

Paper Title: Phenomenology and the Structure of Knowledge in the Qur'an
Author(s): Abu-Hamdiyyah, Mohammad
Institutional Affiliation(s): Retired, Former Professor of Chemistry, University of Kuwait

This paper was prepared for "Science and Religion: Global Perspectives", June 4-8, 2005, in Philadelphia, PA, USA, a program of the Metanexus Institute (www.metanexus.net).

Abstract:

In our previous work (*The Qur'an, An Introduction*; Routledge, London, 2000) the development of Religion in the East Mediterranean region was briefly reviewed and a fresh reading of the Qur'anic discourse was presented from a modern perspective. In this study we stress the phenomenological aspects of and the structure of knowledge in the Qur'anic discourse.

Human beings, according to the Qur'anic discourse, find themselves embedded in this world and already initiated with the learning process, which allows them to proceed along the way of life's journey. This is the empirical fact of existence and the starting point for the inquiry into the meaning and purpose of life. However, human beings are reminded that when they are pursuing knowledge of this world not to forget that they are looking at things of this world from the inside of the system and not from the outside, as they are not direct witnesses (observers) to the creation of the system (the universe) nor of themselves, who form part of this system (18:51). Nevertheless they are commanded to go about and investigate and learn how the creation was started (29:20).

They are told that the act of learning is a gift from God, 'who taught the human being what he knew not' (96:5). This act has two components: the human being (the receiver), with God's spirit (32:9), the divine gift of self-reflective consciousness (76:2), being the active ingredient in her/him, which is part and parcel of the fully developed human being; the other component being the things in the world of the human being (the emitters), which are pervaded with God's light (24:35). The created or naturally available things are the phenomena, what the Qur'an calls the signs of God, which have been provided for human beings to make use of in this life, in order to exist and light their way. The act of making 'use of a thing' gains the human being a unit of experience (a revelation) and in this process, the 'thing' in question becomes clearer to the human being, more understood, unveiling part of its reality. The bit of light that enlightens us on gaining a new experience is God's which was unconcealed in the act of learning.

The above constitutes the basic structure of human cognition (revelation) and this may be pictured as resulting from an overlap of two waves arising from two fields, one from the human being the other from the 'thing', which is being made use of. This is analogous to tying two ends of two strings together, one from the human being the other from the 'thing'. This process of tying-up, or connecting and confining, is ubiquitously used in the Qur'an to represent the resultant activity of perception and cognition, as a result of the human being's intentional interaction with the surroundings, and may be looked upon as the basis of 'reason'. This process applies also to all revelations (new experiences, discoveries) relating elementary units of

experiences (observations) to each other or to more complex relationships that provide us larger overall pictures (concepts) we conceive to represent our world of experience.

The first revelatory step in the process of generating human knowledge starts with the ability of human beings to give names to things they make use of (2:31), in other words the generation of language or speech (55:4), through which experiences in life are communicated to other human beings. Coupled with this ability of naming things they make use of, is the revelatory ability to count these things and the consequent generation of all other manipulations like addition and so on. The ability to weigh and measure (the dimensions of) things using convenient arbitrary standards at hand and naming them as well as estimating the times of happenings of events utilising shade lengths or estimates, positions of the sun and sunrise and sun set and so on, were all revelatory acts. It is clear from the above that Knowledge results from the accumulation of experiences obtained by actively interacting with and interrogating some parts of nature which interest or concern the human being and then making a mental picture of the experiences gained. This is the reason the Qur'an calls nature (the world which we are in and are part of, in all its manifestations) *the world of witnessing*, wherein lie all the signs of God and hence all the active information needed to light our way. This is the basis of empirical knowledge and it is emphasised that it is also the only way to gain faith to keep us on the move and learning, thus strengthening our initial belief. This is not to prove the existence of God, which is impossible by definition, but to lead humans towards the ultimate truth and reality as is proclaimed in (41:53).

