



CAMBRIDGE
MUSLIM
COLLEGE
Faith in Scholarship

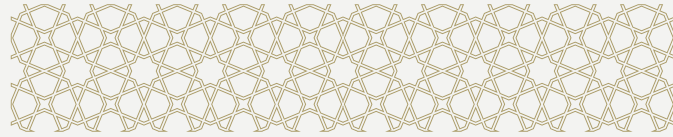
UNITY

N E W S L E T T E R

Donor Report

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21

December 2021 | Jumada 1443



As-salamu ‘alaikum | Peace be upon you

In this donor report, we reflect on some of the highlights of the Academic Year of 2020-21 – from the launch of the new Diploma in Islamic Psychology (pg 7) to the genesis of our online Ramadan programme. We provide a report on our finances and share some Development updates (pg 13).

We also hear from the CMC community: two alumni share their experiences after graduating (pg 15) and we hear from our current BA in Islamic Studies students (pg 17). Dr Samir Mahmoud, one of our lecturers on the Islamic Psychology Diploma contemplates Al-Kindi’s treatise on tackling sadness (pg 18), while Dr Zainab Kabba, our Director of Continuing Education, writes about the College’s vision on our Continuing Education programming (pg 21).

While this newsletter by no means covers the breadth of the College’s activity, we hope it gives you a glimpse of the positive impact we are making in the community, and inshaAllah will continue to make thanks to your support.





Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad

Dean

Despite the multiple challenges of the Covid era this has been a year of remarkable achievements. We have doubled the size of our BA student body, and launched a range of new and world-beating online programmes. Our academics have put CMC on the way to becoming the UK's largest accredited hub for the study and teaching of Islamic theology and law. CMC scholars have published books and articles in the most prestigious academic journals, making the College a global byword for scholarly excellence.

But while we enhance the academic landscape and push for ever more rigorous standards of research, we insist on maintaining our core identity as an Islamic religious institution, inspired by the ideals of the Qur'an and the Sunna. Our graduates in the UK and around the world, and the many thousands who watch our online lectures, are turning into a catalytic force, shaping the Muslim discourse in a wide range of British, European and global contexts.

We are showing how the best of contemporary scholarship can be combined with and reinforced by a faithful and intelligent commitment to revelation. In this way we try to revive the best premodern Islamic practice, which emphasised

rational theology, logic, grammar and rhetoric, as necessary preparations for the accurate study of revelation and the shaping of faithful and authentic Islamic ethics.

As the CMC story enters its second decade, we find that the world around us is in a state of sad confusion. Climate change, anxieties over demographics, artificial intelligence, tectonic shifts in global politics, and the replacement of Enlightenment reason by postmodernism, combine to engender a real sense of anxiety and uncertainty.

Muslims should not consider themselves immune from this general crisis. But instead of having recourse to complaints, or a futile triumphalism, Muslims - and religious believers everywhere - should humbly but confidently maintain the best of their historic traditions, confident that as the Qur'an says, 'what is from God, is forever.'

I would like to thank the CMC staff, students, and our global network of donors and supporters, for facilitating this remarkable endeavour. On behalf of the College, I thank you all, and hope you will continue to remember us in your prayers.



Dr Abdallah Rothman
Principal

Over the course of the past year, I have had the great honour of being entrusted with upholding the mission of Cambridge Muslim College and carrying its vision forward.

In the last decade, CMC has built a reputation for delivering high quality academic programmes that preserve the integrity of traditional Islamic education while intelligently engaging with modern contexts. Quality over quantity, and invested efforts in teaching and learning have produced well-rounded scholars and led to authentic forms of engagement with the Islamic tradition. The foundational years of this institution will be built upon as we continue to grow sustainably, increase capacity, and widen our impact, making this a very exciting chapter in CMC's unfolding story.

As we expand our core programmes in Islamic studies, we have recently added an online diploma in Islamic Psychology (pg 7). This programme exemplifies our mission by bringing traditional Islamic knowledge of the soul together with contemporary understandings of psychology to address the most pressing issues of our time. The Covid pandemic has revealed a gaping hole in the provision of resources, guidance, and resiliency in addressing the widespread, global decline in

mental health and wellbeing. This programme aims to ground practitioners in traditional notions of the self and its spiritual reality to revive and contextualise the understanding of holistic, Islamic health and wellness.

The contemporary landscape poses major challenges which we are tackling - with the help of God and our supporters. In the next few years, we plan to grow our student body to eighty, both in person and online. In order to serve more students while maintaining a personable, collegiate atmosphere of quality education, we need to increase the capacity of our physical campus facilities in Cambridge to actualise a hub of excellence in research, training, and the pursuit of knowledge.

