

# Age of Doubt

Module Two  
Qurtuba Online

# Module Two: the Structure of Thought

First, to provide students with the *explanatory framework* needed to critically engage with Islam and Modernity.

**We do not seek “new information” but only to “*arrange what we already know*”.** In other words, What we need is a *method-of-thinking*

Second, to demonstrate that *metaphysics* is the grounds of all **thinking**, and not epistemology, language, or morality.

## *Awareness* *(al-Wai')*

*“to be conscious, recognize and know a situation or fact – a reality”*

فَاعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ قُلِّ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَاكُمْ

*Awareness of ...*

*Foundations of*  
*Existence/Ultimate*  
*Reality*

*'aqedah*

*Meditation*

“to create and altered state  
of man – to escape a  
reality”

*Awareness*

“to be conscious, recognize  
and know a situation or fact  
– a reality”

## *Deep Thinking*

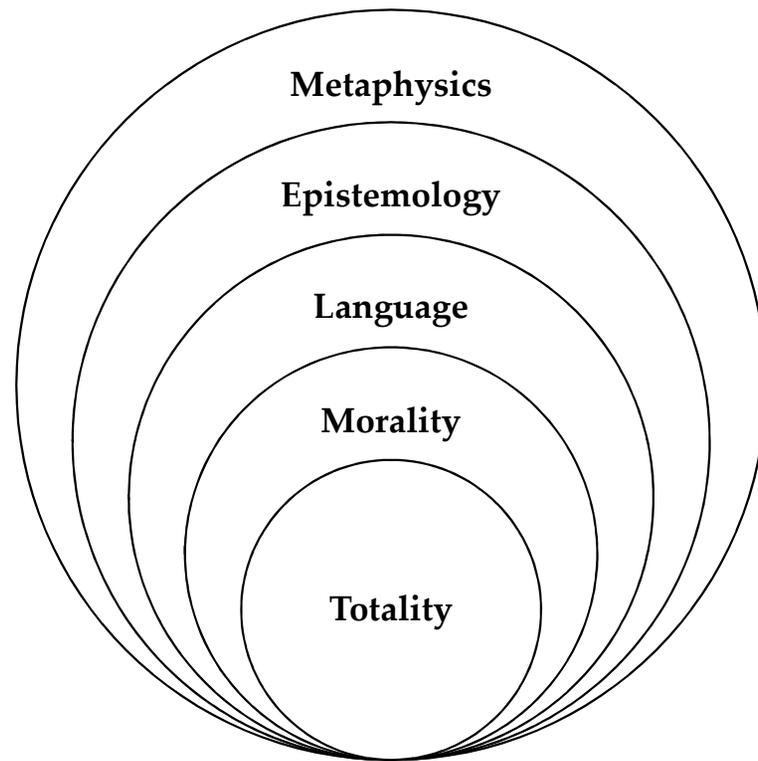
*“the gate to witnessing the greatness of God and the scene of sovereignty are opened before him...” (Ibn Taymiyyah)*

*“deep thinking ... is the beginning of and the key to all good...it is the best function of the heart and the most useful to it” (Ibn al-Qayyim)*

## *Witnessing (shahada)*

*“a person that declares as true what he or she has seen, heard or knows”.*

من قال: أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له، وأن محمدا عبده



*thinking*

“Understanding” ... means “having whatever ideas and concepts are needed to recognize that a great many different phenomena are part of a coherent whole” (Heisenberg 1971; 33)

Theories are made “creatively” ... “The paradox of creativity” however “is that it requires both great familiarity with the subject matter *and* the ability to approach it from a fresh angle” (Kleindorfer et al. 1993: 55)

**Familiarity means a thing, idea or structure are given, parts of every-day-life. Not critical awareness. The familiar thing, idea or structure becomes *the norm – reality*. A structure then becomes a prison cell and we see through its bars oblivious to our condition (as being in a cell).**

What is *Totality*?

