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Respected Sir

Asalamu Alaykum

It gives us immense pleasure to share with your benign self that Our Institution is organising online **3-Week International Interdisciplinary Workshop on Research Methodology (21-12-2020 to 10-01-2021)** In Sha Allah. We aim to focus on various themes related to recent trends in Research Methodology mostly employed in Social Sciences, Arts, Humanities and preferably in the discipline of Islamic Studies. We feel privileged to request your benign self to be one of our **Resource Persons** in this work shop and deliver a lecture on any relevant theme as per your expertise and convenience. This would help us to get benefitted from your profound scholarship and expertise. The participants of this work shop would include Research Scholars and Assistant Professors from various Colleges and Universities, across the globe. Please feel free to share with us the dates of your availability. The time slot including the Question Answer Session would be 11:00 a.m. to 01:00 p.m. as per Indian Standard Time. If this time slot is not feasible to your benign self, we can accommodate your presentation between 3:00 to 5:00 p. m. also, as per Indian Standard Time zone.

With Profound regards

Sincerely

Prof. (Dr.) Manzoor Ahmad Bhat  
Head, Shahi Hamadan Institute of Islamic Studies  
University of Kashmir, Srinagar, India  
&  
Director Workshop



# Shah-i-Hamadan Institute of Islamic Studies

University of Kashmir

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Organizes Extension Lecture Series  
(Lecture - 8)

## Rethinking Epistemology: Reflections on some Quranic Statements



**Prof. (Dr.) Muhammad Mumtaz Ali**

**Professor**  
**KIRK&HS IIUM, Malaysia**  
**(Resource Person)**



**Prof. (Dr.) Manzoor Ahmad Bhat**

**Head**  
**Shah-i-Hamadan Institute**  
**of Islamic Studies**



**Dr. Burhan Rashid**

**Moderator**

**Google Meet Link for**  
**Joining the Lecture:**  
<https://meet.google.com/qfq-jrss-wpg>

**Date: 06-10-2021**  
**Day: Wednesday**  
**Timing: 03:00 p.m. (IST)**

# **RETHINKING EPISTEMOLOGY: REFLECTIONS ON SOME QURANIC STATEMENTS**

**By**

**Professor Dr Muhammad Mumtaz Ali**

**International Islamic University Malaysia**

**mumtazali@iium.edu.my**

**Introduction**

**Review of Literature**

**Current Debate in Epistemology - Main Issues**

**Main Concerns of Epistemology**

**Conclusion**

## Current Debate in Epistemology - Main Issues

It is generally stated epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the study of knowledge.

Epistemology, like any other discipline, has a long history. It is also said every great philosopher has contributed to it.

It is asserted thinkers and philosophers wanted to comprehend the world they live in. Many of them have constructed theories of knowledge to help people make sense of it.

It is also contended that the thinkers and Philosophers who contributed tremendously to understand the world to make their living meaningful in all the terms possible.

The debate on epistemology has witnessed the periods of European Renaissance and the Age of the Enlightenment.

The philosophers of Enlightenment period developed a conviction about the capability of human reason and sense-perception as the most authentic sources of knowledge.

Thus emerged theories of rationalism, positivism, relativism, scientism etc.

Epistemologists had begun their *speculations* with the *assumption* that they have a great capacity to deal with the issue of knowledge.

However, they also discover that as they reflect upon, what they *most probably* know is not sure and secure than they

realized. Indeed, as they further contemplate, they come to consider that many of their beliefs may be dubious or even false.

For a contemporary author, David Coady, epistemology is 'understood as an investigation into how to acquire knowledge or as an investigation into what we ought to believe' or live.

There is a debate, in contemporary world, over the scope of epistemology in which the questions such as what is the place of *true understanding*, *true knowledge* and *true wisdom* are raised? [See A Virtue Epistemology, Ernest Sosa, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007]

Since 1980s onward 'the idea of virtue into epistemological discourse' was initiated by scholars like Ernest Sosa, John Greco, Christopher Hookway, Wayne Riggs, Michael DePaul, Linda Zagzebski, Christine McKinnon etc. [ See, Intellectual Virtue, edited by Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2003,3].

It was Ernest Sosa who introduced the idea of virtue into epistemology that 'signalled the beginning of a movement that came to be called virtue epistemology.' [ibid, 1]

Later on some other philosophers of ethics, such as Julia Annas, David Silomon, Jorge Garcia, and Christine McKinoon joined this debate.