This noble project is one that is truly for and by the people and we cannot do it without the collective support of our donors and advocates. Together we stand to make a major impact at a time when the world is desperate for guidance, wisdom and practical solutions. We are honoured to be working with you to deliver on the mission of CMC and make our vision a reality together. Thank you for your moral and financial support. I look forward to working side by side with you now and in the years to come.



**PROGRAMME AND
RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS**

Launch of new Diploma in Islamic Psychology

Introduction

We were delighted to launch a Diploma in Islamic Psychology in 2021. The online delivery of the Diploma allows us, for the first time, to offer the opportunity for international students abroad to study with us.

This nine-month programme is a culmination of a long path toward the development of an indigenous study of psychology rooted in the Islamic paradigm and informed by the Islamic sciences. It is designed to provide students with theoretical and practical perspectives of psychology and the Islamic sciences.

Islamic Psychology at Cambridge Muslim College

The College's vision is to see a world where the sacred Islamic tradition is considered a viable pathway for addressing the challenges of the modern world.

One of the challenges of the modern world is that our societies are becoming increasingly uprooted from natural and holistic ways of living. Research has shown that as a result, mental health and wellbeing concerns are now at the top of the agenda in our personal lives, community institutions, organisations, companies, and governments.

The rich Islamic spiritual and intellectual tradition has an enormous amount to offer the modern world to address real life problems with practical solutions rooted in an integral understanding of the mind, body, and soul.

We believe that the area of Islamic Psychology speaks strongly to the College's vision, and we have ambitions to work with others to grow and develop this field.

Our teaching and learning approach

Like all the College's programmes, our pursuit of knowledge is underpinned by a spiritual grounding. In this way, we uphold academic rigour and quality standards whilst not compromising our spiritual compass.



The Diploma in Islamic Psychology is no different. It uses the Qur'an and Sunnah as a foundation to understand human nature, rather than integrating Islamic principles into the conventional, secular study of psychology. This one-of-a-kind programme honours and builds upon centuries of the Islamic intellectual legacy of *ilm an nafs*, the science of the soul.

Applications and students

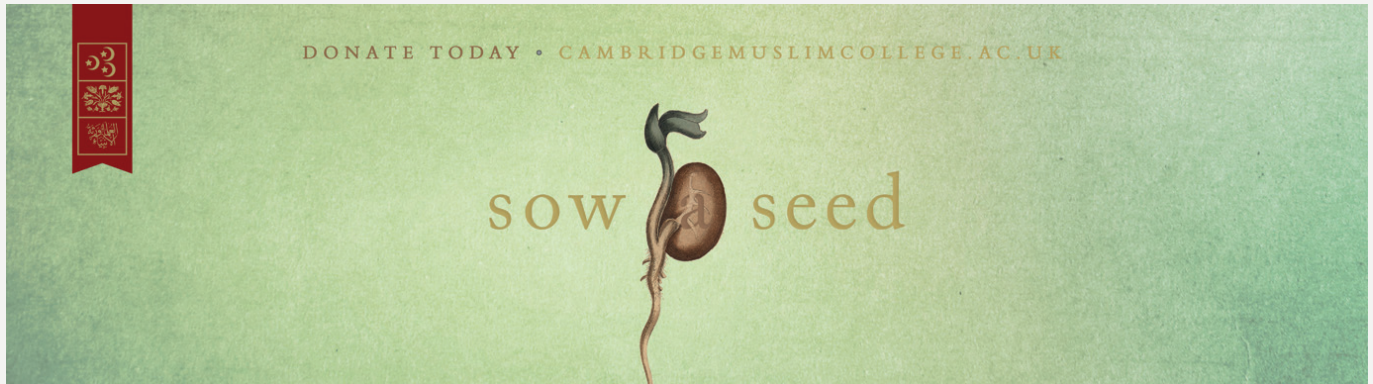
After announcing its launch, we were overwhelmed with inquiries and positive responses. Before closing applications in August, we held two info sessions to give potential applicants a better idea of the programme.

In total, we received 164 applications from 28 countries for 30 places, making selection a difficult process. Applicants were from diverse backgrounds: counsellors, teachers, chaplains, doctors just to name a few.

We look forward to this new chapter of Islamic education and Islamic Psychology, and would like to thank our supporters for making this possible.

