

THE METHOD OF MUSLIM LEARNING  
AS ILLUSTRATED IN AL-ZARNŪJĪ'S *TA'ĀLĪM AL-*  
*MUTA'ALLIM TARĪQ AL-TA'ALLUM*

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## ABSTRACT

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By combining a descriptive method with a comparative one, this thesis attempts to understand the ideas of method of Muslim learning as illustrated in a medieval Muslim treatise, *Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim Ṭarīq al-Taʿallum* (*Instruction of the Student: the Method of Learning*), of Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarnūjī (flourished circa 620/1223). It is apparent throughout the present study that the method of Muslim learning is not simply a technique by which a student seeks to deal, in an appropriate manner, with any academic assignment, but rather, an approach, the very heart of which rests on the problem of ethics, which brings a student into a situation where he maintains his commitment to God, his respect to his teacher, and his invigorated desire in the search for knowledge. The fundamental reason for such an approach to learning is that knowledge (*ʿilm*) in Islam is placed in a religiously special position in that it is recognized as derived from God and given by Him for the nobility of human beings, so that the search for knowledge is a part of the Muslim's religious manifestations of submission to God (*ʿibādah li-Allāh*).

## Résumé

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Titre: La méthode d'apprentissage musulmane telle qu'expliquée par al-Zarnūjī dans son *Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim ʿarīq al-Taʿallum*  
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Cette thèse propose d'essayer de comprendre, en combinant une méthode descriptive avec une méthode comparative, la méthode d'apprentissage musulmane telle qu'elle est expliquée dans un traité musulman médiéval, le *Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim ʿarīq al-Taʿallum* [L'instruction de l'étudiant: méthode d'apprentissage], d'al-Zarnūjī (actif vers 620/1223). Il devient évident, tout au long de cette étude, que la méthode d'apprentissage musulmane n'est pas simplement une technique avec laquelle un étudiant essaie d'affronter, de la façon la plus appropriée, n'importe quelles tâches académiques, mais elle est aussi une approche, dont l'essence repose sur une question d'éthique qui met l'étudiant dans une situation où il maintient, à la fois, son engagement envers Dieu, son respect envers son professeur, et son désir fortifié pour la quête de la connaissance. La raison fondamentale d'une telle approche en matière d'apprentissage est le fait qu'en Islam la connaissance (*ʿilm*) a une position spéciale, étant définie religieusement, car on la reconnaît comme étant dérivée de Dieu et donnée par Dieu pour l'ennoblissement de l'homme, de telle sorte que la quête de la connaissance se veut une des manifestations religieuses de la soumission du musulman à Dieu (*ʿibādah li-Allāh*).

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Montreal, March 1993

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## ARABIC TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

The transliteration for Arabic words in this thesis closely follows the  
Institute of Islamic Studies transliteration system

ب = b	ظ = z
ت = t	ع = c
ث = th	غ = gh
ج = j	ف = f
ح = h	ق = q
خ = kh	ك = k
د = d	ل = l
ذ = dh	م = m
ر = r	ن = n
ز = z	و = w
س = s	ه = h
ش = sh	و = w
ص = ṣ	ي = y
ض = ḍ	
ط = ṭ	

Short    = a;        = i;        = u.

Long    \ = ā;        = ī;        = ū

Long with tashdīd    = ıya;    = ūwa

Ta marbūṭah    = ah;    in idāfah = at.

## INTRODUCTION

The present study examines aspects of the method of learning as illustrated in a medieval Muslim work, *Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim Ṭarīq al-Taʿallum* (*Instruction of the Student, the Method of Learning*), by Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarnūjī (flourished circa 620/1223). Two approaches will be employed to accomplish this task. The first is descriptive, by which al-Zarnūjī's ideas are presented in such a way that the details are systematically discernible. The second is comparative, in that it tries to bring each aspect of his notions into a wider context, in which the ideas of other scholars such as al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Ibn Jamāʿah (d. 783/1381), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) and some others, are considered.<sup>1</sup> To begin, meanwhile, it is necessary in this introduction to deal with some problems concerning al-Zarnūjī's biography, the popularity of his *Taʿlīm*, and the previous studies of the treatise, as well as the structure of this present study.

There is hardly any definite information about the life of al-Zarnūjī. His proper name has remained unidentified. The time frame in which he lived is still a subject of speculation among historians. Moreover, his achievements during

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<sup>1</sup>In this thesis, dates in connection to Muslim events are given according to Muslim and Christian calendars respectively. Otherwise, it will be noted.

his lifetime have not been described adequately. G. E. von Grunebaum and Theodore M. Abel state that "Nothing is known of Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarnūjī's life beyond what may be inferred from his writings of which the present treatise *[[the Ta'lim]]* is the most widely renowned and the only one printed".<sup>2</sup>

It is suspected that the scholar in question was at his peak of his career at about 620/1223.<sup>3</sup> He was situated in the twelfth generation of the Hanafis.<sup>4</sup> It is also known that al-Zarnūjī was a student of Burhān al-Dīn 'Alī al-Faḡhām al-Marghīnānī, the author of *al-Hidayah fi Furus al-Fiqh*, who died in 593/1197.<sup>5</sup> It can be speculated, therefore, that not until the death of his teacher, did al-Zarnūjī reach his intellectual efflorescence.<sup>6</sup>

Some information concerning the period of life of scholars who were regarded as al-Zarnūjī's teachers or with whom al-Zarnūjī had at least

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<sup>2</sup>G. E. von Grunebaum and T. M. Abel, "Introduction," in their English translation of al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tanq al-Ta'allum, Instruction of the Student the Method of Learning* (New York, King's Crown Press, 1947), p. 1, footnote no. 1. This "Introduction," appeared under the title "The Contribution of a Medieval Arab Scholar to the Problem of Learning," in *Journal of Personality* 15 (1946-1947), pp. 59-69. Double brackets *[[ ]]* in quotations used in this thesis are added by the present writer, while the single brackets *[ ]* already existed in the texts from which the quotations are taken.

<sup>3</sup>Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis der arabischen Handschriften*, Band I (New York, Georg Olms Verlag, 1980), pp. 44-45.

<sup>4</sup>This is according to Sulaiman al-Kaffawī in his *A'lam al-Akhyar min Fuqaha' Madhhab al-Nu'mān al-Mukhtar*, as quoted in M. Plessner, "al-Zarnūjī," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., vol. VIII (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), p. 1218.

<sup>5</sup>Edouard van Dyck, *Iktifā' al-Qanū' bi ma Huwa Matbū' min Ashhar al-Ta'lim al-'Arabīyah fī al-Matābi' al-Sharqīyah wa al-Gharbīyah* (Mīṣr: Matba'at al-Hilāl, 1313/1896). Burhān al-Dīn al-Marghīnānī was a great Hanafite scholar whose works such as *al-Hidayah* and the *Kitāyat al-Muntaha* which consists of 8 volumes are considerably important. In his *Ta'lim*, al-Zarnūjī mentions at least four times the name of Burhān al-Dīn 'Alī al-Marghīnānī as his professor.

<sup>6</sup>See footnote below.



corresponded will shed light on this problem.<sup>7</sup> Among them are Fakhr al-Islām al-Ḥasan Ibn Mansur al-Farghanī Qādikhān who died in 592/1196, Ṣāḥib al-Dīn al-Ḥasan Ibn ‘Alī al-Marghinānī who died circa 600/1204, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Kashanī who died in 587/1191. Considering this data together, it is possible to conclude that he flourished a little earlier than the date calculated by Ahlwardt, while it becomes certain that his *Ta‘līm* was composed after the death of his teacher in 593/1197.<sup>8</sup>

To supplement this information on al-Zarnūjī, it is worthwhile to mention the data given in Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-A‘yān*.<sup>9</sup> Here al-Zarnūjī is alluded to as a professor of Rukn al-Dīn Imām Zādā (d. 573/1177/78) in the field of Islamic law (*fiqh*). The information given also affirms that Imām Zādā studied the subject of controversy (*mujādalah*) under Riḍā‘ al-Dīn al-Nīsābūrī

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<sup>7</sup>Al-Zarnūjī himself mentions in his *Ta‘līm* the Muslim scholars whose sayings are quoted. For examples, he says in p. {17}. *Kāna ustādhunā Shaikh al-Islām Burhān al-Dīn Ṣāḥib al-Hidāyah yuḥkī anna* : [My professor, Shaikh al-Islām Burhān al-Dīn, the author of *al-Hidāyah*, narrated that.. ], and in the same manner he says in p. {19} *Kāna ustādhunā al-Qaḍī Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-ma‘rūf bi Qādikhān yaqūl...* : [My professor, the leader of judge [Fakhr al-Dīn] well-known as Qādikhān said.....].

<sup>8</sup>Plessner, "al-Zarnūjī," p. 1218. Richard W. Bulliet assumes that a scholar in the medieval Muslim period normally commenced his career about 21.6 years, with a standard deviation of 18.8, after the death of his teacher. See his "The Age Structure of Medieval Islamic Education," *Studia Islamica* 57 (1983), pp. 105-117. Based on this assumption, it is possibly suspected that al-Zarnūjī's career commenced between 610/1213 and 614/1217, about twenty years after the death of his professor, Burhān al-Dīn al-Marghinānī, in 593/1197. However, it will be confusing if we consider al-Zarnūjī's pupil, Imām Zādā, who died even 20 years earlier than the death of al-Marghinānī above. So, on one hand we have the date of the death of al-Zarnūjī's professor, al-Marghinānī, namely, in 593/1197, which means that the death of al-Zarnūjī should be no earlier than this date. On the other hand, we have the date of his pupil, Imām Zādā, who died in 573/1177, which means that as his teacher, al-Zarnūjī died no later than this latest date.

<sup>9</sup>Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A‘yān wa Anbā‘ Abnā‘ al-Zamān*, 2nd volume, trans. into English by Bn Mac Guckin De Slane (Paris: Printed for the Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842-1847) p. 662, particularly, footnote no. 3.

(d. between 550/1155 and 600/1203).<sup>10</sup> Considering this data, it can be assumed that al-Zarnūjī and al-Nisābūrī lived contemporaneously. Unfortunately, Ibn Khallikān mentions nothing about the latter except that he was the teacher of other scholars known as *Rukn al-Dīn*, meaning "pillar of faith," namely Rukn al-Dīn al-Tawūsi (d. 600/1203),<sup>11</sup> Rukn al-Dīn al-ʿAmīdī (d. 615/1218),<sup>12</sup> and one whose name is unknown.<sup>13</sup>

Given the above information, there is no doubt that the exact period during which al-Zarnūjī lived is still unclear. However, it would be prudent to keep in mind the statement of von Grunebaum and Abel that al-Zarnūjī lived "toward the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth centuries."<sup>14</sup>

In regard to the question of where al-Zarnūjī lived, von Grunebaum and Abel supply us with some information. They maintain in general that al-Zarnūjī was a Muslim scholar who lived in Persia. More specifically, they state that he "was a jurisprudent of the Hanafite school with wide associations in Northeastern Persia (Khorasan) and Transoxiana"<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, they

<sup>10</sup>He was the Hanafite doctor who wrote *Tarīq fī al-Khulafʾ* and *Makārim al-Akhlaq*. His true name and the date of his death were unknown. Ibid., p. 202, especially footnote no. 1.

<sup>11</sup>His full name was Abū al-Fādīl al-ʿIrāqī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn ʿIraqī al-Qazwīnī, generally called al-Tawūsi. His career, both as an Imām and as a polemicist, was pursued in a *madrasah*, known as the Hājibiyah at Hamadan, especially built for him by a chamberlain known as Jamal al-Dīn. Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>12</sup>His full name was Abū Hāmid Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad (or Ibn Aḥmad) al-ʿAmīdī. He was a native of Samarkand and a doctor of the Hanafite school who had great abilities in polemics like other scholars who studied under al-Nisābūrī. He composed some works on polemics such as *al-Irshād* and *al-Nataʾis*. Ibid., p. 660.

<sup>13</sup>He was later known as the Imām Haramī. Ibid., p. 662, especially footnote no. 1.

<sup>14</sup>von Grunebaum and Abel, "Introduction," p. 1, particularly footnote no. 1.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

provide no evidence to support this information. Meanwhile, a Muslim writer made a speculation concerning this problem by considering al-Zarnūjī as being originally from a region recently known as Afghanistan. This possibility is judged from his known name, Burhān al-Dīn, which is according to the writer, commonly used in the country.<sup>16</sup>

Assuming his *nisbah* (attribution), *al-Zarnūjī*, it is probable that he was from Zarandj, a city in Persia which was formerly a capital and city of Sijistan to the south of Herat (now Afghanistan).<sup>17</sup> If we go further to consider Marghinan, a town which is later known Marghelan, Farghan, in Central Asia, as the city where his professors lived, it is not impossible that al-Zarnūjī spent time there to pursue his study.<sup>18</sup> It could be also assumed that around that city al-Zarnūjī met his student, Imām Zadā, originally from Samarkand, to study *fiqh* under his supervision. All speculations above give a general idea that al-Zarnūjī probably come from and lived in a town and went to study in other towns of Persian region; but yet, no certain information was given by Muslim biographers of his period.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Muhammad 'Abd al-Qādir Ahmad, "Al-Imām Burhān al-Islām al-Zarnūjī: Tilmidhu Sahib *al-Hidāyah*" in al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tarīq al-Ta'allum*, ed. by Muhammad 'Abd al-Qādir Ahmad (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah, 1986), p.10. Ahmad says that many of his students from Afghanistan have names such as Burhān al-Islām, Shams al-Islām, Wadh al-Islām, Shams al-Rahmān, etc. It seems to me that his speculation is not so accurate since such names are commonly used as well in Muslim country such as Indonesia, unless it is assumed that Afghan Muslim names also influenced on Indonesian Muslim names. But, so far there is no significant research on this influence.

<sup>17</sup>Yaqut Ibn 'Abd Allah al-Rumi, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1386/1957), p. 138.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, vol. 5, p. 108.

<sup>19</sup>In the light of the above discussion, there is no question that the problem of al-Zarnūjī's biography is still unsolved and remains a challenging subject for serious study. Consequently, his historical background, in terms of social, political, and economic aspects, cannot be presented in this study. We hope that there will be a

Concerning the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tarīq al-Ta'allum*, bibliographical works, such as Ḥājjī Khalīfah's *Kashf al-Zunūn*<sup>20</sup> and Brockelmann's *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*,<sup>21</sup> provide some information. The former states that "it was mentioned in the biographies of Ḥanafite jurists that Burhān al-Islām (Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarāwī), namely the student of the author of *al-Hidāyah*, was author of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tarīq al-Ta'allum*."<sup>22</sup> In addition, Ḥājjī Khalīfah recorded that the *Ta'lim* was commented on by Ibn Ismā'īl who was probably known as al-Nawā. It is said that this commentary, which was written in 996/1587, was intended for the inauguration of Sulṭān Murād III.<sup>23</sup> As for the contents of the *Ta'lim*, Ḥājjī Khalīfah gives the following information:

[[The *Ta'lim*]] was commenced in short by "Praise is due to God who favored the sons of Adam with knowledge and responsible action... and covers some chapters : (1) On the nature of knowledge, (2) On the purpose of study, (3) On the choosing of the subject matter of learning, (4) On respecting knowledge, (5) On industriousness, (6) On the beginning of study, (7) On placing one's faith in God, (8) On the time for the acquisition of knowledge, (9) On the helpfulness, (10) On

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historian who will devote his research efforts to uncovering the biography of this medieval Muslim scholar. This research is very important, given the fact that al-Zarāwī is known as the author of a treatise on the method of learning, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tarīq al-Ta'allum*, whose existence and significance have been recorded in bibliographical sources and recognized by modern scholars. A comprehensive knowledge of the historical conditions in which he lived would assist in reaching a more accurate understanding of his ideas.

<sup>20</sup>Ḥājjī Khalīfah (=Kaṭib Celebī), *Kashf al-Zunūn 'an Asamī al-Kutub wa al-Funūn*, vol. I (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1941), p. 425.

<sup>21</sup>Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* 2, den Supplementbanden angepasste, Auflage (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937-49), Bd. I, p. 606; Supplementband I, p. 387.

<sup>22</sup>Ḥājjī Khalīfah, *Kashf al-Zunūn*, Vol. I, p. 425.

<sup>23</sup>Sulṭān Murād III was the Sulṭān of the Ottomans from 982/1574 to 1003/1595.

the means useful, (11) On abstinence from evil, (12) What creates memory, and (13) Which things brings about and which prevent earning a livelihood.<sup>24</sup>

Carl Brockelmann<sup>25</sup> recorded the *Taʿlīm* under the title *Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim li-taʿallum ʿIlm*. He then informs us as to publications of the work under discussion. According to him, the *Taʿlīm* was first published in Murshidabad in 1265/1848 and later widely published in Tunis in 1286/1869 and again in 1290/1873, in Cairo in 1281/1864, 1307/1889, and 1318/1900; in Istanbul in 1292/1875; and in Kāshān in 1316/1898. Similarly, Brockelmann furnishes his information by listing seven authors of commentaries on the *Taʿlīm*, namely (1) Nawʿī, (2) Ibrāhīm Ibn Ismāʿīl; (3) Ishāq Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī ʿAṣaf under the title *Mirʿat at-Ṭālibīn*; (5) Qāḍī Ibn Zakariyā al-Anṣārī ʿAṣaf; (6) Otmanpāzārī under the title *Tafhīm al-Mutafahhīm*; and (7) a commentary by an anonymous author. Furthermore, he notes that the *Taʿlīm* was translated into Latin under the title *Enchiridion Studiosi* by H. Reland in 1709 and this translation was later edited by C. Caspari in 1838. From the data he provides, it is clear that the *Taʿlīm* has been preserved in many libraries such

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<sup>24</sup>Hājjī Khalīfah, *Kash al-Zunūn*, vol. I, p. 425. It is perhaps a worthy of note to mention some characteristics of the *Taʿlīm*. This treatise consists of about 128 lines of Arabic poems (*shāʿir*), plus two lines of Persian poems and mentions about 53 scholars of various disciplines, whose sayings and poems were quoted. To initiate his instructions, the author uses about 35 times the words, *yanbaghī an* (roughly meaning: it is suggested) and about 14 times the words: *lā budda* (roughly meaning: there is no choice; which is equivalent to: it is obligatory). For a strong suggestion, he uses words like *yajibu ʿala* or *yultaraḍu an* (roughly meaning: it is certainly obligatory). As indicated from its title, the treatise is especially addressed to the student *Ṭālib al-ʿilm* (the searcher for knowledge).

<sup>25</sup>See his prominent work, *Geschichte*, Bd. I, p. 606.

as in Berlin (Germany), in Leiden (The Netherlands), and in Cairo (Egypt), as well as in the library of the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University.<sup>26</sup>

The popularity of the *Ta'lim* was recognized by scholars such as Khalil A. Totah<sup>27</sup> and Mehdi Nakosteen<sup>28</sup> when they both surveyed the classical and medieval Muslim works on learning. They commented that the *Ta'lim* was the best known work in the field of education. Al-Zarnuji was also given credit for the *Ta'lim* by Muidh Khan saying that "the appearance of the edition of Zarnūjī's brochure on the Education of the Student *[[Ta'lim al-Muta'allim]]* in 1907, first drew the attention of European scholars and since then a number of editions of this and similar works have been published"<sup>29</sup> In other words, it has been said that "since the publication of al-Zarnuji's treatise on the education of the student *رسالة تعليم المتعلم [[Risalat Ta'lim al-*

<sup>26</sup>In the library of Islamic Studies, I find three Arabic editions of the *Ta'lim*, in addition to English translation 1 *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tarīq al-Ta'allum* (Mīr Mustafā al-Bābī al-Halabī wa Awlāduh, 1367/1948) This is a *matan* (main text) edition which consists of 63 pages and it is the earliest edition that I found. For the purpose of this thesis, I mainly use this edition, 2 *Sharh Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, a commentary edition by Ibrāhīm Ibn Ismā'īl (Mīr Mustafā al-Bābī al-Halabī, n.d.), which provides also a main text which seems to be no different from the above edition, 3. *Ta'lim al-Mutāllimī Tarīq al-Ta'allum al-Muṣhid al-Amin li Tarbiyat al-Banat wa al-Banīn*, ed by Mustafā 'Ashūr (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur'an, 1406/1986). In addition, I preserve another Arabic edition, *Kitāb Ta'lim al-Muta'allimī Tarīq al-Ta'allum*, ed by Muḥammad Abd al-Qādir Ahmad (Cairo: Matba'at al-Sa'adah, 1986). Meanwhile, Princeton University Library preserves eight copies of manuscripts of the *Ta'lim* and six copies of its commentary (*Sharh*) (See Rudolf Mach, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts (Yahuda Section) in the Garret Collection, Princeton University Library*, indexed by Robert D. McChesney (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 1).

<sup>27</sup>See his *The Contribution of the Arabs to Education* (New York: AMS Press, 1972), p. 70.

<sup>28</sup>See his *History of Islamic Origins of Western Education A.D. 800-1350* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1964), p. 101.

<sup>29</sup>Abdul Muidh Khan, "The Muslim Theories of Education during the Middle Ages," *Islamic Culture* 18 (1944), p. 418.

*Muta'allim*]], orientalists have begun to realize the value of Muslim principles of education"<sup>30</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the *Ta'lim* has been translated into English and it is an important source which appears in the bibliography and footnotes of recently published Western scholarly works on Muslim learning<sup>31</sup>

As to the studies of his *Ta'lim*, which have been done so far, Abdul Muhi Khan was perhaps the first scholar who paid attention to the treatise. In his article, "The Muslim Theories of Education during the Middle Ages,"<sup>32</sup> he attempts to examine the *Ta'lim* in comparison with Ibn Jamā'ah's *Tadhkirat al-Sāmir*.<sup>33</sup> In so doing, Muhi Khan at first considers the affiliation of the

<sup>30</sup>See Editorial Preface of M A. Taufiq's article, "A Sketch of the Idea of Education in Islam," *Islamic Culture* 17 (1943), p. 315

<sup>31</sup>See, for instance, Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: the Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1970). Also, see Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: a Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1992). Besides into Latin and English, the *Ta'lim* has also been translated into French in 1938 by Ibrāhīm Salāmah, into Turkish by 'Abd al-Majid Ibn Musūh Ibn Isrā'īl, under the title *Irshād al-Ṭālibīn fī Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, into Urdu in 1930 by Mohd. Moinuddin, and into Indonesian which appeared in two editions respectively by Aliy As'ad, *Bimbingan bagi Penuntut Ilmu Pengetahuan* [*A Manual for the Seeker of Knowledge*] (Kudus: Menara, 1978) and by A. Mudjib Mahali together with Mujawazah Mahali, *Kode Etik Kaum Santri* [*Ethical Codes of Muslim Students*] (Bandung: Bayan, 1980), as well as into Jawi Arabic (a local language in Indonesia, using Arabic script) by Hammam Nashiruddin. It was also rendered into Maduranese (another local language in Indonesia). See Ahmad, "Imām Burhān al-Islām," p. 13; Mohammad Sharif Khan, *Education, Religion and the Modern Age* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1990), p. 160, and Martin van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu," *Bydragen Tot De Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde*, Deel 146 (1990), p. 257. In the latter, van Bruinessen surveys text-books written in Arabic script and used in the traditional Muslim institution of learning (*pesantren*) in Indonesia, on the basis of a new collection in the library of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV) at Leiden (The Netherlands). The writer finds the *Ta'lim* in the top 100 in pesantren literature.

