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GOALS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION REVISITED: A THEME OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY

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Abstract: *This article critically examines the goal(s) of Islamic education, with a particular focus on the interpretations advanced by William Chittick. This examination occurs within the context of the unitary theistic objective intrinsic to Islamic education, contrasting it with the multiplicity of secular goals underpinning Western education. The critique is centred on Chittick's assertion that modern Western education, dominated by the principle of takthīr—multiplicity—is fundamentally incompatible with the unifying vision of tawhīd—the unity of God—inherent in traditional Islamic education. At the heart of this inquiry lies the question: can the objective(s) of Islamic education, firmly rooted in the principle of tawhīd, as Chittick steadfastly asserts, coexist with the Western educational framework, which is grounded in takthīr? Drawing from classical Islamic thought with a particular focus on Sufism, the paper revisits the triadic structure of knowledge in Islamic intellectual tradition: transmitted, intellectual, and inspired knowledge, which aims to cultivate the soul's spiritual transformation. While Chittick views tawhīd as the ultimate guiding principle. This paper, through a critical-analytical framework, contends that tawhīd and takthīr are inextricably compatible and interdependent through the lens of waḥda (unity-in-diversity and diversity-in-unity), compelling us to engage with the nuanced interplay between these seemingly opposing forces within the realm of education.*

Keywords: *Diversity, Education, Ibn ʿArabī, Muslims, Rūmī, Unity.*

Abstrak: Artikel ini secara kritis mengkaji tujuan-tujuan pendidikan Islam, dengan fokus khusus pada interpretasi yang dikemukakan oleh William Chittick. Kajian ini dilakukan dalam konteks tujuan teistik tunggal yang melekat pada pendidikan Islam, dengan membandingkannya dengan banyaknya tujuan sekuler yang mendasari pendidikan Barat. Kritik ini berpusat pada pernyataan Chittick bahwa pendidikan Barat modern, yang didominasi oleh prinsip *takthīr*—kemultiplitas—pada dasarnya tidak sesuai dengan visi penyatuan *tawhīd*—kesatuan Tuhan—yang melekat dalam pendidikan Islam tradisional. Inti dari penyelidikan ini terletak pada pertanyaan: dapatkah tujuan-tujuan pendidikan Islam, yang berakar kuat pada prinsip tawhīd, sebagaimana yang

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ditegaskan Chittick, hidup berdampingan dengan kerangka pendidikan Barat, yang berlandaskan pada *takthīr*? Dengan mengacu pada pemikiran Islam klasik, khususnya Sufisme, makalah ini mengkaji kembali struktur *triad* pengetahuan dalam tradisi intelektual Islam: pengetahuan yang ditransmisikan, pengetahuan intelektual, dan pengetahuan yang diilhami, yang bertujuan untuk menumbuhkan transformasi spiritual jiwa. Sementara Chittick memandang *tawhīd* sebagai prinsip panduan utama. Tulisan ini, melalui kerangka kerja analitis kritis, berpendapat bahwa *tawhīd* dan *takthīr* tak terpisahkan dan saling bergantung melalui lensa *waḥda* (kesatuan dalam keberagaman dan keberagaman dalam kesatuan), yang mendorong kita untuk terlibat dengan interaksi yang bernuansa antara kekuatan-kekuatan yang tampaknya berlawanan ini dalam ranah pendidikan.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Ibn ʿArabī, Keberagaman, Muslim, Pendidikan, Persatuan, Rūmī.*

Introduction

The first question that curiously rises as we contemplate the title concerns the aim of Islamic education: Is there but one goal, singular and undivided, or does the purpose of such an education fragment into multiple pursuits? This inquiry, seemingly simple, reaches deep into the heart of Islamic philosophy and mysticism, where the loftiest of discussions on unity and multiplicity unfold within the all-encompassing topic of existence. For existence, being the wellspring of all phenomena, shapes and directs every thought, every state, every action. And so, when we ponder the goal or goals of Islamic education, we are inevitably led back to that same primordial question of oneness and manyness, from which the highest and purest implications for Islamic education may naturally spring. Here, we find that the cultivation of the mind is not merely the accumulation of knowledge, but a journey back to the very essence of being, a journey wherein the soul may catch glimpses of the sublime unity that shines through the veil of multiplicity, ever present in the myriad forms of creation.

To this end, throughout this article, my reflections shall be anchored in a critical engagement with the profound insights of the venerable Islamic scholar, William Chittick. A towering presence in contemporary Islamic thought, particularly within the Western academic sphere, the task of examining his perspectives on education is vital—not only due to his vast contributions to Islamic studies, especially Islamic philosophy and mysticism, but also because his thought is deeply intertwined with the primal theme of unity and multiplicity. This theme, so central to understanding the Islamic intellectual tradition in its variant forms, serves as the bedrock upon which this discourse is built.

At the heart of this inquiry lies the question: can the objective(s) of Islamic education, firmly rooted in the principle of *tawhīd* (the oneness of God), as Chittick (2011, 87–89; 2013b, 7, 12–13) Steadfastly asserts, coexists with the Western educational framework, which is grounded

in multiplicity—a worldview that emphasizes the fragmentation of knowledge. As I will argue, the essence of a truly unitary vision of Islamic education calls for us to transcend simple dichotomies, compelling us to engage with the nuanced interplay between these seemingly opposing forces within the realm of education. Before embarking on this exploration, however, it is necessary to define different branches of knowledge in Islamic intellectual tradition, for this is foundational in guiding and supporting the ascent of this critical inquiry.

Islamic Branches of Knowledge

The term "educate" finds its origins in the Latin *"educare,"* which speaks to both "leading forth" and "drawing out," suggesting that education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but the awakening of what already resides within (Chittick 2011, 86; Ravi 2022, 4). It is an act of remembrance and unveiling, bringing forth what is inherently present but veiled by forgetfulness. This dual act of teaching (leading forth) and guiding (drawing out) reaches beyond the merely terrestrial, extending into metaphysical realms, where education aids the soul's journey toward self-realization. This consideration emerges from the unique human condition whose creation in the divine image—most notably, the capacity for desire— sets them apart from all other creatures. The attribute of desire necessitates guidance. For desire, unbound and unguided, may lead us astray, away from the path of fulfilment. In this light, education becomes a sacred task that emerges not merely as a social or intellectual necessity but as a spiritual endeavour, a means through which the soul is directed toward the full manifestation of its latent divine attributes.