For more information, please visit our website: <https://www.cambridgemuslimcollege.ac.uk/programmes/islamicpsychology/>

Pandemic Programming - Ramadan Live



The onset of the health pandemic in 2020 impacted the College in ways that we did not foresee. Prior to this, our external programmes were mostly restricted to members of the community in the UK. Our online educational offerings were limited to recordings on our digital platforms and packaged online learning platform.

When the world went into lockdown in March 2020, we observed and responded to the learning needs of Muslims through a screen. With the support of our faculty and affiliated scholars, we created Ramadan Live, a fully virtual live programme comprised of insightful lectures and interviews to tend to the minds and hearts of a global community who was about to have a Ramadan like no other.

The response was both profound and wide-ranging. From 'Midnight Moments', designed to provide opportunities for short meditative reflection by our now principal Dr Abdallah Rothman to 'Arts, Culture and History' interviews with historian Dr Amina Nawaz in Germany, our YouTube videos accumulated over one million views. We received comments from all around the world about how our Ramadan Live programme helped people through a turbulent and isolating time.

For Ramadan 2021, we wanted to continue connecting with our growing audience. The 'Sow a Seed' programme theme was designed to illustrate how – from the seeds sown by our supporters - we have grown over the last eleven years.

We also listened to feedback from our Ramadan Live viewers. In addition to our live lectures, we introduced a new component of short and informative reflections on history and the natural world. This allowed us to have long lectures about paradigms of leadership and reflect on the Qur'an, as well as sit for a few minutes to hear the sounds of the English countryside while learning about early British Muslims or what it means to be stewards of earth.

We are blessed with an audience who is deeply engaged and who entrust us with their Islamic learning. Whether through prayers, sadaqah or zakat (pg 13), every effort is valuable.

As said by one supporter:

May Allah subhanahu wa ta'alla bless CMC for all its efforts in sowing the seeds for the future of Muslim Leadership. Ameen.

To catch up on the Ramadan Live 2021 programme, visit www.cambridgemuslimcollege.ac.uk/sowaseed

Research and Publications

Aside from our onsite courses and public outreach programmes, the College also has a growing and dynamic research arm. Below we've included an extensive list of publications by CMC academics.



Dr Ramon Harvey

Aziz Foundation Lecturer in Islamic Studies

Books

Harvey, R. *Transcendent God, Rational World: A Māturīdī Theology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021.

Journal Articles

Harvey, R. The Case of the Missing Disciple: Abū l-Hasan al-Rustughfānī and the First Reception of al-Māturīdī's Theology in Samarqand. *Oriens* 49, 2021, 1-36.

Book Chapter

Harvey, R. 'Qur'anic Values and Modernity in Contemporary Islamic Ethics: Taha Abderrahmane and Fazlur Rahman in Conversation'. In *Islamic Ethics and the Trusteeship Paradigm: Taha Abderrahmane's Philosophy in Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Mohammed Hashas and Mu'taz al-Khatib. Leiden: Brill, 2020, 150-69.



Dr Najah Nadi

Aziz Foundation Lecturer in Islamic Studies

Journal Articles

Nadi, N. *The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān (IEQ) II*, Editor Iqbal, M., s.v. "Blood Money (diya)." Canada: Center for Islamic Sciences Publication, 2021.

Nadi, N. *The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān (IEQ) II*, Editor Iqbal, M., s.v. "Despair (ya s)." Canada: Center for Islamic Sciences Publication, 2021.

Nadi, N. and Iqbal, M. *The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān (IEQ) II*, Editor Iqbal, Muzaffar., s.v. "Companions (aṣḥāb)." Canada: Center for Islamic Sciences Publication, 2021.

Nadi, N. *The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān (IEQ) II*, Editor Iqbal, M., s.v. "Chambers of the Prophet's wives (*hujurāt*)." Canada: Center for Islamic Sciences Publication, 2021.

Academic affiliations

CACS Emeritus Fellow at Virginia Theological Seminary, Washington, DC.



Dr. Abdallah Rothman

Principal

Books

Rothman, A. *Developing a Model of Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: Islamic Theology and Contemporary Understandings of Psychology*. London: Routledge, 2021.

Haque, A. & Rothman, A. (Eds.). *Islamic Psychology Around the Globe*. Seattle: IAIP Publishing, 2021.

Journal Articles

Rothman, A. & Coyle, A. 'Clinical Scope of Islamic Psychotherapy: A grounded theory study'. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 2021.

Rothman, A. & Coyle, A. 'Conceptualizing an Islamic psychotherapy: A grounded theory study'. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 2020, 7(3) 197-213.

Rothman, A. 'An Islamic Model of the Soul for Application in Psychology'. CMC Research Papers. Cambridge: Cambridge Muslim College, 2020.