<sup>32</sup>*Islamic Culture* 18 (1944) pp. 418-433

<sup>33</sup>The full title is *Tadhkirat al-Sāmir wa al-Mutakallim fī Ādāb al-ʿĀlim wa al-Muta'allim* (*A Memorandum for the Student and Lecturer on the Manners of the Teacher and Student*) by Burhān al-Dīn Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm Ibn Saʿd Allāh Ibn

‘*ulamā*’ (men of religious sciences, sing. ‘*ālim*’) who were quoted in the two books. There is no doubt that most of the ‘*ulamā*’ quoted in the *Ta‘līm* were Hanafites while in the *Tadhkirat al-Sāmī* the ‘*ulamā*’ mentioned therein were Shāfi‘ites. Accordingly, he reached the conclusion that the two books represented two characters of Muslim learning, each of which is different, reflecting the difference in the nature of the Hanafites and the Shāfi‘ites in terms of Islamic law.

In greater depth, Muīdh Khan compares further the two treatises in light of the nature of their contents. There are three aspects which he considers, namely (1) the division of knowledge, (2) the purpose of learning, and (3) the methods of study. From these aspects, Muīdh Khan basically pointed out that the *Ta‘līm* is to some degree more flexible than the *Tadhkirat al-Sāmī*. According to him, the *Ta‘līm* has in many cases given a more significant role to reason.

In terms of the division of knowledge (curriculum), al-Zarnujī offered two classifications : (1) compulsory (*farḍ ‘ayn*) and (2) optional (*farḍ kifāyah*). By the former, he meant that every Muslim, individually, has to study certain subjects such as *fiqh* (Islamic law) and *uṣūl al-dīn* (basic doctrines of theology) while the latter means that Muslims as a community, not individually, have to follow courses such as medicine and astronomy. On the other hand, Ibn

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Jamā‘ah al-Kinānī Totah supplied us with some information concerning the contents of the book, consisting of five chapters : (1) The value of learning and the learned, (2) How the teacher should conduct himself, conduct his classes and treat his students, (3) Rules for the conduct of the student, and his relationship with his professor and fellow students; (4) The etiquette of residence in the *Madrasahs* (See Totah, *The Contribution*, p 71.).



Jamā'ah divided the subjects into two categories: the religious (*shar'ī*) and the non religious (*ghair al-shar'ī*). The former consists of three subdivided subjects: (1) the obligatory (*fard 'ayn*), (2) the optional (*fard kifāyah*); and (3) the voluntary (*nafl*). The latter (*ghair al-shar'ī*) included three classifications: (1) the forbidden (*ḥaram*), (2) the disliked (*makrūh*) and (3) the permissible (*mubāḥ*).

Regarding the purpose of study, Muḥd Khan found a significant difference between al-Zarnūjī and Ibn Jamā'ah. Learning, according to al-Zarnūjī, is sought in order to obtain a right way of thinking and living. He refers to Abu Hanīfah (d 150/767) who said that:

Education means understanding of what makes or mars a soul and learning something without putting it into actual practice is meaningless. One should therefore know how to distinguish between right and wrong in regard to both this world and hereafter and should choose the right conduct, so that his misguided intellect may not lead him astray and consequently Allāh's wrath may fall upon him.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, according to Ibn Jamā'ah, learning "was a medium for drawing people nearer to God and for spreading and reviving divine law."<sup>35</sup> Muḥd Khan comes to the point that Ibn Jamā'ah disliked the course of philosophical theology which tries to discuss the problem of God by the way of rational thinking, instead of merely doctrinal.

The difference between al-Zarnūjī and Ibn Jamā'ah could also be seen in terms of the methods of learning. Muḥd Khan pointed out that al-Zarnūjī preferred "understanding" to "memorizing". Methods such as disputation

<sup>34</sup>Muḥd Khan, "The Theories," p 421

<sup>35</sup>Ibid , p 425

(*munāẓarah*) and deliberation (*muḥāraḥah*) are strongly suggested by al-Zarnūjī. In contrast, Ibn Jamā'ah, influenced by al-Shāfi'ī, suggested that the values of comradeship (*murāfaqah*) and repetition (*tikrār*) be instilled in students. In other words, Ibn Jamā'ah placed accuracy and correct reading and memorizing of the texts as a significant method rather than original and intellectual contemplation.

By comparing the *Ta'lim* with Ibn Jamā'ah's *Tadhkirat al-Samī'ī*, Muḥd Khan succeeds in demonstrating, to some degree, the principles of Muslim learning in the medieval period to which al-Zarnūjī made a contribution. Al-Zarnūjī's ideas, according to Muḥd Khan, indicated some aspects of Muslim learning which were strongly influenced by the development of schools of Islamic law. It has been widely recognized that one of the striking phenomena of the medieval Muslim period was the rise and the development of Islamic schools, among which four are very prominent, each of which was the Ḥanafīte affiliated to Abī Ḥanīfah, the Mālikite to Malik Ibn Anas (d. 179/795), the Shāfi'ite to al-Shāfi'ī (d.204/820), and the Ḥanbalite to Ibn Ḥanbal (d.241/855) respectively.<sup>36</sup> Al-Zarnūjī with his *Ta'lim* supplied us with ideas on learning mostly promoted by medieval Ḥanafite scholars such as Burhān al-Dīn al-Farghānī al-Marghīnānī and al-Hasan Ibn Maṣṣūr al-

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<sup>36</sup>Islamic schools of law (*madhāhib*, sing. *madhhab*) had during the early period emerged with a geographical designation; for instances, the Kuffians, for those who lived in Kuffah, the Medinians, for those who lived in Medina, and the Syrians, for those who lived in Syria. Subsequently, in the first part of the second century of Muslim era (eight of common era), the groups, based on a geographical designation, formed themselves around individual masters of Islamic law, such as the group of Abu Ḥanīfah in Kuffah, that of Malik in Medina, and that of al-Auza'ī in Syria. Then, by the middle of third century of Muslim era (ninth of common era), a great number (about five hundreds) of 'personal' schools existed; but only four of them continue to survive down to our time: Ḥanafites, Mālikites, Shāfi'ites, and Ḥanbalites.

Farghani. In the study of Muslim educational history, particularly in terms of the ethical framework, al-Zarnūjī's contribution cannot be neglected.

The study of al-Zarnūjī's *Taʿlīm* was also done by von Grunebaum and Abel. Together they first translated the *Taʿlīm* into English in which version they also identified some of the scholars quoted by al-Zarnūjī. In their "Introduction" to this translation, they first discuss al-Zarnūjī's attitude to the problem of learning. According to them, al-Zarnūjī perceives learning as the type of psychological activity which man alone has. Animals, although having the ability to feel and perceive their surroundings, are unable to build knowledge. In other words, they say, "al-Zarnūjī means learning through the medium of verbal symbols which are conceptualized and comprehended."<sup>37</sup> This perception, according to them, is different from that in the modern era in which the learning process is "the acquisition of motor habits or reflex conditioning."<sup>38</sup>

In assessing al-Zarnūjī's ideas, von Grunebaum and Abel classify them into two main categories. The first is those which are ethical and religious in which al-Zarnūjī sets forth certain types of religious duties to be practiced by the student. This category is alogical, in the sense that we cannot discuss it in the light of reason. For instance, in chapter 13 of his *Taʿlīm*, al-Zarnūjī suggests that the student will find added sustenance if he "recites each day from

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<sup>37</sup>von Grunebaum and Abel, "Introduction," p. 3

<sup>38</sup>Ibid

the moment of daybreak to the time when the prayer starts a hundred times .  
Praise be to God, the Exalted, Praise be to God."<sup>39</sup>

The second category of al-Zarnūjī's ideas deals with the technical aspects of learning, and potentially should be discussed in the light of psychology. Considering al-Zarnūjī's suggestion that the student has to select the course of study primarily beneficial to himself, von Grunebaum and Abel comment that "by beneficial, al-Zarnūjī had cognizance of the preparedness of the student, his readiness to absorb new material by awareness and understanding rather than by blind faith in authority."<sup>40</sup> There are at least six aspects of the methods of learning, with which al-Zarnūjī was concerned, namely (1) the curriculum and the subject matter, (2) the choice of setting and teacher, (3) the time for study, (4) techniques for learning and manner of study, (5) dynamics of learning, and (6) the student's relationship to others. Apart from the lack of analytical contemplation in al-Zarnūjī's thought, they recognize that it is in these aspects given above that al-Zarnūjī makes his contributions to the problem of Muslim learning.

Similarly, von Grunebaum and Abel try to expose, to some extent, the setting of al-Zarnūjī's work in the light of the history of Muslim education in the medieval period. They perceive that when al-Zarnūjī composed his *Ta'lim*, institutions of Muslim learning had been well organized. Since the eleventh and

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<sup>39</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tariq al-Ta'allum, Instruction of the Student the Method of Learning* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), p. 73

<sup>40</sup>von Grunebaum and Abel, "Introduction," p. 4

twelfth centuries at least there had been *madrasahs*<sup>41</sup> throughout Muslim regions, particularly in Persia. Von Grunebaum and Abel finally suggest that:

It is evident that al-Zarnūjī had in mind the *madrasa* and its conditions when he composed his *Taʿlīm*, for in his time more and more scholars achieved the relative economic security of a fixed position, and the larger and widely renowned *madrasas* had become the true fountain-heads of traditional learning.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to the two above-mentioned studies, the *Taʿlīm* drew the attention of M A. Quraishi and I.O. Oleyede.<sup>43</sup> The former seems to have been influenced by the study of von Grunebaum and Abel above in that he described the contents of the *Taʿlīm* which referred to educational theories. However, his article overlooked the references to study. As for Oleyede, he went one step further and questioned some problems which al-Zarnūjī had proposed. Al Zarnūjī, for instance, suggests that to avoid laziness, students should limit their eating. Such a problem, Oleyede points out, is better examined by a nutritionist.

In Indonesia, the study of the *Taʿlīm* has been done in 1990 by Djudi who tried to examine al-Zarnūjī's theory of learning in the light of modern

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<sup>41</sup>For observations of the *madrasah*, as the institution of Muslim learning in medieval period, see George Makdisi's works, particularly *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), and *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990)

<sup>42</sup>von Grunebaum and Abel, "Introduction," p. 17

<sup>43</sup>M A. Quraishi, "An Arab Educator of the XIII century" in his *Some Aspects of Muslim Education* (Baroda: Centre of Advanced Study in Education, Faculty of Education Psychology, M S University, 1970), pp 112-121. And I.O. Oleyede, "Utilizing the Principles of *Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim* for the Islamization of the Modern Techniques of Learning," *Muslim Education Quarterly* 7 (1990), pp 8-18. Transliterations are added

psychology.<sup>44</sup> To a considerable measurement, the author is successful in describing relevant concepts such as that of learning, that of memory, and that of motivation. Apart from the impression of exaggeration in some places and the lack of references, the study represents the first attempt in an academic manner to deal with al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim* in Indonesia. In the following year, in 1991, another study of the *Ta'lim* was done by a prominent Indonesian scholar, H.A. Mukti 'Alī.<sup>45</sup> He observed the influences of al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim* on the rules of learning established by a well-known Indonesian educator, Imam Zarkasyī, for his students in a modern Muslim boarding school (*Pondok Modern*), Gontor, Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. 'Alī recognizes that, in many cases, Zarkasyī tried to actualize the ideas in al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim* in the context of modern traditions. This is a prove that even in the modern Muslim boarding school where the *Ta'lim* was no longer studied in formal classes, al-Zarnūjī's ideas continue to give important impacts. Interestingly, though 'Alī claims as employing a comparative approach, his study is in fact no more than a summary of each chapters of the *Ta'lim*, supplemented with his comments on Zarkasyī's rules of learning, on the bases of 'Alī's personal experience. Moreover, he clearly neglects the sources on theories of Muslim learning, both classic and modern, which could have made the study more academic.

<sup>44</sup>Djudi, "Konsep Belajar Menurut al-Zarnūjī: Kajian Psikologik Etuk Kitab *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* [Al-Zarnūjī's Concept of Learning: a Psychological Study on Ethics in the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*]," Master thesis (Yogyakarta: Institut Agama Islam Negeri [The State Institute of Islamic Study] "Sunan Kalijaga," 1990). Arabic transliterations are added. The sense of exaggeration appears, for instance, in Djudi's opinion in pp. 19-20 that the *Ta'lim* had probably been a main reference for the initial establishment of modern theories of learning by Western scholars.

<sup>45</sup>H.A. Mukti 'Alī, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Versi Imam Zarkasyī* [Imam Zarkasyī's Version of the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*] (Gontor: Trimurti, 1991). Arabic transliterations are added. 'Alī includes eleven sources in his bibliography: one is al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim* and its commentary (Sharh) while the others are books and manuals mainly dealing with the orders of Imām al-Zarkasyī, for his students.

To my mind, it is perhaps ideal that al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim*, as a medieval work, should be approached, in a full sense, from a historical perspective. This means that the study should be a historical inquiry which on the one hand situates al-Zarnūjī as a central figure who was not isolated from his socio-political background, and on the other regards the *Ta'lim* as al-Zarnūjī's intellectual expression. In this ideal manner, historical evidences are certainly required to picture the entire aspects of al-Zarnūjī's life, in order to grasp the more accurate meanings, based on historical contexts, of concepts and theories offered in his *Ta'lim*. Moreover, the historical approach will be able to determine the elements which affect al-Zarnūjī's ideas by examining the intellectual characters of scholars whose sayings are quoted in his *Ta'lim*. It must not have been without significance that al-Zarnūjī selected and included a number of scholars of different currents: Sunni jurists like Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Shafi'ī, and Buhān al-Dīn al-Marghīnānī; a Shī'ī Imām, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765); a Ṣūfī master and theologian, Mansūr al-Ḥallāj (executed in 310/922); a Greek Physician, Galenosī (d. circa 200 A.D.); and a great Arabic Poet, Abū Tayyīb al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965).<sup>46</sup>

The present study is however not such a historical inquiry as described above, given the reason that al-Zarnūjī's biography is still silent. Rather, it is an

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<sup>46</sup>Instances of the studies consistent with such a historical perspective are: 1. Sami S. Hawi, *Islamic Naturalism and Mysticism: a Philosophical Study of Ibn Tufayl's Ḥayya Bin Yaqzān* (Leiden: F. J. Brill, 1974); 2. Zainool Rahim Kassam, "The Problem of Knowledge in Nasir-i Khusraw: an Ismā'īlī Thinker of 5th/11th Century," Thesis (Montreal: The Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1984), and 3. Mehdi Aminrazavi, "Suhrawardi's Theory of Knowledge," Dissertation (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1989). In the case of these three scholars, historical informations on their life, their works, their involvement in political events are considerably available.

attempt to approach the *Ta'lim* with descriptive and comparative manners. By descriptive, I will go into a comprehensive effort to demonstrate aspects of the method of learning in al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim*. In this respect, I will develop what von Grunebaum and Abel have achieved to divide al-Zarnūjī's ideas into two categories; religious and technical. While they disregard the use of the religious category since it is considered alogical, I will try to describe the categories in a more detail presentation. In addition, I will give a more special attention to the problem of knowledge since it is in this aspect that the basic nature of al-Zarnūjī's theories is essentially found.

By comparative manner, I will try to put together ideas of Muslims scholars such as al-Farābī, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Jama'ah, Ibn Khaldun, and some others, in line with aspects of al-Zarnūjī's theories. The assumption to consider the scholars in wider context is that concepts which al-Zarnūjī offered in his *Ta'lim* were in fact not unique to him, but rather typical in the history of Muslim scholarship. This comparative manner will consequently give an idea to highlight the nature of al-Zarnūjī's ideas in comparison to that of other scholars.

It should be noted that, to illuminate some aspects of his ideas, in both descriptive and comparative manners, historical accounts will, to certain degree, supplement.

Structurally, this study consists of two main chapters. In the first place, it deals exclusively with the problem of knowledge, which is anyhow the core of learning. This chapter examines mainly al-Zarnūjī's attitude to knowledge and his classification of it. His perception of this problem certainly determines the characteristics of his ideas on the method of learning as a whole. In the second



chapter, this study discusses the details of the method of Muslim learning in the light of two categories . one is those which are ethical, including the problems of *niyah* (intention), *jidd* (industriousness), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and *hurmah* (respect), while the other is those which are practical such as about the choice of subject matter, the select of teacher, and the process of learning.

## Chapter I

### THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

It appears to have been a typical feature that, so far as my research goes, most Arabic works on Muslim learning, either classical or modern, deal in the beginning of their expositions, with the problem of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> This is perhaps a way by which the authors lay down their basic assumption which determines their theories about aspects of learning. To know the characteristics of a theory of learning is therefore to understand, first of all, how the author perceives knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup>See for instance 'Abd al-Salām Ibn Saḥnūn (d. 256/869), "Risālāt Adab al-Mu'allimīn," ed. by Ḥasan Husnī al-Wahhāb, in 'Abd al-Amīr Shams al-Dīn, *al-Fīkr al-Tarbawī 'inda Ibn Saḥnūn wa al-Qābisī* (Beirut: Dār Iqra', 1985), pp. 53-81, Abu Ḥasan al-Qābisī (d. 403/1012), "al-Risālah al-Mufasssilah li Ahwal al-Muta'allimīn, wa Ahkām al-Mu'allimīn wa al-Muta'allimīn" in 'Abd al-Amīr Shams al-Dīn, *Al-Fīkr al-Tarbawī 'inda Ibn Saḥnūn wa al-Qābisī*, pp. 99-190. Ibn 'Abd al-Barrī (d. 426/1034), *Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm wa Fadlih wa Mā Yanbaghi fi Riwayatih wa Hamlih*, 2 vols., ed. by 'Abd. al-Raḥmān Muḥammad 'Uthmān (Cairo: Matba'at al-'Asimah, 1388/1968); Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Fatḥat al-'Ulm* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Husainiyah al-Miṣriyah, 1322/1904), Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī al-Shaukānī (d. 648/1250), *Adāb al-Ṭalab* (Yaman: Markaz al-Dirash wa al-Abhath al-Yamaniyah, 1979); Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī (d. 682/1283), "Kitāb Adab al-Muta'allimīn," ed. by Yaḥyā al-Hishābī, *Majallat Maḥad al-Makhṭūṭat al-'Arabiyah* 3 2 (1957), pp. 267-284; Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi' wa al-Mutakallim fi Adab al-'Ālim wa al-Muta'allim* (Haydarabad: Dar'at al-Ma'arif, 1353/1933), and 'Abd Basīt al-'Almawī (981/1573), "Al-Mu'id fi Adab al-Mu'id wa al-Mustafid," in Shafīq Muḥammad Zay'ūr, *Al-Fīkr al-Tarbawī 'inda al-'Almawī* (Beirut: Dar Iqra', 1987), pp. 24-53. See also Abū Bakr Jābir al-Jazārī, *Al-'Ilm wa al-'Ulama'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub li al-Malāyīn, 1983).

### A. Knowledge (*ʿIlm*) : Its Significance and Division

Al-Zarnuqī deals in the first chapter of his *Taʿlīm* with the issue of knowledge in the light of its virtue and its nature. Insofar as this problem is concerned, our examination of al-Zarnūjī's ideas can be directed to two main points. In the first place, we will consider his attitude to knowledge in connection with learning. Second, we will describe his classification of knowledge as subject matter. However, since al-Zarnūjī's notions are tied to his commitment to Islam,<sup>2</sup> it is necessary to commence this examination by considering some remarks on Islamic perceptions of the position of knowledge.

There is no objection, particularly by Muslim scholars, that knowledge (*ʿilm*) should occupy an important position in Islam. A modern Muslim scholar, Ismaʿīl R. al-Fārūqī, together with his wife, Lois Lamyāʾ al-Fārūqī, writes that "Islam identified itself with knowledge. It made knowledge its condition as well as its goal."<sup>3</sup> His contemporary, Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-Attas, suggests that "there have been many expositions on the nature of knowledge in Islam more than in any other religion, culture, and civilization,

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<sup>2</sup>For an introduction to Islam, see Charles J. Adams, "The Islamic Religious Tradition," in *Religion and Man*, ed. by W. Richard Comstock (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 553-617. According to David Ede and others, "this is one of the best of the many short introduction to Islam found in textbooks on the religions of man. Well written, it consciously directs its attention to the Islamic religious tradition. With the annotated bibliography of basic works, it serves the purpose of introducing the beginner to Islam," (David Ede and others, *Guide to Islam* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1983), p. 89). See also Adams's article, "Islam," in *A Reader's Guide to the Great Religions*, 11th ed., ed. by Charles J. Adams (New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 287-337, and "Islamic Religious Tradition," in *The Study of the Middle East: Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. by Leonard Binder (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976), pp. 29-96.

<sup>3</sup>Ismaʿīl R. al-Fārūqī and Lois Lamyāʾ al-Fārūqī, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986), p. 230.

and this is no doubt due to the preeminent position and paramount role accorded to *al-ʿilm* by God in the Holy Qurʾān."<sup>4</sup>

The significance of knowledge in Islam may be easily discerned in dynamic fields such as Theology and Jurisprudence. While arguing that in its first emergence, Islam did not discuss man's knowledge of God, A. S. Tritton is successful in showing the significant place of knowledge in the early development of Muslim schools of theology such as the Khawarij, the Murji'ah and the Mu'tazilah. Although there are serious controversies among them, Tritton recognizes that:

The outstanding fact is that all these theories are Muslim. The starting point is religious; man face to face with God, the book, and the prophet. It might seem that the Mu'tazili doctrine of reason as a source of knowledge of God is not Muslim, but it is equally plausible to argue that it is a product of the emphasis which the Koran lays on the signs of God's activity, for the signs are no use unless there is someone who can interpret them. It is likely that the Mu'tazila took suggestions from outside but in essentials there is nothing foreign in the history of these theories.<sup>5</sup>

In the field of Islamic Jurisprudence, this problem has been a central issue since it is required to undertake *ijtihād*, by which Islamic legal issues can be produced in more practical provisions to meet social conditions which continuously change. It is indeed true that to Muslims the primary sources of Islamic law are the Qurʾān and *hadīth*, but in fact they are alone not sufficient in

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<sup>4</sup>Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), 1978), p. 136.

<sup>5</sup>A. S. Tritton, "Theory of Knowledge in Early Muslim Theology," in *Woolner Commemoration Volume*, ed. by Mohammad Shafi, M. A., 11th ed. (Lahore: Mehar Chand Lahman DAS (Harvard University Library Microproduction Department, 1940), p. 256. Discussion of the problem of knowledge in Islamic is often seen in contrast to the problem of *taqlid* (a blind acceptance of belief). See for instance, Richard M. Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlid* - the Foundations of Religious Belief in Classical Ashʿarism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109 (1989), pp. 37-62.

facing technical needs, mainly in the flexible domains of society, *ummah*. Basic rules which the two sources provide must be developed through the process of reasoning, *ijtihad*. To do the *ijtihād*, which both the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* encourage, a number of basic requirements, which remain behind the problem of knowledge, are absolutely needed. Every Muslim has in fact the right and even an obligation to perform *ijtihād*, but it can not be done without meeting the following requirements

(1) He has to possess the knowledge of the Qurʾān and all that is related to it, that is to say, a complete knowledge of Arabic literature, a profound acquaintance with the orders of the Qurʾān and all their sub-divisions, their relationship to each other and their connection with the orders of the *sunnah*. He should be able to make clear the meaning of the obscure passages (*mutashābihah*), to discriminate the literal and the allegorical, the universal and the particular.

