. This has naturally led Western secularism to bestow man with the Divine responsibilities which previously belonged to God. Behaviorism and other social sciences have paved the way for secularization by strongly confirming that man's ethical behavior is formulated by his environment and culture. And since there are many different cultures in this world with various ethical standards, the issue of following any ethical code as the true one with a capital "T" has been psychologically rejected, or at least greatly diluted.

In this ungodly milieu of ethical relativism, the secular society is given the authority to decide on its own moral code and to use man-made laws to guarantee that its citizens are socially responsible. Man was thus crowned as the sole owner of his own life and body. He is free to do whatever he wants with them. To marry a person with his own sex, to change his sex and amputate his sex organs, change his God-given features with plastic surgery, kill himself or assist others to end their life. Thus I do not think it is possible to Islamize without an earnest study of the history and philosophy of Western psychology. When the edifice of this secular humanism is exposed and demolished and an Islamic conception about man and his existence is erected on its ruins the "how" of Islamization would be easily fulfilled. The Islamizer would then develop a heightened sense and clarity of vision by which he can differentiate between the secular, the neutral and the very useful after adaptation.

This in fact is what Western psychologists are doing all the time. They are more faithful to their secularism than some Muslim psychologists to Islam ! They have the “secular insight” which enables them to adopt and adapt useful aspects in some religious practices and then secularize their spiritual background by devising substitute secular theories. The useful techniques of meditation, which is actually related to Eastern religions is now widely used in the West as a secular practice of transcendental meditation (T.M.). The therapeutic practice has been robbed of its spiritual component and its mantra to become an American psychotherapeutic technique.

Even Freud himself, to my mind, had done exactly the same procedure in developing his psychoanalytic therapy. He found that troubled emotionally disturbed and guilty sinners were greatly helped by confessions they made to a warm friendly and understanding priest who allowed them to ‘ventilate’ and who guarded their secrets and relieved their suffering by using spiritual and religious consolation. The confessions were generally tearful and associated with cathartic emotional release, so the ‘sessions’ took place in a small isolated part of the church known as a confessional. The confessor, the priest who hears the confessions, listens attentively and contemplatively without looking at the confessing person. When the sinner finishes, the priest would now use his spiritual methods to ‘heal’ the suffering of the troubled person. I believe that he has copied exactly the same model, but instead of a spiritual and religious help Freud subjected the emotionally disturbed to secular psychoanalytic theory. Islamizers of Western psychology should have the Islamic commitment and the self confidence to use the same approach.

But can we as Arab and Muslim psychologists carry out the burden of Islamization the way Westerners work for secularization? I believe now that, had it not been for their lack of knowledge in Islam itself, Western psychologists who convert to Islam can do a much better job in this field than we who were born Muslims. Naturally they have better understanding of their culture, and they are up-to-date with all the new theories and fads in psychology since they are produced in their native land. More importantly, the kind of education they receive since early childhood encourages them to be creative and critical. They would accordingly have no feelings of conscious or unconscious inferiority when critiquing big names and central theories in their specialization. That is why, when some Western psychologists turn to “spiritualism”, however deviant their beliefs may actually be, they write in such a convincing and forceful manner that their books become best sellers even in their secular countries. Take for example the books written by Scott Peck, particularly *The road less traveled: A new psychology of love, traditional values and spiritual growth* that made publishing history by being in the New York Times best selling list for a record period of ten years. Or read the works of Herbert Benson, especially his books, *Beyond the relaxation response* and *Timeless healing*. So I believe now that much service can be rendered to the Islamization of psychology if native Muslim psychologists can, with their knowledge of the religion, work with Western Muslim converts. This can be one of the most successful “hows” of Islamization.

One final point in this section on the “how” of Islamization is the difference between what I call *wajib* or *fardu’ain* Islamization and *mustahab* or *nafilah* Islamization. In the *wajib* obligatory Islamization, we Islamize because if we do not our clients will either get very little benefit or no use out of our intervention or they may even end up worse than

their condition before they came to see us. Whether we believe in Islam as a religion and a worldview or not, we have to know the Muslims we are helping and take their beliefs into consideration.