Book Chapters

Rothman, A. & Haque, A. 'Introduction to Islamic Psychology Around the Globe'. In Haque, A. & Rothman, A. (Eds.), *Islamic Psychology Around the Globe*. Seattle: IAIP Publishing, 2021.

Khan, F., Keshavarzi, H. & Rothman, A. 'The Role of the TIIP Therapist'. In Keshavarzi, H., Awaad, R., & Khan, F. (Eds.), *Applying Islamic Principles to Clinical Mental Health Care*. London: Routledge, 2020.



Dr Timothy Winter (Abdal Hakim Murad)

Dean

Journal Articles

Winter, T. 'In search of a contemporary Shari'a discourse of pluralism', in Jocelyne Cesari (ed), *EUARE Lectures: Second Annual Conference 2019*. Bologna: European Academy of Religion, 2020, 95-134.

Book Chapters

Winter, T. 'God the Speaker: the many-named One', in George Archer et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*. London: Routledge, 2021. 45-57.



Dr Sohail Hanif

Associated Lecturer

Journal Articles

Hanif, S. "Al-Kāsānī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition.

Hanif, S. "The Questions of Abū Ḥanīfa." *Diyanet İlmî Dergi*, 56 (2020): 1349-1404. (uploaded 4th January, 2021)

Hanif, S. "Hadith and Fiqh in the Ottoman Period Between Egyptian and Rumelian Ḥanafis, 9th-11th Centuries A.H." Pages 229-85 in *Osmanlı'da*

İlm-i Hadis. Edited by Zekeriya Güler, Bekir Kuzudişli, Mustafa Celil Altuntaş. Istanbul: İSAR Yayınları, 2020. (uploaded 14th January, 2021)

Hanif, S. "Abū Yūsuf's *Ikhtilāf Abī Ḥanīfa wa-Ibn Abī Laylā* and the Transmission of Knowledge in the Formative Period of the Ḥanafī School." *Islamic Law and Society* (2021): 1-33.



DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

A Financial Overview (September 2020 – August 2021)

Despite uncertainty caused by the pandemic, we were grateful to receive generous contributions from our supporters in the UK and globally. From September 2020 to August 2021, we raised £1,161,996*, of which 90% was sadaqah, zakat and grants. £349,780 of this income was zakat. Our total expenditure of the year was £918,852*. We ended the year with cash reserves of £876,416.

We allocated £270,000 of zakat income towards student support, building maintenance and miscellaneous zakat-eligible administrative expenses.

This year, we were also very fortunate to have received asset donations in the form of two properties which will generate rental income for the College in future years.

At present, while our finances are stable in the short term, they will not support our ambitious plans to expand our campus, increase our student intake, launch new courses and develop our research arm.

Our spending will also drastically increase in the coming years given pending major capital expenditure of £2-4million to purchase an adjacent building for £1.6m, and to expand our campus.

We need to act strategically and quickly to diversify and grow our income streams.

**These figures are pre-audit, so there may be adjustments in our final accounts.*

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A VIRTUAL
TOUR OF OUR
CAMPUS.



Moving Forwards: Diversification Is Key

Donations will always remain an important part of the College’s income. For this reason, the College encourages our supporters to donate regularly as Friends or Patrons, as well as to continue giving sadaqah and zakat.

Our US supporters can now make tax-deductible donations to the College via www.cambridgemuslimcollege.ac.uk/donate/us

We have also launched two new donation options*.

Aside from donations, the College is also building other income streams. We are looking into developing a more robust shariah-compliant shares and property portfolio, which will eventually form part of our endowment. Other revenue opportunities include onsite and online continuing education programmes and merchandise sales.

The College – with God’s help – is a legacy for the community, so we will do all we can to ensure that it is financially sustainable for generations to come.

TWO NEW DONATION OPTIONS*

CRYPTOCURRENCY

After feedback from our supporters, we have decided to accept donations in Bitcoin, Ethereum and other major cryptocurrencies.

As a College that trains Muslim thinkers, it is important for us to engage with and reflect upon the innovative ideas of our time.

We are aware that this is a new area and that there is a range of opinions about its Islamic validity, so this is launched as a pilot project.

For more information:
www.cambridgemuslimcollege.ac.uk/crypto

LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

Leaving a portion of your will to the College is one of the most impactful ways to support our work, as it ensures we have long-term income.