(2) He must know the Qurʾān by heart with all the traditions and explanations..

(3) He must have a perfect knowledge of the traditions, or at least three thousand of them..

(4) He should be pious and live an austere life.

(5) He should have a profound knowledge of all the sciences of the law.

(6) He should have a complete knowledge of the four schools of jurisprudence.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, a serious observation concerning the Qurʾānic attention to knowledge (*ʿilm*) has been made by a modern Western scholar, Franz Rosenthal. He holds that "*ʿilm* is one of those concepts that have dominated Islam and given Muslim civilization its distinctive shape and complexion. In

<sup>6</sup>T. P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (Clifton, N.J.: Reference Book Publishers, 1965), p. 199. This is out of date, but is still widely used.

fact, there is no other concept that has been operative as a determinant of Muslim Civilization in all its aspects to the same extent as *‘ilm*”.<sup>7</sup> To support this argument, he goes into an indepth calculation of the use of the word *‘ilm* in the Qur’ān. According to him:

In all its derivations, the root *‘-l-m-* excluding, of course, the unrelated *‘ālam* "world"- occurs in the Qur’ān with unusual frequency. There are about 750 occurrences all told. Since the Qur’ān contains roughly something short of 78,000 words, it can be said that the derivations of the root *‘-l-m* make up about one percent of its vocabulary.<sup>8</sup>

To continue, he suggests therefore that:

The frequency with which the root *‘-l-m* occurs in the Qur’ān is not a matter of chance. It is mentioned with such persistence that nobody could fail to notice it. It was a concept that the prophet wanted to be noticed. It was one of the basic ideas he had made it his business to convey to his followers.<sup>9</sup>

Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, while arguing that "the frequency of appearance of the roots of a word (for example, *‘-l-m* ), is only one indication of the importance of a concept", suggests that "The emphasis on knowledge

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<sup>7</sup>Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: the Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: E J Brill, 1970), p. 2. For a critical response to his thesis, see S. Pines, "Jāhiliyya and ‘Ilm," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), pp. 175-194, in which the author makes the point that "there are some data that indicate that Jewish Christians set a particularly high value on knowledge, and that they held themselves and the other Jews, or Hebrews, or Children of Israel, to be people of knowledge and the other nations to be ignorant " (p. 186)

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 21 For the meaning of knowledge (*‘ilm*) in Islam, see his "Muslim Definitions of Knowledge," in *The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Middle East*, ed by Carl Leiden, pp. 117-132 (Austin: The Humanities Research Center, the University of Texas, 1966). Also see Muhammad A‘la Ibn ‘Alī al-Tahānawī, *Mawsū‘at Istilāhāt al-‘Ulūm al-Islāmiyyah*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Shirkat al-Khīrāt li al-Kutub, 1966), pp. 1048-1069, and Samīh ‘Āṭif al-Zayn, *Majma‘ al-Bayan al-Hadīth* (Beirut: Maktabāt al-Madrasah, 1990), pp. 603-605

can be directly discerned from the elevated status accorded to those who seek, possess, teach, and act upon it (the *‘ulamā’*).<sup>10</sup>

The Qur'an categorically dismisses any thought of equality between those who know and those who do not: 'say [unto them, O Muhammad]: Are those who know not ? But only men of understanding [*fulul albab*] will pay heed' (39.9). Positive fear of God which forms the central principles of Islamic religious life can be attained only by those who have knowledge (35.28) for they, together with the angels are able to testify to God's existence and unity (3:18) through the evidence of creation. Nobody except those with knowledge shall grasp the meanings of divine wisdom through similitudes (*amthāl*) that God has coined for mankind (29:43).<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, there are a number of *ḥadīths* which emphasize the importance of knowledge in Islam. Some of them are collectively presented as follows:

Seek ye knowledge from the cradle to the grave. Knowledge is like a lost treasure for the believer, he seeks it even if it be in China. To seek knowledge is the duty of every Muslim man and woman. Acquire knowledge because he who acquires it performs an act of piety. He who travels in quest of knowledge, to him Allāh shows the way, he walks in the path of Allāh. Who goes forth in search of knowledge, God will not let his labors go unrewarded in this world and in the world hereafter. That person who dies while engaged in acquiring knowledge with a view to spreading it will be granted God's blessings in the next world. He dies not who takes to learning.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Concept of Knowledge in Islam and Its Implication for Education in a Developing Country* (London: Mansell, 1989), p. 34. Transliterations are added. For more analysis of the Qur'ānic ideas of knowledge, see 'Abd al-Rahmān Salih 'Abd Allāh, *Educational Theory: A Qur'ānic Outlook* (al-Makkah al-Mukarramah: Umm al-Qurā University, 1982). Also, see Sheikh Nadim Al-Gisi, "The Qur'an on Islamic Education" *Islamic Quarterly* 42 (1968), pp. 1-24.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 34-35

<sup>12</sup>In presenting *ḥadīths*, one should be attentive to questions of criticism or authenticity. Considering this problem, these selected *ḥadīth* materials pertaining to the problem of knowledge (Muslim education) are collected and arranged to be a close paraphrase. See Rab Nawaz Malik, "The Development of Muslim Educational Thought (700-1900)," Dissertation (Kansas University of Kansas, 1968), p. 51. For more discussion, see Al-Zaluzi Rahmān, *Muḥammad Sallā Allāh 'alaihī Wassalam: Encyclopaedia of Seerah*, vol. 3 (London: The Muslim Schools Trust, 1981) and H. A.

Al-Zarnūjī's attitude to knowledge, as will be demonstrated below, is essentially in line with Islamic ideas. Although he rarely quotes the Qur'anic verses or the *ḥadīths*, but rather refers often to the wisdom and tradition of his ancestors, in his *Ta'lim*, al-Zarnūjī obviously recognizes that "on [the subject of] the virtues and excellences of learning [[knowledge]] there exists [a considerable number of] Koranic verses and sound [i.e., well authenticated] and well-known traditions"<sup>13</sup> The interesting point of his suggestion appears in his concern with the importance of knowledge connected with the superiority of mankind to other of the creations of God. Without any philosophical explanation, he holds that "the nobility of learning is not hidden from anyone since it is peculiar to humankind. Exclusive of knowledge, men as well as all other animals are associated with every virtue, such as valor, courage, strength, generosity, compassion. Learning [[knowledge]] is the exception"<sup>14</sup> To support this argument, he refers to the idea that "God revealed the preeminence of Ādam over the angels whom He commanded to prostrate themselves before him [[Ādam]]."<sup>15</sup>

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Jawad, "Muhammad The Educator: an Authentic Approach," *Islamic Quarterly* 34: 2 (1990), pp. 115-121

<sup>13</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Ṭarīq al-Ta'allum, Instruction of the Student the Method of Learning*, trans. and notes by G.E. von Grunebaum and T.M. Abel (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), p. 24. For the Arabic version, see *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Ṭarīq al-Ta'allum* (Mīsr, Mustafa al-Babī al-Halabī wa Awladuh, 1948), p. 8. Hereafter, references to the Arabic edition will be given in brackets next to references to the translation version by von Grunebaum and Abel. In most occasions, the word *al-ʿilm* in the *Ta'lim* is rendered by Grunebaum and Abel as "learning."

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22 {5}. See Nasīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī, "Kitāb Adab al-Muta'allim," p. 273.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.* {5}.



Additionally, al-Zarnūjī signifies the importance of knowledge as a means by which one can attain a high position in the eyes of God. With regard to this matter, he brings with his argument the concept of *taqwā*, by saying: "learning [[knowledge]] is noble for it leads to that fear of God which entitles [the believer] to God's benevolence and to eternal bliss."<sup>16</sup> It is only with knowledge that one can perform every religious obligation on the one hand, and avoid any prohibition determined by religious teachings on the other. These two matters, performing the obligation and avoiding the prohibition, are essential factors in the concept of *taqwā* (fear of God).

It is clear from the above citations that al-Zarnūjī's ideas concerning the virtue of knowledge center around the concept of man. Practically, there are two aspects of man on which he bases his argument. The first is that it has been true in nature that man, different from other creations of God, has the ability to attain knowledge. Other creations are, even though possessing some mental activities similar to those of man, such as perceiving their environment, unable to obtain knowledge. From this perspective, it is fair to assume that "al-Zarnūjī means learning through the medium of verbal symbols which are conceptualized and comprehended"<sup>17</sup> The second factor is that man, from the Islamic perspective, is obliged to act in accordance with the rules derived from religion. Otherwise, his life is nothing. In so doing, man needs knowledge which facilitates the performance of his duties.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid {5}

<sup>17</sup>T.M. Abel and G.E. von Grunebaum, "The Contribution of a Medieval Arab Scholar to the Problem of Learning," *Journal of Personality* 15 (1946-1947), p. 61.

Considering the importance of the concept of man in al-Zarnuji's ideas, it is important consequently to note some aspects of man; his nature and his purpose, in the light of Islamic teachings. To begin, it is interesting to see how the Qur'ān pays attention to the problems of man.

In the Qur'ān references to man as a species are conveyed by the term *al-insān* which occurs sixty-five times and its plural form of *al-nās* and *al-ins* which occur, respectively two hundred and forty and eighteen times. In all except one (17.4), the appearance of the definite article "al" joined to *Insān* seems to have some significance. S.H. Shamma proposes that this article has a function similar to that in *al-Ilah* (Allāh) which seems to have raised the original meaning of God to that of a universal and unique God. In the case of *Insān*, it seems to have given extra importance to mankind with its universal import and uniqueness.<sup>18</sup>

Insofar as the nature of man is concerned, the Qur'an discusses the problem in the light of two levels of the process of creation. The first level is primordial which is unseen, *ghā'ib*, and is understood only through revealed knowledge. At this level, it is frequently explained in the Qur'an that "man is created *ex nihilo* from lower organic substances referred to as *tin* (clay), *turab* (dust and mud), *min ṣalsal min ḥamāi masnūn* (and from dark altered clay) which God moulded with His own Hand and when it was fully formed, breathed His spirit into it."<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, at the second level "the creation of man is the scientifically known biological process: a sperm which lodged in a firm place and was turned into a lump which was later equipped with bones and flesh."<sup>20</sup> Although the main concern of the Qur'ān with the creation of man is

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<sup>18</sup>Mohd Nor Wan Dawud, *The Concept of Knowledge*, p. 15

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, p. 16

primarily at the level of primordial time, which is unseen (*ghāʾib*), some of its biological explanations have been scientifically acceptable.

In brief, the nature of man may be described as follows:

Man has a dual nature, he is both soul and body, he is at once physical being and spirit (15:29; 23:12-14). God taught him *the names* (*al-asmāʾ*) of everything (2:31), By 'the names' we infer that it means *the knowledge* (*al-ʿilm*) of everything (*al-ashyāʾ*). This knowledge does not refer to knowledge of essence (*dhāt*) or inmost ground (*sirr*) of a thing (*shayʾ*) such as, for example, the spirit (*al-rūh*), of which only a *little* knowledge is vouchsafed to man by God (17:85); it refers to knowledge of accidents (sing. *ʿard*) and attributes (sing. *ṣifah*) pertaining to things sensible and intelligible (*maḥsūsāt* and *maʿqūlāt*) so as to make known the relations and distinctions existing between them and to clarify their natures within these contexts in order to discern and understand their causes, uses, and specific individual purpose. Man is also given *knowledge about* (*maʿrifah*) God, His Absolute Oneness; that God is his true Lord (*rabb*) and true Object of Worship (*ilāh*) (7:172; 3:18). The seat of this knowledge in man, both *al-ʿilm* and *maʿrifah*, is his spirit or soul (*al-nafs*) and his heart (*qalb*) and his intellect (*al-ʿaql*). In virtue of the fact that man knows (*ʿarafa*) God in His Absolute Oneness as his true Lord, such knowledge, and the necessary reality of the situation that follows from it, has bound man in a Covenant (*mīthāq*, *ʿahd*) determining his purpose and attitude and action with respect to himself and to God (q.v. 7:172 fol.).<sup>21</sup>

As for man's purpose in his life, since he is created by God, he has to do *ʿibadah* (submission) to Him, and "his duty is obedience (*tāʿah*) to God, which conforms with his essential nature (*fiṭrah*) created for him by God (q.v. 30:30)."<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, man is the Vice-Regent (*khalifah*) of God on earth (2:30), and thus he holds the weighty burden of *trust* (*amānah*) namely "the trust of responsibility to rule according to God's Will and Purpose and His

<sup>21</sup>Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), 1978), pp. 132-133 Q.v. = Qurʾānic verse.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid See also, George N. Atiyeh "Al-Kindi's Concept of Man," *Hamdard Islamicus* 3.2 (1980), p. 40.

Pleasure (33:72)."<sup>23</sup> To drive the purpose of his life, man should basically develop his potential, including his intellect, given him by nature (*fītrah*).

Al-Zarnūjī similarly emphasizes throughout his theory of knowledge the significance of action (*ʿamal*). His argument with regard to this matter is practical and this may be affected by his concern with Islamic jurisprudence. He differentiates two interconnecting terms, *ʿilm* and *ṭiqh*. The former is understood by al-Zarnūjī "a [secondary] means through which the nature of a propounded subject may become clear" while the latter is "the science of the fine point of knowledge."<sup>24</sup> He then quotes Abū Hanīfa's point of view that "Jurisprudence is a person's knowledge of his rights and duties" and that.

The purpose of learning [[knowledge]] is to act by it while the purpose of action is the abandoning of the perishable for that which lasts forever. It is necessary for man neither to neglect his soul nor what helps or injures it in this life and in the next life. Hence man should try to provide what is useful while avoiding what is harmful to the [soul], lest his intelligence and his knowledge become weapons [arguments] against him and his punishment be increased. May God preserve us from His wrath and His punishment.<sup>25</sup>

Nowhere is the influence of the concept *ʿamal* on al-Zarnūjī's ideas clearer than in his theory of *ʿilm al-ḥal*, which, in turn, determines his classification of knowledge. Al-Zarnūjī considers Muhammad's tradition that "The quest for knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim man and Muslim woman."<sup>26</sup> He then clarifies this tradition by saying "Know that it is not obligatory for every Muslim, man or woman, to seek all [aspects of] learning

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 134

<sup>24</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Taʿlīm*, p. 24 {8}

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 24 {8}

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 21 {4}

[[knowledge]], but only that in keeping with his station in life *[[ʿilm al-ḥāl]]*"<sup>27</sup> Furthermore it is suggested that "the most meritorious knowledge is that in keeping with one's station *[[ʿilm al-ḥāl]]* and the most meritorious action is to maintain one's station *[[ḥilz al-ḥāl]]*." <sup>28</sup> As a jurist he bases his argument on a consideration that "it is necessary for the Muslim to strive for as much knowledge as he may need in his station whatever this is."<sup>29</sup>

Ibrāhīm Ibn Ismāʿīl and Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad, in their commentaries on the *Taʿlīm*, note that *ʿilm al-ḥāl* includes both the science of Islamic theology (*uṣul al-dīn*) and that of Islamic law (*fiqh*). As for the meaning of *al-ḥāl* itself, Ismāʿīl suggests that it is "immediate matters of human life such as the problem of unbelief (*kufr*), faith (*īmān*), ritual prayers (*ṣalāt*), legal alms (*zakat*), annual fasting during the month of *Ramaḍān* (*ṣiyām*), and the others, excluding those for the next time."<sup>30</sup> Aḥmad, in a more detailed note, holds that "the meaning of *al-ḥāl* is immediate matters pertaining to the life of humankind such as his faith and his knowledge concerning worship and primarily human business as well as dealing with approaches to meet his economical needs in order to make his life."<sup>31</sup>

On the basis of his concept *ʿilm al-ḥāl*, al-Zarnūjī classifies knowledge, as subject matter of learning, into two categories. The first is that dealing with

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid

<sup>28</sup>Ibid

<sup>29</sup>Ibid

<sup>30</sup>Ibrāhīm Ibn Ismāʿīl, *Sharḥ Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim* (Miṣr: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.), p. 4

<sup>31</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim*, ed. by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad (Cairo: al-Saʿādah, 1986), p. 83

matters which pertain to a person under all situations, and it is therefore definitely necessary for every individual person (Muslim) to seek this kind of knowledge. To al-Zarnūjī the position of this knowledge is equal to that of food<sup>32</sup> which everybody no doubt needs. In Islamic juridical terms, studying this knowledge may be justified as *farḍ 'ayn*, an obligation which must be done by every Muslims.<sup>33</sup> In his *Ta'lim*, al-Zarnūjī describes:

Since he [[the Muslim]] will have to perform his prayers he must needs [[sic]] know as much of the prayer ritual as will help him acquit himself of his duty to pray. [Furthermore], knowledge of his [other] religious obligations is incumbent upon him. For whatever leads to the ascertaining of duty is itself duty and what leads to the determining of obligation is itself obligation. This applies to fasting, and also to [the payment of the] poor-tax if [the believer] possesses wealth, and to the pilgrimage if one is under obligation to perform it. It also applies to trading if one is engaged in commerce.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, al-Zarnūjī includes in the first category of knowledge matters of ethics (rules of conduct). It is prescribed for all of us to learn "qualities [of human character] such as generosity and avarice, cowardice and courage, arrogance and humility, chastity [and debauchery], prodigality and parsimony and so on. For arrogance, avarice, cowardice and prodigality are illicit. Only through knowledge of them and their opposites is protection against them possible."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in other places al-Zarnūjī raises the importance of the knowledge of the Oneness of God. This matter is considered necessary to

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<sup>32</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim*, p. 21 {4}

<sup>33</sup>In his *Ta'lim* the term *farḍ 'ayn* does not appear explicitly. Rather, he often uses the words *yūstaradu 'alaih* and *yajibu 'alaih* which both mean "it is obligatory upon him", ascribed to the knowledge considered necessary to all Muslims. For instance, he says in p. {5}. *yūstaradu 'alaih 'ilmu ahwāl al-qalb* (it is obligatory upon him [the student] to know [learn] about the matters pertaining to the heart)

<sup>34</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim*, p. 21 {4}

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, p. 22 {5}

be studied by all Muslim as it pertains to their basic faith. Al-Zarnūjī considers this knowledge as that which should be sought in the early stage of the religious development of Muslims.

Unlike most Muslim scholars, al-Zarnūjī seems to neglect the importance of sciences dealing with the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*. In chapter I of his *Taʿlīm*, which exclusively discusses the problem of knowledge, al-Zarnūjī does not mention the two subjects, the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, to be studied by the student. However, in chapter IV: "On Respecting Knowledge and Those Who Possess It," his reverential attitude towards the two sciences is clearly apparent in his suggestion that it is obligatory for the student "not to stretch out one's foot toward the Book, to place books of [Koran] interpretation above other Books, and not to place anything else above the Book."<sup>36</sup> As to *ḥadīth*, he refers to the tradition of his predecessor that:

Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Buhārī came to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan with the Book of Prayer [probably a law Book]. And Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan said to him: "Go out and learn the science of Tradition," since indeed he estimated that this [kind of] knowledge was better suited to his nature. So [this student] investigated the science of Tradition and finally became superior to all the other imāms of Tradition.<sup>37</sup>

His attitude as demonstrated above seems to indicate that in fact, he considers the subjects of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* as obligatory sciences which the student should learn. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to master religious sciences such as Islamic law (*fiqh*) and Islamic theology (*tawḥīd*) while neglecting the

<sup>36</sup>Ibid , p. 35 {19}

<sup>37</sup>Ibid , p. 36. Muhammad Ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 257/870) was one of the well-known Traditionalists in Islām, while Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan (namely Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad Ibn al- Hasan Ibn. Farqad al-Shaibānī (d. 189/804) was one of the students of Abū Ḥanīfah.

subjects of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, which are considered the primary sources of Islamic teachings.

The second category of knowledge, according al-Zarnūjī, is that of "matters affecting a person upon certain occasions"<sup>38</sup> and seeking this knowledge is classified as *farḍ kifāyah* (a collective duty). Explaining this duty, he says: "[this means that] when some [people] fulfill it in a given place, others are excused from this [duty]; on the other hand, if no one fulfills it, the sin resulting from such omission, falls on the whole community. It is for the Imām to direct and for the community to submit with regard to this [obligation]."<sup>39</sup> He makes an analogy that the *farḍ kifāyah* knowledge holds the same position as the science of medicine and that of the stars for they are both needed at stipulated times only.

It should be borne in mind, nevertheless, that he distinguishes these two kinds of knowledge, the sciences of medicine and Astronomy, and classifies them into two different categories. First, knowledge such as that of medicine represents that which is basically permitted to be studied because "it deals with accidental [secondary] causes. Therefore its study is allowed just as is [that] of other accidental causes. The prophet treated himself medically."<sup>40</sup> As for the second class, represented by the science of the stars, its study was initially forbidden, because according to al-Zarnūjī "it is both harmful and useless" and he says: "Escape from the decree of God and his dispensation is impossible [so

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 23 {6}

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 23 {6}.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 24 {7}



that the study of the stars is both futile and sacrilegious]."<sup>41</sup> However, he recognizes that this prohibition is "with the qualification that one is permitted to study [astronomy] just enough to determine the *qibla* and the times of prayer."<sup>42</sup> In other words, it could be assumed from his suggestion that to the extent of conforming to religious duties, searching for non-religious knowledge is nevertheless necessary.<sup>43</sup>

In brief, it could be said that al-Zarnūjī's divisions of knowledge, presumably influenced by his discipline of *fiqh*, consist of two main categories: the knowledge which is *farḍ ʿayn* and that which is *farḍ kifāyah*. The former mainly covers *tawḥīd* (Islamic theology), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *akhlāq* (Islamic ethics). As for the latter, it is represented by the science of medicine and that of the stars. It is worth noting that his divisions certainly parallel al-Shafīʿī's opinion, quoted by him, "that science has two branches: the science of legal doctrine which has to do with religious problems [*adyān*] and the science of medicine which has to do with [human] bodies [*abdān*]; any study that goes beyond [these sciences] is only a method of attracting an audience."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 23 {6}. In this context, what he means by the science of stars is perhaps Astrology.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 23 {6}. *Qiblah* is the direction toward Mecca in Muslim prayers. In this context, the science of the stars means Astronomy.