Biography:

Mohammad Abu-Hamdiyyah was born in 1930 in Palestine. He became a US citizen in 1968. He earned a BSc Chemistry (Honours) summa cum laude at the University of Wales UK in 1957. He served as a Pre-Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Southern California from 1961-65 earning his Ph.D in 1965. He then worked as a Research Chemist at Dupont in the Pioneering Research Lab in Wilmington, Delaware, from 1965-68. From there he became Professor of Chemistry in the College of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, serving from 1968-73. He also served as Professor of Chemistry at the University of Kuwait from 1973-1990. Since 1990, Abu-Hamdiyyah has been living in retirement in England and working on the Semitic Scriptures and the relationship of Science to Religion.

Paper Text:

The Phenomenological Aspects of the Qur'anic Discourse

The Qur'anic discourse gives a clear, unambiguous and explicit presentation of the purpose of life for mankind in this world. This includes God's projection of having the human being as His successor (tenant) upon earth in this life with full responsibility for a specific aim and purpose, namely, service and competition in doing good works. That is the human being is on trial during this life. To achieve this end God made available for human beings to make use of all what is in the earth and the heavens, equipped them with the necessary tools to use during their mandate, namely the learning process where humans have a permanent link to God during their mandate in this life, and provided the guiding principle- to avoid excessive selfishness in all its manifestations as it is the root of all evils both on the individual and

community (national) levels. It is stressed that the salvation or success of human beings in this life is dependent on their actions, as they have been endowed with the freedom of choice- to conform or rebel against these guidelines. Finally, at the end of the human mandate comes the day of reckoning when the balance sheets of their actions are presented, followed by judgment and reward or punishment. This is the global framework of the revelations proclaimed by Muhammad, which serve as the departure point for human beings in this life and their movement back towards their creator.

These clear, unambiguous and explicit objectives for mankind in this life are presented and argued now and again in the Qur'anic discourse. The methodology used in preaching this message focuses on drawing the attention of the audience (readers) to the phenomena in their external world, which they are familiar with and to that in their inner world (within themselves).

Humans are asked to consider, examine and think about what they witness. These are the familiar things, which are being utilised by them one way or another. They are not asked to consider and ponder upon things, which are hypothetical and never met before. What they are asked is to look deeper into their existence and inquire and think about what is it that allows this existence at all. The phenomena or the signs of God, cover all sorts of things, which they encounter in life- physical, biological, political, social, economical and psychological, which are not necessarily familiar to every person but are dependent on the audience being addressed. Examples are: time (several aspects of it, whether to a particular part of the day or to a very long period of time), the sun, the stars, the moon, animals and their uses, trade, wealth, ships, winds, rain, thunder, lightning, plants and the seasons, creation from earth or from water, and the formation of life in the womb, the creation of male and female spouses for love and affection and the creation of the heavens and the earth, old age, death, fear, love, aggression, the pen, even the letters of the alphabet and the rise and fall of civilizations.

Some examples follow:

'It is God who causes the grain and the date stone to sprout; He brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead too from the living. So that then is God. So where are you going to turn [to avoid the truth]? He causes the dawn to break, and made the night for rest, and the sun and the moon for reckoning of time. That is the ordaining of the Mighty the All-knowing. It is He who appointed the stars for you that you may be guided thereby in the darkness of the land and of the sea. Thus we have made plain our signs for a people who know. It is He who brought you all forth from one single selfhood (personhood) and then a lodging place for a while and then a repository [on death], thus our signs are spelled out to people who grasp the truth (6:95-98)'. ' He has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with the truth; high let Him be exalted above the gods they join with Him. He created the human being from a drop-like thing and behold this same being becomes an eloquent disputant. And the cattle! He has created for you: in them you have warm garments and gainful uses; and of them you eat. And you find beauty in them when you take them out to pastures and when you fetch them home. And they carry your loads to [many] a place, which [otherwise] you would be unable to reach without great hardship to your selves. Verily, your Lord is most compassionate, a dispenser of grace. And [it is He who created] horses and mules and donkeys, for you to ride, as