This conception aligns exquisitely with the Islamic philosophy of education, where learning occurs through three distinct yet interwoven pathways: transmitted knowledge (*'ulūm naqlī*), intellectual knowledge (*'ulum 'aqlī*), and inspired knowledge (*'ulūm kashfī*). These streams correspond to the various ways in which the soul encounters and draws forth knowledge from both external and internal realms (Chittick 2011, 85–87; 2013b, 2–5).

Transmitted knowledge, as the name so aptly reveals, speaks of the knowledge passed down through the ages, from teacher to pupil, through sacred texts or ancestral tradition. It is knowledge acquired not by solitary reflection, but by receiving the truths imparted by others—be it in the scientific realm or from the revered tomes of theology. The secular sciences of history and sociology, as well as the sacred disciplines of Islamic theology (*kalām*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*), are all drawn from this well of transmitted knowledge, whose authority rests in the great voices of each discipline and the guidance of the Qur'an, and the Hadith. While disciplines such as history and sociology are today grounded in empirical methods, their inclusion here under transmitted knowledge refers to

their dependence on the transmission and interpretation of recorded human experience, rather than on purely experimental inquiry. In the classical Islamic sense, '*ulūm naqli*' encompasses knowledge preserved and conveyed through authoritative reports (*akhbār*) and narratives, which form the epistemological foundation of these fields even when critically re-examined (Chittick 2013b, 2–5).

In contrast, intellectual knowledge—rooted in the stirring of the soul's own faculties—requires no transmission, although external intervention can help in the process. It blossoms from within, nurtured by reason and experience. Disciplines like mathematics, philosophy, and the natural sciences arise from this realm, where the soul's gaze seeks truth independently. Here, the law of causality, for instance, is not taught but understood, as when a flame springs from the match's spark, needing no authority to declare its cause (Chittick 2013b, 23–25).

Yet beyond both of these, loftier still in the Sufi perspective, lies inspired knowledge—an awakening that springs from the soul's innermost recesses. This is knowledge neither learned from transmission nor deduced by reason and experience, but felt through the heart's quiet intuition, often born of devotion or inner purity. Inspired knowledge leads the soul toward realization, where, in polishing the heart, one draws near to the Divine. Such understanding is deeply personal, for it involves not only the acquisition of truths but the soul's ascent toward them, much like Rumi's moth circling the flame, drawn irresistibly toward the light, seeking to merge with the source of its own longing (Chittick 2013a, 235; Knysh 2017, 145).

This tripartite approach to knowledge—transmission, intellection, and inspiration—may be more comprehensible if likened to the cosmic law of gravity. Transmitted knowledge trusts the authority of scientists and experts, or, in the modern world, the institutional authority of science itself. Intellectual knowledge arises from observing the fall of an apple, and inspired knowledge is the inner realization of weight and balance, known in the depths of the self, be it through self-discovery or external guidance. The critical distinction between these three forms of knowledge becomes apparent when we consider the concepts of imitation (*taqlīd*), verification (*taʿaqqul*), and realization (*taḥqīq*) (Chittick 2013b, 2–5; Choudhury 2019, 2–6).

Transmitted knowledge, at its core, is born of imitation. To belong to a religion, culture, or intellectual discipline, one must mirror the accumulated wisdom of its traditions, customs, and scholars. In Islam, this inheritance is known as *taqlid*, the act of following the judgments of revered jurists known as m*ujtahids*. Those who follow this path, the *muqallids*, trust in the weight of centuries of scholarship, accepting without question the *fatwas* — legal rulings — given by the *mujtahids* of a particular school. They, in humility, refrain from venturing into the perilous

seas of personal interpretation, for *ijtihād* — that noble endeavour of legal interpretation — demands an ocean's depth of knowledge. Through *taqlīd*, there is harmony, a steadfastness in practice that shields the faithful from the dangers of capricious or errant understanding. This reliance on authority fosters continuity, preserving the sacred teachings of the Quran and Hadith (Chittick 2013b, 2–5; Ibrahim 2016, 804–5; Arnel and Haqq 2025, 13–25).

Yet, the pursuit of intellectual knowledge stands in stark contrast. Grounded in reason, *ta'aqqul* demands verification or independent inquiry—the blossoming of reason in the garden of understanding. Those who engage in verification, the '*āqil,* seek understanding not only of "dos and don'ts" but of "is' and isn't," venturing into a direct, untainted intellectual engagement with primary sources and texts. In this sphere, imitation—often practiced by *muqallids* and *mujtahids*—is regarded as the province of novices or students, not of masters. Great philosophers such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Mulla Sadra (1571-1635) sought to harmonize human reason ('*aql*) with divine revelation (*wahy*), asserting that reason must not be enslaved to revelation. This explains why, in Islam, *taqlid* is permissible exclusively in practical matters linked to *Shariah*, while it is strictly forbidden in the fundamental principles of Islam—*tawhīd*, *prophecy*, and *the return* (Chittick 2013b, 2–5; Choudhury 2019, 29–34; HosseiniEskandian et al. 2023, 159–79)

Higher still in the Sufi perspective is inspired knowledge, which springs from *taḥqīq*, or direct personal realization—a deep awakening within the soul that often needs but a subtle spark to kindle its flame. The *muḥaqqiq*, one who possesses *taḥqīq*, discerns truth through direct intuition, bypassing both transmitted and intellectual knowledge. Just as one is immediately aware of one's own consciousness without the need for a prophet to reveal it or a philosopher to define it, so too does the *muḥaqqiq* grasp the essence of things without an intermediary. It is a knowledge born not of imitation or deduction but of unveiling, where the knower and the known become one. However, while the *muḥaqqiq* may glimpse ultimate truths, this insight is so forbiddingly elitist that it cannot shape the world unless grounded in the frameworks of transmitted and intellectual knowledge. Thus, within the Sufi tradition, where *taḥqīq* is pursued as the primary goal, many Sufis have been known to express themselves in ways that seem bizarre and even inappropriate to the outward observer. These expressions, known as *shaṭḥiyāt*, emerge from an intuitive grasp of truth that transcends conventional norms (Chittick 2013b, 79–82; 2011, 89–90; Rustom 2023, 119–25).