<sup>43</sup>So far his attitude to the sciences of medicine and the stars is concerned, he does not totally reject the sciences, since to some extent he realizes that Muslims can take advantage of them for the purpose of religious duties. It seems to be sure that such an attitude can also be applied to other non-religious sciences which he does not mention such as mathematics and chemistry. The fact that he mentions only the sciences of medicine and the stars is perhaps because of the popularity of these sciences in his era.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 24 {7}

## B. Further Discussions

A further examination is necessary to elucidate some aspects of al-Zarnūjī's ideas on knowledge. His attitude toward the significance of knowledge, his attention to *ʿaml*, his emphasis on Islamic jurisprudence, *fiqh*, his concern with medical science as well as with astronomy, and his approach to the classification of knowledge are those which stimulate discussion. While considering classical and medieval Muslim intellectuals such as al-Fārabī, al-Ghazālī<sup>45</sup> and Ibn Khaldūn, this examination will attempt to perceive the problems of Muslim learning in the light of medieval Muslim history.

### 1. The Excellence of Knowledge (*ʿIlm*)

Al-Zarnūjī's attitude concerning the excellence of knowledge for human life, both because of human nature and because of human necessity, is in fact, not unique. A point which should be kept in mind is, however, that his arguments in regard to this concern are purely religious, with the tradition of his predecessors as his references. This attitude seems to show the tendency of Muslim Traditionalists (Jurists) of his era, neglecting to a considerable extent, the significance of the rational approach. It is clear when his approach is compared to such scholars as al-Ghazālī and Ibn Khaldūn whose ideas

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<sup>45</sup>A study dealing more exclusively with aspects of learning in light of al-Ghazālī's thoughts is being in a process of completion by my fellow student, Hasan Asari, under supervision of Dr. Donald P. Little, to pursue his MA degree in the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University. According to him, the study examines the problem of knowledge and practical aspects of learning such as the relationship between teacher and student, by employing relevant works of al-Ghazālī.

concerning the significance of knowledge to human beings are presented below.

Al-Ghazālī is one of the great Muslim scholars, the predecessor of al-Zamujī, who provides us, in dealing with the problems of knowledge, both religious and logical evidence. Insofar as his philosophical approach is concerned, knowledge is significant, not only when it is compared with other attributes of God, but also in itself. Knowledge, says al-Ghazālī, "is in itself an absolute excellence, apart from any attribution [[of God]] It is the description of God's perfection, and through it the angels and prophets were imbued with honor."<sup>46</sup> Furthermore he argues that knowledge:

...is in itself delightful and therefore sought for its own [intrinsic value], and you would also find it a way which leads to the hereafter and its happiness, and the only means whereby we come close to God

The greatest achievement in the opinion of man is eternal happiness and the most excellent thing is the way which leads to it. This happiness will never be attained except through knowledge and works, and works are impossible without the knowledge of how they are done. The basis for happiness in this world is knowledge. Of all works it [[knowledge]] is, therefore, the most excellent.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldūn, who flourished about two centuries after al-Zamujī, recognizes the ability of the human being to search for knowledge. His concern with this problem is apparent in several sections of his *Muqaddimah*. His idea, according to Rab Nawaz Malik, is that "what distinguishes man from other living beings, he says, is his thinking capacity and inquisitiveness. Man's ability to think, coupled with his curiosity, enables him to investigate, discern,

<sup>46</sup>Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm The Book of Knowledge*, trans and notes by Nabih Amin Faris (Lahore S H Muhammad Ashraf, n d ), p 25

<sup>47</sup>Ibid , p 26 {8}

and discover."<sup>48</sup> Malik adds that "it is his (man's) inquisitiveness that creates in him the desire to understand things and acquire more knowledge. To blunt man's ability to reflect and inquire, Ibn Khaldun asserts, is to violate his nature, thus preventing him from achieving what he is able to achieve."<sup>49</sup>

In the words of Aliah Schleifer, it is said that:

According to Ibn Khaldūn, man is set apart from the lower stages of Allāh's creations by his ability to think. Through this ability and the existence of the soul, he is able to move towards the world of the angels, the essence of which is pure perception and absolute intellection. It is the world of the angels which gives the soul power of perception and motion.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, Schleifer concludes that:

Ibn Khaldūn presents man as the focal point of the universe. But, man before he reaches the stage of discerning intellect, is simply matter in as much as he is ignorant of all knowledge. Through knowledge, he reaches the perfection of his form. It is the discerning intellect, the God-given ability to think, which enable man to arrange action in an orderly, logical manner.<sup>51</sup>

## 2. The Connection of Knowledge (*ʿIlm*) and Action (*ʿAml*)

As to *ʿaml*, al-Zarnājī seems to regard it as a standard of the quality of knowledge which the student should search for. Even though he mentions in his *Taʿlīm* only a limited number of sciences, from his explanation it is clear that the more practical a knowledge the more it is necessary that it be studied.

<sup>48</sup>Malik, *The Development*, pp 70-71

<sup>49</sup>Ibid, p 71

<sup>50</sup>Aliah Schleifer, "Ibn Khaldūn's Theories of Perception, Logic, and Knowledge," *The Islamic Quarterly* 34 2 (1990), p 93

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, p 98

This notion is to some degree comparable to that set forth by al-Ḥujwiri (d. 567/1171) : "knowledge is obligatory in so far as it is requisite for acting rightly. God condemns those who learn useless knowledge."<sup>52</sup> The question of the degree to which *ʿilm* and *ʿaml* interrelate has actually been a stimulating issue in the history of Muslim learning.

Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) regards action (*ʿaml*) as "the only possible way 'to lay in provisions for the Last Day' and attain salvation."<sup>53</sup> In his notion, knowledge requires action. Ibn Bājjah (d. 533/1138), in perceiving the inter-relation between the two, quotes ʿAbd al-Rahmān Muḥammad al-ʿAubī (d. 228 A.H.) that "the end of thinking is the beginning of action and the end of action is the beginning of thinking."<sup>54</sup> Muslim thinkers in general, however, consider knowledge (*ʿilm*) higher than action (*ʿaml*). There are five reasons which support the argument of the superiority of knowledge:

1. Knowledge without action is an action, whereas action without knowledge is not an action, 2. knowledge without action may be useful, whereas action without knowledge is not useful; 3. knowledge is necessary, and action follows it like a lamp (which is as necessary as is knowledge, if there is to be light, or, like as a shadow follows the light of a lamp ?); 4. scholars hold the same rank as the prophets; and 5. knowledge comes from God, whereas action comes from human beings.<sup>55</sup>

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. circa 139/757) says that "knowledge is the soul while action is the body, knowledge is the foundation while action is the branch;

<sup>52</sup>G.E. von Grunebaum, "Muslim World View and Muslim Science," *Oriens* 17 (1964), p. 361

<sup>53</sup>Rosenthal, *Knowledge*, p. 248

<sup>54</sup>Ibn Bājjah, "Al-Wuqūf ʿalā al-ʿAql," in *Rasāʾil Ibn Bājjah al-Ilāhiyah*, ed. by Majid Fakhrī (Beirut: Dār al-Nahr, 1968), p. 108

<sup>55</sup>Rosenthal, *Knowledge*, p. 249

knowledge is the parent while action is the children; and in knowledge inclusively exists action while in action knowledge does not automatically exist."<sup>56</sup> In other words he says:

One's action on a matter of which he himself is not aware that it is false is fancy while the latter is the epidemic of virtue. One's avoidance of an action on a matter which he himself does not understand that it is right is carelessness while the latter is epidemic of religion; One's engagement courageously in a matter which he himself is not aware of whether it is right or false is fancy of intellect (reason).<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī, as noted by Rosenthal, holds that "knowledge was indeed 'the root of roots,' for "action can take on form (*yutaṣawwir*) only through knowledge of the manner in [[respect to]] which the action is to be undertaken," and there is also some knowledge, such as the knowledge of God and His attributes and His angels, which has nothing to do with action."<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, he is consistent in emphasizing the connection of the two, *ʿilm* and *ʿaml*, in order to gain happiness which is no doubt sought by both the ancients and more modern people. According to him, knowledge (*ʿilm*) needs a measurement (*miʿyār*), distinguishing it from other activities while action (*ʿaml*) "is a criterion (*mizān*) which will determine in a lucid and succinct manner, rising above passive imitation (*taqlīd*) and aiming at demonstrative certainty,

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<sup>56</sup>Abd Amīr Shams al-Dīn, *Al-Fikr al-Tarbawī ʿinda Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, al-Jahīz, ʿAbd al-Ḥamid al-Kātib* (Beirut Dār al-Iqraʿ, 1985), p. 165. Compare with Hippocrates's opinion: "Knowledge is the spirit, and action is the body. Knowledge is the root, and action is the branch. Knowledge is the father, and action is the child. Action came about because there was knowledge. Knowledge did not come about because there was action." Rosenthal, *Knowledge*, p. 249.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid

<sup>58</sup>Al-Ghazālī, *Mizān al-ʿAml*, p. 328, quoted in Rosenthal, *Knowledge*, p. 249.

'that (type of) action conducing to happiness and distinguishing it from that which conduces to wretchedness."<sup>59</sup>

Similarly, it is interesting to note that Abū Ḥanīfah, in addition to pointing out, as al-Zarnūjī indicates, that "the purpose of learning is to act by it," addresses a rather different opinion in his *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim*, "that *ʿamal* is the corollary (*ṭabaʿ*) of *ʿilm*; *ʿilm* with a little *ʿamal* is better than ignorance with much *ʿamal*."<sup>60</sup> It is also interesting to note an opinion from a Ṣūfī master of the late twelfth century, Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 1171/1168) who suggested that :

There is a saying : "He who listens with his ears will relate [what he has learned], he who listen with his heart will preach, and he who practices what he has learned is guided and gives guidance." There is another saying: "*ʿilm* calls out praxis, but if the latter does not respond, *ʿilm* will go away."<sup>61</sup>

### 3. Islamic Law (*Fiqh*) as a Supreme Subject

Another aspect of al-Zarnūjī's ideas on knowledge is that he obviously promotes the knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, *fiqh*, as a supreme subject of learning. To recall, it is significant to notice the emphasis of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Abu ʿAbd Allāh which al-Zarnūjī quotes:

1. Learn, for learning is an adornment for him who possesses it, a virtue and a preface for every praiseworthy action.

<sup>59</sup>Maqṣūd Ḥakīmī, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), p. 194.

<sup>60</sup>Joseph Schacht, "An Early Murcīte Treatise: the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim*," *Oriens* 17 (1964), p. 104.

<sup>61</sup>Abu al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Kitāb ʿĀdāb al-Murīdīn, a Sufi Rule of Novices*, trans. and intr. by Menahem Milson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 41.

2. Profit each day by an increase of learning and swim in the seas of beneficial knowledge.
3. Give yourself up to the study of jurisprudence, for the knowledge of jurisprudence is the best guide to piety and fear of God, and it is the straightest path to the goal.
4. It is the sign leading on to the ways of proper guidance; it is the fortress which saves [one] from all hardship.
5. Verily, one godly person versed in jurisprudence is more powerful against Satan than a thousand [ordinary] worshipers.<sup>62</sup>

Al-Zarnūjī explains the term, *fiqh*, by quoting Abū Ḥanīfah's opinion that it "is a person's knowledge of his rights and duties."<sup>63</sup> In his elaboration, the contents of *fiqh* are of some subjects such as ritual prayer, fasting, legal alms and major pilgrimage to Mecca as well as commerce. *Fiqh* is knowledge pertaining to legal obligations.

In the classical period of Muslim history, it was known that *fiqh* as a body of knowledge did not develop until the emergence of Islamic schools of law. The fact that al-Zarnūjī refers to Abu Ḥanīfa is a proof that he is aware of the development of this subject (*fiqh*) since Abu Ḥanīfa is a great scholar of early period to whom the school of Ḥanafite has been ascribed. Abu Ḥanīfa's opinion represents, therefore, the nature of this subject in the beginning of its rise. In addition, al-Zarnūjī refers also to al-Shāfiʿī, another great scholar of the classical period, to whom the school of Shafīʿite has been ascribed. When al-Zarnūjī recognizes al-Shāfiʿī's divisions of knowledge, it seems to be certain that he is aware of al-Shāfiʿī's opinion of the subject of *fiqh*.

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<sup>62</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Taʿlīm*, p. 22 {6-7}.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, p. 24 {8}.



Nowhere is al-Shāfi'ī's explanation of the knowledge of *fiqh* more important than in his *al-Risālah*, where it is postulated that legal knowledge consists of two kinds: "one is for the general public, and no sober and mature person should be ignorant of it"<sup>64</sup> According to al-Shāfi'ī, this type of knowledge is mentioned in the Qur'ān and may exist popularly among Muslims. This knowledge "admits of error neither in its narrative nor in its interpretation; it is not permissible to question it."<sup>65</sup> He gives some examples:

That daily prayers are five, that men owe it to God to fast the month of Ramadān, to make the pilgrimage to the [sacred] House whenever they are able, and to [pay] the legal alms in their estate; that He [God] has prohibited usury, adultery, homicide, theft, [the drinking of] wine, and [everything] of that sort which He has obligated men to comprehend, to perform, to pay in their property, and to abstain from [because] He has forbidden it to them.<sup>66</sup>

As for the second kind of *fiqh*, al-Shāfi'ī suggests that "It consists of the detailed duties and rules obligatory on men, concerning which there exists neither a text in the Book of God, nor regarding most of them, a *sunna*. Whenever a *sunna* exists [in this case], it is of the kind related by few authorities, not by the public, and is subject to different interpretations arrived at by analogy."<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, besides these two kinds of *fiqh*, al-Shāfi'ī recognizes another type derived from a narrative (*khabar*) or analogy. Al-Shāfi'ī states: "The public is incapable of knowing this kind of knowledge, nor can all

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<sup>64</sup>Muhammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Risālah*, trans and note by Majid Khadduri (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1987), p. 81.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 81

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82

specialists obtain it. But those who do obtain it should not all neglect it. If some can obtain it, the others are relieved of the duty [of obtaining it], but those who do obtain it will be rewarded."<sup>68</sup> To enhance his argument, he refers to the duty of *jihād* imposed by God in the Qurʾān as well as uttered by His prophet. "The duty of [jihād], holy war, is a collective [kifāya] duty different from that of prayer: Those who perform it in the war against the polytheists will fulfil the duty and receive the supererogatory merit, thereby preventing those who have stayed behind from falling into error."<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile, al-Khwārizmī (flourished 356-387/975-987) includes in the knowledge of *fiqh* eleven subjects: the foundations of Islamic law (*uṣūl-al-fiqh*), state of purity (*al-ṭaharah*), ritual prayers (*al-ṣalat*), fasting (*al-ṣawm*), legal alms (*al-zakāh*), major pilgrimage (*al-hajj*) and its conditions, sale transaction (*al-bayʿ*), marriage (*al-nikah*), blood-money (*al-diyah*), lawful share (*al-farīdah*), and rare matters (*al-nawādir*).<sup>70</sup> Another Muslim scholar, ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ al-ʿAlmawī explains that:

*Fiqh* is a science concerning the details of holy law, which is formulated on the basis of detail proofs, both ascribed to the Qurʾān as well as *ḥadīth* and developed by jurists who use certain methods to interpret the texts. The science contains all aspects of Islamic law derived from the Qurʾān, *Ḥadīth*, *Ijmāʿ* (Consensus), *Qiyas* (analogy) or other Islamic juridical approaches. *Fiqh* aims at directing Muslims to undertake God's order and to avoid what He forbids in order that he gain advantages in both the next life and today's world.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>70</sup>See al-Khwārizmī Muhammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Yūsuf, *Mafatih al-ʿUlum*, ed by Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Beirut. Dār al-Kutāb al-ʿArabī, 1989), pp. 19-40.

<sup>71</sup>ʿAbd Basīṭ al-ʿAlmawī, *al-Muʿrid fi Adab al-Mulīd wa al-Mustahid*, ed by Shafiq Muḥammad Zayʿūr (Beirut. Dār Iqraʿ, 1986), p. 78. For another meaning of *fiqh*, see Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī, "Risalah fi al-ʿUlūm," ed by Marc Berge, in *Bulletin*

Given these suggestions, it is understood that the science of *fiqh* deals with all aspects of religious activities which Muslims are obliged to perform. *Fiqh* accordingly provides Muslims with a complete set of rules on which their practices must be based. To true Muslims, none of their everyday life activities are activities removed from *fiqh*. Concerning this belief, it is no wonder that al-Zarnuji promotes *fiqh* as the supreme subject for Muslim learning.

Some remarks on the nature of Islam itself will also elucidate this problem. Even though the core of Islam, as with other great religions, lies in the belief in God (the theological aspect), its expression is obviously colored by juridical aspects (*fiqh*). "Islamic religion is characterized by the prominence of legal conception in its system. The shari'ah, or holy law, is its very essence, and *fiqh*, or religious jurisprudence, is its science (*ilm*) par excellence."<sup>72</sup> In like manner, Makdisi stresses that "Islam is first and foremost, a nomocracy. The highest expression of its genius to be found in its law; and its law is the source of legitimacy for other expressions of its genius."<sup>73</sup>

In the words of Joseph Schacht, "Islamic law is the epitome of Islamic thought, the most typical manifestation of the Islamic way of life, the core and the kernel of Islam itself."<sup>74</sup> It is said by J.N.D. Anderson that "for centuries the law has held a paramount place in the civilization and structure of the

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*d'Etudes Orientales* 18 (1963), p. 295 and Abi al-Hasan al-Husayni al-Jurjani, *Al-Ta'rifat*, ed. by 'Abd Rahman 'Umayrah (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1987), p. 216.

<sup>72</sup>S. D. Goitein, "The Birth-Hour of Muslim Law," in his *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), p. 126.

<sup>73</sup>George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh Press, 1981), p. 8.

<sup>74</sup>Joseph Schacht, *Introduction to Islamic Law*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 1.

Muslim World, at least in the Islamic ideal." Islamic law, continues Anderson, "covers every aspect of life and every field of law -international, constitutional, administrative, criminal, civil, family, personal, and religious. In addition, it covers an enormous field which would not be regarded as law at all in any modern classification."<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, Charles J. Adams says "Islam has often been called a religion of law."<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, observing the Qur'anic attitude to law, Goitein again notes:

In any case, if one considers its (i.e. the Qur'anic) subject-matters to its mere essence, under the five main headings of preaching, polemics, stories, allusions to the Prophet's life, and legislation, one will reach the conclusion that proportionately the Koran does contain legal material no less than the Pentateuch, the Torah, which is known in world literature as "the Law."<sup>77</sup>

Considering the above remarks, it is not surprising that al-Zarnūjī promotes the subject of *fiqh* as a religious science which the student should learn in high esteem.

#### 4. Sciences of Medicine and of the Stars

As for al-Zarnūjī's discussion on the subjects of medicine and astronomy, it seems to be sure that his idea portrays the Muslim attitudes of his era to the development of these two subjects. It should be kept in mind that classically Muslims identified foreign sciences (*ʿilm al-awāʾil*), with which medical science and astronomy are classified, in contrast to the religious

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<sup>75</sup>J.N.D. Anderson, "Law as a Social Force in Islamic Culture and History", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 20 (1957), pp. 13-14.

<sup>76</sup>Adams, "The Islamic Religious Tradition," p. 577. See also G.H. Bousquet and Joseph Schacht, eds., *Selected Works of C. Snouck Hurgronje* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1957), p. 48.

<sup>77</sup>Goitein, "The Birth-Hour," p. 128.

sciences, namely those which are claimed as derived from the Qurʾān and Islamic Traditions.<sup>78</sup> It is recognized that both the science of medicine and that of the stars are not Islamic in origin. However, apart from the lasting controversy, they enjoyed, to a certain degree, a great deal of attention from Muslim rulers and the masses. A number of hospitals and clinics were founded to provide both medical service and medical teaching.

Insofar as Islamic traditions are concerned, it was indicated that Muhammad's traditions "contain medical advice together with a variety of other subjects, but its influence on Muslim medicine seems to have been almost nil."<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Ibn Khaldūn holds that there is no need to practice the rules of medical science, because "the prophet's mission was to make known to us the prescriptions of the Divine Law, and not to instruct us in medicine and the common practices of ordinary life." He continues:

One is then under no obligation ... to believe that the medical prescriptions handed down even in authentic traditions have been transmitted to us as rules which we are bound to observe; nothing in these traditions indicates that this is the case. It is however true that if one likes to employ these remedies with the object of earning the divine blessing, and if one takes them with sincere faith, one may derive from them great advantage, though they form no part of medicine properly so-called.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Concerning this problem, see S. Pines, "What Was Original in Arabic Science," in *Scientific Change*, ed. by A.C. Crombie (London: Heinemann, 1963), pp. 181-205; Also, J.L. Breggren, "Islamic Acquisition of the Foreign Sciences: A Cultural Perspective," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 9 (1992), pp. 310-325.

<sup>79</sup>Aydin Mehmed Sayili, "The Institutions of Science and Learning in the Moslem World," Dissertation (Harvard. Harvard University, 1941), p. 79

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 80

In practice, however, Muslim history records the flourishing of this science under the rule of Islamic regimes. Utilitarian and pragmatic reasons can by no means reject the necessity of it. Aydın Mehmed Sayılı observes that:

The prophet and the first caliphs were treated by Harath Ibn Kalada al-Thaqafi (d.c. 650) who, according to some sources, had studied in Jundisāpūr. Important and continuous influence upon Islam from Jundisāpūr started, however, only during the reign of the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (788-809). Earlier, the Umayyad caliphs had patronized the best physicians available in Alexandria and in other culturally prominent centers of Syria and Iraq. Like the Sasanian and early Abbasid monarches, the Umayyad caliphs also seem to have sought the services of some doctors who had a knowledge of Hindu medicine; Barmak, who was a Buddhist, was called to Damascus to the court of ʿAbdalmālik. It was with the ʿAbbāsīd rule, however, that Indian and especially Greek influences began to enrich the medical knowledge of Islam at a fast pace.<sup>81</sup>

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din suggests that Muslims in medieval history "did great service to medical science in all its branches, and while non-Muslims went to the shrine of one saint or another to be cured of their ailments, the Muslims went to hospitals for treatment. Hospitals and asylums with capable nurses and able physicians spread everywhere in the early Muslim Empire. In Baghdad alone there were 864 licensed physicians."<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Charles Michael Stanton considers that "Islamic contributions to medicine were monumental - as evidenced in the many volumes written by noted physicians of the classical period, including Ibn Sīnā, al-Rāzī, and Ibn Rushd." Stanton continues that "their concept of the physician's role went beyond the mechanical

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 76

<sup>82</sup>Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, *Islam and Civilization* (Lahore: The Working Moslem Mission, 1931), pp 53-54.

treatment of physical and mental illness, but took a holistic approach that incorporated preventive medicine as well as concepts of hygiene."<sup>83</sup>

Meanwhile, Ibn Jumay<sup>c</sup> (d. 594/1198) gives some reasons for the excellence of medical science in connection with religious subjects. He says:

Medicine's objective is to maintain health in those bodies; and it is obvious that health is the noblest good that those bodies can acquire because the enjoyment of all other procurable things, in short, (the enjoyment) of this life, is attained and accomplished only through health. Therefore, the sages said : "Health is a hidden property without which visible properties will not be sound." Thus then, only through health can any deeds of corporal obedience and worship be performed. Therefore, the right-guiding law joins the art of medicine and religious learning.<sup>84</sup>

Evoking almost the same response as the science of medicine was the science of the stars. Al-Zarnūjī's attitude to this science leads us to consider also the Muslim response in the course of medieval Muslim history. Like the science of medicine, Astronomy did not originate with Islam. Muḥammad's Traditions even seem to be negative in its perception of the science. It is said in the Tradition, quoted by Ibn Sīnā, that "there are two things I fear above all, concerning my people, the belief in the stars, and their infidelity (which consists

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<sup>83</sup>Charles Michael Stanton, *Higher Learning in Islam: the Classical Period, A.D. 700-1300* (Savage, Maryland Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), pp. 114-115. Transliterations are added.