We will soon be offering our UK donors support on writing an Islamic will. If you are interested, please contact us on development@cambridgemuslimcollege.ac.uk



VOICES FROM THE CMC
COMMUNITY

Alumnus Spotlight



Hassan Rabbani

Hassan Rabbani undertook the Diploma in Contextual Islamic Studies and Leadership at the Cambridge Muslim College from 2012 to 2013. He has studied extensively in a range of subjects, from Islamic Studies to Philosophy to Psychotherapy. In the past ten years, Hassan has founded multiple community projects and has been actively involved in interfaith work. He is currently serving as the Muslim Chaplain at Heriot Watt University and counsellor at Healers Muslim Counselling.

After completing both a BA and MA in Islamic Studies, I was strongly inspired to join CMC. I really enjoyed the Contextual Islamic Studies and Leadership course; it was an amalgamation of travel, study and experiential learning, all whilst being immersed in the Cambridge intellectual scene.

The Diploma was a key milestone which formed the subsequent ten years of work that I have gone on to achieve. Studying Philosophy provided me the confidence to complete a second Master's in Philosophy. During that time, I worked as a 'Shaykh on the helpline' for a BME women's listening support service, Amina. This work compelled me to take a year's counselling course as well as a Psychotherapy programme. As a result, I am now able to include a session of pre-marital counselling for weddings that I conduct. It also led to me co-founding Healers, the first Muslim Counselling service in Scotland.

Being exposed to interfaith worship as well as visiting the Vatican and meeting Pope Francis led me to do significant outreach and inter-faith work, particularly with Interfaith Scotland, Interfaith Glasgow, Edinburgh Interfaith Association and the Scottish government.

These connections have brought about my engagement in many exciting projects. It has also presented the exciting opportunity to speak at the recent COP26 where I presented a session alongside the Archbishop of Sweden on "Faith in action to strengthen community-led and gender-responsive adaptation for climate justice".

The Diploma formed the pathway to my founding of the Zainab Cobbold Institute in 2105, which serves to fill a gap in providing further, holistic, CMC style, Islamic education to young Muslims who have moved on from Madrassah. Currently, I am working as the first paid Muslim university chaplain in Scotland at Heriot Watt.

Before CMC, I was lost. Having access to amazing teachers and the course content provided direction and the tools to engage with my previous studies. My intellectual curiosity was awakened in unexpected areas. I can clearly see the impact of the Diploma on my daily activities, for which I am ever grateful.





Safiyya Dhorat

Safiyya Dhorat graduated from the CMC with the Diploma in Contextual Islamic Studies and Leadership in 2015. She has studied a Masters in Islamic Studies and worked closely with local and national Government. Now, Safiyya is a chaplain at Ebrahim College and successfully runs ‘Spiritual Birth’, a hypnobirthing course.

Nearly six years after graduating with the Diploma in Contextual Islamic Studies and Leadership, the CMC remains a home away from home. I will forever remain grateful to Allah and indebted to the staff and supporters of the College. The Diploma further deepened my appreciation of my previous Islamic Studies and its connections to modern contexts . My spirituality was developed through experiencing the high levels of ihsan (prophetic excellence) of people at the College and through Shaykh Abdal Hakim’s regular lectures.

After graduating, I completed a Master’s program in Islamic Studies at SOAS. Following this, I was a researcher for a six-month project funded by SOAS and the government to identify barriers to Islamic seminaries achieving higher education accreditation. I also trained as a hypnobirthing instructor and went on to create my own course, ‘Spiritual Birth’. In the past few years I have served as a Chaplain at a Muslim college, collaborating with a local NHS trust to train Muslim seminary graduates in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care.

As a response to some of the many effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have worked alongside senior scholars and expert clinicians to tackle rising

cases of domestic and spiritual abuse, including creating safe online spaces for women experiencing poor mental wellbeing. Another huge part of my work during the lockdowns was teaching online antenatal courses. I was privileged to educate couples about both the physiology and spirituality of birth and in understanding their birth rights and choices. Supporting the community to reconnect to the Divine during these difficult times was made possible by the training in media and counselling which CMC provided me.

The CMC experience has changed my life. The rigorous and holistic education better prepared me for the many challenges that lay ahead. It gifted me the skills, knowledge and courage to either offer my own solutions or to successfully work with field professionals. Most importantly, the College taught me what it means to be compassionate and to have sincere concern for everyone. This is what helps me the most in my most cherished role, that of being a mother to my two precious children.



BA Spotlight

We interview James O'Neil and Isma Kousar who are currently in their second year of the BA (Hons) in Islamic Studies.

Before joining the College, Isma studied for several years in Dar ul-Uloom in the North whilst James studied at the European Institute of Islamic Studies after moving to the UK from the US.

So, what initially motivated you to do the course?