well as for [their] beauty: He will yet create things of which [today] you have no knowledge' (16:3-8). It is He who sends down water from the skies; you drink thereof, and thereof [drink] the plants upon which you pasture your herds; and thereby He brings forth for you crops, and olives, dates and grapes, and all manner of fruit. Surely in that is a sign for a people who think. And He has subjected to you the night and the day; the sun and the moon and the stars too are subjected to you by His behest. Surely in this there are messages (signs) for people who understand (that is those who are able to connect to their observations). And that which He has multiplied for you in the earth of diverse hues: in this behold, there is a sign for a people who remember. It is He who made the sea subservient for your use, so that you might eat fresh meat from it, and bring forth out of it ornaments for you to wear; and on that [very sea] one sees ships cleaving through it; and that you [might be able to] go forth in quest of his bounty, and so haply you will be thankful' (16:10-14).

'And of His signs is that He created you from earth and behold you are human beings (made of flesh and blood) ranging far and wide. And of His signs that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, so that you may repose in them, and He has set between you affection and mercy. Surely in that are signs for a people who reflect. And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and the variety of your tongues and colours. Surely in that are signs for all who are knowledgeable (30:19-22)'

There are many other aspects of life as was lived at that time, which were used in the preaching discourse. Few more examples put in a different format are given below.

In 56:58-59 the question is posed: *'Do you see [the fluid] you discharge [during intercourse], is it you who created it, or are We not who did the creation?'*

In 56:63-64 we are asked: *'Do you see [the seeds] you are ploughing [in the ground], is it you who are making it grow, or are We not [who cause it to grow]?''*

It is further asked in 56:68-69: *'Consider the water, which you drink, is it you who cause it to come down from the clouds, or are We not the cause of it coming down?'*

In chapter (surah) 16 after pointing out many of the things God made available for the use of human beings, the question is posed in 16:17:

'Is he who creates as he who does not create? Will you not take heed?' This is followed by 16:18 saying: Should you try to count God's blessings, you could never number them. Verily, God is forgiving, a dispenser of grace'.

In 22:73 we are given a similitude to consider.

'O human beings, an example is given, so listen to it. Verily, those upon whom you call beside God shall never create a fly, even if they assembled for that purpose; and if the fly should rob them of aught, they would never rescue it from him. Weak indeed alike are the seeker and the sought'.

The Qur'anic discourse in its posing all the questions about the interconnectedness of all things in the human beings' world to God and which urges them to pursue the truth as indicated in the signs of God, does not stop at just posing of these questions and keep us in suspense pending to our finding the final answer. The answer is given explicitly or

implicitly after each posed question, so one can discern the obviously false answer, which leads to a cul-de-sac in life with no meaning or purpose, from what is being put as the alternative true answer. Moreover the meaning and purpose of life propounded in the Qur'an are argued in a reasoned way and it is up to the human being to accept or reject such a view. This is explicitly stated in the following:

'Clear insights have come to you from your Sustainer. Whoever, therefore, chooses to grasp [these insights] does so for his own gain; and whoever chooses to remain blind does so to his own loss. And I [Muhammad] am not your keeper (6:104).'

The pointers to God, the phenomena within and outside the human being, are the 'miracles' of God according to the Qur'an and are the only reliable indicators to the Creator. From this, one sees they are not miracles in the popular sense of the word. That is, they are not supernatural, but only manifestations of God's creations as seen in the natural world. .

The emergence of the human being and the underlying consciousness of the World.

According to the Qur'anic revelation (2:30) God addressed the angels (the forces of communication or the messengers between God and the creation) telling them: 'I am projecting having a successor, a tenant, upon the Earth'. Thus 'God has caused the human being to spring forth from the earth like a plant' (71:17). The human being emerged from the earth in time and in stages (71:14, 22:5) among all the other beings of this world as indicated by the many verses in the various chapters of the Qur'an as part of the preaching discourse.