To conclude, in Islam, the only knowledge deemed truly reliable is that which is revealed through transmission, verified through intellection, realized through intuition, and responsibly practiced through volition. As echoed by contemporary Muslim scholars, such understanding is

known as *ma'rifah*, the ripe fruit of the many branches that sprout from the tree of knowledge. The word *ma'rifah* springs from the Arabic root '*arafa*, a term that beautifully intertwines the acts of knowing, verifying, and realizing, integrating the outward with the inward, the manifest with the nonmanifest. This root graces both the Qur'an and Hadith, appearing in myriad forms, lending its wisdom to the sacred texts. An individual who embodies *ma'rifah*, known as the '*ārif*, fulfils their duties to self, to God, and to creation, for their knowledge is simultaneously anchored in transmission (*taqlīd*), intellection (*ta'aqqul*), and inspiration (*taḥqīq*). Thus, from this lofty perspective, the ultimate goal of Islamic education must be the cultivation of *ma'rifah*. It is not the mere accumulation of knowledge grounded solely in *taqlīd*, *ta'aqqul*, or *taḥqīq*, but the synthesis of all, which nourishes the soul. It is within this framework that Muslim educators should aspire, guiding souls toward the realization of knowledge that is neither one-dimensional nor fragmented. Instead, it is a unified understanding that mirrors the unity of Being itself despite the infinite diversity of its manifestations. The ultimate aim of Islamic educational institutions, then, is not to produce mere *muqallids* (imitators), *mujtahids* (jurists), '*āqils* (philosophers), or *muḥaqqiqs* (Sufis), but rather the nurturing of '*urafā'*, those who know things as they are. This noble aim is profoundly echoed in the revered supplication of the Prophet, who, with earnest heart, entreated: "*Oh God, reveal unto me the nature of things as they truly are*" (Chittick and Rustom 2025, 1–3).

The Reign of *Takthīr*

Several conflicts between Islamic and Western education, particularly regarding the core Islamic principle of *tawhīd*, become evident in Chittick's analysis. As Chittick (2011, 87–89) outlines, modern education claims to be grounded in "science" and seeks authority through its "scientific" nature, emphasizing empirical observation, which relies solely upon knowledge accessible through the senses. It primarily dismisses knowledge not confirmed by the cold hand of empiricism—a tragic departure, Chittick contends, from the luminous path of Islamic education, which places its trust in the unified vision of *tawhīd*, asserting that nothing is truly real save the ultimate reality of God. *Tawhīd*, as Chittick so eloquently elucidates, is more than a creed or belief—it is the very essence of knowledge itself, the bedrock upon which all understanding must rest. In the Islamic tradition, nothing exists but God, and all else is a self-disclosure, a manifestation of the divine. Thus, knowledge of anything is knowledge of God, and any form of education that fails to acknowledge this is, in Chittick's eyes, ignorance, as it prevents individuals from perceiving things as they truly are. It is a fragmentary and fractured understanding of a world that, in truth, is whole and united.

According to Chittick (2011, 87–89) Modern Western education, born

in the fiery crucible of the Enlightenment, has forged for itself a new idol: *Takthīr*, closely aligned with the pragmatic exigencies of modern states. *Tawhīd*, deriving from *waḥda*, oneness, asserts the unity of God or all existence, while *takthīr*, originating from *kathra*, manyness, posits the multiplicity of reality. *Takthīr,* as Chittick (2011, 88–89) persistently asserts, is the very antithesis of *tawhīd*. Where *tawhīd* insists upon the unity of all things, *takthīr* revels in their division. Where *tawhīd* speaks of the harmony between the soul and the cosmos, *takthīr* speaks of their separation. Nevertheless, this is not to say that *takthīr* is entirely without merit. Indeed, Chittick (1994, 33; 2011, 88) concedes that the very multiplicity of the world is itself a reflection of the multiplicity of the divine attributes, and some Muslim philosophers used the term to describe the act by which God creates the world of multiplicity. As Chittick contends, however, humans are called to transcend *takthīr*, perceiving beyond the multiplicity and discord governing the visible realm. The duty, according to Chittick, is to establish *tawhīd*, promoting unity, harmony, balance, equilibrium, and peace, beginning with the individual. Chittick (2011, 89) contrasts this with modern thought, which believes in imposing a system on society for harmony, wherein individuals conform to the imposed system. As Chittick puts it, "Traditional [Islamic] thought says, 'Begin with yourself.' Modern [Western] thought says, 'Reform others (2011, 89).'"

By contrast, in the traditional Islamic worldview, "*takthīr* in the service of *tawhīd*," as designated by Chittick (2013b, 52–55), the various branches of knowledge were all seen as interrelated, each one shedding light on the others. Metaphysics, cosmology (e.g., mathematics, astrology, and medicine), spiritual psychology, and ethics were not seen as separate disciplines but as parts of a single, unified inquiry into the nature of reality. Knowledge of the cosmos, for instance, was understood to be intimately connected to knowledge of the soul. To study the stars was to study oneself, for both the macrocosm and the microcosm were reflections of the same divine reality. In this, the pursuit of knowledge was always directed toward a greater understanding of God and of the unity that underpins all existence.

Chittick's mentor, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2012, 10–11), echoes similar concerns, warning of the dangers that come from a compartmentalized approach to education. Nasr laments the schism within modern education, where two irreconcilable worldviews (i.e., *tawhīd* and *takthīr*) wrestle for the soul of the student, leaving it fragmented and impoverished. For Nasr, Islam, rooted deeply in the principle of *tawhīd*, is now beset by a grievous compartmentalization, whereby knowledge and faith are torn asunder. He argues that in modern universities, knowledge stands divided, religion relegated to the shadows, as though an orphaned child cast adrift from the family of thought. Nasr (2012, 10–12) warns of the creeping paralysis that such division breeds—a malaise of the soul, stifling its

vigour, much like the decay of age. He urges a return to *tawhīd*, where all facets of education, the intellectual and the spiritual, intertwine. He does not shun modern science, but rather entreats that it be woven into the greater tapestry of an Islamic worldview, so that it may serve, rather than overshadow, the eternal truths of the faith. Only thus, Nasr contends, can the Islamic world reclaim its intellectual and spiritual vitality.

What, then, is the solution to this malaise? For Chittick (2011, 88–90; 2013b, 12–18) the answer lies in a return to *tawhīd*, a recognition that all knowledge is ultimately knowledge of God. This is not to suggest that one must abandon the study of the physical world, but rather that such study must serve the goals of a greater vision, for without a unified vision of reality, education becomes an empty exercise, producing individuals who may be skilled in their respective fields but who lack any deeper understanding of themselves or the world in which they live.