<sup>84</sup>Ibn Jumay<sup>c</sup>, *Treatise to Ṣalāh ad-Dīn on the Revival of the Art of Medicine*, ed. and trans. by Hartmut Fahndrich (Wiesbaden: Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner GMBH, 1983), p. 9. More positive responses to this science have been also shown in modern works such as Syed Habibul Haq Nadvi, *Medical Philosophy in Islam and the Contributions of Muslims to the Advancement of Medical Science* (Durban: The Center for Islamic Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Planning and Publication, 1983); and Muhammad Salim Khan, *Islamic Medicine* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986). For a study of individual scholars of medicine in the history of Muslim civilization, see Rosenthal, *Science and Medicine in Islam: a Collection of Essays* (Great Britain: Variorum, 1990).

of) rejecting the doctrine of destiny."<sup>85</sup> Ibn Khaldūn reports another tradition : "those who say 'the rain that we receive comes from the kindness of God and from his [[God]] mercy' believe in me and do not believe in the stars; those who say 'the rain that we receive comes from a star' do not believe in me but in the stars."<sup>86</sup> Additionally, an extreme response to the use of this science appears from al-Asbahī, a thirteenth century Yemeni legal scholar, that:

The times of prayer are to be found by observation with one's eyes. They are not to be found by the markings on an astrolabe or by calculation using the science of the astronomers. The astronomers took their knowledge from Euclid, the Indian astronomical tradition recorded by the authors of the *Sindhind*, as well as Aristotle and other philosophers, and all of them were infidels.<sup>87</sup>

It is clear that the reason for rejecting the science of the stars is indeed theological, either because the science leads Muslim to believe in something other than God or because it was found by non-Muslim scholars. However, certain theologians such as Ibn Hajar al-Haytami and Abu Khayar "were willing to believe that God had endowed nature with a quality such that a certain correspondence exists between the events of the world and the positions of the heavenly bodies." What they object to is the astrologers who "believed in a direct influence of the stars as the underlying principle of astrology"<sup>88</sup>

Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064), an Andalusian Muslim scholar of the medieval period, went even farther, that:

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<sup>85</sup>Sayili, "The Institutions," p. 178

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., pp. 178-179. In this tradition, the science of the stars was discouraged since it leads the Muslim to have beliefs which might compete with his belief in God. In this context, the science of the stars was identified as Astrology.

<sup>87</sup>Berggren, "Islamic Acquisition," pp. 318-319

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 182.



Astronomy (*ʿilm al-hayʾah*) was discussed by Ptolemy, Lunakhas before him, their followers, and earlier, the people of India, Nabataeans, and Copts. It is a good, sensory (*ḥissiyy*), and demonstrative science. It consists of the knowledge of the celestial bodies, their revolution, intersection, position, and their distance, and their satellites. The utility of this science is to arrive at the principles of creation and the majesty of the wisdom of the Creator, His power, His design, and His will. This utility is a very lofty one, specially for matters concerning the Hereafter.<sup>89</sup>

Considering the principle of utility, Islam regards pure astronomy as useful both in ordinary matters pertaining to the calendar and in the need "for the determination of the days of religious significance, as well as for the times of prayers and the beginning and end of the daily fasting in Ramadan."<sup>90</sup> In regard to this problem, Nasr suggests that:

The most important Islamic astronomical instrument is of course the astrolabe, which consists of the stereographic projection of the celestial sphere on the plane of the equator taking the pole as the viewpoint. The circle of declination and the azimuthal co-ordinates appears on the plates of the astrolabe, while the asterisms are on the spider or net. This multi-functional instrument can determine the altitude of the stars, the sun, the moon, and other planets in much the same way as a sextant or quadrant. The astrolabe can also be used to tell time and to measure the height of mountains and the depth of wells.<sup>91</sup>

## 5. The Division of Knowledge

Finally, we will discuss al-Zarnūjī's ideas about the classification of knowledge. As mentioned above, his approach to this problem is practical in that he endeavors to prioritize the subjects of learning. Similarly, he is

<sup>89</sup>A. G. Chejne, *Ibn Hazm* (Chicago: Kazi Publications Inc., 1982), p. 155.

<sup>90</sup>Sayyid, "The Institutions," p. 174.

<sup>91</sup>Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Science* (Westerham, Kent, U.K.: Westerham Press, 1976), p. 118.

apparently dominated by his concern with the religious duties, with which *fiqh* deals. Accordingly, his classification falls into two categories which are prominent in the field of Islamic jurisprudence. Knowledge, to al-Zarnuqī, is of two kinds: one is that which is obliged to be sought by all Muslims (*farḍ ʿayn*) and second that which is a collective duty (*farḍ kifāyah*) for Muslim community (*ummah*).

This classification is in fact not without precedent. A century before him, the great Muslim intellectual, al-Ghazālī, categorized knowledge in a similar way but with a more detailed explanation. Practical as well as philosophical reasons are given in his elaboration. In his *Kutāb al-ʿIlm*, for instance, al-Ghazālī provides us with a special section on this matter. The relating ideas of this problem can be also found in his other works such as *Mizān al-ʿAml*,<sup>92</sup> *Miʿyār al-ʿIlm*,<sup>93</sup> and *Ayyuhā al-Walad*.<sup>94</sup>

Al-Ghazālī holds that not all branches of knowledge must necessarily be acquired by all Muslims. There is a certain knowledge that every individual Muslim should search for. He recognizes, however, that to determine which knowledge is obligatory, Muslims fall into controversy, subject to their own concerns. Scholars of theology (*mutakallimun*), for instance, argue that it is theology, for the reason that this knowledge deals with the problem of faith in God. Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence also have their view when arguing that the subject of which the study is obligatory is the science of Islamic law, *fiqh*,

<sup>92</sup>Al-Ghazālī, *Mizān al-ʿAml* (Misr: Matbaʿat Kurdistān al-ʿIlmiyah, 1328/1910).

<sup>93</sup>Al-Ghazālī, *Miʿyār al-ʿIlm fī Fann al-Mantiq* (Misr: Matbaʿat Kurdistān al-ʿIlmiyah, 1329/1911).

<sup>94</sup>Al-Ghazālī, *O Disciple (Ayyuhā al-Walad)*, trans. by George H. Scherer (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1951).

because it covers the matters of everyday life. Other suggestions with their supporting argumentation also come from scholars of other disciplines such as those interested in the Qur'ānic exegesis (*mufasssīrūn*) and those concerned with Muhammad's Traditions (*muḥaddithūn*).

Apart from this controversy, al-Ghazālī derives his suggestion from his division of the whole of knowledge. On one hand, he emphasizes the division of knowledge into two main categories: that of *mukāshafah*, dealing with esoteric matters, and that of *mu'āmalah*, covering the rules of human actions. On the other, he perceives knowledge as being twofold: that concerning the path approaching the life of the future (*ākhirah*) and that pertaining to worldly matters. Only under these twin categories can his suggestion concerning knowledge being necessarily sought by all Muslims be understood.

To al-Ghazālī *farḍ 'ayn* knowledge is that which is "essential for individual survival, within the frame work of one's beliefs, actions and prohibitions"<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, *farḍ kifāyah* knowledge is that which "is essential for the survival of the society. However, it ceases to be an individual binding if certain members of the community are performing this act for the benefit of the whole society"<sup>96</sup>

It is worth noting that the classification of knowledge into *farḍ 'ayn* and *farḍ kifāyah* is still used in modern time. Al-Attas, at least, discusses this

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<sup>95</sup>Munawar Ahmad Anees and Aha Nasreen Athar, "Educational Thought in Islam," *Hamdard Islamicus* 3: 2 (1981), p. 71

<sup>96</sup>Ibid. For further readings of al-Ghazālī's classification of sciences, see 'Abd. Amīr Shams al-Dīn, *Al-Fīk al-Tarbawī 'inda Imām al-Ghazālī* (Beirut: Dār Iqra', 1985), pp. 40-45; and Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzālī* (Jerusalem: the Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, 1975), pp. 349-411.

problem. The former is to him knowledge of the prerequisites to understand the core knowledge which is significant for the individuals in Islamic education. It "must reflect the inner being of man (*rūḥ*, *nafs*, *qalb*, and *ʿaql*) and his spiritual sense."<sup>97</sup> Included in this category are subjects such as the Holy Qur'an, Tawḥīd, Ḥadīth, religious sciences (particularly *Fiqh*), Ethics and Arabic. As for *farḍ kifāyah* knowledge it is that, of which the parts have been deployed in proportion to the service to self, state and society. It deals with man's physical faculties and senses and includes such matters as the natural, physical and human sciences as well as aesthetics. In brief, his suggestion concerning this division is as follows:

Islam distinguishes the quest for two kinds of knowledge, making the one for the attainment of knowledge of the prerequisites of the first obligatory to all Muslims (*farḍ ʿayn*), and that of the other obligatory to some Muslims only (*farḍ kifāyah*), and (however) the obligatory for the latter can indeed be transferred to the former category in the case of those who deem themselves duty bound to seek it for their self improvement.<sup>98</sup>

To conclude, from the above discussion dealing with aspects of knowledge, it is clear that al-Zarnūjī's contribution is not distinct from that of other scholars and is in line with a traditional current. His attitude to the problem of knowledge is typical in that religious factors, which are often derived from the wisdom and the experience of his ancestors, play a dominant role. Likewise, in terms of the classification of subjects of learning, he achieves no advancement and even follows the footsteps of traditional scholars who had appeared before him. Al-Ghazālī, whose influences were recognizable at the time of al-Zarnūjī's flourishing may be the scholar of whom he took greatest

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<sup>97</sup>Al-Attas, *Islam*, p 151

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, p 79

advantage, despite the fact that the name of the great Muslim intellectual is hardly found in his *Ta'lim*.

## Chapter II

### ASPECTS OF THE METHOD OF LEARNING

Aspects of the method of learning, which will be discussed in this chapter, are generally divided into two categories. The first is that concerning ethics consisting of *nīyah* (intention), *jidd* (industriousness), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and *ḥurmah* (respect). Basically religious concepts which are applied in all aspects of Muslim life, these virtues should be employed by the student, according to al-Zarnūjī, to enforce the process of learning. Second, the category which deals with technical aspects of learning, such as how to select subject matters, how to choose a teacher, how to determine the appropriate fellow-student to have as a companion, and how the step-by-step process of learning should unfold.

#### A. Ethical Aspects

The place of ethics in the field of Muslim learning has been well recognized. Two factors tend to confirm this point. On one hand, ethics is a subject for which students of learning should search, since it rules the conduct of everyday life. By seeking knowledge of ethics, through training and habituation, in general, students are expected to have good characters. At this level, ethics implies "learning and knowledge acquired for the sake of right living." It is "a concept of what a person should know, be, and do to perfect the

art of living "<sup>1</sup> In other words, ethics, as a body of knowledge, "is a reasoned account of the nature and grounds of right actions and decisions and the principles underlying the claim that they are morally commendable or reprehensible."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, ethics is crucial in that it deals with the relationship of a student and his teacher as well as with the student's interaction with his surrounding. The main concern of the method of learning, among other things, is how to make the relationship mutual in the sense that a good understanding should occur between them. Seen from the position of the student, only through the pleasure of his teacher can he partake in the process of learning such that he can take advantage of knowledge to the extent that his teacher makes possible. To draw the pleasure of his teacher, however, is not an easy task, and it requires an art derived from his motivation and his character. If he fails in performing this art, a student can hardly achieve success in his studies.

As demonstrated earlier in chapter I, al-Zarnūjī has paid attention to the first level, by pointing out that ethics, together with *tawhīd* and *fiqh*, is an obligatory subject for all Muslims. Our concern here is, however, with the second level with which part of his *Ta'lim* deals. In examining this aspect, one thing that should be borne in mind is that al-Zarnūjī addresses his suggestions concerning ethical matters exclusively to the student, rather than to the teacher. This gives an impression that al-Zarnūjī likely burdens the student more than the

<sup>1</sup>Ira M. Lapidus, "Knowledge, Virtue, and Action: the Classical Muslim Conception of Adab and the Nature of Religious Fulfillment in Islam," in *Moral Conduct and Authority: the Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. by Barbara Daly Metcalf (London: University of California Press, 1984), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), p. 1.

teacher. To what extent this impression is correct will perhaps be obvious through this examination since it considers, as well, the opinions of other scholars. .

There are four main concepts which al-Zarnūji emphasizes in connection with the problem of ethics as a part of the method of learning. These four are (1) *nīyah* (intention), (2) *jidd* (industriousness), (3) *tawakkul* (trust in God), and (4) *ḥurmah* (respect). It is apparent that the first three concern the attitudes initiated by the awareness of his own 'self'; whereas, the fourth pertains to his attitude generated by his respect of others. These concepts, as will be discussed below, assume significance and, as a whole, contribute to the advancement of the student in learning.

### 1. Intention (*Nīyah*)

Intention (*nīyah*) is an inner action, appropriately undertaken in the heart of humankind, immediately preceding the actual (physical) action. Juridical Islam considers it as being a factor which determines the validity of the action as a whole. Missing a *nīyah* makes an manifest work less valuable and even to be considered invalid. Meanwhile, once a *nīyah* of learning is stated, with a sincere heart, this means that one-third of the desired knowledge has been grasped, according to al-Shāfiʿī and Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal.<sup>3</sup> Al-Baihaqī (d. 565/1161) maintains that an action is threefold: (1) the heart (*qalb*) from which an intention is derived, (2) the tongue (*lisan*) by which the intention is stated,

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Shafīq Muḥammad Zayʿūr, *Al-Fikr al-Tarbawī ʿinda al-ʿAlmawī* (Beirut: Dār Iqraʿ, 1986), p. 55.



and (3) the action (*ʿaml*) which is in itself an actual performance of action. Different from the other two, however, the action of the heart (*nīyah*) is by itself considered an act of worship.<sup>4</sup>

A tradition has been prominently circulated concerning the problem of *niyah*: "Deeds [or= works] [are measured] by their intentions."<sup>5</sup> Another tradition says that "God (Allah) does not consider your physical performance (appearance). Rather, He considers your heart and your action (work)."<sup>6</sup> In the Qur'an, it is suggested, likewise, that "there is no sin for you in the mistakes that ye make unintentionally, but what your heart proposes (that will be a sin for you)."<sup>7</sup> These quotations denote the position of intention (*nīyah*) as a determinant factor measuring the quality of action. Intention is thus significant, not only in enhancing the validity of action, but also in judging the value of it. The reliance of a good work on a sound intention is in no circumstances deniable. It is thus not impossible that an actually good work be considered bad if it comes from an evil heart. It might also happen otherwise in that a particularly bad action is recognized as being good because it is generated from a sincere heart. The following *ḥadīth* obviously confirms this problem:

How many are the deeds which bear the image of the deeds of this world and become, through their good intention, of the deed of the next world! and how many again are the deeds which bear the image

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Ibid

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in al-Zarnūjī, *Taʿlim al-Mutaʿallim Ṭarīq al-Taʿallum, Instruction of the Student the Method of Learning*, trans. and notes by G. E. von Grunebaum and T. M. Abel (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), p. 25 {8}

<sup>6</sup>Muhy al-Dīn Abī Zakariya Yahyā Ibn Sharaf al-Nawāwī, *Riṣāḥ al-Ṣāliḥīn min Kalam Sayyid al-Mursalin* (Beirut: Dār al-Hikmah, 1987), p. 15.

<sup>7</sup>*The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, an explanatory translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall (New York: New American Library, n.d.), p. 301.

of the next world, but then become, through their evil intention, of the deeds of this world!<sup>8</sup>

Holding the idea that intention is the basis of any work, al-Zarnūjī considers this problem as being a fundamental ethic of the student in searching for knowledge. The student should in all circumstances keep a good intention in his heart, because otherwise the seeking of knowledge will suffer from a serious defect. Al-Zarnūjī suggests that an intention (*niyah*) should be firmly planted in the heart of the student. For the stronger an intention the more forceful the work and hence the greater the success that will be achieved.

Al-Zarnūjī then goes into a discussion concerning the kind of intention which signifies the value of learning. Indeed, learning is in itself noble as has been explained by many verses and traditions. But, it becomes otherwise if it is sought on the basis of an evil intention. Other Muslim scholars also raise this issue. Ibn Jamā'ah, for instance, makes the point that the excellence of knowledge can be approved only on condition that it is sought on the basis of an excellent intention.<sup>9</sup> Al-Ghazālī and al-Birūnī (d.c. 442/1051) suggest the same idea. A point of differentiation exists, however, in spelling out the states of good intention. Even though the differences do not appear contradictory, it is interesting to note the ideas of each.

As to this problem, al-Zarnūjī in his *Ta'lim*, offers four considerations enhancing a true intention in searching for knowledge. Interestingly, none of them is practical; rather they tend to be more idealistic in keeping with purely religious notions. For a practical purpose, nevertheless, al-Zarnūjī recognizes

<sup>8</sup>Quoted in al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim*, p. 25 {8-9}

<sup>9</sup>Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi' wa al-Mutakallim fi Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim* (Hyderabad, Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif, 1353 A.H.), p. 13.

that learning can be intended to meet the worldly necessities; yet, it is ultimately subject to how far the worldly necessities are essential for undertaking religious duties

Al-Zarnūjī first suggests that the true intention of learning lies in seeking God's pleasure. He considers this factor as being essential and hence determinative of the other three. A closer examination of this first-suggested intention will show its connection with his idea of man as a devotee (*ʿābid*) of God. Manifestation of this status is that any activities undertaken, particularly those bearing on the duties of worship (*ʿibādah*), must be ascribed to God only. Learning for al-Zarnūjī is considered a religious duty, the intention of which should uniquely attain the pleasure of God. This comes to the belief that learning which is conducted without any intention of approaching the pleasure of God is less valuable insofar as the religious factor is concerned.

The second point is that learning should be intended as an endeavor to obtain happiness in the next life. This suggestion seems to stem from his belief that the eternal life is in the hereafter, whereas the world today is temporary. Consequently, the real happiness which should be reached is that in the hereafter, which may necessarily require the sacrifice of earthly pleasure. It is still alive in the traditional Muslim belief that this world is a trial to the true believer through which a real pleasure in the next world is approached. Therefore, learning may to some degree be regarded as a manifestation of the sacrifice which institutes a bridge for the student in this world to face the final station in the hereafter.

The third intention in learning is to revive religion and promote Islam. Al-Zarnūjī is aware of the necessity of knowledge as an indispensable prerequisite for establishing any notions derived from religion. Similarly, he recognizes that any religious action including "ascetic life and piety are not perfect where there is ignorance."<sup>10</sup> It is clear that his suggestion parallels his assumption as to man being a representative of God in the world (*Khālifah fi al-Ard*). Bearing this status, one is responsible for partaking in any religious duties as God has ordered. Learning should be thus committed to this responsibility in that it provides the seeker the knowledge required to assume the duty.

Lastly, he suggests that learning should be intended to render "thanks [to God] for a healthy mind and a sound body."<sup>11</sup> This corresponds to the fact that man is created in the most excellent form among the creations of God, for he is equipped, among other things, with superior intellectual ability, (*ʿaql*). He apparently wants to say that learning should be directed to enhance the advancement of the intellect as well as of other human potentials, such as intuition and the physical aspect of human existence. This is expected because thanking God in Islam requires a manifestation as well as an awareness, such as the action of learning, to employ any advantages gained in order that a human being achieves greater and greater success.

Insofar as the above states of intention are concerned, al-Zarnūjī seems to suffer from a lack of relevance to the problems of today's world. Like most

<sup>10</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Taʿlīm*, p. 25 {9}

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 26 {9}

Traditionalists, he obviously pays greater attention to idealistic matters. A closer examination will demonstrate, however, that he is to a certain extent aware of worldly purposes. This is true in the case of his suggestion that searching for knowledge to gain a higher position in terms of worldly matters is permissible to the extent that the position is intended

. . . to command what is good and forbid what is evil, and in order to promote the truth and strengthen religion, and not in order to satisfy his ego and his desires. And that [i.e., the repression of selfish aims] becomes more and more possible in proportion as [the learned man in a worldly position] undertakes to command the good and forbid the evil.<sup>12</sup>

The value of intention lies definitively in the idea of sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*). It is a virtue to hold an intention in the deepest heart of man corresponding solely to God. There is no need at all in doing a sincere thing to let someone else be informed of that which lies in the heart. Such a virtue is really difficult to achieve so that, according to the prophetic tradition, the intention of the true believer is more important (valuable) than his actual action.<sup>13</sup>

To go into a further examination, it is useful to compare al-Zarnūjī with other scholars such as al-Ghazālī and Ibn Jamā'ah. By presenting the ideas of other scholars, it is perhaps obvious that al-Zarnūjī is to a considerable degree more attentive to the ultimate goal of learning as a part of religious duties, while he is rather negative in perceiving worldly purposes. However, as will become apparent, it is recognized that the problem of intention in Muslim learning seems to focus on an attempt to make a balance in facing two worlds: the world of today (*al-dunya*) and the world of the hereafter (*al-ākhirah*).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. {10}

<sup>13</sup>See 'Abd al-Basīṭ al-'Almawī, "Al-Mu'īd fī Ādab al-Mufīd wa al-Mustafīd," in Zay'ūr, *Al-Fikr al-Tarbawī 'inda al-'Almawī*, p. 55.

Al-Ghazālī, whose concern with this subject appears in some of his works, perceives the problem of intention in searching for knowledge in two situations: one is idealistic and the other practical (pragmatic). His idealistic perception of learning is that learning should be generated only for the sake of God. Al-Ghazālī says: "learning as well as teaching is worship of God which is valid only when a worshiper has a sincere motivation."<sup>14</sup> For worship is submission of the Muslim to God in order that, to think practically, he produces pleasure for God. However, learning which suffers from the lack of the intention to be pursued for the sake of God leads the student only to fall into the state of *ma'siyah*, a blameworthy action. Teaching or seeking knowledge "away from God is considered sin (*ma'siyah*), similar to undertaking a prayer or engaging in a holy war (*jihād*) without an intention for the sake of God."<sup>15</sup> According to al-Ghazālī:

He who pursues learning in order to make money, so as to attain a social position or to reduce his taxes and evade his obligations towards the sultān (king), he who studies for the sake of any other ambition save that of serving God exposes himself to dire consequences.<sup>16</sup>

In the second situation, al-Ghazālī perceives the intention of learning by taking the kinds of knowledge into consideration. So far as a religious science is pursued, he is bound to suggest that it should, under any condition, be sought for the purpose of seeking God's pleasure. However, if the object is a worldly knowledge, continues al-Ghazālī, one may hold an intention supporting his

<sup>14</sup>Al-Ghazālī, *Fatḥat al-'Ulum* (Misr: Matba'at al-Husayniyah al-Misriyah, 1322/1904), p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

desire in terms of secular business. His passage dealing with this problem reads as follows.