For example in 32:7-9 we are told that:

'[God] started the creation of the human being from earth, and then He made his procreation through a humble fluid. Then He formed him and breathed into him His spirit'.

The Qur'an stresses this sort of language for the emergence of humans from the earth (71:17, 53:32), and that this emergence occurred in stages or phases (71:14, 22:5, 67:23) culminating with the human person being endowed with God's Spirit (38:71-72), the ability to name and deal with things (2:31) and also the ability to conform or rebel, to be grateful or ungrateful (32:10, 76:3) to the source who makes all this possible. There are many verses in the Qur'an stressing this evolutionary aspect of the creation in order to remind human beings of their origin and destiny and their mandate in this world.

In other units of the Qur'an emergence is summed up by expressions based on the verb 'fatara' (to bring forth into being, to cleave, to break out) and its derivatives, especially 'faater' (the one who brings forth) and 'fitrah' the verbal noun. This emergence is applicable not only to the human being (17:51, 11:51, 36:23, 43:27) and its faculty of reasoning (30:30) but also to the rest of the creation, the universe. For example, God is described in 6:14, 12:101, 14:10, 35:1, 39:46, and 42:11, as 'faater(u) (the One who brings forth) of the heavens and the earth. In these verses the active participle of *fatara*, *faater(u)*, is used for the creation of the heavens and the earth.

It is of interest to note here that the same word (*fitrah*) is used in the Hebrew Bible for a newborn *breaking out* from the womb, for humans and animals alike (Exodus 13:2, 13, 15; 34:19 and Numbers 3: 12; 8:16; 18:15).

The meaning of *fatara* and its verbal noun *fitrah* as well as that in the Hebrew Bible (indicating the older use of this verb among the Semitic speaking people), must apply generally to the use of the active participle *faater* in the creation of the system- the universe, heavens and earth, which appears in the above mentioned verses. This means that the system of the universe is also initiated or born with an in-built tendency or information, like any a new born *breaking out* from the package of its inception.

Accordingly, the materials of this world, which appear to us as dead, possess a sort of consciousness. This is at the core of the information package, which is dynamic in character and acts as the driving force in the course of existence.

That matter from which the human being emerged is not passive is very clear from another expression the Qur'an uses, namely 'tasbeeh', which is the verbal noun of 'sabbaha'. The latter is the intensive form of 'to swim' and thus it means literally 'to swim intensively' but usually taken to mean to extol, to laud. It is declared in (17:44): 'and verily there is not a single thing [in this world] that (does not proclaim His praise or literally does not intensively move obediently toward Him), but you [humans] fail to grasp the manner of their motion towards, or glorifying, Him. Verily He is forbearing, much forgiving.' *Tasbeeh* is widely mentioned in the Qur'an (for example: 24:41, 59:24, 62:1, 57:1, 59:1, 61:1 and so on). In (57:1, 3), for example, we have: 'all what is in the heavens and the earth swim intensively towards God (usually translated as extol God), and He is the Almighty the Wise. He is the First and the Last and the Evident [in the creation] and the Hidden [from sight] and He has full knowledge of everything.'

The literal meaning of 'Tasbeeh' is spelled out here, as intensive swimming, in order to indicate the dynamical character of this process, the motion of everything back to God as proclaimed in various places in the Qur'an. But whether one thinks of the literal meaning, the intensive motion towards the creator, or the extolling of God's glory, both imply that each thing in this world has a sort of consciousness, which enables it to receive information and respond in its own way. It is as if it has an inner feeling (not obvious to us), which guides it to its destination.

Thus it is not surprising to note that the Qur'an uses the same expression, '*God inspiring, or revealing*', which is used extensively in the sphere of human activity, also for other living beings and for the material system. This is illustrated for other living beings, in (16:68), which says: '*And your Lord revealed unto the bees, saying- take unto yourselves dwellings in mountains and in trees, and in what [men] may build [for you as way of hives]*'.