James: I needed to devote myself to a full-time, holistic programme. Also, living as an American Muslim in Oldham, I wanted to understand what it meant to be a Muslim in 21st Century Britain. CMC was the only place that wedded traditional Islamic studies with the context of our times.

Isma: For me, I simply wanted to continue studying. After the Dar ul-Uloom, I was wondering: how am I going to put all this knowledge into practice? CMC seemed like the perfect place to combine academia with tradition; something the traditional madaris do not deliver in terms of academics.

James: I do think CMC's approach is important; we're engaging and responding with what would traditionally have been brushed under the rug as Orientalism, and not dismissing them as hate-filled ideologies.

Could you share something interesting or surprising that you've learnt on the course?

James: I think the way that we've studied fiqh with Shaykh Salman (Younas) and Shaykh Sohail (Hanif) has been quite unlike any other fiqh class that I've ever had. Here, we dive deep into the theory and conceptualisations of the jurist; it makes fiqh so much more meaningful and relevant.

Isma: I would say the same! Understanding that fiqh is not just a list of rules. It's been the biggest game changer for me. Going into theories, comparing to Western thinkers or just the simple encouragement to reflect. Usually there isn't room to reflect.



What would you like to go on to do in the future following the course?

James: Writing is important to me. So many modern movies are based on Biblical stories or ancient stories like The Illiad. The Seerah could do the same if we make it culturally digestible. I'm also an educator and would like to work on curriculums in Islamic schools to make them the best UK schools.

Isma: So, quite similar to James, I would like to go into the educational sector and spread knowledge, through teaching or writing on Islamic sciences. Additionally, I would love to continue my education.

Finally, what is your favourite part of being a BA student at CMC?

Isma: I really like the sense of community. There is a real sense of care and concern, from the students and the staff. An interest in people and what they want to do. It's a very pleasant and nurturing environment to be in. It's very motivating.

James: Yes, it's the suhba of the college. Lunchtime is probably my favourite time; we have opportunity to sit with scholars like Shaykh Abdal Hakim, listen to him and witness his adab. It's a place where I can be myself and we respect each other, even when we disagree. It's a healthy, spiritual environment, alhamdulillah.

Reading Al-Kindi on Dispelling Sorrow

By Dr Samir Mahmoud

Abu Yusef Yaqoub ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi (801–873 CE) is known as the father of Islamic Philosophy. He was also a scientist of a very high calibre, a mathematician, an astronomer, a physician, a geographer as well as a talented musician.

Out of the several hundred treatises that he wrote, only several works have survived until our day. One is an interesting treatise on ethics titled “On Dispelling Sadness,” which can be described as a form of philosophical consolation. It consists mainly of practical advice, aphorisms and anecdotes that can help one ward off sorrow (*huzn*) and increase happiness (*sa’adah*).

One particularly striking passage, derived from the Greek philosopher Epictetus, describes our earthly life as a transitory passage on an island during a long sea voyage. As he describes it: *“Our residence in this phenomenal world is transitory; it is a journey towards the eternal one. The most miserable man, is he who prefers for himself the material above the spiritual, for the material, apart from its ephemeral nature, obstructs our passage to the spiritual world.”*

Al-Kindi’s basic argument is that we shouldn’t place value on physical objects or possessions. By their very nature, he says, wealth and other physical goods are vulnerable and transitory. Instead, he urges, we should value and pursue things that are enduring and that cannot be taken from us: these are the eternal things.

Imagine, al-Kindi tells us, that we are on a sea voyage on a boat filled to its maximum capacity with passengers and their belongings.

The boat temporarily docks and we disembark to enjoy some free time exploring the island.

On the island we may swim with the fish, walk along the beach, explore new species of plants and animals, befriend the natives, pick fruits from the trees, or even set up a hammock to relax.

After some time, the captain will eventually call us back to the boat to continue our journey.

Some of us might feel sorrow at leaving behind our new possessions, which we worked hard to acquire. We might try to convince ourselves that we can somehow find a way to fit them on the boat. Others might suffer over the loss of new friendships hoping to convince the captain to allow them on board.

We realize as we are returning to the boat that neither request is possible.

This life of ours on earth is like a respite on this island. Soon we shall be called back to our boat to continue our cosmic journey into the afterlife.

What al-Kindi intends for us to take away from this story is the realisation that sadness or sorrow is a result of forming attachments to things that will not stay with us.

Wanting things and loving others is not a bad thing, insists al-Kindi; rather they only need to be guided and tempered, otherwise we are destined to fall into pitfalls. A gap arises between what we want and what we can attain of it.