One of my popular stories that can illustrate this concerns an honest broad-minded European psychiatrist, Dr. Karl Schmidt, who was, or may still be, practicing in Brunei. He read a valuable paper on his innovated techniques of treating drug and alcohol addicts in Brunei. The paper was read in Amman, Jordan, in 1987 in the Third Pan Arab Congress on Psychiatry sponsored by the Association of Arab Psychiatrists. He took a group of addicts to a camp outside the city and subjected them to a daily rigorous program of physical training and concentrated talks and video programs. The program started at dawn and finished at bed time and was heavily saturated with Islamic activities involving prayers, talks and video shows. After his lecture, one Muslim Arab psychiatrist, who was one of those who were more “royal than the king”, asked the European psychiatrist mockingly, “How can you, as a trained scientist, use religious activities in such a therapeutic endeavor? How can you mix religion with science?” The Western psychiatrist told the Muslim ‘scientist’ that he had tried all the methods and practices that he had learned in England but they have failed to change these Muslim addicts and that the rate of relapses in those who improved was astounding. “When I introduced the Islamically oriented activities, they healed much more patients and the relapse rate was much less”. Then he continued to explain, “I am not a Muslim. I am a Christian but since Islamically oriented therapies work better for Muslims than secular ones, one should use them whether one believes in Islam or not “.

This is a *wajib Islamization*. Its aim is simply to benefit from knowledge about the psychology of Muslims in executing their psychological intervention. The *mustahab* or supererogatory or favored Islamization on the other hand is practiced by committed Muslim psychologists. They are the professionals who have strong faith and love of Allah Ta’ala and his Prophet (PBUH) and whose objective is not only to benefit their clients from their expertise but also to make them better Muslims. They may train them to practice *Qiyamulail* or they may read Qur’an to them as a form of Rukiah or do some other Islamically oriented interventions with what they have learned from modern psychological theory and practices. Such psychologists would look at their practice as a form of blessed worshipping of God.

I believe that much of the confusion concerning Islamization is caused by mixing up these two approaches that I may call Islamization “A” for the *wajib* and Islamization “B” for the *mustahab*. When psychologists who are either uncommitted to Islam itself or who do not believe in it as a religion listen to Islamically devoted psychologists enthusiastically speaking along the lines of Islamization “B”, they would feel confused and embarrassed. They get the impression that they are being coerced into changing their beliefs. They may not openly refuse but they may sabotage the whole project. On the other hand many scholars devoted to Islamization “B”, may be feeling that diluting the process of Islamization to the study of the psychology of Muslims is unacceptable. They may even criticize those working for Islamization “A” as compromisers and Westernized!

## The “who” of the Islamization of Western psychology:

Now we come to our last section of the paper in which I would like to mention some of the most important characteristics of the Islamizer of psychology. I have already mentioned this in a paper titled, *The use and abuse of human sciences in Muslim countries*, published as a separate by IIU Press in 1992. I wrote a few pages about this very issue with the sub-title, “**Islamizing the Islamizer**”, which at the time became a catch phrase. I believe that very few people in the audience have copies of this paper and I feel that these pages are quite pertinent for what I want to say about the “who” of Islamization and so I will reproduce them hereunder with some adaptations:

The most important quality of the Islamizer is his or her sincerity. The depth of Islamic faith and spiritual motivation are the bedrock for this blessed task. Some of our contemporary pioneer Muslim scholars in the field of Islamization stress and at times over-stress intellectualization as the major attribute of an Islamizer. This to my mind is not fully justified. A half-baked, half-hearted intellectual who still harbors remnants of pride about being an academician or the one who had become too ‘scientific’ to offer a strong Islamic statement without pedantically philosophizing it would not be productive in this field in spite of his or her recognized contributions in their Western specialty.

On the other hand, a devout and selfless Muslim scholar, who is not as learned in social science as the former, may at times offer a much better and lasting contribution to Islamization. Indeed, the first generation of the real pioneers of Islamization include names like Abul-Al’la al-Mawdudi, Sayid Qutb, Malik Ben Nabi and Said Nursi. Though non of them was a noted social scientist, their names continue to shine like unfailing light and their literature reprinted for hundreds of times in many languages to continue its influence on the Muslim social scientists and the laity.

Some of their works and their methodologies may be criticized today by some of our colleagues. This is probably unfair and ungrateful. One cannot judge their original literature which was written in some cases more than 50 years ago with today’s assessment norms. Some of those who level unsympathetic criticism at them are the very ones who benefited from their unequalled contributions as young students, to later climb the stairs of Islamically oriented expertise in their fields. For many years their works were the only sources on the Islamization of psychology, education and other social sciences.

When I stress the importance of sincerity, deep faith and *taqwa* I obviously do not wish to belittle the weight of high specialization and intellectual endeavor. The contributions of gifted Islamic giants like Mawdudi and Qutb is the very rare exception and never the rule. They are like al-Muhasibi, al-Ghazali and ibniQayyim whose ideas even today, after the lapse of centuries, can guide Muslim psychologists and Islamizers. These are the selected beloved slaves of God who are Bestowed with Divine knowledge.