Regarding the material system it is stated that the natural course of the earth or that of the heavens is inspired (99:5 and 41:12 respectively), in the sense that they possess a sort of consciousness capable of responding to a communication, which keeps their intensive motion on their prescribed course towards their destination to the creator.

It appears, therefore according to the Qur'anic discourse, that there are three levels of consciousness in the creation. The lowest is that of matter with an invisible aspect of

consciousness, which is the common denominator in the three levels, and has a built-in automatic response to God's command (no voluntary actions exist). The next level is that of living beings with a visible consciousness that is characterised by a special super structural arrangement of complex combinations of matter. The third level is that of the human being which is characterised by a self-reflective consciousness with a well-developed voluntary response.

The privileged position the human being occupies in this world emerged (came into being) naturally according to the Qur'an, as part of the projection God made of having a successor (tenant) upon earth (2:30). This special position is reflected in the generation in the human being, as a result of the engagement of human beings with their world of interest or concern, a 'feeling' of debt to, and dependence on, that which allows this existence at all. This feeling is the source of what the Qur'an calls 'deen: religion', the source of human gratitude to their creator (76:3). But this special position comes with a heavy burden in view of the duties involved in carrying out the 'trusteeship' and the presence of the freedom of choice. The latter presents the human being with a lot of problems, as proclaimed in the following (91:7-10):

'Consider the 'human self or personhood' (nafs) and how it was formed, and how it is endowed with the ability to 'break explosively out of its bounds' and also the ability to 'be cautious and conscious of its bounds'. The [one] who purifies the 'self or personhood', that is who keeps it trim (that is not encroaching on others) and in check, will achieve success; and that who makes the 'self' grow out of bounds, will eventually fail.'

The failure happens when human beings get occupied with the things presented to them in this world forgetting the purpose and meaning of life and thus acting as if they were self-sufficient, independent of God. The latter state is a fallen state. In this state the human being overindulges the 'I' factor or the 'We' factor for a community, a tribe or a nation.

God provided all humans with the equipment to use and the materials for learning and it is up to them to elect to utilise or not to utilise what has been provided. God does not favour one set of human beings over another (only their actions count, 53:39), nor does He fight their battles, it is entirely in our hands. Whether the human being elects to remember or to forget her/his trusteeship and responsibility before God, is a matter of resolve (20:115). Summarising the human beings efforts during the course of life, we are told in (84:6-8) that we are going to labour constantly towards, and eventually encountering, our Sustainer; those who have the resolve not to forget the trust will find an easy encounter, and those who forget this day of encounter will find it hard.

The Structure of Knowledge

The first inspiration Muhammad received at the start of his mission was the following (96:1-5):

'Proclaim in the name of your Lord who created. He created the human being from a clot (leach-like thing). Proclaim that your Lord is the most generous, who has taught [the human being] the use of the pen. He has taught the human being what he knew not'.

This says that God teaches the human being what he does not know. In Arabic to 'know' is '*'alima*' and to 'teach' is '*'allama*', which is the causative form of to 'know'. So how does the learning occur by human beings? Is it by God holding man/woman, as it were, and feeding her/him with knowledge? We know that is not the case. We know that the human being is the seeker of knowledge and which comes to her/him naturally as it is essential for living and existence. However the act of learning does not occur in vacuum. Something else is needed in addition to the human being, namely the learning material in the human being's environment. The learning occurs by utilising built-in ingredients in the two essential components of the learning process, the *human being* (the receiver) and *the available things* in the surroundings, which the human being 'makes use of' for his existence (the emitters). This is stressed in many places in the Qur'an.

For example (31:20) states:

'Have you not seen (realised) that God has made available for you to make use of, all that is in the heavens and in the earth and has lavished on you His blessings outward (visible, evident) and inward (hidden, invisible)?'