> It is characteristic of modern times that any discussion of "education" revolves around the needs of states and societies. These needs are defined in terms of the multiple gods that rule over the worldview of *takthīr*. These gods are well known to everyone because they determine the orientation of modern societies and are constantly discussed by politicians and ideologues. People assume that these gods are good gods and that if they worship the gods by devoting effort to achieving what they promise, they will be happy. Worship of these gods is part of the modern ethos and is taken for granted, just as *tawhīd* was part of the pre-modern ethos and was taken for granted. In many contexts today, it is dangerous to speak against the gods of *takthīr*, because the worshipers of these gods are fanatics who possess a great deal of social and political power. Nonetheless, we should be realistic and acknowledge the names of the ruling gods of our times. No list could be exhaustive, because there are so many gods. But these names are representative: freedom, democracy, science, medicine, technology, progress, development, equality, education. The worship of the god "education" is held in the highest esteem. All the other gods encourage us to attend at the temples of this god, for education trains people to reject the ancient gods and to abandon the principles of traditional thought—that is, *tawhīd*, prophecy, and the Return. Education in this sense is everywhere a primary concern of politicians and states. States must provide education; they must train people in the worldview of *takthīr* and accustom them to worship at the temples of the many gods. The least responsibility of Muslims in this situation should be to acknowledge that modern education is destructive of the goals of *tawhīd*. Without acknowledging the dead ends of ideology and the worthless promises of paradise made by politicians, there will be no hope for people to follow the Straight Path (Chittick 2011, 91).

Chittick's argument, therefore, is less about the clash of educational methods or pedagogies and more about a profound ideological divergence. The two systems are not just different but fundamentally incompatible. The former, devoted to the worldview of takthīr, glorifies multiplicity and the empirical, while the latter, steeped in tawhīd, holds fast to the oneness of God and unity of all things. Thus, the Western preoccupation with empirical knowledge seems to Chittick not only insufficient but a perilous distraction from the higher truths that Islamic education seeks to cultivate. Yet, as the veil is drawn back, these two paths may not be

as irreconcilable as Chittick (2011, 88–90; 2013b, 12–18) contends. Through a thoughtful inquiry spanning the subsequent sections of this article, a glimmer of hope emerges—a path towards transcending this dualism, where unity and multiplicity might find harmony once more.

The Reign of *Tawhīd*

In Chittick's (2013b, 52–54) learned discourse, we are drawn to the perils of "*takthīr* without *tawhīd*," a condition emblematic, he argues, of Western thought since the Enlightenment. Given his Western background, it is no wonder that Chittick should turn his gaze upon addressing the most pressing issues within his own cultural milieu. His devotion to the revitalization of Islamic civilization remains undeniable, yet we must recognize the vantage from which he speaks. Thus, it becomes clear that while Chittick laments the perils of a world splintered by "*takthīr* without *tawhīd*", he is perhaps less mindful of an equally grave danger—that of "*tawhīd* without *takthīr*," a peril that, I argue, constitutes the root of the challenges facing the Muslim world, especially concerning the foundations of its education.

The prevailing pursuit of unity, divorced from a concurrent recognition of diversity, introduces a host of potential perils within scholars of the Muslim world. Foremost among them are jurists—the *mujtahids* — who constitute the majority of Muslim intellectuals. Their hearts beat only for the One, heedless of the many. Their words, like blades, cleave through the faith of their *muqallids*, declaring Islam the only faith that Heaven shall accept, while they stand blind to the richness of spiritual diversity—a condition necessarily integral to the creation of the many from the One. This is no existential embrace of God's oneness as the essence of all reality, but rather a stark assertion of numerical singularity. In such a state, *tawhīd* is but a number, cold and rigid, counting the singularity of God while ignoring the boundless breadth of His creation. These *mujtahids* cling to their exclusivity, and in their wake, their *muqallids,* who are only allowed to imitate them in matters of practice and not belief (i.e., *tawhīd*, *prophecy*, and *the return*), follow like shadows, embracing a darkened zeal, where thought is crushed beneath dogma, and the flames of extremism are kindled. This extremity finds expression in various forms, ranging from the ideologies of Islamic terrorist groups to the autocratic regimes prevailing in numerous Muslim-majority nations (Safi 2018, 131–34; Choudhury 2020, 59–65).

Yet, verily, Muslim philosophers too, those men of reason and intellect—the *ʿāqils* —do stumble in this matter. They do not approach *tawhīd* with the same rigidness as *mujtahids*; their conception of divine unity is existential rather than numerical. Yet, they too struggle with the duality of the One and the many, failing to transcend it. Instead of embracing the harmonious dance of unity and diversity, they elevate the One above the

many, much like Chittick's notion of "*takthīr* in the service of *tawhīd*." Their thought, though lofty, rests too long in the exaltation of *tawhīd*, making of *takthīr* a mere servant to their philosophy. And so, their wisdom, like a bird with a broken wing, does soar no more. The pronounced emphasis on the primacy of "the One" over "the many," a philosophical stance referred to as *tawhidism* or *tawhidistic* idealism, brought about an intellectual stasis, where the quest for knowledge halted, save when it was bent toward the unveiling of *tawhīd's* greater mysteries. Such was the fate of the learned in the Muslim world, that many fields of inquiry—astronomy, mathematics, medicine—were explored only as they cast light upon the One, as if they were solely signs pointing to the distant One and rarely seen as the One Himself cloaked in manifold disguises (Choudhury 2020, 42–49).

This intellectual stasis, born of an overemphasis on *tawhīd*, extends even beyond the philosophers to the Sufis of Islam—the *muḥaqqiqs*. Their hearts burn with the fire of *tawhīd*, and in their quest for unity, they forsake the world entirely. Their dualism, though not of the mind but of the heart, is no less perilous, for they seek to escape the many by immersing themselves in the One. Through asceticism, they turn away from the world, and in their trance of spiritual ecstasy, they see only the dazzling vision of the One, and the many fade into insignificance. Thus, in the mystical realm, we encounter a worldview that we might term "*takthīr* in favour of *tawhīd*," where the many are overshadowed by the overwhelming intoxication of union with the One, leaving the Sufi incapable of engaging with the world of multiplicity. It is as though they have climbed too high and cannot descend, nor can they impart their insights to those who walk upon the earth. Even when they do, their contributions often emphasize nothing but disdain for and detachment from *takthīr*. This explains why there is so much historical stigma associated with the term "Sufi" in the Islamic intellectual tradition, to the extent that many contemporary Muslim scholars have opted for the term "'*ārif,*" hoping to rekindle the forgotten brilliance of Sufi luminaries like Ibn Arabi (1165–1240) and Rumi (1207-1273), who knew that true wisdom lies in equally acknowledging and embracing both the One and the many (Chittick and Rustom 2025, 1–3).