Epictetus himself is said to have once given the unsettling advice that when kissing one's child, one should remind oneself that the child could die tomorrow.

This Stoic sentiment resonates with the Quranic (28:88) idea that "Everything perishes save the Face of God". Al-Kindi was certainly aware of this. However, al-Kindi's is a moderate position consistent with the Prophetic model that he certainly emulated in his other works.

Rather than having no attachments, we should enjoy the pleasures of wealth and the good company of loved ones but we should treat them like a noble king treats his guests.

The king, al-Kindi explains, does not approach his guests when they visit nor does he see them off when they leave. Rather, he enjoys their company when they are there but shows no sign that he is need of any of them.

Al-Kindi's remedy for reducing sorrow is cognitive, echoing the Stoic philosophy and contemporary Cognitive or Rational Behavioral Therapy. Al-Kindi's logic goes something like this:

Keeping things forever cannot possibly exist, not in this world at least. So al-Kindi advises: "We should not desire that which does not and cannot exist". We cannot change the world – at the end of the day we only have control over ourselves and how we respond to the world.

We can, however, change how we think or feel about it, but that is not quite enough on its own. He advises us to change the entire way we are in the world, to cultivate the right kinds of habits. Only then can we experience a lot more joy.

We may borrow from al-Kindi's toolkit a number of therapeutic techniques for our daily lives today:

(1) Go to the heart of things, penetrating deep into them so as to expose their true nature

Things aren't always what they seem to be. Often a moment's thought will get us beyond the veil of illusion to the reality of them.

Take our clothes, for example. The essence of clothes is to clothe us, yet the fashion industry and its constantly changing trends seem to impose on us, in our hyper consumerist culture, the desire to constantly look different. It is a want but not a need.

(2) "*Meditate on things that have saddened you or others and compare them to your current state*" (al-Kindi)

We have been in bad situations before and here we are, still alive and perhaps even stronger. Remember that as we suffer through our current state.

(3) "God does not burden any human being with more than He has given him - [and it may well be that] God will grant, after hardship, ease." (Q 65:7)

In life there is as much ease and there are as many solutions as there are hardships and problems. There is comfort in knowing that.

God is the Compassionate One even though we may not always be able to perceive that in our darkest moments.

(4) Do these in small doses or steps until they become a way of life

It is difficult for us to change our perspective on things let alone our habits, but it becomes easier if we do them in small measures.

In our daily life, we can choose a situation that causes us much sorrow, then look at examples of how others have handled it, and take comfort in the thought that it is as much an opportunity for our growth as it is a problem.

Then we should do the same with a second and then a third situation until we are able to do it regularly as a matter of habit.

Conclusion

According to Al-Kindi, loss is inevitable but sorrow isn't; it's a choice that depends on how we respond to situations that life throws at us.

As we disembark off the boat into this world (dunya) we can decide on the kinds of attachments we make and cultivate the right kinds of habits that will protect us from spiralling into the vortex of sorrow every time we lose something or someone.



Dr Samir Mahmoud

Dr Samir Mahmoud is currently director, founder, and senior researcher at Living Turath, Instructor at the Cambridge Muslim College, and Educational Development Officer at the Lebanese Muslim Association. He has a PhD in Islamic Studies, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge; MPhil in Islamic Studies, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge; MA Architectural History & Theory, UNSW, Australia; BA (First Class Honours) in Anthropology & Politics, UNSW, Australia.

Dr Mahmoud also has certificates in Jungian psychology, economics, Renaissance philosophy & art, mindfulness, and somatic therapy. He completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Islamic Architecture, MIT; Postdoctoral Fellowship in Islamic Art, Oxford University; Andrew Mellon Postdoctoral Fellows in the Arts & Humanities, American University of Beirut, and is currently member of the Guild for Pastoral Psychology. Until 2019, Dr Samir was Assistant Professor at the Lebanese American University. He teaches the 'The Birth of Modern Subjectivity' module as part of the Diploma in Islamic Psychology at Cambridge Muslim College.

Transformational Learning

By Dr Zainab Kabba

In a two-family house situated in Queens, New York, a little girl sat reading words from a sacred text, squeezing her eyes shut in an attempt to sear them onto her memory. Words that held no true meaning to her but which she knew were of great importance, as her parents referred to them constantly. Born to a West African immigrant father and an American mother with Pan-African leanings, one would expect that the little girl's eyes would beam a confidence reflective of a luminous historical legacy, a self-assuredness compounded from a rich concoction of gender, race, culture, religion, and nationality. However, when she opened them, not a trace of such an elixir was detected. Instead, there she sat, an African-American Muslim girl, swirling internal chaos gathering inside, lacking a true understanding of the meaning of the words she had parroted.