Linda Zagzebski is considered as a philosopher of both ethics and epistemology whose interest lies in both ethics

and epistemology. This sort of debate led to the idea of intellectual virtue [intellectual virtues such as intellectual carefulness, thoroughness, humility, courage, trust, autonomy and fairness [ibid, 3]. They excluded truthfulness and reality of anything.

The need for intellectual virtue has become one of the most promising topics in contemporary Western philosophy. Virtue epistemology is one of the symbols of this discourse. In contemporary discourse on epistemology knowledge as virtue has been the main attention. Hence, 'other epistemic values have been neglected.' [ibid, 4]

There is a debate over the scope of epistemology in which the questions such as what is the place of *true understanding* and *true wisdom* in epistemology are raised? [See A Virtue Epistemology, Ernest Sosa, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007]

This approach, to epistemology, in fact, encourages rethinking epistemology.

**Now debate is about**

True knowledge

True wisdom

True belief

# What are the Main Concerns of Epistemology in truth and reality?

## 1. True, Authentic and Universal Worldview:

### The Creator

In the Quran some statements are made such as:

It is He Who has dispersed you all around the earth, and it is unto Him that you shall all be mustered. It is He Who gives life and causes death, and He holds mastery over the alternation of night and day. Do you not understand this?  
[23: 79]

AllÉh, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting by Whom all subsist, there is no God but He. Neither slumber seizes Him, nor sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. Who is there who might intercede with him save with his leave? He knows what lies before them and what is hidden from them, whereas they cannot attain to anything of His knowledge save what He wills them to attain, His Dominion overspreads the heavens and the earth, and their upholding wearies Him not. He is All-High, All-Glorious.[2: 255]

Say: "If the sea were to become ink to record the Words of my Lord, indeed the sea would be all used up before the Words of my Lord are exhausted and it would be the same even if We were to bring an equal amount of ink." [18: 109]

**If all the trees of earth become pens, and the sea replenished by seven more seas were to supply them with ink, the Words of Allah would not be exhausted. Verily Allah is Most Mighty, Most Wise. To create all of you or to resurrect all of you is to Him like [creating or resurrecting] a single person. Verily Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing [31: 27-28]**

## **2. Straight Way of life and two groups of people**

Direct us on to the Straight Way, the way of those whom You have favoured, who did not incur Your wrath, who are not astray [1: 6-7]

**Who are the source of Development?**

**= Muslimeen, Moumeeneen, Sadeqeen, Siddiqeen, Shuda**

**Saleheen, Mooqneeneen, Sabeteen, Sabereen, Sameteen, Mushfiqeen, Munfiqeen, Mustaqfreen**



**[isteqfar], Zakreen, Abeeden, Rakeen, Sajideen, Muqniteen, Tayybeen , Khasheen, Khaefeen, Qaneeteen, Khashieen, Sabereen, Hafezeen, etc.**

**Rejection of Allah, Knowledge and Islam: Going against Truth and reality and creating *fitna* and *fasad* , total destruction, chaos, crises**

### **3. Two Realms**

**This is the Book of Allah, there is no doubt about it; it is a guidance for the pious, for those who understand [believe] in the existence of that which is beyond the reach of perception [2: 2-3].**

**It talks about certain unseen realities and argues that those are the truths of the Universe [ 2: 6].**

**There are some people who claim that they know and accept those unseen truths which are mentioned in this book but in reality they deceive themselves about those unseen realities and truths [2:8- 9].**

### **4. First Step towards Knowledge is to know the – First Teacher of Humanity**

**Allah swt All-Knowledgeable, All-Wise, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Self-Existent, Ever-Living, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate says it is who taught us that which we do not know especially the Right Way of life.**

He said: “He teaches you the Right Way and has full knowledge of everything” [2: 283];

“He taught you what you know not. Great indeed has been Allah’s favour upon you”[4: 113].

He taught us many things. Referring to the Prophet Isa, He said:

“...recall My favour...when I taught you the Book and Wisdom” [5: 110].

Then Allah taught Adam the names of all things. [2: 31]

Glory to You! We have no knowledge except what You taught us. You, only You, are All-Knowing, All-Wise.[2: 32]

Through His teachings He granted us the Criterion by which we can distinguish truth from falsehood

**He has revealed this Book to you, setting forth the Truth and conforming the earlier Books, and He revealed the Torah and the Gospel before that for the guidance of mankind; and He has also revealed the Criterion [to distinguish the Truth from falsehood] [3:3-4].**

Most blessed is He Who sent down this Criterion on His servant, to be a warner to all mankind [25:2].

