PSYCHOLOGY FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: A GUIDE TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

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TEACHING AND LEARNING PSYCHOLOGY FROM THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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The Muslims' world view about the nature of man, a central concept in psychology, is very different from the West. As such, there is an urgent and pressing need to have some sort of a framework for both teachers and students to understand psychology, and, it is precisely due to this need that the present guide was written. As in the West, early Muslim writings on psychological issues are subsumed within philosophy and these writings are mostly on the nature of man and personality development (Haque, 2004). Inherent in these early Muslim writings is the blending of Islamic philosophy (tawḥīd or the Oneness of God) and religious ideas (based on the Qur’ān and Sunnah). However, as pointed out by Haque, the literature on these scholars' contributions to psychology is sparse and scattered.

The word “psychology” originally means the “study of the soul” (from the Greek terms psyche meaning “soul,” and logos meaning “the study of a subject”) which reflected the early interest of the philosophers. This is most interesting because it seems that psychology started out with theological underpinnings. However, with secularisation, theology took a back seat to science and empiricism, and this is reflected in the subject matter of psychology during the Renaissance right up to the present time. Currently, the spiritual aspect of man is no longer a part of Western psychology and it is up to the individual to practice religion. Consequently, psychological theories of man are seen to be deterministic leaving little or no room for human volition, which is contrary to the Islamic theory of human nature. As