In the above there are three terms, which are described as blessings of God. The first is '[God] made available for you to make use of'. This expression has been explicitly stressed in the Qur'an in many places, but it is implied in all verses urging humans to consider their world. The second term is 'outward' which means visible, material or evident, describing the things to be made use of. The third element is 'inward', that is hidden and not visible. All the created things in this world (the signs of God), which are visible to us (this 'visibility' includes what we also deduce from the use of instruments which are essentially extensions of the human body), contain the necessary information, which is inward and invisible but necessary for the 'knowing' process. This information is somehow connected with the light of God, as knowing and light are connected in the Qur'an, as can be discerned from (24:35). This says:

'God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp (the lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West (that is universal) whose oil well-nigh would shine, even if no fire touched it; light upon light; God guides unto His light him that wills [to be guided]; and [to this end] God propounds parables for the human beings, and God has full knowledge of all things.'

The revelation states that God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. Then it goes on to illustrate for us the light of God by a parable of a lamp placed in a niche. The niche is a cavity made in the wall of a dwelling with an opening so that when a lamp is placed there, it throws light on the inside of the dwelling. The niche is the visible, material thing, representing matter, which we deal with in our everyday life. The description of this parable portrays to an observer facing the enclosure a vertical cross section of the kernel of matter with the lamp in the centre, intimating that the light of God is at the core of things of this world, which have layered realities outside the core. The light of God, although not revealing of itself (that is hidden, invisible), is the source that allows us to perceive the various layers of realities of the things of this world (which are outward, evident or visible directly to the human being or indirectly through the instruments which serve as extensions of the human being).

The tools the human being has been equipped with for the learning process occur on two levels: the visible one used for observation or interaction with the surroundings, and the invisible (inside the body) used for understanding and conceptualisation. The invisible tools are described in the Qur'an as hearts, albaab or af'idah, which literally mean the essential parts inside the body for feeling and discerning. They carry the figurative connotation as the seats of understanding so they are translated as minds. Both kinds of tools have been mentioned in several places in the Qur'an, often together. Examples are:

1 We created the human being from a drop of mingled sperm in order to try him, thus We made him a being endowed with hearing and seeing (76:2).

2 It is He who endowed you with hearing, sight and hearts (minds), yet how little gratitude you show (23:78).

3 Say: [God is] He who has brought you [all] into being and has endowed you with hearing and sight and hearts, [yet] you are seldom grateful (67:23).

4 And God has brought you forth from your mother's wombs knowing nothing and He endowed you with hearing and sight and minds so that you might have cause to be grateful (16:78).

5 Have We not provided him (the human being) with two eyes, a tongue and two lips? (90:8-10).

The Act of Cognition

Both, the human element (the subject, the receiver) and the thing in question (the object, the emitter) are needed for the act of cognition. In order to shed light on how the circuit of the learning process is completed or closed and thus get a result or achieve an act of cognition, we examine the expression used in the Qur'an for the act of understanding. This term occurs only in the verbal form. This is illustrated in the following example, (22:46):

'What! Have they not gone about looking through the land, so that their hearts (the invisible tools inside) might have been used to understand [their observations or what they have seen], or their ears made to hear? Indeed, it is the hearts and not the eyes that go blind.'

We underlined the relevant verb, which is 'to perform the understanding or the comprehending' of whatever under scrutiny. The imperfect verb used for this action is derived from 'aqala', which literally means to tie up the foreleg of a camel with a 'iqaal' in order to restrict its freedom of movement and stay in place (localized). 'Iqaal' is the name given for the piece of rope used for the tying. It is also the name of the looped headband made of camel's hair (or other materials nowadays) to keep the kufiyyah, (a piece of cloth used as a man's head-dress), in place. When you tie a rope or a string, or tie two loose ends of strings, you make a loop, or in the extreme case a knot.