This [intention for the sake of God] is specified only to [the seeking of] the religious knowledge which is a part of the submission to God, *ʿibadah*. But, it is not addressed to the worldly knowledge such as the science of medicine, or astronomy, the search for which are not forbidden with the intention of getting a position or gaining wealth. As for the religious knowledge, such as the Qurʾānic exegesis, Ḥadīth, Islamic jurisprudence and theology, it is by no means permitted to seek them for the sake of anything other than God.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, Ibn Jamāʿah proposes some suggestions which are all religious. Learning, according to him, must be conducted for the sake of God. It should also be intended to implement holy laws as obligatory for all Muslims in order to attain the rewards of God in the form of a comfortable life. Learning must also be generated to make the student closer to God so that he, through learning, always keeps his mind on the sovereignty of God, particularly on the day of the resurrection (*qiyāmah*).<sup>18</sup> Abū Bakr Jābir al-Jazāʾirī suggests that a sincere intention in learning should confirm three purposes: understanding God, maintaining knowledge with the goal of promoting Islam, and teaching people the knowledge.<sup>19</sup> Ḥajjī Khalīfah (d. 1067/1657) takes the view that "he who pursues a branch of knowledge for a livelihood will not develop into a learned man, he may only become a semi-learned man."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 15

<sup>18</sup>Ibn Jamāʿah, *Tadhkīrat al-Samīʿ*, p. 13

<sup>19</sup>Abū Bakr Jābir al-Jazāʾirī, *Al-ʿIlm wa al-ʿUlamāʾ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub li al-Malayn, 1983), p. 31

<sup>20</sup>Ḥajjī Khalīfah (=Kātib Celebī), *Kashf al-Zunūn ʿan-Asāmī al-Kutub wa al-Funūn*, vol. I (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1941), p. 22

Although the basic purpose of learning in Islam was first and foremost based on religious foundations, this does not mean that the goal of learning entirely neglects secular and social ends. The prophet says "the best among you are not those who neglect this world for the other, or the other world for this. He is the one who works for both together."<sup>21</sup> Ibn al-Muqaffa', a Muslim scholar of the eighth century of common era, is said to have suggested "seek ye learning; for if you are kings it will lend you distinction and if you should be lowly and poor it will bring you food."<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, Ikhwan al-Safa' recognize that learning will aim at attaining valuable benefits such as "honor, prestige, power, nobility, accessibility, competence, generosity, delicacy and dignity."<sup>23</sup> In addition, it is interesting that Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi (d. 587/1191) takes another side and argues that learning should be devoted finally to "the attainment of illumination which in turn requires the perfection of all the faculties of man, both mental and psychological, involving both rational elements and the soul with all its aspects and dimensions."<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, it is worth noting that al-Biruni makes a stimulating point pertaining to the problem of intention. He basically agrees that learning, as a scientific activity, must go straight to the purpose of God. All sciences are

<sup>21</sup>Djemal D. Sabba and George J. Tomeh, "Education as Philosophy," *The Year Book of Education* (World Bank Company, 1957), p. 69, see also Mehdi Nakosteen, *History of Islamic Origins of Western Education A.D. 800-1350* (Boulder University of Colorado Press, 1964), p. 41.

<sup>22</sup>Quoted in Khalil A. Totah, *The Contribution of the Arabs to Education* (New York: AMS Press, 1972), p. 89.

<sup>23</sup>Ali Akbar Farhangi, "An Investigation of the Ideological Foundation and Administrative Structure of Higher Education in Iran from Islamic Madressahs to Western University" Dissertation (Ohio: Ohio University, 1980), p. 130.

<sup>24</sup>Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Islamic Philosophers' Views on Education," *Muslim Education Quarterly* 2:4 (1985), p. 10.



useful according to him insofar as a true intention exists in the mind of those who hold them. Similarly, he is in agreement with the notion that learning can, to some degree, be intended to achieve worldly matters. More than this, al-Biruni comes to a suggestion that learning should also make the student confident and secure. In his mind, knowledge "...is not acquired only to seek God's pleasure, and to achieve a number of worldly benefits; equally important is the 'confidence and security' which it engenders among possessors. For there is no worse source of insecurity and degradation than ignorance."<sup>25</sup>

## 2. Industriousness (*jidd*)

However, an intention alone to search for knowledge is far from sufficient. In the process, for sure, learning requires the virtue of industriousness, (*jidd*), which signifies a character that the student is consistent in pursuing his desire by hard-work. Al-Zarnūjī believes that this virtue will result in great achievement. "To the extent to which you pursue something you will reach what you desire," according to him.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the more serious an effort, the greater the attainment.

It is interesting to note that the above virtue must certainly be assumed, not only on the part of the student, but also on the part of his teacher and of his father. "Industriousness of three kinds of people", according to al-Zarnūjī, "is essential in [the pursuit of] science and learning. These people are the student, the teacher and the father."<sup>27</sup> This suggestion seems to reflect the necessity of

<sup>25</sup>Hisham Nashabi, "The Attitude of al-Birūnī towards Science and Education," in *Al-Biruni Commemorative Volume*, ed. by Hakim Mohammad (Pakistan: The Time Press, 1979), p. 395.

<sup>26</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim*, p. 38 {22}

<sup>27</sup>Ibid {22}

an intact cooperation among them, in carrying out the learning process. Their devotion to their tasks and their industriousness are factors in attaining success in the search for knowledge. The division of tasks among them may be explained in that the student is, in himself, a subject in which he should, under all circumstances, employ his abilities with the means of the available instruments. The teacher is, by profession, one who is responsible for supplying knowledge and guidance for the student. Meanwhile, the father is by nature, one who is taking care of his life, particularly in terms of providing the student financial support to meet the needs pertaining to his studies. In addition, the father also represents the one who is responsible for educating the student insofar as the nuclear family is concerned. Al-Zarnuji seems to be sure that learning will be successful if the three elements cooperate with one another.

In his *Ta'lim*, however, al-Zarnuji is himself concerned with the virtue of diligence on the part of the student. In this regard, according to him, the very aspect of industriousness rests in the employment of his time as effectively as possible. It is encouraged that learning must be pursued basically at any time throughout the student's life. He seems to be in agreement with the idea that learning is a life-long process.

Al-Zarnūjī, then, goes into the practical aspect when he suggests that "it is essential in the seeking of knowledge to maintain a vigil throughout the nights"<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, he suggests that "in the search for knowledge it behooves one to persevere in study and repetition both at the beginning of the

<sup>28</sup>Ibid , p. 39 {23}

night and at its end. For verily the time between dusk and the hour of dawn is a blessed time."<sup>29</sup>

It seems to be popular in the Muslim tradition of learning that night is a special time. It is regarded as a convenient time, not only in the sense of circumstance, but also in that, in the belief of most traditional Muslims, it is a time when God encourages His people to undertake a submission in which they communicate with Him. It is a time when His blessing openly reaches those who are closer to Him. This belief affects them in terms of learning since, as has been mentioned earlier, learning is also a religious duty. However, it is not necessarily considered that the other times are not good for studying.

Ibn Jamā'ah suggests, for instance, that the student be sure to manage his time, both in the night and the afternoon, on the basis of kinds of learning activities. For "memorizing", for instance, it is suggested that the most convenient time is in the late night, approaching the dawn. For "thinking" it is in the early morning. As for "writing", it is better in the middle of the day while "reflection and discussion" are more effective at night.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī suggests that the time of night is more beneficial than that of the afternoon. There are three ranges of suitable times for "memorizing," according to him, that are respectively in the late night, then in the middle of the afternoon, and then the next day. Additionally, he advises that the time of fasting is more beneficial than that when there is too much eating.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 39-40 {24}

<sup>30</sup>Ibn Jamā'ah, *Fadhkhat al-Sāmī*, p. 114

<sup>31</sup>Quoted in Ibid., p. 114

In addition to the factor of using time well, al-Zarnūjī suggests that the student refresh his aspiration, from time to time. "It is obligatory in seeking knowledge to have the highest aspiration level for learning, since verily man flies by his aspiration as the bird flies with his wings"<sup>32</sup> The custom of industriousness grows together with the advancement of ambitions. The higher the ambition the more forceful the diligence. In contrast, it will discourage the hard work of the student when he suffers from a lack of ambition. Therefore, al-Zarnūjī makes the point that "Aids to the acquisition of anything are industriousness and an ambition that aims high"<sup>33</sup> For sure, al-Zarnūjī also suggests that "if one has the most extreme aspiration but does not have industriousness, or has industriousness but does not aspire high, knowledge comes to one only in a small amount."<sup>34</sup>

In the meantime, al-Zarnūjī also reminds the student to be moderate in any effort in his learning. The student should not necessarily exhaust or weaken himself since to do so will result in the interruption of studying. He "should practice temperance in this respect for moderation is one great source of all success." Furthermore, it is instructed. "Do not make hateful to yourself the service of God. Verily, he who makes plants grow does not cut up the ground nor does he neglect it entirely"<sup>35</sup> This idea has taken root in the Islamic tradition since the Prophet says that "Indeed, this religion of mine is solidly

<sup>32</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim*, p. 40 {25}.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. {25}.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 41 {26}

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, p. 40 {25}

grounded, so enter into it with moderation." Also, it is suggested: "Your mind is your riding-beast, hence use it with moderation." <sup>36</sup>

Al-Zarnuji then continues to discuss the problem of laziness. It is a serious matter facing the student since it is the main cause of failure. The student suffering from this character defect will attain no knowledge through his study. Even though it is not an easy task to overcome it, al-Zarnūji suggests the student be aware of this problem and hence be attentive to avoiding it.

Al-Zarnuji considers two main factors which cause the student to fall into laziness. The first pertains to the motivation derived from the awareness of the merit of learning. It will cause laziness, according to al-Zarnūji, once the student loses his idea concerning the benefit of what he searches for. He suggests, accordingly, that "it is necessary when embarking on study to bestir oneself for the acquisition [of knowledge] and [prod oneself] to industriousness and perseverance in the meditation of the merit of learning." <sup>37</sup>

The second concerns itself with the problem of eating and drinking. He assumes that control in this matter is indispensable, by selecting good food and measuring the quantity of it. In this respect, he raises Galenos's suggestion that "the pomegranate is useful, all of it, while fish is harmful, all of it."<sup>38</sup> But, al-Zarnuji addresses the view that "a little fish is better than a great deal of pomegranate. Through [excessive eating] there is also loss of wealth and eating

<sup>36</sup>Quoted in Ibid {26}

<sup>37</sup>Ibid , p 42 {25}

<sup>38</sup>Ibid , p 45 { 31 } Galenos, Greek Physician (d. circa 200 A.D ).

beyond satiety is entirely harmful " <sup>39</sup> He seems, therefore, to be more attentive to the problem of quantity. Interestingly, he then suggests that.

The correct way of reducing food is to eat only dishes as well as the most delicate and most desirable food, and not eat with a terrible appetite. However, if one has an honest objective in eating a great deal, [an objective] such as that of becoming strong by this means in order to fast, pray and do difficult work, then this [practice] is permissible <sup>40</sup>

### 3. Trust in God (*tawakkul*)

The idea of *tawakkul* is essentially two-fold. On one hand, one should work with all the force one possesses along with a plan and organization in attaining his purpose. On the other, while working hard, one should fully trust in God to determine the attainment of his work. The target one aims at in his plan and organization exists only through hope, but it is not necessarily always obtained. When it is reached, thanking God should be expressed through action, while, when it is otherwise, an evaluation should be made and should encourage his further effort. Both thanking God and evaluation should therefore be manifested in action. Such a *tawakkul* is not expected to frustrate someone because of his failure and neither make him too proud of his success. Rather, this attitude continuously encourages people to work hard to reach real success in the future.

Realizing the importance of *tawakkul*, al-Zarnuji suggests that the student trust in God in his search for knowledge. "It is necessary in the quest

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 45 {31}

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

for knowledge to put one's trust in God while one pursues learning."<sup>41</sup> Together with firmly good intentions and diligent work, two virtues which have been explained above, the virtue of *tawakkul* must be maintained during the state of learning. For, from the Islamic point of view, there is an absolute power behind human ability, which determines the ultimate achievement of human action -- God. Islam suggests that one should be concerned and make the effort while the result is appropriated to God. "When thou art resolved, then put thy trust in Allah," mentions the Qur'ān.<sup>42</sup>

This virtue does not signify, however, that the student weaken his endeavors to attain knowledge. It is believed that until he himself reforms his own condition, God does not change him.<sup>43</sup> What *tawakkul* is concerned with is that the student would deteriorate through any business other than learning, such as that which is devoted to worldly matters. It is the same as the idea that "as long as 'his heart is not in it,' the studying and learning will not be as productive as they might otherwise be."<sup>44</sup> By *tawakkul*, it is expected that the student should continue to be consistent with his concern to search for knowledge, safe from any interference.

As a consequence, al-Zarnūjī instructs the student "not to be concerned with matters pertaining to the sustenance of his life [food] nor occupy one's mind there with."<sup>45</sup> He, as always, gives attention to the conflict of learning as a

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, p. 55 {43}

<sup>42</sup>The Qur'an, 3:159. See *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, p. 75.

<sup>43</sup>The Qur'an, 13:11. See Ibid, p. 183.

<sup>44</sup>John Jarolimek and Clifford D. Foster, *Teaching and Learning in the Elementary School* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1977), p. 307.

<sup>45</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *ʿAshim*, p. 55 {43}

religious duty with any pragmatic problem pertaining to a secular orientation. The student is obviously encouraged to be consistent with his purpose of learning. According to him:

The intelligent man should not be eager for the affairs of this world since this kind of solicitude and sad concern does not avert calamity nor is of use, but rather is harmful to the spirit, the mind and the body. These [concerns with worldly matters] cause a cessation of good works. One [should rather] attend to matters pertaining to the future life since these prove useful.<sup>46</sup>

In other words, he suggests that it is "essential in the search for knowledge to reduce one's attachment to worldly affairs as much as one can." "It is obligatory", continues al-Zarnūjī, "for the student not to be occupied with anything else but knowledge and never turn away from learning."<sup>47</sup> In the words of Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan "Indeed this trade of ours goes on from the cradle to the grave; so he who wishes to refrain from this pursuit of knowledge for even one hour, might as well leave it entirely this very hour."<sup>48</sup> The student, under all circumstances, should be concerned with learning. Al-Zarnūjī believes that by full concentration, the student reaches great delight in his endeavor.

With regard to this problem, al-Ghazālī has also indicated a view in which the choice of learning over secular affairs is crucial, not because the latter are useless, but rather because of the necessity for full attention to the problem of knowledge. Worldly affairs, by themselves, always attract human interest and they even interfere with human effort in the search for knowledge. A safeguard is therefore needed to protect the student from disturbance, and

<sup>46</sup>Ibid

<sup>47</sup>Ibid, p. 56 {44}

<sup>48</sup>Ibid



keeping one's distance from any secular business is considered effective. In the mind of al Ghazali "since one can not pay attention to two things at the same time and personal ties are disturbing, the student must reduce his worldly interests."<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. Respect (*ḥurmah*)

As discussed above, knowledge, insofar as the religious perspective is concerned, is in itself excellent. This idea is to al-Zarnūjī so significant that he necessarily suggests that the student glorify knowledge. Al-Zarnūjī is of the opinion that "He who attains knowledge does not do so except through respect, while he who fails [in this goal] does so by ceasing to respect and venerate learning and its bearers " <sup>50</sup>

Al-Zarnuji further maintains that the student should direct the respect foremost to the teacher. For the latter is considered the one who possesses knowledge and who transfers it to the student. By respecting the teacher, in practical terms, it is expected that the student receive the best treatment as well as the greatest advantages from the teacher. To al-Zarnūjī, "in the study of science one does not acquire learning nor profit from it unless one holds in esteem knowledge and those who possess it." In addition, the respectful attitude is important because "man does not become an unbeliever through rebellion [against divine law] but rather by making light of [his rebellion] and by discarding reverence." <sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup>K. El. S. M. el-Bagū, "Al-Ghazālī's Philosophy of Education with Special Reference to *al-Ihya'*, Book I", Dissertation (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh, 1953), p. 206

<sup>50</sup>Al-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim*, p. 32 {16}

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 32 {15}

This suggestion finds its basis in Islamic tradition, in which just as knowledge receives an excellent recognition, the teacher, as a learned man, enjoys the same respect. It is stated that he occupies the third rank after God and His angels.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, one who gives a high respect to the possessor of knowledge means that he does the same toward seventy prophets.<sup>53</sup> Another tradition states, "Whoever venerates the people of knowledge is considered as doing so toward God. Similarly, whoever disregards the people of knowledge means that he disregards God and His messengers."<sup>54</sup> One who makes prayers together with the learned man is considered as praying with the prophet, and because of the latter, he gains the forgiveness of God.<sup>55</sup> In the context of learning, these sayings signify the nobility of the teacher whom, therefore, the student should, in all circumstances, respect.

Practically, there are some expressions which are maybe appropriate in addressing respect toward the teacher. Al-Zarnuji recommends these expressions to be kept in the mind of the student.

First, he should glorify his teacher by considering him as being his father. "He who teaches you one letter of those you need for your religious instructions is your father in religion," according to al Zarnuji.<sup>56</sup> This should be understood as meaning that the teacher feeds the student with knowledge, just as the parents provide him with food. The student, therefore, should

<sup>52</sup>The Qur'ān, 3:17, p. 64, quoted in Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi'*, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup>Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi'*, p. 9.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10.

<sup>56</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim*, p. 32 {16}.

venerate the teacher in the same manner as he does his father. It is the teacher who takes care of his development, in terms of his cognition and affection as well as his skills. Such an idea can also be found in al-Ghazālī's thoughts. This passage is attributed to him:

The parents are the cause of the children's present existence in this mortal life, while the teacher is the cause of the immortal life. Without him that which has been brought into existence through the parents would be doomed to eternal destruction. Only the teacher is of service for the eternal life in the next world.<sup>57</sup>

Al Ghazali, further says: "just as it is the duty of the children of one father to love one another and co-operate in achieving all their common goals so it is also the duty of the students of one teacher to love and cherish one another."<sup>58</sup>

In addition, according to al-Zarnūjī, the student should also take a position, out of respect for his teacher, like that of a patient towards a doctor. He has to give his teacher his trust to go forward with the process of learning. For, in terms of academic matters, the teacher is more aware, because of his experience, than the student. The situation is the same as that of a patient who should trust his doctor since the latter is the expert in diagnosing as well as in healing his disease. If the student does not act in this fashion, respecting his teacher, he will hardly achieve a success in his studies.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup>Al-Ghazali, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm: the Book of Knowledge*, trans. and notes by Nabih Amin Faris (Lahore: S.H. Muhammad Ashraf, 1962), p. 145.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>59</sup>A couple of verses of a poem composed by al-Zarnūjī enhances this suggestion:

1. Neither the teacher nor the physician advise you unless they are honored.

2. So bear your disease patiently if you wronged its healer, and be satisfied with your ignorance if you have wronged a teacher. See al-Zarnūjī, *Taʿlīm*, p.

34 {18}.

Ibn Jamā'ah shares this suggestion when he holds that one of the best attitudes of a student toward his teacher is that he trust in the teacher to overcome his academic problems. As to the comparable status of the teacher and the doctor, he suggests that the student must openly consult with his teacher and let him offer a solution to escape academic problems, just as the patient tells what he feels in order that his doctor may make an accurate diagnosis as well as prescribe an appropriate treatment. According to Ibn Jamā'ah, the student should discuss with his teacher what must be achieved, look for his pleasure, and be close to God while he serves his teacher. For, assumes Ibn Jamā'ah, being humble in facing the teacher is rewarded. Also, letting the teacher control his development is an honor, and being modest towards him is prestige.<sup>60</sup> As in the thinking of al-Ghazali, it is held that "the student must be neither supercilious nor imperious but must completely submit to his teacher and listen to his direction just as the ignorant patient listens to the direction of a kind and expert doctor."<sup>61</sup>

While venerating the teacher, in the mind of al-Zarnuji, the student should also respect his children. For the latter are those for whom the teacher is responsible in taking care of their growth. Respecting his children means that the student should help the teacher undertake his duty as the parent of his children, apart from his business in cultivating knowledge from which the student benefits. Giving this help is very important in demonstrating that he is aware of the consequence of the teacher's being less attentive to his children, since most of his time is given to dispensing his teaching. Although the help is not

<sup>60</sup>Ibn Jamā'ah, *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi'*, p. 87

<sup>61</sup>el-Bagir, "al-Ghazālī's Philosophy of Education," p. 206

necessarily expressed in the form of physical or material action, the respect for the teacher's children might be enough to lessen the burden of the teacher. Respecting the children of the teacher has been encouraged by al-Zarnūjī's professor, Burhan al-Dīn al-Marghinānī who says:

. that one of the greatest imāms of Buhāra [at one time] had sat lecturing and had sometimes risen in the middle of his discourse. When asked the reason [for this] he explained: Verily, the son of my teacher played with boys on the streets and came sometimes to the gate of the mosque. As often as I saw him I arose for him in order to honor my teacher.<sup>62</sup>

Likewise, the student should also serve himself as the servant of his teacher, in meeting his daily needs. Al-Zarnūjī believes that by so doing, the student will achieve advancement in the search for knowledge. An experience of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Arsabandī (d. 512/1118) signifies this suggestion; "Verily, I have reached this rank [a chief Imām of Marw] only by serving my teacher, for I have served my teacher, the judge, the Imām Abū Yazīd ad-Dābūsī. I both waited on him and prepared his food for thirty years, but I never ate anything thereof."<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Harun al-Rashīd (reigned in 170-194/786-809), the Caliph of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty, perceived the significance of this point when he sent his son to al-Asma'ī (d. 216/831) to study Grammar and *Adab*.

One day [the Caliph] saw [al-Aṣma'ī] purifying himself and washing his feet while the son of the Caliph poured water over his feet. So [the Caliph] reprimanded al-Asma'ī in this manner saying: "indeed, I sent him [my son] to you to learn grammar and be instructed in *adab*, so why is it that you don't ask him to pour water with one hand and wash your foot with the other hand?"<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Faḥm*, p. 33 {17}

<sup>63</sup>Ibid. {16} Imām Abū Yazīd al-Dabūsī was probably Abū Zaid al-Dabūsī (d. 441/1039)

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 34 {17}

Respect should be also given to the teacher when he visits the town where the student resides. This suggestion, on one hand, portrays the tradition of Muslim scholarship which was acquainted with academic travel, *rihlah ʿilmīyah*, by which a scholar or a student used to make a long journey from one city of learning to another in order to attain knowledge. It signifies, on the other, that the relationship between the student and the teacher is permanent, even in the event that they live in separate places. The presence of the teacher in a town where the student live should, therefore, be welcomed with the greatest of respect. There is a narration in the *Taʿlīm*, enhancing this suggestion:

The venerable Imām, the most glorious sun among the imams, al-Ḥulwānī left Buhāra and settled for some time in a certain town because of an incident which befell him. His students visited him with the exception of the venerable Imām, the judge, Abū Bakr al-Zarānjī. When he met him, al-Ḥulwānī asked him "why did you not come to visit me?" Abū Bakr replied "I was occupied serving my mother." Al-Ḥulwānī answered, "You will obtain a livelihood but you will not attain the glamour of teaching." And this is just what happened for [Abū Bakr] lived most of his life in villages and was unable to carry on lectures. Thus is deprived of the fruits of learning who has slighted his teacher, and only in a small way does he profit from his knowledge.<sup>65</sup>

It is interesting that a tradition said to be from ʿAlī Ibn Abī Talīb enhances this suggestion. "I am the slave of him who taught me one letter of the alphabet. If he wishes he may sell me, if he so desires he may set me free, and if he cares to he may make use of me as a slave."<sup>66</sup>

It is apparent that al-Zarānjī sees the teacher as a determinant factor in the process of learning. The success of study seems to be very much dependent

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, pp. 33-34 {17}. Shams al-Aʿimmah Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Khulwānī (d. 448/1056 or 449/1057) and Abū Bakr al-Zarānjī (d. 508/1114).