This Book, beyond all doubt, was revealed by the Lord of the Universe...It is the **Truth** from your Lord [32: 2-3]

These are the *ayath* of a Book that clearly expounds the **Truth** [12: 1].

**Allah SWT taught us through the Quran about the Truth and Reality of life and the world. He guided us so that we can understand and make our life, society and the world meaningful and worthy of living [16: 64] which is the main concern of epistemology.**

**He guided us to the Way that is the Most- Straight so that we can do righteous works.**

**He taught us about the Truth and Reality of the Next world. He taught us beyond any doubt that in the Next world, He will take the account of this worldly life and grant us the best and greatest reward.**

**He also taught and warned us about the grievous chastisement that awaits us [17: 9-10]. It is taught to us in the Quran:**

He who follows the Right Way shall do so to his own advantage; and he who strays shall incur his own loss. No one shall carry another's burden. And never shall We punish any until We send a Messenger [to make the Truth distinct to them from falsehood]. [17: 15]

## **5.Existence of True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge [TAUK]**

...and Allah granted him dominion and wisdom, and imparted to him the knowledge of whatever He willed [2: 251].

... So keep steadfast, and do not follow the path of the ignorant [those who do not have true knowledge of the reality] [10: 89].

...They only disagreed among themselves **after knowledge** [of the truth had] come to them...

And were you indeed to follow the vain desires of people after the true knowledge had come to you, none will be your supporters against Allah, and none will have the power to shield you from His punishment [13: 37].

Further again we were asked to: “Get you down from here, all of you, and guidance **[knowledge]** shall come to you from Me: then, whoever will follow My guidance **[knowledge]** need have no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who refuse to accept this [body of knowledge and guidance] and reject Our signs as false are destined for the Fire where they shall abide forever” [2: 38-39].

Allah swt said: ‘Get down, both of you [i.e. man and Satan], and be out of it; each of you shall be an enemy to the other. Henceforth if there comes to you a guidance **[knowledge]** from Me, then whosoever follows

My guidance **[knowledge]** shall neither go astray nor suffer misery' [20: 122-123].

The true din [worldview] with Allah is Islam. The People of the Book adopted many different ways rather than follow the True way of Islam even **after the knowledge of Truth had reached them**, and this merely to commit excesses against one another. [3: 19]

Tell whoever disputes with you on this matter **after true knowledge has come to you**: "Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, and then let us pray together and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie." [3: 61] And were you indeed to follow the vain desires of people **after the true knowledge** had come to you, none will be your supporters against Allah, and none will have the power to shield you from His punishment [13: 37].

Those who were **endowed with knowledge** [in the world] will say: [16: 27].

Tell them, [O Prophet!]: 'Believe in it, or do not believe'; when it is recited to those who were **given the knowledge** before its revelation, they fall down upon their faces in prostration [17: 107].

...there they found one of Our servants upon whom We had bestowed Our mercy, and to whom We had

imparted a special knowledge from Ourselves [18: 65].

Father, a knowledge that has not reached you has come to me. So follow me that I may guide you to a straight way [19: 43].

We granted knowledge to David and Solomon and they said: “All praise be to Allah Who has exalted us above many of His believing servants!” [27: 15]

Nay, but they have lost their knowledge of the Hereafter. They are steeped in doubt and uncertainty about it: rather they are blind to it. [27: 66]

When Musa [Moses] reached the age of full youth and grew to maturity, We bestowed upon him wisdom and knowledge. Thus do we reward those who do good [28: 14]

But those who had been endowed with knowledge and faith shall say:... [30: 56].

## **6. Disregard of Knowledge**

Should you follow their desires disregarding the knowledge which has come to you, you shall have no protectors or helper against Allah [2: 120].

Were you to follow their desires in disregard of the knowledge which has come to you, you will surely be reckoned among the wrong-doers [2: 145].

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## 7.Place of Conjecture

Among them are also the unlettered folk who do not know about the Books but cherish baseless wishes and **merely follow their conjectures** [2: 78].

...do you attribute to Allah something about which you **have no knowledge** [2: 80].

...They have **no definite knowledge** of it, but merely **follow conjecture**; and they surely slew him not [4: 157].

[O Muhammad!] If you obey the majority of those who live on earth, they will lead you away from Allah's path. They only **follow idle fancies, indulging in conjecture**. And your Lord knows well

who stray from His path, and also those who are rightly-guided [6: 116-117].