So what is being tied up, joined or connected in the act of cognition? When we get interested in an object and make use of it, two components are involved, one from the human being, the other from the object. An act of cognition is made when these two

components (rays? waves?) meet or overlap, and are tied-up together (that is, get connected), a knot or a loop is formed and an understanding or familiarization occurs or materializes.

We see a sort of homogeneity in the two active elements involved in the learning process, the spirit of God in the human being (the receiver) and the light of God in the 'thing' (the emitter).

It is clear from the verse above that human action precedes perception. We go about the land to see (there is an intention here) and then form a perception of whatever we saw of interest. A mental image is produced which is named or given a label, an utterance. The utterances, unlike the mental images, are relative to a given people and form their language and speech through which experiences in life are communicated to each other. In (55:1, 4) we are told that: ' the dispenser of mercy or grace has taught him [the human being] the art of explaining [his observations and experiences]'. Although they are only utterances and relative, languages are translatable to each other because of the sharing of the corresponding underlying mental images, which are not relative.ⁱ

The interaction of the human being with different things will produce different mental images. In general, as we get more and more adept in making use of a given thing in novel ways, new experiences emerge thus increasing our knowledge, which means unveiling another layer of its reality. The mental image of the thing, as a result of the novel experiences gained, gets modified more and more. This process continues. The process of gaining relations between two different objects generates an interconnection and thus the onset of interconnectedness between the things of interest in our environment and the increase of our knowledge. As we learn we keep tying-up loose ends.

Needless to say that the invoking of God in the process of learning does not free us from pursuing or seeking the truth ourselves as best as we can in our own way. That is explaining things without saying this or that was done by God. This must be done in our own words based on our experiences. However it must be stressed that we are working within the system and thus there will always be limitations imposed on our descriptions and our imagination. The only certain thing in our learning is what we gain from the utilization of the things we make use of. Thus there is no escaping learning through empirical investigations. The invoking [of God], which under normal circumstances is hidden within one's self, only keeps our minds focused on the right direction. And it is the delineation of the direction of the way of God that summarises the message of the Qur'anic discourse.

We already quoted the revelation (29:20) challenging humans to go about and find out how the creation was started. This applies to all statements concerning God's knowledge of things. Learning concerns the human being and that can only be through utilising the phenomena, the signs of God. It is our mandate to learn and know more.

The expansion of our knowledge and experience may be pictured as follows: If we imagine the expansion of our knowledge as an expanding bubble wherein we reside, then as a result of our increasing knowledge the inner surface is pushed outwards from

the inside. This expansion will continue, as long as we are gaining knowledge through empirical experience, until the end of the mandate of mankind in this world when the bubble will eventually burst and we are released and the ultimate reality appears. Since the human being is historical, it is important to note that each individual human being has her/his own bubble, which will burst on death. The bubble represents the human being's world and thus although the worlds of human beings are somewhat different, on Judgement Day they are equalised with respect to the final truth, as the ultimate truth will appear to every one.

ⁱ The utterances, which form the speech or language of a given of people is called 'lughah' in Arabic. 'To utter' is 'laghawa or laghaya' and the verbal noun denoting the process of uttering words is 'laghw'. The latter usage has been used in situations when people speak a lot without thinking carefully, so the utterances lack meaningful cohesion or sense. What is of interest here is the apparent common origin of the Greek 'logos' and its verbal forms to the corresponding Semitic equivalents as displayed in Arabic and also in the Hebrew Bible as evident in Job (6:3). The Greek 'logos' (word or speech) and the various verbs associated with it, as 'legow' (to say, speak) or 'logaw' (a desiderative of legow, to be fond of talking), show the same shades of meaning we noted above for the Arabic. This can be seen clearly in: Greek-English Lexicon, by Henry George Riddle and Robert Scott, 8th Edition, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1897, p. 880, p. 899. One finds there also that the first usage of 'legow, to say to speak' appeared in Herodotus (fifth century B.C) but never in Homer (ninth century B.C).