What, then, does this dualism bring to the Muslim world? It brings a stifling of thought, a narrowing of vision, and a turning away from the diverse beauty of the cosmos. The jurists, with their rigid laws and exclusivity, bring extremism and dogmatism. The philosophers, in their lofty towers, bring stagnation to the intellect. And the Sufis, lost in their spiritual ecstasies, bring an escape from the world that leaves it unchanged. Thus, the path forward, I argue, is neither in *tawhīd* nor *takthīr* alone, but in the marriage of the two. *Tawhīd* embraces *takthīr*, while *takthīr* discloses *tawhīd*. The many must be explored in all their richness, yet always with the understanding that it is the One in disguise.

The jurists must soften their hearts and open their minds to the diversity of God's creation. The philosophers must delve into the diversity of the cosmos, not as a mere sign that points to the One, but as a guise that simultaneously discloses and disguises the One. Finally, the Sufis must return to the world, bringing their insights of the One to bear upon the many.

Transcending Dualism

Throughout this discourse, I have critiqued the imbalanced focus on *tawhīd* and the different forms it takes among Muslim scholars of various schools, and instead, I have championed a vision where *tawhīd* and *takthīr*, unity and diversity, are inextricably intertwined. Inspired by the teachings of great '*ārifs* like Ibn Arabi and Rumi, this vision of "*tawhīd* in *takthīr* and *takthīr* in *tawhīd*"—or "unity in diversity and diversity in unity"—captures the profound truth that the One and the many condition each other, each sustaining the other. To dwell solely in the One is to stand with the Divine Essence (*dhāt*), unknowable as it is, detached from the world and the relationships that bind His many creatures. Yet to confine oneself to the many is to miss the unity that embraces all. Forsaking the latter forgets that the One can only be known through His creatures, wherein His Names, long yearning for concreteness, find form in the beings they shape. But to neglect the former is to be lost in the chaos of multiplicity, blinded to the unity that binds them all. To walk both paths at once is to tread the fine line between abstruse polytheism and abstract monotheism (Corbin 1998, 184–200).

The doctrine of the "*waḥdat al-wujūd*," or the "unity of Being," stands as the anchor of Ibn Arabi's lofty metaphysics and Rumi's spiritual psychology. Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī, revered as al-Shaykh al-Akbar, "the Greatest Master," may well be the most profound and prolific thinker to ever grace the annals of Islamic thought (Chodkiewicz 1993, 6–10; Aljahsh 2025, 289–312). Born in Murcia, amidst the splendour of Muslim Spain, he is said to be the first to weave together the divergent strands of the Islamic intellectual tradition, thus crafting a systematic tapestry of thought that brought unity to multiplicity. Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, the luminous poet and mystic of Persia, followed in his wake. His verses sing of love, unity, and the transcendence of the self. In his *Masnavi*, he speaks of spiritual unity with the Divine, urging the soul to rise above its earthly confines. Though both masters received their wisdom through mystical intuition (i.e., inspired knowledge), they did not leave their insights untethered. They grounded their intuitions in the dual pillars of reason (i.e., intellectual knowledge) and divine revelation (i.e., transmitted knowledge), constantly turning to logical arguments, the Quran, and the sayings of the Prophet (*hadīth*) to lend weight and authority to their visions. In this marriage of heart and mind, they found harmony, where

longing met understanding, and feeling found form (Zarrabi-Zadeh 2014, 6–10; Rahim 2016, 100–119; Muizzuddin, Zaenuri, and Anam 2024, 38–57; Houassi 2025).

What sets these two towering figures apart from their Sufi forebears and successors is their equal embrace of both the unity and diversity of existence. In their teachings, the One and the many reflect each other, as day does reflect night—one cannot be truly known without the other. They speak, with wisdom born of divine insight, that to see diversity in unity reaches a loftier height than seeing unity in diversity. Indeed, their vision holds that the purpose of God in creating the cosmos was to manifest His oneness through differentiation, that He might be known through the countless forms of life, as the Hadith of "The Hidden Treasure" proclaims: "*I was a hidden treasure, so I wanted to be known; hence I created the creatures so that I might be known.*" Thus, they declare that diversity, born of God's own yearning for differentiation, is no mere afterthought but a sacred principle, a shining thread in the fabric of all existence. In this, diversity becomes equally if not more vital than unity alone, for it is solely through the many that the One is revealed. And, as I have sought to show, this balance between the One and the many lies at the very heart of Islamic education.

To confront the dualistic view, as often embraced by Muslim scholars of diverse schools, we must draw a clear line between *tawhīd* and *waḥda*. As mentioned before, *waḥda* is the etymological root from which *tawhīd* does spring, meaning oneness or unity. Yet, this difference transcends mere language, for it does reveal a deeper ontological distinction. Perhaps this is why Ibn Arabi's followers speak of *waḥdat al-wujūd* rather than *tawhīd al-wujūd*. The meticulous distinction between *tawhīd* and *waḥda* is better understood by contemplating the Sufi notions of annihilation (*fanā'*) and subsistence (*baqā'*), spiritual stations that guide the soul in its journey toward unity with God. *Fanā'* signifies the negation of the many and the affirmation of the One, whilst *baqā'* marks the re-emergence of the many in the seeker's soul, now transformed, adorned with divine attributes in place of their mortal imperfections. These stations are intertwined, for the seeker is ever annihilated from the lower states and made to subsist in higher ones. Thus, *baqā'* is seen as the loftier state of spiritual ascent. In much the same manner, *tawhīd* refers to the act of joining two or more things together into a singular whole, whereas *waḥda* refers to the state of being one or undivided. In other words, *waḥda* is a state of being, whereas *tawhīd* is the path, a process of becoming. *Tawhīd* (union), then, is the journey of cultivating divine attributes within the seeker. But it is only through achieving *waḥda* (unity) that these divine attributes find rest and harmony within the seeker, abiding in perfect equilibrium (Sumbulah 2016, 29–50; Rozi 2022, 45–60; Romadlon, Ihsan, and Istikomah 2020, 79–200; Hidayat 2024, 325–34).

Rūmī (Rūmī 1950, 1:3052-54) defines *tawhīd* as the living embodiment of the first *Shahadah*—Muslim's declaration of God's oneness, "There is no god but God" (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*). The "no" negates all reality save the Divine, even the self's fleeting existence, which must thus be annihilated. Yet the "but" of the *shahādah* affirms that only God may be named as truly real, and all else in creation fades into mere conditional existence, ever dependent upon Him. Ibn 'Arabī (1946, 97–99), too, does ponder the many expressions of *tawhīd* in the Holy Koran, interpreting "There is no god but God" as "There is nothing in existence but God." He cites the verse, "*God is the light of the heavens and the earth (24:35),* equating light with existence. As light does enfold the colours of the rainbow, so too does existence embrace all things. What we perceive as colour has no being of its own, but does live only through light, as all does through God (Chittick 1989, 113).