# What is *Totality*?

“The wood of the table appears, when present to me, as firewood, when in the extreme cold it is more important not to die frozen than to use a table. It appears as the phenomenon wood-firewood, a thing-with-sense, just as the wood-desk would, in an everyday manner, appear equally as a thing with-sense. The sense (*sentido*) [which something has], *on the other hand, never is a merely theoretical or abstract consideration. It always pertains to the everyday and is existential; it is the wood as something integrated into the ‘for’ of action*, whether [the action be] practical or [geared towards the] production of artifacts (*poiética*). (1977/2011, 69 [2.3.5.7])

# Formation of a *Totality*

We give *meaning* to the multiplicity of parts surrounding us *by relating them to a totality* that “includes, embraces, and unifies them organically”. For example;

- Four *isolated* blocks of wood would have *no meaning* “of itself”. Four related/*assembled* blocks + a surface of wood = *meaning* (a table). The table accrues new meaning; it is on which man *eats*, on which we hold a *discussion*, on which we do *labour*.
- A vessel of water *means survival* for a man lost in a desert. In contrast, the vessel of water means profit for a local market manager. Water means *sustenance* for a farmer, and means disaster for occupants of a flooded city.
- Karen means *schoolteacher* for the child. Karen means *wife* for the husband (Bob). Karen means *constituent/voting citizen* for the politician (e.g. seeing teacher Karen outside of school – shock and confusion).

**Parts are only meaningful because we recognize that “they have a place in an order; they have a function in a totality”. Through recognition a part can both: (1) come into existence and (2) have meaning. Alternatively, it is given *meaning*.**

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We give *value* to the multiplicity of parts surrounding us *by relating them to a system* that “includes, embraces, and unifies them organically”. For example;

- Table as *surface for food (mundane)* versus a table as *surface for art (aesthetic)*.
- A vessel of water as *survival (existential/major importance)* versus vessel of bottle for as profit supermarket owner (*mundane/little importance*).
- Karen means *schoolteacher* for the child (*function/less importance*) versus Karen as a mother to Ibn Bob (*love/major importance*).

Parts are only *valuable* because we *they have meaning* and they serve a *function* within a system.

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# Totality and *Sub-Systems*

**Man-Self Relations;** self-perception (*selbstverständnis*)

**Man-Object Relations;** material relations

**Man-Man Relations:** intersubjective relations (Lebenswelt) – political, economic, social fields.

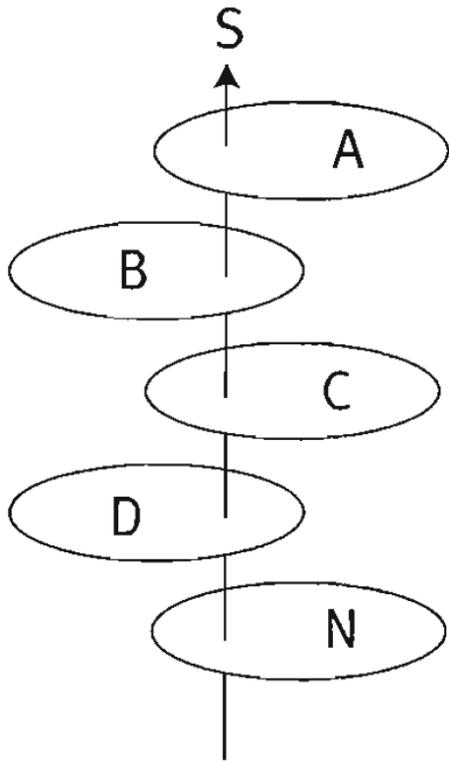


Figure 1. THE SUBJECT (S) ACTS IN VARIOUS FIELDS

*Notes: A, B, C, D, N are diverse practical fields (familial, economic, athletic, political, etc.). The subject (S) cuts across these fields, fulfilling differentiated functions in each.*

# Relativism?

Relativism; that parts and relations do not actually exist in the real world but are contained within the mind. This is false for two reasons:

First, on the existence of parts. There are two types of parts; *observer-dependent* and *observer independent*. Currency is observer dependent. Karen is observer independent. For example, in a post-apocalypse world, currency would not exist. Whereas, if Bob did not recognize that he is married to Karen, Karen would still exist.

Second, on the existence of relations. The relations between parts can be a false relationship. This does not mean a *real* relationship does not exist if it is false. For example, if I were to falsely claim that Bob is Karen's father, this does not mean a real relationship does not exist (wife-husband).