As for the rest of us sinners, there is no substitute for a well grounded postgraduate specialization in our selected Western science. It is important that the field of Islamization should not be the dustbin of those who failed to attain academic excellence in their

disciplines. Enthusiastic Islamic rhetoric about Islamizing psychology from a colleague with shaky academic credentials may only bring about scorn and refusal from his associates.

It is of interest to mention that in his *Almungith minaldalal*, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali strongly stresses this very point. He says that anyone who wants to expose the deviance and contradictions in any science, should first study that science until he becomes better than those who are considered experts in it and comes to know more about its secrets than them. It is only then, Ghazali says, that scholars and laity can appreciate his criticism. So before he criticized Greek philosophy, al-Ghazali first studied it meticulously and wrote his famous book *Maqasid al falasifah* . After he received recognition as the leading Muslim philosopher of his time, he authored his famous book, *Tahafut al-Falasifah* in which he leveled his uncompromising attack on them. This then should be the second attribute of the Islamizer of psychology.

The third quality needs no discussion. The Islamizer should definitely be well read in Islam as a religion and a worldview. This would require him or her to study the relevant material from Qur'an and its tafsir, the Sunah and Blessed Hadith, some aspects of Islamic Fiqh particularly those related to family law, and to relate this to the works of early Muslim scholars and thinkers particularly in issues related to psychology.

A fourth quality is that the Islamizer should be movement oriented and down to earth in his Islamic studies. He should view Islam as a dynamic worldview playing its forceful role in the psyche of the individual and the cultural patterns of the whole society. Without this cogent approach the Islamization process may be an aloof academic exercise. I can generally tell with great accuracy whether an Islamization material is written by a movement oriented or an 'ivory tower' social scientist or psychologist. The former can readily see the danger of secular Western knowledge and abuse to the ideology of Muslim youth. He can easily identify himself with them to understand the way they think and can thus see where the secular danger can be damaging. He can then propose the counteraction in real life experiences. He writes simply and clearly and can readily see the practical use of his Western specialization in helping Muslims. The latter tends to engage in detailed criticisms of Western abstract theories from philosophical or scientific points of view, punctuating his hairsplitting discourse with a few rare Islamic references. He tends to use much jargon and difficult terms, proving to himself and others his 'scientific rigor' and his infinite store of unfamiliar vocabulary.

The fifth item concerns the image of the Islamizer about himself and his abilities. It is sad to see many intelligent and highly trained Muslim psychologists parroting ethnocentric and absurd Western theories, year after year, to their students without seriously thinking about developing their own Islamic theoretical framework. It is unfortunate that the major contribution of most Arab and Muslim psychologists is the translation of Western psychology textbooks or Western psychological tests. When textbooks are supposed to be authored, they are generally not different from those that are translated. I have seen many books supposedly authored by Arab psychologists that are translated almost word for word from a Western source. At times this renders the Arabic style difficult and incomprehensible. You have to read the English text to know what the Arab psychologist wanted to say !

Translated psychological tests also exhibit this phenomenon of unthinking copying. I know of one psychologist who translated the Eysenck Personality Inventory for subjects in a Muslim country known for its very hot climate. As is known, the EPI is a test that measures neuroticism and introversion. It is composed of some 60 questions to be answered by a "yes" or "no". For his English subjects living in foggy cold England, Eysenck put the question, "Do you sweat a lot?" to measure emotionality. Our Muslim psychologist translated the question as it is. In his very hot country both psychologist and subjects are wet with profuse sweating all the time!

Another Arab psychologist who translated the MMPI to Saudi subjects, put the same question used by the authors of the test to detect the lie factor. If you ask an American whether he observes the rules of etiquette when eating alone in the house the way he observes them when he is eating out and he says "yes" then most probably he is telling a lie. At home he may pick up a piece of roast beef from the refrigerator with his fingers, in the restaurant he will politely use his fork and knife. A Saudi on the other would use his fingers whether he is at home or in a restaurant. If he says "yes" to this question he is telling the truth but the tester will consider it a lie.

These are minor examples, but what I am sad about is that I have lived with big names in Western psychology such as Wolpe in the States and Vic Meyer, Miller Mair, Arther Crisp, Meredith and Philip Vernon in the UK. I have also lived and known big names in psychology in the Muslim world such Abdal Aziz al-Kausy, Shihabudin Mughni, Afaq Ansari, Abu Hatab, Uthman and Raffa'i. Most of the Westerners were definitely less impressive to me than the Easterners. I wonder why then our contribution is far less than our abilities. None of us has come up with an Islamically oriented theory or a new famous test or a new kind of psychological therapy that excels and becomes the therapy of choice in all parts of the Muslim world? I do not think the main reason is that we are very busy or we lack facilities. I believe that the reason is lack self confidence and the courage to come up with something new.