...Many indeed say misleading things **without knowledge**, driven merely by their **lowly desires**. But your Lord knows well the transgressors [6: 119]

I do not say to you that I possess Allah's treasures, nor that I have access to the realm beyond the ken of perception, nor do I claim to be an angel [11: 31].

Say: "None in the heavens and on the earth has knowledge of the Unseen save Allah. They do not know when they will be raised to life [27: 65].

Nay, but they have **lost their knowledge** of the Hereafter [Unseen]. They are steeped in doubt and uncertainty about it: rather they are blind to it [27: 66].

...Allah will say: "Did you give the lie to My Signs even without encompassing them with your knowledge? If that is not so, what did you do?" [27: 84].



Among them are also the unlettered folk who do not know about the Books but cherish baseless wishes and merely **follow their conjectures** [2: 78].

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[O Muhammad!] If you obey the majority of those who live on earth, they will lead you away from Allah's path. They only **follow idle fancies, indulging in conjecture**. And your Lord knows well who stray from His path, and also those who are rightly-guided [6: 116-117].

...Many indeed say misleading things **without knowledge**, driven merely by their lowly desires. But your Lord knows well the transgressors [6: 119]

## **8. Human Faculties**

Allah has brought you forth from your mother's wombs when you knew nothing, and then **gave you hearing, and sight and thinking hearts so that you may give thanks**[16: 78].

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Do not follow that of which **you have no knowledge**. Surely the **hearing, the sight, the heart – each of these shall be called to account** [17: 36].

It is He Who has endowed you with **the faculties of hearing and sight and has given you hearts [to think]**. **Scarcely do you give thanks.** [23: 78]

## **9. Subservience of Nature**

He has subjected for you the night and the day and the sun and the moon and the stars have also been made subservient by His command. Surely there are Signs in this for those who use their reason [16: 12].

**And He it is Who has subjected the sea that you may eat fresh fish from it and bring forth ornaments from it that you can wear. And you see ships ploughing their course through it so that you may go forth seeking His Bounty and be grateful to Him** [16: 14].

Have you not seen how Allah has subjected to you all that is in the earth, and the vessels that sail in the sea by His command, and it is He Who holds back the sky that it may not fall on earth except by His leave? Surely Allah is Most Gentle, Ever Compassionate to people [22: 65].

**And it is He Who has endowed you with life and it is He Who causes you to die, and it is He Who will then resurrect you. Man is indeed extremely prone to denying the Truth** [22: 66].

...Allah will say: "Did you give the lie to My Signs even without encompassing them with your knowledge? If that is not so, what did you do? [22: 84]

Have you not see that Allah has subjected to your service all that is in the heavens and on the earth and has abundantly bestowed upon you all His bounties, both visible and invisible? Yet some persons dispute regarding Allah without having any knowledge or guidance or any illuminating Book [31: 20-21].

Do they not see Our handiwork: We created for them cattle which they own? We have subjected the cattle to them so that some of them they ride and eat the flesh of others. They derive a variety of benefits and drinks from them. Will they, then, not give thanks? [36: 71-73].

Allah it is Who has subjected the sea to you so that ships may sail upon it at His bidding and you may seek of His Bounty and give thanks to Him. He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and the earth, all being from Him. Verily there are Signs in this for those who reflect [45: 12-13].

## **10. Method of Knowledge**

Knowledge is the starting point of creation of further knowledge. **THERE IS NO PLACE FOR:**

blind faith, dogmas, myths, doctrines, superstitions, desires, fancies, imaginations, assumptions, distortions, presuppositions, biases, prejudices, reactions, hasty decisions,

speculation, conjecture, illusions, enmity and hate, etc.

Knowledge is created with the help of tools of observation, comparison, historical evidence, and thinking and reflection supported by parables. Epistemology is based on knowledge in which the above-mentioned tools play fundamental role. In this process of creation of new knowledge the empirical evidence, historical events along with comparative and critical skills are fully employed along with powerful rational arguments resulting in creativity.

## 11. Purpose of Knowledge

Finally the purpose of knowledge is the recognition and acknowledgement of Allah swt, our own place and role.

**For understanding the social and natural phenomena we follow the principle of amar bil maarooof wa nahi anil munkar for the sake of maintaining the originality of this world by way of maintain balance in everything.**

**Ultimate goal is to guarantee a comfortable place for everyone leading to the path of development and success, here in this world and in the hereafter.**

## **Conclusion**

### **A] Need to Restate Epistemology**

Whether we like it or not, surely we all will return to Allah SWT to give an account of our life spent here. This is the truth of our life about which we have been informed without any doubt.