Tawhīd involves the negation of something on one hand and the affirmation of another on the other. In this dual state, man remains yet distant from pure unity, for he sees God in all things, yet still perceives the world as fragmented. In this state, man becomes a mere vessel through which God's most exalted names and attributes are made manifest. In this, we hear the echoes of the Hadith frequently cited by Ibn 'Arabī, where God proclaims, *"…my servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks…"* Herein lies the heart of *tawhīd* —the seeker, through devotion, allows the Divine to act through him. Yet, still, this state is not pure unity; for man remains apart, merely a reflection of the Divine.

Waḥda, however, is the pinnacle of *tawhīd*, where the manifestation of God within the seeker intensifies until all duality dissolves. Unlike *tawhīd*, which involves both negation and affirmation, *waḥda* is a state of pure, indivisible unity. Here, the seeker sees no "other," but only the One, as Ali, companion of the Prophet, beautifully proclaims: "There is no He but He" (*lā huwa illā huwa*). In this state, the seeker is no longer striving to find God; rather, they are agreeably at peace by the realization that they are surrounded by Him. The seeker's state moves from "seeing Him in everything" during *tawhīd*, to "seeing everything with Him" in *waḥda*. They no longer see unity merely amidst diversity but understand diversity itself as a harmonious expression of unity. In this exalted state, unlike *tawhīd*, the seeker is no longer just a delimited vessel for the manifestation of His names and attributes, but His vicegerent (*khalīfah*) upon the earthly stage who has become His hearing with which He hears, His seeing with which He sees, His hand with which He strikes, and His foot with which He walks. He who has reached this stage no longer finds unity and diversity as inherently incompatible and becomes a living

embodiment of the Name "*Yā man lā yashghaluhu sha'nun 'an sha'nin*" (O He whom no task distracts Him from another) for such a one actively lives and engages with the many while dwelling in peace with the One.

Rumi draws an apt metaphor for these states through the image of iron within the embrace of fire. In the first phase, akin to *tawhīd*, the iron retains its form, but it is coloured by the fire, glowing red with its fervent heat. The iron becomes a vessel for the fire's attributes, much like the seeker who reflects the names of God. Yet, in the second phase, emblematic of *waḥda*, the iron loses its individuality. As it remains immersed in the flames, it transforms, becoming indistinguishable from the fire itself. No longer merely reflecting the fire's attributes, the iron has become the fire.

> The color of iron is obliterated by the color of the fire,
> The iron boasts of fire yet remains silent.
> When red like the gold of the mine,
> It exults without tongue: "I am the fire."
> It has gained honor through the color and nature of the fire,
> It says, I am the fire, I am the fire.
> I am the fire, if you are doubtful or suspicious,
> Test me! touch me with your hand! . . ." (Trans. by Chittick 1983, 193)

When Ibn 'Arabī (1994, 3:189-191) does ponder this perspective, he often invokes the verse, "*He who is God in the heavens is also God on the earth; He is the Wise, the Knower (43:84)*." He unveils a truth far deeper than the eye may first perceive. His interpretation of this verse does not entail merely "seeing unity in diversity," a characteristic of the inherently dualistic stage of *tawhīd*, but rather "seeing diversity in unity," a prominent feature of the non-dualistic stage of *Wahda*. This verse suggests that God is equally present here on earth, in the realm of multiplicity, the same God who reigns in the unitary realms of heaven. There is no division, higher or lower, but one undivided Reality. This noble idea is also reflected in the revered supplication from the prophet who calls upon God by the Name "*Yā man danā fī 'ulūwihi wa 'alā fī dunūwihi*" (O He who is near in His exaltedness and is exalted in His nearness).

How this vision sharply contrasts with the philosophy of Mulla Sadra, who speaks of existence as hierarchical, where the unseen world holds greater reality than the visible, and the manifold forms found in this realm are but shadowy echoes of a grander truth. Owing to its relative unreality, the world of multiplicity should, then, always remain subservient to the more real world of unity (Chittick 2013b, 31). Yet Ibn 'Arabī would remind us that such divisions are wrought by the mind of man, which seeks to categorize and assign weight to what is, in essence, an indivisible whole. Mulla Sadra himself underwent a significant shift in his philosophical orientation, aligning more closely with Ibn 'Arabī's concept of the "personal (*shakhṣī*) unity of existence." This marked a departure from his earlier standpoint, primarily rooted in the notion of

the "hierarchical (*tashkīk*) unity of existence."

And so it is that my own spiritual guide once imparted to me this golden truth: that the enlightened soul finds as much joy in beholding God in the most exalted realms of the spirit as in witnessing the lifeless husk of the lowliest creature on earth. For the joy lies not in the form but in the essence of existence, wherein God and all creatures share. Rūmī portrays this even more eloquently when he writes about his vision of *waḥda*:

> Since I am ever at peace with this Father,
> This world is like Paradise in my sight.
> At every moment (appears) a new form and a new beauty,
> So that from seeing the new (visions) ennui dies away.
> I see the world to be full of bounty,
> The waters constantly gushing from the springs. (Rūmī 1950, 4:3263—65)

In essence, *tawhīd* contains within itself a hidden duality. Muslim scholars, who linger too long in this dualistic worldview, risk becoming ensnared by its division. As Rūmī so poetically states, "*To unify form [the many] with such deep-seated essence [the One] is not possible except by a sovereign king (3:1393).*" Without progressing beyond *tawhīd* to *waḥda*, the stage of true unity exclusive to Muhammad's religion, there is scant hope that the plight of the Muslim world shall be mended.

This duality is sharply reflected in Chittick's discussion of education, where he contrasts the self-focused traditional worldview with the outward, reformative tendencies of modern thought (2011, 89). "Traditional thought says, 'Begin with yourself.' Modern thought says, 'Reform others.'" Here, he captures the divide between two paths: one of personal dedication and inward growth, the other of societal transformation.