She passed through her years of education, gradually becoming an expert in ignoring the swirling chaotic confusion, a dim sense of ignorant familiarity. However, determined to address this ignorance, one winter day, now a young woman, she emptied her bank account, and found herself at Cairo International Airport.

She remained in Cairo for close to two years, studying Arabic and other Islamic sciences. Her interaction

with the people and their cultures enabled her to obtain a deeper understanding of the language and caused her to reflect on her own. She pushed forward with these reflections in her educational journey which led her to explore digital learning in a graduate programme.

Suddenly, the image of that little girl with her eyes shut trying to memorise Quranic verses became seared on the inner screen of her mind's eye. In a flash of intuition, the little girl's future projection drew a causal line connecting the effect of the shared sense of internal chaos to rote method of knowledge acquisition; a mere parroting of internally meaningless words, externally meaningful by scholars without any context or way of activating its meaning for her cultural context.

She scoured Islamic education in the American context and was frustrated by the dearth of material that addressed the authority of these scholars and the content of what they taught. This absence led her to bring her degree subject, computing in education, into contact with religious education and identity formation. Her continued search led her to England to delve deeper into this subject at the University of Oxford and eventually to Cambridge Muslim College.

When I arrived at Cambridge Muslim College in 2016 for an interview, I had just submitted my dissertation, having spent four years examining how celebrity religious scholars reconfigure the Islamic tradition and contribute to the construction of Muslim selves in an American context. I had spent a year travelling from Canada to the US, to Turkey, Egypt and back to the UK, listening to lectures, interviewing teachers and students in short-term intensive learning environments. Think Rihla. Why were they there, what did they hope to gain from these encounters? My findings will be published by Routledge next year, however, when CMC hired me to develop a new portfolio of public education programming, I brought all of this to bear on developing our strategy for continuing education programmes.

As an educator, ethnographer, and writer, my teaching and research philosophy is very much rooted in understanding the seen and unseen factors that impact pedagogy and student learning in formal and informal learning spaces. It eschews the rigidity of didactic teaching and instead sees the role of the educator

as an instigator of transformation to usher in change. Although students learn much in the classroom, they also contend with an array of social actors clamouring to teach them something. This being the case, students must be questioned and be encouraged to question their teachers. It is this tussle that refines the theories and approaches of the educator and emboldens students to develop and voice their thoughts and opinions.

With a mission to train the next generation of Muslim thinkers we must create environments where this can occur. Students must be able to consider the social context alongside historical events that impact their current time, demonstrating the interconnectedness of topical issues and the challenges they present to different communities. In this way students acquire a nuanced understanding of contemporary challenges. Rather than focus on prescriptive solutions or directives, at the College we aim to equip learners with frameworks and tools that will enable them to engage with people in multicultural societies. This creates a foundation for developing nuanced understandings of how to engage critically with emergent situations as knowledge unfolds itself to the seeker of knowledge. These days students learn from multiple sources, and as such we provide virtual access to knowledge, teachers, and a global community of learners. This attention to online learning is meant to supplement face to face encounters which retain their primacy in our ecology of learning.

Whether it be a morning lecture on paradigms of leadership, an evening class on short surahs from the Qur'an, a weekend with tea and books or a week exploring Bosnian heritage, our continuing education programmes aim to share knowledge of Islam and Muslim practice that will imbue learners with deep and nuanced understanding of tradition. Equipped with these understandings, we intend to stimulate inner and outer transformations in Muslim thinkers from all walks of life, in all corners of our ummah, illustrating how Islam is as a viable pathway for addressing the challenges of the modern world.

Dr Zainab Kabba



Dr Zainab Kabba is an educator, researcher, writer and strategy advisor from New York City. She is currently the Director of Continuing Education at Cambridge Muslim College.

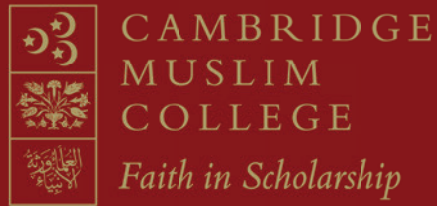
In her last role as Associate Director of Programmes at the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, University of Oxford, she oversaw the development of programmes and research activities related to social entrepreneurship, systems thinking and knowledge equity.

Zainab holds a BS in Information Systems from Stony Brook University, an MA in Computing in Education from Columbia University, a Certificate in Executive Leadership and a PhD in Education from the University of Oxford.

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