In fact, one of the most important lessons through all intellectual activities is to remember that to Him are all destined to return [40: 3].

This lesson about the Next Life would guard us from all evils activities and to remind us to always turn to Him.

Allah SWT says in the Quran that on the Day of Resurrection and Judgement all people will see and confess the Truth and Reality of the Next world [40: 11].

On that Day All SWT will ask: “Whose is the Command today?”. All the people of the entire generations would say: “It is Allah’s, the One, the Overpowering” [40: 16].

On that Day of Judgement, which we have forgotten totally, Allah SWT would say: “Today shall everyone be fully recompensed for his deeds. None shall be wronged today. Surely Allah is Swift in Reckoning” [40: 17].

On that Day the hearts of those people who fail to recognize the Truth of the Next world in this world would be full of suppressed grief with leap up to the their throats and they would not find any sincere friend nor intercessor whose word would be headed by Allah SWT [40: 18].

Allah SWT would reveal all the secrets that hearts of people had concealed and would make His judgement.

Allah would judge with justice and no one can escape on that Day from His justice. Whosoever would have committed any wrong in this world would see the result of it. Allah SWT is indeed Strong, Terrible in Retribution [40: 22].

On that Day we would cry out to one another for help [40: 32]. We would turn around to retreat; there would be none to protect us from Allah SWT [40: 33].

Just as there will be no savior but Allah in the Next Life, in this life too our True Savior and Guide is Allah and His Book.

These are the fundamental life lessons which we have been taught by Allah SWT. Living by these teachings, and turning to Allah SWT for knowledge and guidance can alone save us from walking blindly in the alleys of falsehood, pride, and gloom.

There is no compulsion in Din [accepting Truth]. The right way now stands clearly distinguished from the wrong. Hence, he who rejects the evil ones and believes in Allah has indeed taken hold of the firm, unbreakable handle. And Allah [Whom he has held for support] is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [2: 256] Allah is the Guardian of those who believe, and brings them out of every darkness into light. And those who disbelieve, their guardians are the evil ones; they bring them out of light into all kinds of darkness. These are destined for the Fire, and there they shall abide. [2: 257]

## **B] History of Scholarship**

Irrespective of the above-mention debate on the origin and development of epistemology and even philosophy, the current dominant debate on ‘modern Western epistemology’ poses certain questions to the thinking minds. As we find in history other than philosophers, thinkers and scientists some other but very important figures such as Adam, Idris (Enoch), Nuh (Noah), Hud (Heber), Salih (Methusaleh), Lut (Lot), Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Yaqub (Jacob), Yusuf (Joseph), Shu'aib (Jethro), Ayyub (Job), Dhulkifl (Ezekiel), Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Dawud (David), Sulayman (Solomon), Ilias (Elias), Alyasa (Elisha), Yunus (Jonah), Zakariya (Zachariah), Yahya (John the

**Baptist), Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad [PBUT] who had been granted Books, Knowledge and Wisdom.**

**These Prophets [PBUT], people of extra ordinary knowledge and wisdom have not been discussed in those books which claim to be the books of high scholarship.**

**It appears to us that neither they [the Prophets] nor their followers were aware of the challenges of intellectual life and scholarly contributions.**

**Instead of investigating their scholarly and intellectual contributions in various domains of life, it appears to us that they have been side lined, neglected and reduced to the level of religious figures.**

**We get the impression that neither they nor their followers had at all contributed anything scholarly and significantly especially in the area of epistemology.**

**Hence, they are not mentioned in the mainstream history of scholarship of the world. It is portrayed that they did not have any remarkable or considerable contributions, as done by philosophers, thinkers and scientists, towards the development of intellectual history of mankind.**



Contrary to this, it is explained in such a way that it gives the feeling that they and their followers were totally unaware of the challenges of intellectual life and the need of scholarly contributions. Rather, they focussed on dogmas, myths and illusions. We read in the books of intellectual history of mankind that it was the period of Greek philosophical thought, as discussed in every book, in which philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle laid the foundation of epistemology.

**The history of origin of life and thought has been explained in the context of total darkness and primitive forms of life.**

**Consequently, in the absence of any form of knowledge, man depended wholly and solely on his own faculties – reason, sense perception and experiences. Hence, based on this understanding, the idea of sociology of knowledge and science was developed. Every scholarly contribution is seen, studied and understood in terms of human efforts free from the guidance and help of True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge brought up by the Prophets [PBUT].**

**Thanks**