<sup>66</sup>Ibid, p. 32 {16}.

on the respectful attitude of the student to his teacher. More practically, al-Zarnuji suggests that the student let his teacher take care of his learning to the extent possible. Al-Zarnuji says:

In seeking knowledge, it is necessary not to choose oneself the kind of learning to pursue, but to entrust the matter to the teacher. For indeed experience has come to the teacher in these matters so that he has more knowledge of what is needed for each person and what is suitable to the nature [of each student].<sup>67</sup>

[[It is necessary]] for the student not to sit near the teacher during the lecture except under necessity, rather is it essential that pupils sit in a semi-circle at a certain distance from the teacher, for indeed this is more appropriate to the respect due [the teacher].<sup>68</sup>

In addition to the teacher, the respect of the student should also be given to the Book as well as to other text-books. In regard to this matter, al-Zarnūjī refers to some traditions about how to respect the Book. The most interesting is that the student should be in a state of ritual purity while taking or bringing the Book. By this means, it is believed that the attainment of knowledge will successfully be achieved. Al-Khulwanī said: "Verily, I obtained this learning by means of veneration for I never took up paper unless I was pure."<sup>69</sup> Another tradition is narrated that.

The venerable Imam, the sun of the Imams, as-Sarahsi had a stomach ache. It was his wont to repeat the Koran at night. So he purified himself seventeen times [each time after he had been compelled to relieve nature] in order not to resume recitation without being pure. He did this since learning is light and purification is light, thus the light of learning is increased by [purification].<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, p. 36 {21}

<sup>68</sup>Ibid, pp. 36-37 {21}

<sup>69</sup>Ibid, pp. 34-35 {19}. The idea that knowledge (learning) is a light is found also in al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, quoting Ibn Masʿūd: "Knowledge is not virtuosity but is a light which is shed into the heart." Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*, p. 205.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid, p. 35 {19}

Additionally, the student should be careful in arranging books to show respect to them. The Book and those of exegesis must be put above the others. Books concerning religious knowledge should be in a higher position than the others. Similarly, it is forbidden, according to al-Zarnūjī to stretch out one's foot toward the Qurʾān as well as other books.

Writing in a clearly beautiful style is also an expression of respect toward books, suggests al-Zarnūjī. Besides that, it is preferred to select the square form of books, since "It is the easiest for lifting, placing and reading." <sup>71</sup> Still concerning respect for books, al-Zarnūjī suggests, "it is necessary not to have any red color in the Book for thus was the usage of the philosophers but not the usage of our ancestors, to our shaihs [[Muḥammad Ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, one of the greatest traditionists in Islam]], the use of red mixture [for writing] is abhorrent." <sup>72</sup>

Finally, as an expression of respect for knowledge, suggests al-Zarnūjī, the student should highly appreciate his companions in learning as well as the learned men who surround him. From them, it is expected that the student can take as much advantage as possible. Listening to their wisdom and knowledge, even though he may hear them many times is suggested because al-Zarnūjī believes that "he whose respect after a thousand times is not equal to his respect the first time (he hears these things), is not worthy of knowledge." <sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 36 {20}

<sup>72</sup>Ibid

<sup>73</sup>Ibid



## B. Learning Strategies

The very nature of Muslim learning throughout the classical and medieval periods was an intensely direct contact between the teacher and the student, with oral transmission constituting the predominant approach. The teacher occupied, as a consequence, a greater position of authority while the need to get in touch with him was thus indispensable for the student. The situation encouraged the student to build a permanent relationship even in the event that the teacher resided in a town, far from his residence. The academic journey (*riḥlah ʿilmīyah*), by which a student travelled to reside for a long time with a learned man in a city, was a common feature of the time. Ibn Khaldūn describes this well as follows.

A scholar's education is greatly improved by travelling in quest of knowledge and meeting the authoritative teachers (of his time). The reason is that human beings obtain their knowledge and character qualities and all their opinions and virtues either through study, instruction, and lecture, or through imitation of a teacher and personal contact with him <sup>74</sup>

Another striking characteristic of Muslim learning in the early period was that concerned with memorization which was regarded as the main task of the student. The mastery of knowledge was determined by the extent of one's memory. This evaluation of memory corresponds with the nature of religious knowledge which must not merely be understood for personal purposes, but also be transmitted as precisely as possible to others. Memorization was at first applied to the study of the Qurʾān which is "considered by Muslims literally to

<sup>74</sup>Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: an Introduction to History*, vol. 3, trans. by Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 307, quoted in Yusef Abdul Lateef, "An Over-View of Western and Islamic Education," Dissertation (Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts, 1975), p. 80

be the word of God; its accurate memorization in one or more of the seven conventional recitational forms is the first step in mastering the religious sciences."<sup>75</sup> In other words, "'Mnemonic domination' (*malaka l-hifd*), the memorization of a key text just as the Qur'ān is memorized, is also the starting point for the mastery of religious science."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Dale F. Eickelman, "The Art of Memory. Islamic Education and Its Social Reproduction," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1978), p. 485. For more information about *rihlah 'ilmiyah* (academic travel) in the history of Islamic scholarship, see Sam Isaac Gellens, "The Search for Knowledge in Medieval Muslim Societies: a Comparative Approach," in *Muslim Travellers, Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination*, ed. by Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (Los Angeles: University of California, 1990), pp. 50-68, and idem, "Scholars and Travellers: the Social History of Early Muslim Egypt, 218-487/833-1094," Dissertation (Columbia: Columbia University, 1978). See also, Jean Elizabeth Gilbert, "The 'Ulama' of Medieval Damascus and the International World of Islamic Scholarship," Dissertation (Berkeley: University of California, 1977). In the latter, the author examined the contribution of the migration (*rihlah*) of Muslim scholars ('Ulama') from other cities to Damascus, and this movement resulted in the institutional and international establishment of Muslim learning in Damascus in the medieval period.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid. 'Mnemonic domination' (*malaka l-hifd*) means in this context 'the faculty of memory'. Meanwhile, Seyyed Hossein Nasr tries to show the combination of the use of books and the significance of oral transmission in Muslim learning, by saying: "As a result of the influence of the Qur'anic revelation and also other factors related to the rise of the whole Islamic educational system, the significance of the oral tradition and memory as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge came to complement the written word contained in books, especially those books which became central texts for the teaching of various schools of thought and which figured prominently in the relationship between the traditional master (*al-ustādh*) and the students (*tullāb*). Such books became more than simply the written text. Rather, they came to accompany and in a sense became immersed in the spoken word, through an oral teaching transmitted from master to student and stored in the memory of those destined to be the recipients of the knowledge in question. Such books were not exclusively written texts whose reality was exhausted by the words inscribed in ink upon parchment."

The oral tradition also played a cultural role in determining which book or books of a particular master would become texts to be discussed in study circles and would act as a vehicle for the transmission of the teachings of the master in question. The oral transmission helped to establish the authority of teachers who were to follow and it served as the criterion with the aid of which one could distinguish one student from another as far as his closeness to the master and understanding of the latter's message were concerned, although naturally often ensued." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Oral Transmission and the Book in Islamic Education: The Spoken and the Written Word," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 3:1 (1992), pp. 1-2.

However, so far as higher learning is concerned, Muslim scholarship represented the dynamic development of intellectual traditions. Even though religious knowledge such as Islamic law (*fiqh*) and Islamic theology (*kalām*), were indeed considered the most attractive subjects since they originated from the Qur'an, Muslim learning hardly neglected the other subjects, which were considered non-religious sciences, particularly those which employed philosophical or rational enforcement. This situation was, furthermore, reflected by the establishment of various institutions, not only the *masjid* (the mosque), the *madrasa* (the school of religious sciences, such as *fiqh*), and the *dār al-ḥadīth* (the house of tradition), but also the *dār al-ʿilm* (the house of knowledge) and the *dar al-ḥikmah* (the house of philosophy). Similarly, this circumstance brought into existence both humanistic and scholastic traditions in which methodological fashions took shape in various terms such as *munāẓarah* (disputation) and *mudhakarāh* (discussion) <sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup>For more information concerning aspects of Muslim learning in the history of Islam, see Totah, *The Contribution*. Also see Ahmad Shalabi, *History of Muslim Education* (Beirut: Dar al-Kashshaf, 1954); A. S. Tritton, *Materials on Muslim Education in the Middle Ages* (London: Luzac and Co., 1957); Abdelwahid Abdalla Yousif, "Muslim Learning During the Earlier Abbasid Era 745-861 A.D., Dissertation (Toronto: Department of Adult Education, University of Toronto, 1978); S. M. Ziauddin Alavi, *Muslim Educational Thought in the Middle Ages* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 1988); Vicente Cantarino, "Medieval Spanish Institutions of Learning: a Reappraisal," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 44 (1976), pp. 217-228; Norman Daniel, "Characteristics of Institutional Learning in the Middle Age Exemplified in the study of Islam," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 44 (1976), pp. 271-285; Avner Giladi, "Islamic Education Theories in the Middle Ages, some Methodological Notes with Special Reference to al-Ghazali," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin* 14 (1988), pp. 3-10; K. H. Semaan, "Education in Islam, from the Jāhiliyyah to Ibn Khaldun," *Muslim World* 56 (1966), pp. 187-198; A. S. Tritton, "Muslim Education in the Middle Ages," *Muslim World* 43 (1983), pp. 82-94, and George Makdisi's works such as *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981) and *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), and Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: a Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

As will be considered, the above characteristics of Muslim learning appear to some extent among al-Zarnūjī's ideas.

### 1. Selecting Subject Matters

An important task for the student is that he should select the subject matter of his learning having in mind certain considerations in accordance with his interests. Al-Zarnūjī seems to have been acquainted with a tradition in which the role of the student in this matter is important, before he becomes involved in a learning process in which the teacher takes dominant control. Besides, in offering his suggestions on this problem, al-Zarnūjī does not indeed propose specific lessons, considering that the student has full responsibility for determining whatever course he may be interested in.

The student should select subjects which give more advantages to his interest. This is the first point al-Zarnūjī suggests. He says that "when undertaking the study of knowledge it is necessary to choose among all the branches of learning the one most beneficial to oneself."<sup>78</sup> This implies that before being active in a learning process, the student should be aware of his necessities. With this awareness, the student might determine what the student should study to the extent possible and in terms of his needs in choosing the subject of learning.

The second point is that the student should select the subjects which meet his needs in the matter of religion. At this point, al-Zarnūjī recognizes that

<sup>78</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim*, p. 28 {11}

every person undergoes his own development in terms of religious life. It is subject to this development that students should choose religious subjects. However, al-Zarnuji pays serious attention to the subject of the Unity of God (*tawhid*). He holds that the students have to learn about the belief in one God because "the faith of him who blindly follows authority, even though it may be correct in our view, still is defective because of his failure to ask for proof." <sup>79</sup> Apart from his traditionalism as shown in many of his suggestions, it is interesting that at this point al-Zarnuji seems to fall into rationalism. For believing in God on the basis of reason is eminently the attitude of the rationalists in matters of theology.

The third point he suggests is that the subject selected should be one necessary for the student's future. Al-Zarnuji displays his perception that the student should anticipate what is needed to face his long life. On the one hand, in matters of religion particularly, al-Zarnuji suggests that the student be pragmatic by taking the subject which is most beneficial, in that it is a subject for the practical purpose of his religious life. On the other hand, he considers that a student should equip himself with the knowledge important to the future of life.

Finally, in selecting the subject it is suggested that the student should not be attracted to new matters. Rather, he should select the ancient subjects.

It is essential to choose ancient before new things. It is said "Stick to ancient things while avoiding new things." Beware of becoming engrossed in those disputes which come about after one has cut loose from the ancient authorities. For [such dispute] keeps the student away from knowledge, wastes away his life and leaves him with [nothing but] solitude and hostility. [A dispute] is one of the

<sup>79</sup>Ibid, p. 28 {12}

indications of the Hour [i.e. the last Day]] and the annihilation of both knowledge and doctrine " <sup>80</sup>

Before proceeding to consider the ideas of other scholars concerning the selection of the subjects, it is relevant to raise the issue of progress in Islam, given al-Zarnuji's notion of ancient against new things.

It has been commonly held that Muslims' attitudes toward their culture tend to be *backward*, in that they give extreme importance to the previous traditions, instead of being *forward* looking with regard to the concerns of the future. Following the footsteps of the traditions of their predecessors constitutes the legitimate authority in their lives. It is evident, at least, in the thinking of al-Zarnuji as demonstrated above, that the ancient knowledge, instead of the new, should be more important in terms of what the student should seek. This is perhaps in line with the notion of Ibn al-Muqaffa':

We have found men before us to have been larger in body and, moreover, more rational, stronger and, moreover, more skilful; long-lived and, moreover, more experienced..., the most that a *'ālim* of our generation can aspire to is to receive his *'ilm* from them. .. After them, nothing more can be said, be it weighty or trivial.<sup>81</sup>

Similarly Abu Hayyan al-Tawhīdī (d. 414/1023) addresses the notion that:

If you examine the matter carefully you will see that none of these sciences is correctly practiced by scholars today because the world is passing away and the Last Hour is drawing near... Decrease is inevitable in human life at all times and places so that man's will

<sup>80</sup>Ibid

<sup>81</sup>Ibn al-Muqaffa', *al-Adab al-Kabīr wa al-Adab al-Saghīr* (Beirut: Dār Sādir, n.d.), pp. 12-14, quoted in Tarif Khalidī, "The Idea of Progress in Classical Islam," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40 (1981), p. 280.

does not grow too powerful – and that he may know that He Who tested him with such decreases is the sole source of increase.<sup>82</sup>

Al-Fārābī also takes a pessimistic view in perceiving the future when he says

Matters will proceed like this until the condition of philosophy reaches the stage where it was with Plato – and will be developed until it settles at the stage where it was with Aristotle. Scientific investigation (*al-nazar al-ʿilmī*) will then cease, and all methods will be fully worked out. Theoretical philosophy as well as popular universal philosophy will be perfected, and there will be no more room for any further investigation. It will then become a craft (*ṣinaʿa*), to be taught and learned only.<sup>83</sup>

While al-Zarnūjī, as has been examined above, does not require a definite subject which should be taken by the student, the history of Muslim scholarship witnesses the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* as being permanently important subjects. Not until passing these subjects, did the student pursue subsequent subjects such as Islamic law (*fiqh*) and Islamic theology (*kalam*).<sup>84</sup> Ibn Saḥnūn takes the view, for instance, that the sciences of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* are necessarily studied earlier since both form the sources of religious instruction and the basis for other religious knowledge. Ibn Jamāʿah, while suggesting the same idea, adds that the Arabic language is necessarily studied in companionship with the study of these two subjects. Only after going through these studies, can the student intensively concentrate on other knowledge.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Abū Hayyān ʿAlī Ibn Muḥammad al-Tawḥīdī, "Risāla fī al-ʿUlum", ed. by Marc Berge in *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 18 (1963), pp. 31–32, quoted in Khalidī, "The Idea," p. 280.

<sup>83</sup> Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Hurūf*, ed. by M. Mahdī (Beirut, 1970), pp. 142–143, quoted in Tarif Khalidī, "The Idea," p. 280.

<sup>84</sup> Concerning this problem, see Tritton, *Materials on Muslim Education*, pp. 40–47, and Totah, *The Contribution*, pp. 32–46.

<sup>85</sup> Ibn Jamāʿah, *Tadhkiratal-Sāmiʿ*, p. 133.

It is interesting that, different from the above opinion, Ibn Miskawayh makes the point, pertaining the significant subjects which should be studied, that one should pay attention to the knowledge corresponding to his existence and to his nature. He does not point out certain subjects familiar to the field of learning, but his view represents a philosophical tendency which is universal to the advancement of human life. He suggests

Whoever wishes to perfect himself as a human being (*insāniya*) and reach the rank (*‘amr*) which is meant by 'human nature' in order to integrate his self (*li-yatimma dhātahu*) and have the same preferences and intentions as those of the philosophers, let him acquire these two arts (*sinā‘atayn*). I mean the theoretical and practical parts of philosophy, as a result, there will accrue to him the essential natures of things (*haqā‘iq al-umūr*) by means of the theoretical part, and good deeds by means of the practical part.<sup>86</sup>

As for al-Ghazālī, he suggests that the students be aware of some points in selecting their subject matter. First, he should not, at the same time, select a number of subjects from different fields. Instead, he must give priority in choosing the most important in relation to his life. To al-Ghazālī, it is obvious, that the subject is that concerning the hereafter (*‘ilm al-ākhirah*), "including the science of practical religion, as well as the science of revelation. The goal of the science of practical religion is revelation and the goal of revelation is to know God."<sup>87</sup>

Secondly, in selecting the subject matter, according to al-Ghazālī, the student should consider the degree of one subject over the other. He says that

<sup>86</sup>Tian by D. Gutas in "Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristotle's Philosophy: a Milestone between Alexandria and Baghdad," *Der Islam*, Band 60, Heft 2 (1983), p. 232, quoted in Nasr, "The Islamic Philosophers' Views on Education," p. 5.

<sup>87</sup>Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, p. 134.



there is no one who "should address himself to one branch of knowledge before he has already mastered the branch which precedes it because science is of necessity so arranged that one branch prepares for another and one branch leads to another."<sup>88</sup> Consequently, until he does master one subject, the student should not take another one without important reasons.

Al-Ghazālī lastly suggested that the students be sure of the nature of the selected subject, in terms of its nobility and its goal. Al-Ghazālī believes that each branch of knowledge assumes its own value, which is subject to its nature. To him, the more the science is religious the nobler the value that it bears. Similarly, each science possesses its purposes and this is basically divided into three kinds: (1) the purpose of achieving secular matters, (2) that of purifying the inner being, and (3) that of knowing God.<sup>89</sup>

Finally, it is important to mention the points of Abu Bakr Jabr al-Jazā'irī. The selection of subject matters, according to him, must consider three purposes: (1) the subject which aims at meeting religious obligation, (2) that which is beneficial for the life of the student, and (3) that which makes one closer to God.<sup>90</sup>

## 2. Selecting a Teacher

In suggesting some considerations in selecting a teacher, al-Zarnujī emphasizes two problems. First, he offers three points characterizing the

<sup>88</sup>Ibid

<sup>89</sup>Ibid pp 139-140

<sup>90</sup>al-Jazā'irī, *Al-ʿIlm wa al-ʿUlamāʾ*, p. 33

selected teacher. Then, he suggests that the student ask advice (consultation) and be patient while selecting the teacher.

The teacher selected should, according to al-Zarnūjī, be a learned man. Students have to be aware of this aspect, since learning is practically a process of transmission of knowledge from the teacher to student. The learned teacher will provide the student with the great deal of the knowledge he needs.

In addition, a teacher whom the student should select should be the one who is the most pious. Al-Zarnūjī seems to consider the affection aspect in the learning process so that the role of such a pious person is required. From this teacher, it is expected that the student can be acquainted with a good mental attitude. For the pious teacher will take care of his student, not only in the matter of the technical aspects of academic life, but also his religious life.

Lastly, al-Zarnūjī suggests that the student choose for his teacher one who is the most advanced in years. This means that learning to al-Zarnūjī involves the process of sharing experiences. Generally speaking, the older teacher is the more preferred in that sense, because he has lived for a long time, the teacher has experienced many aspects of his life. It is necessary for the student to be introduced to his experience. Similarly, the experienced teacher has enough understanding of the problems of learning such as how to motivate the student and how to instruct him.

What he suggests concerning the characteristics of the selected teacher is derived from the tradition experienced by his predecessors. Abu Ḥanīfah in this case is a figure whose experience in selecting his teacher, Hammād Ibn Abī Sulaiman (d. 738 AD), is referred to by al-Zarnūjī (Abū Ḥanīfah said): "I

found him venerable, with a serious mien, gentle and patient.' He [also said] "I was on safe ground with Hammad b. Abi Sulaiman and I grew." <sup>91</sup>

As to the approach in selecting the teacher, al-Zarnūjī describes the significance of consultation and that of patience. Concerning the former, he refers to the tradition that the Prophet was always in consultation with his companions in solving any problem.

Verily God Almighty commanded [even] His messenger to seek counsel about all of his affairs. Although [in reality] there was no one more intelligent than [Muhammad], nevertheless he was instructed to consult with others. So he sought advice from his friends in all affairs including domestic matters. <sup>92</sup>

Another tradition is referred to 'Alī Ibn Abī Talīb (the 4th Caliph, 656-661 A.D., after the death of the prophet), who had an excellent opinion in promoting the use of consultation for it marks the quality of human existence. He says

"No men ever perished from seeking advice." It is said "A man, half a man, and nothing. A man is the one who is intelligent in his judgment and consults [others]. A half man is he who is intelligent in his judgment but does not seek advice or seeks advice but is not intelligent, while one who is nothing is he who is neither intelligent nor seeks advice." <sup>93</sup>

In addition, al-Zarnūjī suggests that the student be patient in determining who will be his teacher and should by no means be in a hurry. Again, he refers to the tradition that

If you come to Buhara do not hasten hither and thither from one master to another. Rather, be patient a couple of months until you

<sup>91</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Fa'ihm*, pp 28-29 {12}

<sup>92</sup>Ibid, p 29 {12}

<sup>93</sup>Ibid

reflect concerning the choice of a teacher. For, if you come to a learned man and begin to study with him right away, his teaching may often not be to your liking. [If this is the case] you leave him and come to another teacher. But no blessing will come to you by taking up your studies in this manner. Hence reflect two months about the [right] choice of a teacher and seek advice in order that it will not be necessary to leave him and withdraw from him. [It is better] that you remain with him until your studies have prospered and you have come to profit a great deal from the knowledge you have attained."<sup>94</sup>

Al-Zarnuji recognizes that patience is the fundamental character in attaining success in learning. It is even more important than courage. Patience and perseverance form a large core in all affairs although in fact they are very hard to practice. "The effort in the attainment of glory wearies but persistence is rare among them."<sup>95</sup> It is suggested that the seeker of knowledge be patient in selecting a teacher as well as in studying with him and not to be too ready to leave him before completing the study.