> No recovery of the [Islamic] intellectual tradition will be possible until individuals take steps for themselves. The tradition can never be recovered by imitation or by community action, only by individual dedication and personal realization. Governments and committees cannot begin to solve the problem. Understanding cannot be imposed or legislated, it can only grow up in the heart. (Chittick 2013b, 21)

Yet, while this view underscores individual agency, it remains confined by a dualism between the self and society. Chittick implies that the self can evolve independent of its social, historical, and political surroundings—a notion that stands in contrast to both contemporary conceptions of selfhood (Martin et al. 2003; Sugarman and Martin 2020) and scripture (Quran 22:46, 16:78, 3:137) as well as his own expressed views elsewhere regarding the complementarity of the self and the cosmos (Chittick 2013b, 51). Chittick's conception of understanding, of course, is not of mere cognitive reflection or memory, but of consciousness and awareness, the essence of human existence itself. It is here that Chittick's argument falters. While it is true that this understanding cannot be forced,

it is equally true that external conditions play a vital role in cultivating it. The revealed religions themselves arose for this purpose—to awaken within the hearts of individuals the spark of such understanding. Societal structures, education, cultural norms, laws, and policies all play a part in either veiling or unveiling this understanding. Thus, Chittick's perspective, though insightful, misses the larger truth. The individual and society are not separate; they are inextricably bound. One cannot blossom in isolation, nor can society flourish without the nurturing of the individual. Both must rise together, intertwined, if there is to be any lasting change.

While I share many of Chittick's criticisms of Western education's multiplicity of goals, our paths diverge in his assertion of an unbridgeable divide between the *tawhīd* worldview and the *takthīr* worldview, implying an inherent conflict between Islamic and Western education. I argue that these worldviews are not irreconcilable. Indeed, *waḥda's* worldview offers a path forward, a means by which these seemingly opposing visions may be brought into harmony. In what follows, I shall briefly discuss the practical implications of embracing the *waḥda* worldview, particularly regarding the education of Muslim children in the West.

Educational Implications

In traditional Islamic education, the quest for knowledge carried not the burden of mere academic pursuit but was rather a pilgrimage of the soul—a spiritual journey whose ultimate purpose was nothing short of the transformation of the soul (Chittick and Rustom 2025, 6). The faithful student, yearning for truth, through the noble act of *takhalluq bi akhlāq Allāh*— assuming the character traits of God as one's own —endeavoured to become a mirror harmoniously reflecting the luminous attributes of God—qualities revealed in the names of *al-Wāḥid* (the One) and *al-Mukaththir* (He who creates the many). In this act of "*takhalluq*" laid threefold virtue, as a rich tapestry woven in harmony and order.

First, this journey of knowledge demanded an inward transformation, wherein the heart of man, through self-discipline and humility, might embrace a deep understanding of the One—a stone unmovable, upon which the edifice of the self might rise in full splendour. Yet, verily, understanding must not dwell only in the heart; it must bloom forth like roses in the spring, spreading fragrance far beyond. The second task, therefore, was to make such understanding manifest in every deed. What matters is knowledge if it is not lived? The true scholar does not merely know the path, but walks it—day and night, thought and action, all in harmonious accord with the divine names, *al-Wāḥid* and *al-Mukaththir*. Thirdly, this sacred charge did not rest with the self alone but called the scholar to be a beacon unto society, a torch that illuminates the paths of others. In this dissemination of understanding, knowledge did not serve as a shield to keep men from the world, but as a force to reshape it.

Yet, this mission, noble and exalted as it is, cannot be fulfilled by any soul who has not first adequately mastered the aforementioned branches of knowledge. The realization of spiritual transformation requires a delicate balance, one that transcends any duality, for it weaves together both unity and diversity. It is here that the principles of *tawhīd* and *takthīr* emerge as monozygotic twins, pointing the way toward a holistic yet inclusive education. *Tawhīd*, the foundation of Islamic education, as the heavens embrace the stars, holds all knowledge in an interconnected whole. *Takthīr*, meanwhile, reflective of Western education, thrives on the acknowledgment of multiple fields of study, each with its own distinct contribution to the tapestry of human understanding. As discussed earlier, these principles, though appearing as opposites, are in truth complementary.

A holistic education grounded in *tawhīd* embraces unity, perceiving all branches of knowledge as threads within the same vast fabric. In this light, the pursuit of knowledge becomes a journey toward recognizing the divine unity that pervades all human understanding, and the student is taught not merely to master subjects in isolation but to weave them together into a coherent whole. Such an education does not simply aim to train the intellect but seeks to nurture the whole individual— emotionally, socially, politically, spiritually, and ethically—so that they may come to reflect the full spectrum of divine attributes.

In contrast, an inclusive education shaped by *takthīr* revels in diversity. It celebrates the wide variety of human knowledge, acknowledging that each discipline offers its own unique window into the world. This educational framework encourages the student to explore the vastness of human thought, appreciating the manifold ways in which knowledge can be approached and understood. Whether through the rigour of mathematics, the narrative of history, the discoveries of science, or the contemplation of philosophy, every field is recognized as contributing to the collective human experience. *Takthīr* ensures that no branch of learning is left marginalized, and no voice silenced, for the many are cherished in their diversity.

And so, we are left to ponder: Which is the greater guide? The unity of *tawhīd*, which binds all branches of knowledge together, or the diversity of *takthīr*, which celebrates the many paths of inquiry? In truth, neither alone is sufficient, for each contains within it both strength and limitation. A holistic education, though it excels in uniting knowledge, can risk becoming narrow in focus, while an inclusive education, though it thrives on diversity, may lose sight of the greater vision of unity. The answer lies, then, not in choosing between these two paradigms but in recognizing their inherent complementarity. By embracing both, educators can create a learning environment that nurtures the interconnectedness of knowledge while honouring its diversity.

The implications of this synthesis between *tawhīd* and *takthīr* are profound, especially when we consider the education of Muslim children in the West. In recent years, many Muslim parents, grappling with the challenges of raising their children in secular environments, have chosen to enrol them in Muslim private schools, despite the financial and logistical burdens this entails (Zabihollahi 2024, 16). This decision is often rooted in the perception, eloquently articulated by Chittick (2011, 88; 2013b, 13), that public schools in the West have become dominated by the principle of *takthīr*, lacking a unified vision that imbues life with meaning and direction.

> The history of European thought is characterized by the opposite trend. Although there was a great deal of unitarian thinking in the medieval period, from that time onward dispersion and multiplicity have constantly increased. "Renaissance men" could know a great deal about all the sciences and at the same time have a unifying vision. But nowadays, everyone is an expert in some tiny field of specialization, and information increases exponentially. The result is mutual incomprehension and universal disharmony. It is impossible to establish any unity of understanding, and no real communication takes place among specialists in different disciplines. Since people have no unifying principles, the result is an ever-increasing multiplicity of goals and gods, an ever-intensifying chaos (Chittick 2013b, 13).