Meanwhile, in the minds of Ibn Jama'ah, the ideal teacher, whom the student necessarily selects, is he who is committed to three dimensions: to himself, to his profession, and to his student. His points concerning this suggestion may be summarized as follows.

1. His commitment to himself as a Muslim. While dispensing his instruction, he always keeps his mind on God, follows the prophetic traditions, and avoids worldly interests. He also conducts his action along with his knowledge and cares for his society as well as purifies his heart from impure matters. More interestingly, he must be active in preparing the textbook.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-30 {13}

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 30 {13}

- 2 His commitment to his profession (teaching). In addition to being consistent in the sincere intention of learning, he must pay attention to the problems of knowledge, particularly those pertaining to Islamic law derived from the Qur'an
- 3 His commitment to his students. He always encourages the students to be intense with the pleasure of God. Likewise, he provides a greater portion of his time to guide them, and takes care of their problems both in terms of academic life and in religious matters

Abu Bakr Jabir al-Jaz'iri similarly suggests the student in this matter select the teacher who is not arrogant about his knowledge and who devotes himself intensively and sincerely to the field of learning. Besides, the student should chose the teacher who brings life and stimulation to his spirit in learning. It is also crucial that the selected teacher must be one who practices his knowledge consistently <sup>96</sup>

### 3. Selecting fellow-students

Al-Zarnuji realizes that learning proceeds through communication between the student and his fellows as well as because of his circumstances. It is suggested that the student should respond to this necessity by selecting his fellows properly so that they enforce the attainment of his success in searching for knowledge. This is not an easy task, according to al Zarnuji, because it involves several aspects which must be taken into account

<sup>96</sup>al-Jaz'irī , *Al-ʿIlm wa al-ʿUlamāʾ*, p. 38

First of all, the student should choose as his friend the fellow who is diligent. It is expected that a diligent fellow will encourage the student in many aspects of his studying, particularly those which pertain to the task of lessons such as memorizing, understanding and questioning. The need for such a friend is also essential in creating a dynamic situation to avoid laziness. In contrast, al-Zarnuji reminds students not, under any condition, to select indolent and negligent fellows. They, unlike the diligent ones, will only disturb and make trouble in the learning process.

Secondly, al-Zarnuji encourages the student always to get in touch with a fellow who has a good religious character, because from the beginning, al-Zarnuji always emphasizes the importance of religious matters in all aspects of learning. This is true also in terms of selecting his fellow-students. Those who are consistently committed to the religious obligations will create a good condition to enhance learning activities. This condition leads the student to keep in his mind the sincere purpose of the basis of God's guidance and hence supports him in concentrating on his work of studying. Al-Zarnūjī believes that this is a key factor in obtaining knowledge.

Finally, it is suggested that the student should select as his fellow one who is gifted with good ability and understanding. This is a person with whom the student is expected to consult in any case of difficulty in understanding his lessons. It is undeniable that the achievement of a good comprehension in certain matters is not always easy. The role of a student's friends is to provide him with assistance in solving his problems.

By suggesting these points, al Zarnuji recognizes that the character of the student in searching for knowledge is affected to a considerable degree by that of his fellows with whom he gets in touch. The fellow student, like his parent, is part of the external factors which contribute to determining the degree of his success in seeking knowledge. Al Zarnuji refers to a tradition saying "Everyone born, is born a Muslim unless his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian " <sup>97</sup>

Ibn Jamā'ah similarly considers the necessity of friendship in the process of learning. Nevertheless, he reminds the student to be careful in choosing his friends, and not to fall into a very intimate relation, particularly with those who are different in gender. He suggests that the student should keep a distance from one who has bad character traits, such as too much humor, as well as from one who is weak in terms of learning and thinking. Instead, the

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<sup>97</sup>Al-Zarnūjī describes this idea by considering a number of supporting poems

- 1 Do not inquire concerning a man but observe his companion, for verily one's companion imitates the other companion.
- 2 And if the companion is evil, then quickly shun him, but if [the companion] is good, associate with him. In this way you will be led in the right direction.

There is another poem

- 1 Do not associate yourself with a companion indolent in his ways. How often through the corruption of another man is a pious man corrupted.
- 2 Contagion spreads quickly from the lazy to the [lively] one, just as when one places a [burning] coal in ashes, the fire is allayed.

Similarly the Wisdom of the Persians suggests

- 1 A bad friend is worse than an evil snake, [swear] by the pure essence of the Eternal God.
- 2 A bad companion leads you toward Hell, take a good companion in order to secure success. Al Zarnuji, *Ta'lim*, p. 31 {15}

student should remain intense with an associate, who is not only a friend but also committed to religious observance.<sup>98</sup>

It is relevant, in terms of selecting fellow-students, to raise the points of Ibn Miskawayh who presents some characteristics of friendship. According to him, there are four types of affections, each of which corresponds to the three foundations of human objectives in his life, as follows:

(1) The type of friendship which is quick to develop, but equally quick to dissolve, (2) the type which is quick to develop, but slow to dissolve, (3) that which is slow to develop, but quick to dissolve, and, (4) that which is slow to develop and slow to dissolve. This fourfold division corresponds to the threefold division of human goals or objectives: aiming at the pleasant, the good and useful, to which a combination of the three may be added.

Friendship for the sake of pleasure corresponds to (1), according to Miskawayh, that for the sake of goodness to (2), that for the sake of utility to (3), and that for the sake of a combination of the three to (4), provided it included the good as an ingredient.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4. The Learning Process

Al Zarnuji considers four important stages in the process of learning. At the first stage, there is a greater emphasis on memorizing. Secondly, there is a process of understanding in which a memory is examined not only to be remembered but also to be preserved comprehensively. The third stage is the expressive one in which what is held in memory and is preserved in his understanding is questioned through discussion or consultation to obtain a proof. Lastly, learning involves reflection and meditation to grasp the true

<sup>98</sup>Ibn Jama'ah, *Tadhkirat al-Samir*, pp. 11-18.

<sup>99</sup>See Majid Lakomy, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), p. 116.



essence of knowledge and, if it is necessary, to develop the student's knowledge as a consequence of a new challenge

In the first stage, since it is mainly memorizing, it is better to start learning with an amount of materials which can be retained in the student's memory. An excessive number of subjects should be avoided. For the beginning, suggests al-Zarnūjī, learning is concentrated in filling the memory with knowledge. He acknowledges that this process in the first instance is very difficult and requires a great deal of exercise in terms of repeating material (knowledge) until it is held in the memory. "Learning is [worth] one letter while repetition is [worth] a thousand letters." A way to practice an effective memorization is suggested:

Every day he [student] should increase [the span of] his memorial recall by one word so that even if the duration and quantity of his study become large, it would [still] remain possible for him to recall it [by repeating it] two times, and thus increase [his retention] gently and gradually. But if study in the beginning is [to be] long so that it is necessary to make ten repetitions [of the material], then in the end [the learner] is also able to proceed in this fashion [i.e., to become proficient gently and gradually] because he becomes accustomed to this [amount] and does not break this habit without great effort.<sup>100</sup>

In the second stage, in which it is necessary to grasp an understanding, the student should begin with a more readily understood matter. It is suggested that the student should not be attracted to knowledge which is in fact very hard to hold in his memory and to be reached by his understanding even though he has listened to it many times. "Holding in memory two letters is better than listening to two loads [of books] while the comprehension of two letters is

<sup>100</sup>Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim*, pp 47-48 {32-33}

better than the retention in memory of two loads [of books]."<sup>101</sup> To exercise the capability of understanding, al-Zarnuji offers some points.

- 1 Writing down a part of the material after memorization and practice in a number of repetitions
- 2 Employing intelligence and meditation to exert himself to comprehend strenuously what has been given by the teacher.
- 3 Preserving what he has understood, while together with working hard, praying to the Creator (God).<sup>102</sup>

Subsequent to the stages of memorizing and understanding, learning tends to be a process of deliberating. The main concern at this stage is with an

<sup>101</sup>Ibid

<sup>102</sup>As always, to justify his suggestions al-Zarnūjī tries to find the support of tradition. In this case, he refers to al-Khalīl Ibn Ahmad as-Sarakhsī

- 1 Serve knowledge in a way that it becomes a useful thing [to you] and keep its lesson alive by praiseworthy action
- 2 And if you do not retain anything, repeat it, then affirm it in a most energetic manner [i.e., hammer it into your head]
- 3 Then make notes about it in order that you may return to it and its study always
- 4 Then when you are sure it will not slip from your grasp, go on after it to something new
- 5 But at the same time repeat what preceded [this new knowledge]; and establish firmly [in your mind] the importance of this increase [in knowledge]
- 6 Discuss with people subjects of learning in order that you may live. Do not keep yourself away from the enlightened
- 7 If you conceal knowledge you will be forgotten so that you see no one but the ignorant and the boorish
- 8 Then you will be bridled with a fire on the Day of Resurrection and will be made to burn with a vehement chastisement. Ibid, p. 48 {34}

attempt to seek a proof pertaining to the knowledge the student has held in memory and has understood

Discussion is a way to approach this stage, and, to al Zarnūjī, is a method which aims at gaining the truth. It should be borne in mind, however, that a discussion progresses through a presentation of arguments which may be complicated, subject to the sides from which knowledge is perceived. Therefore, practicing this method requires, besides a great deal of knowledge and the technical aspects of presentation, certain manners. The truth which comes from a discussion "is only attained through circumspection, the avoidance of violent dispute, and fairness [in general], not however through hostility and anger."<sup>103</sup>

In addition to discussion, the stage of deliberating can be practiced through questioning. Al-Zarnūjī believes that the usefulness of questioning "is greater than repetition since in this [[questioning]] there is repetition and one more element." Al-Zarnūjī continues "Posing questions for an hour is better than a month of repetition."<sup>104</sup> Through questioning the student is expected to be expressive in seeking a greater understanding of knowledge. However, he advises that questions be asked of an appropriate person, namely one who has a just and candid nature.

The last stage which the student should reach in learning is, according to al-Zarnūjī, that which employs the ability of reflection and meditation. It is suggested that the student "meditate at all times on the more subtle matters [or,

<sup>103</sup>Ibid {35}

<sup>104</sup>Ibid , p 49 {35}

the fine points] of knowledge and that he accustom himself thereto, for only by reflection can subtle problems be solved " <sup>105</sup>

Along with these stages, al-Zarnūjī offers some suggestions which support the process of learning

- 1 Taking, under all circumstances and at all times, any advantage (in terms of knowledge) from the presence of every learned man.
- 2 Praising God and thanking Him especially when an understanding is gained
- 3 Evaluating himself as to what has been achieved in order to stimulate further learning
4. Moderating the loudness of speaking in order to hold subject matter in memory.
- 5 No break and no intermission in pursuit of knowledge.

It is worth noting that al-Zarnūjī recognizes to a certain degree the connection between searching for knowledge and that of seeking income. "The acquisition of knowledge and learning can be linked to the earning of a livelihood " Then, he suggests "if it is obligatory for the student of learning to make a living so as to be able to keep his family and other [dependents], let [him] work for his livelihood and [at the same time] repeat assiduously and discuss rather than let him be idle [or lazy] " <sup>106</sup>

<sup>105</sup>Ibid

<sup>106</sup>Ibid , pp 50-51 { 37-38 }

Abū Ḥanīfah was, according to al-Zarnuqī, the one who "used to study [or: study law] by propounding questions often and discussing them in his shop when he was a cloth-merchant " <sup>107</sup>

What follows is an attempt to consider the ideas of other Muslim scholars on this problem. As will be seen, they share with al-Zarnuqī the idea of gradual process of learning, which, in term of subject matter, starts from the easiest materials and proceeds to the more sophisticated ones. The point which distinguishes them from al-Zarnuqī is perhaps that they perceive such a gradual process of learning as being natural, in the sense that they recognize the development of human abilities from one step to another. Meanwhile, al-Zarnūjī, in seeing this problem, is more concerned himself with the tradition of his ancestors and does not try to bring the issue into rational explanation.

To begin this examination of other scholars, however, it is useful to look at the Qur'ānic outlook towards the ways of learning. From the following passages, one can draw a notion that the Qur'an offers some methods of study

(1) Man's attention was drawn to the art of reading and writing. In the very first revelation of Mohammed, when speaking of God, the Koran says "Read in the name of God - who teaches man to write with the pen, who teaches him things, he knew not before " (2) The importance of the senses was mentioned in many verses and it is pointed out that man can raise his intelligence through his senses. (3) It is noted that one should use his past experience for the future guide of learning. (4) Many verses indicate the importance of observation of the universe. It is noted that one should travel with an open eye observant of the nature, the relics, and the remains of those nations that rose and fell in days gone by, as is shown in the following verse. "Men of understanding are those who reflect on the creation of the heaven and the earth, and say, thou hast created this in vain." This verse also indicates the importance of reflective

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. 50 {37}

thinking and it shows the significance of the purpose of the universe (5) Case history and biographies are two other ways that one may learn. History is taken by the *Koran* as a field that everyone should ponder, for it is stated "Have they not then journeyed in the land and seen how was the end of those before them?" Learning lessons from hardships and trials, from Divine Revelation, contemplation and meditation are also mentioned in the *Koran*.<sup>108</sup>

According to al-Farabi, learning requires an awareness from the student concerning his ignorance of the subject for which he searches. This is important since it helps him receive the knowledge offered by his teacher. Al-Fārābī perceives the student as being of two kinds in terms of ignorance. The first is he who is aware of his suffering from the lack of knowledge, which means that he by himself feels and recognizes it. The second is he who is not aware of it even though in fact he has no knowledge of the subject about which he learns.<sup>109</sup> To al-Farabi, learning presupposes the first type of ignorance so that the student realizes the need for knowledge.

Furthermore, al-Farabi perceives learning exclusively as a human activity which deals with human intelligence. "It is a kind of discourse that aims at producing cognitions which were not known before and of whose lacking a person is aware."<sup>110</sup> In practice, learning, in the mind of al-Fārābī, is of two types. The first deals with the state of character which results in action while the second is concerned itself with cognition. For the first type, learning places an

<sup>108</sup>A. Arasteh, "Islamic Contribution to Educational Methods," *Educational Theory* 7 (1957), p. 29.

<sup>109</sup>Fuad Said Haddad, "An Early Arab Theory of Instruction," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (1974), p. 241.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 242.

emphasis on either practice or discourse, whereas for the second type it is undertaken by the means of speech or by anything which may replace it <sup>111</sup>

As to learning by speech, according to al-Fārabi, it demands three conditions:

One is that the learner conceives the thing to be learned and comprehends the meaning of what he hears from the teacher. The second condition is that the learner becomes convinced that what he conceives and comprehends from the teacher's speech exists. The third is that the learner commits to his memory and is able to reproduce what he conceived or what he came to be convinced <sup>112</sup>

In addition, al-Farabi offers five methods of learning, each of which connects with the types of cognitions. These five arts (methods) can be simplified as follows:

The first art is demonstration; it leads to conviction and certainty. The second art is dialectic; it gives a conviction that approaches certainty. This kind of conviction al-Farabi calls 'belief'. The third art is sophistry, the fourth is rhetoric; its function is to make one satisfied with his cognition; sophistry and rhetoric leads to 'persuasion'. The last art is poetry. The purpose of poetry is to make one imagine. Imaginations are similitudes of things and not the things themselves <sup>113</sup>

Meanwhile, Ibn Miskawayh takes the view which considers the student as a man with his full natural existence. To him, learning is a process which involves some steps derived from the inner aspect of the student himself in response to the development of his existence. These internal aspects are so

<sup>111</sup>Ibid, p. 243

<sup>112</sup>Ibid, p. 245

<sup>113</sup>Ibid, p. 244. For further observations of al-Farabi's ideas of learning, see Shamas Malik Nanji, "Al-Farabi's Philosophy of Education," Thesis (Montreal: The Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1989). With a very sophisticated analysis, the author examines relevant works of al-Farabi.

significant that he perceives that learning "must partake of both the temporal and the spiritual in man, and in doing so it must follow the natural order of precedence. In the order of nature the first power to make its appearance is that of desire, ire [[natural sense of self respect]] and reason being second and third respectively." He adds that learning "should begin with the discipline of desire extending gradually to the culture of ire and reason, in their respective order of appearance." <sup>114</sup>

As for Ibn Khaldun, he gives an emphasis, in terms of learning, on the problem of habit. To him, learning constitutes a craft which forms a skill significant to the knowledge of the sciences and it is best acquired through habit. <sup>115</sup> More practically, he suggests that, from a paedagogical perspective, learning should be a gradual process which considers the ability of the student from one stage to another. It is not necessary to supply him with plenty of information at one time altogether. To him, learning "is effective only when it proceeds gradually and little by little." <sup>116</sup> At the first step, learning deals with the fundamental problem which is covered in each chapter of the subject matter studied. Then, the given problem is repeated until it is solidly grounded in the mind of the student. This process lasts continuously while the level of the subject develops slowly but surely. Describing this, Ibn Khaldun says

Preparedness for and reactivity to scientific knowledge and understanding grow gradually. At the beginning the student is completely unable to understand any but a very few points. His understanding is only approximate and general and can be achieved

<sup>114</sup>B. H. Siddiq, "Ibn Miskawayh's Theory of Education," *Iqbal* 2 (1962-1963), p. 42.

<sup>115</sup>Aliah Schleifer, "Ibn Khaldun's Theories of Perception, Logic, and Knowledge," *The Islamic Quarterly* 34.2 (1990), p. 96.

<sup>116</sup>Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, pp. 292-293.



only with the help of pictures (*muthul*) derived from sensual perception. His preparedness, then, keeps growing gradually and little by little when he faces the problems of discipline under consideration and has them repeated to him and advances from approximate understanding of them to a complete, higher knowledge.<sup>117</sup>

Similarly, Ibn Khaldun introduces the use of observation and discussion as the effective methods of learning since they train the student to attain a precise expression and a greater understanding of what he has memorized. According to him

The transmission of things one has observed with one's own eyes is something more comprehensive and complete than the transmission of information and things one has learned about. A habit that is the result of personal observation is more perfect and more firmly rooted than a habit that is the result of information.<sup>118</sup>

In addition, "The easiest method of acquiring the scientific habit", he says, "is through acquiring the ability to express oneself clearly in discussion and disputing scientific problems. This is what clarifies their import and makes them understandable."<sup>119</sup>

As is apparent in many suggestions, the highest expression of learning is habituation, through which knowledge enters into the mind of a student. Habit is thus the very important factor in comprehending a subject. He maintains that

...skill in science, knowledge of its diverse aspects, and mastery of it are the result of a habit which enables its possessor to comprehend all the basic principles of that particular science, to become acquainted with its problems and to evolve details of it from its

<sup>117</sup>Ibid, p. 293, quoted in Hadi Sharifi, "Ibn Khaldun's Thoughts in the Context of the Sociology of Education," *Muslim Education Quarterly* 2-3 (1985), pp. 17-18.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid

<sup>119</sup>Ibid vol. 2, p. 429

principles. Until such a habit has been obtained, skill in a particular discipline is not forthcoming.

Habit is different from understanding and learning by heart. Understanding of a simple problem in a simple discipline may be found equally in someone well versed in the particular discipline and in the beginner and in the accomplished scholar. Habit on the other hand, belongs solely and exclusively to the scholar or the person well-versed in scientific discipline.<sup>120</sup>

To sum up this chapter, two characteristics of al-Zarnūjī's ideas about aspects of the method of Muslim learning can be underlined. First, he enforces religious concepts such as *niyah* (intention), *jidd* (industriousness), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and *hummah* (respect), to be the basic motives of Muslim learning. By applying these concepts, the system of Muslim learning has normative aspects which distinguish it from the systems generated by the beliefs or ideologies other than Islam. The intention of learning which is idealistically directed to the pleasure of God is one of the significant factors in Muslim learning since it is believed that the entire life of human beings as well as the existence of the universe is dependent on His power. This motive subsequently influences all aspects of Muslim learning such as the relationship of the student with his teacher and the ways by which the student should concentrate on learning. However, it should be kept in mind that such motives represent the view of Muslim traditionalists, who perceive the efforts of human beings, including learning, as no more than the choices of works (*ikhtiyar*) while the determinative decision of the human efforts remains absolutely in the hand of God. It is different from the rationalists' point of view that since God has provided human beings with such powers as intellect (*ʿaql*), soul (*nafs*), and

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., p. 426.

body (*badn*), one's achievement is subject to human efforts in employing these powers.

Second, in terms of practical aspects, al-Zarnuji recognizes the gradual process in all aspects of learning such as in choosing the subject matter, in determining the teacher from whom the student should learn, and in selecting friends whom the student contacts. The gradual process should be supported by some abilities and skills such as writing, questioning, discussion, and consultation. To enhance this opinion, al-Zarnuji mostly refers to the traditions of his predecessors, although his theories to some extent are shared with other Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Khaldun whose explanations are more reasonable since their approaches are more philosophical and psychological.

## CONCLUSION

I have attempted to demonstrate some aspects of the method of Muslim learning, advanced by Burhan al-Dīn al-Zarnūjī as reflected in his sole treatise, *Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim Tariq al-Taʿallum*. Similarly, I have tried to outline some of the opinions exhibited by Muslim intellectuals such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Khaldūn, and Ibn Jamāʿah. Having considered the above, I will venture two concluding remarks.

First, it is fair to recognize that, to the extent of my study, the theory of the method of learning in al-Zarnūjī's *Taʿlīm* is a considerable contribution of a medieval Muslim scholar to the problem of learning, in that it covers both ethical and technical aspects. Insofar as the history of Muslim learning is concerned, such a comprehensive theory dealing with aspects of the method of Muslim learning, which is presented in a single work, is rarely found. Al-Zarnūjī's theory concerns not merely the problem of how the student establishes the correct position in relation to his teacher and that of his behavior in terms of virtues such as *imān*, *ḥidd*, *tawakkul* and *ḥumayl*. Rather, it also copes with practical problems which relate to the process of learning.

Second, the theory represents, however, no advancement in the sense that it does not go beyond the traditional point of view. It is not distinct from that espoused by other traditional Muslim scholars, and as well it is no more than a compilation of the traditions of the predecessors of the author. It is correct, indeed, that the theory includes, to some extent, psychological aspects, but it nevertheless simply follows the traditions, and hence, suffers from the

lack of rational arguments. Therefore, the theory is obviously in line with a traditional current of Muslim scholarship, into which the works of great scholars such as al-Ghazali have been incorporated. This point is sufficient for me to support the opinion that al-Zarnūjī, to whom the theory in the *Taʿlīm* is attributed, "was not revolutionary nor world-shaking, he was rather a collector and synthesizer of the ideas of scholars and sages who had preceded him. He was a traditionalist since he looked for guidance along with the pathways of the ancients and pursued the injunctions of the Koran."<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances, the method of learning is thus presented as a part of the religious undertaking, which should, in all situations, conform to religious instructions, since learning is, in itself, considered a religious duty, which is, in a general sense, in the same position as other obligatory duties such as the daily ritual prayer and just war.

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<sup>1</sup>G. E. von Grunebaum and T. M. Abel, "Introduction," in their English translation of al-Zarnūjī's *Taʿlīm al-Mutaʿallim Tarīq al-Taʿallum, Instruction of the Student: the Method of Learning* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), p. 1.

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