In this, Chittick calls for a return to *tawhīd*, the foundational principle of all revealed religions. Yet, the answer, I argue, lies not in a retreat into one camp or the other, but in building schools that marry the two— *tawhīd* and *takthīr*. For Muslim families in the West, this means that the future of Islamic education should not be confined to the walls of Muslim schools, often driven by the principle of *tawhīd* alone. Instead, Muslim parents and educators should seek to integrate Islamic values and teachings within the public school system, advocating for an education that respects both unity and diversity. If the proponents of other ideologies (Meyer 2010; Omercajic and Martino 2020) strive to shape the minds of children in these halls, then why should the Muslims not also stand strong and bring their wisdom into the public space?

What, then, is the answer to those who say that the school should be secular, that it should not take sides in the matter of faith? Shall we listen to the claim that secularism is a neutral ground, free of bias, and suited to all? According to Slife et al. (2012, 214), this is, but a myth, known as the "myth of neutrality," for no worldview is free of its own biases, methodologies, and assumptions. If secularism is merely one of many possible worldviews, why, then, should the secular hold sway above all others, particularly in today's multicultural societies? Shall not the theistic worldview, with its own rich perspectives, have a voice in the education of the young?

> We realize in saying "scientific ideas" that it can be jarring to many psychologists to even consider theism as a potentially scientific idea, especially in view of their secular and naturalistic training. Theistic perspectives, especially when used to

> conceptualize research and practice, have long been implicitly, if not explicitly, illicit in science. Yet, if we are going to challenge the myth of neutrality and compare the method assumptions of different worldviews, we have to operate with a view of science that is broader than any particular epistemology (empiricism) or method worldview (naturalism). The hallmark of science is the investigation of ideas, with investigation and method allowable in a variety of forms, including qualitative and perhaps even theistic forms. To identify science with a particular epistemology and/or method worldview is to decide before investigation what philosophies work best. This position seems singularly unscientific to us (Slife et al. 2012, 221).

The challenges of such integration are numerous, for the laws and regulations of each country vary in their approach to religious education. In many Western countries, public education remains strictly secular, and religious instruction, where it exists, is limited to a comparative study of belief systems. While this may foster an intellectual understanding of different faiths, it often lacks the depth needed to nurture a truly theistic worldview. Hence, in shaping educational policies, a question of great import arises: how shall we give voice to the many worldviews that seek inclusion? If all are to be weighed, where then shall we begin? The answer, I argue, lies in two guiding principles—relevance and inclusivity. Relevance speaks to the prominence and growth of a particular worldview within a given land. Take, for instance, Canada, where Muslims now form the second-largest and fastest-growing religious group. This demographic weight bids us to heed their perspectives in the crafting of education. Inclusivity, meanwhile, rests upon the openness of a worldview to engage in dialogue with others, fostering a spirit of coexistence.

A fine, though not flawless, example of such balance is seen in Finland (see Basic Education Act 1998, Section 13, Amendment 454/2003). There, students may be schooled in the tenets of their own faith, should their numbers be sufficient and their parents make such a request, allowing Islamic teachings to dwell within the public sphere. As such, there are no exclusive Islamic schools in Finland, and the majority of Muslim students in the country participate in Islamic religious education (IRE) as a compulsory school subject (Sakaranaho and Rissanen 2021, 113). Thus, both relevance and inclusivity are upheld, weaving a tapestry wherein no worldview stands apart, but all may flourish together under the same roof of learning.

Yet, even within the Muslim community, questions arise about how to balance the diversity of Islamic thought. With so many sects and interpretations, which should take precedence in the public school system? The answer lies not in favouring one sect over another, but in returning to the triad of principles that all Muslims hold dear—*tawhīd*, *Prophecy*, and *the Return*. Each sect should tend to its own garden, exploring the finer, distinctive teachings of *Sharia* within the walls of their respective communities, while public education shall remain devoted to the shared tenets. This way, we safeguard both the unity and diversity of

the faith, allowing the universal principles to be taught in schools, while the particulars are nurtured within each branch of the community.

In this, we see not merely an educational policy, but a greater means of fostering acculturation, ensuring that Muslim children, regardless of their specific sect, may walk through the doors of public schools and find a space where their beliefs are not only acknowledged but also taught. If we fail in this, if families feel compelled to seek refuge in Muslim private schools for the safeguarding of their children's faith, then a gap does widen between the culture they inherit and the one they inhabit. This divide can hinder integration and leave them adrift, feeling neither wholly at home in their new land, nor in full communion with their roots (Zabihollahi 2024, 110).

The road to this holistic yet inclusive education is, of course, not without its thorns. Schools, for instance, must find the means to hire teachers skilled not only in Western education but also in the deep well of Islamic knowledge. Resources must be devoted to training educators, lest the burden fall upon unlearned shoulders (Memon 2011, 287). Thus, the focus of Muslim efforts should shift—not towards building more Muslim private schools, walled and separate, but towards founding higher education institutions where the wisdom of Islam is taught and cultivated. This, then, is the course that shall be taken to nurture educators who, well-versed in *waḥda* worldview, may bring Islamic learning into the public square, and, in so doing, bridge the gap between Islamic and Western education.

The endeavour to weave Islamic education into the fabric of public schools presents a host of challenges, each deserving its own thoughtful consideration. Yet, within this humble work, the aim is not to dwell upon the myriad challenges, but rather to set forth the pressing need for such integration into the broader curriculum. This notion, far from being a dream too lofty, has already gained prominence in many countries across Europe (Franken and Gent 2021, 10), where Muslims now form five percent of the populace and are still rising. Since this effort is still in its infancy, to weigh its merits now would be to judge a tree still young. Nevertheless, those well-versed in the Islamic intellectual tradition and familiar with Western educational aims may agree that if Islamic education is to thrive in public schools, it must adopt a *waḥda* worldview, where there is no conflict between the unitary goal of Islamic education and the multiplicities aims of Western education.

Conclusion

To conclude, the dualistic worldview of *tawhīd* tends to seek change by striving for oneness and unity, yet it often struggles to find peace with the Father, as exquisitely expressed by Rūmī. Thus, it also struggles to perceive the present state of the world of multiplicity as paradise, regardless of its apparent chaos. Until this worldview drives Muslim scholars, they may

find it challenging to truly appreciate things as they are. Hence, their capacity to contribute significantly to meaningful change may remain limited. As critical as I am of the current state of Islamic education and its apparent disparities with Western education, I also hold a deep appreciation for the substantial integrative steps that have been taken. These steps represent the convergence of two educational paradigms in dire need of each other. The latter thirsts for *tawhīd*, while the former longs for the infusion of *takthīr*. In my view, the marriage of these two paradigms is the most beautiful of occurrences, especially when there is the hopeful prospect of a child being born with the worldview of *waḥda*, embodying "unity in diversity and diversity in unity".

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