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# Conscience (al-Wijdān) and Civility (at-Tamaddon) in Intercultural Teacher Education

## An Islamic Perspective in Hypermodern Risk Society

> *"Have they not travelled throughout the land so their hearts may reason, and their ears may listen? Indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but it is the hearts in the chests that grow blind."*
> The Qurʾan, 22:46

We no longer inhabit postmodern cultures but have transitioned to hypermodern ones characterised by an accelerated form of modernity within risk societies. In this increasingly globalised and hypermodern context, the role of educators has evolved beyond traditional boundaries. Preparing teachers to navigate classrooms marked by profound cultural, religious and linguistic hyper-diversity has become essential. This requires a more comprehensive and sophisticated approach to teacher education, one that responds effectively to the complexities of the contemporary world.

In contemporary hypermodern discourse, the demands for and the promises of change dominate much of the public narrative. While many people advocate change and political figures pledge to deliver it, the precise nature of this "change" often remains ambiguous. What, specifically, do people desire, and what are politicians committing to achieve? Although no universal definition of "change" exists, certain underlying assumptions commonly shape these discussions. Chief among them is the notion that change entails replacing an undesirable current state with a preferred alternative. Implicit in this assumption is the belief, often held by those advocating change, that their perspective embodies the ideal alternative, while the existing state reflects the views of those who must adapt. In essence, *calls for change usually imply an expectation that others conform to the perspectives of those demanding it.* Everyone

is dug in, entrenched and unwilling to move from their ideological position; at the same time, everyone is talking about, demanding and even promising change. What kind of change is possible when no one thinks they need to change and everyone thinks "others" need to change? The belief that others are "the problem" hinders change and contributes to much of the incivility and polarisation within our societies today.[1]

Hypermodern life is marked by rapid change and an emphasis on individualistic, competitive survival strategies, often undermining collective progress and civility. This environment fosters polarisation and diminishes social cohesion. Religion, like politics, evokes strong emotional responses and deeply held convictions, with many perceiving their beliefs as absolute and dismissing opposing views as flawed. Such attitudes are often accompanied by a fear of moral "corruption" through engagement with differing perspectives. This mindset, while increasingly pervasive, reflects prior incivility rather than being inherent to religion. Civility, rooted in moral consciousness and ethical principles, transcends codified laws, thus serving as a vital framework for respectful coexistence.[2]

Civility faces significant challenges in contemporary times, even as the 21st century underscores the interconnectedness of global populations, fostering unity and the need for meaningful dialogue. While societies have become more multicultural, true intercultural engagement remains limited. Hypermodernity, marked by rapid change and complexity, highlights the need to move from coexistence in parallel multicultural spheres to interculturalism, where cultures actively share and recognise their uniqueness. This hypermodern era, shaped by post-secular, post-rational urban life, amplifies the role of religion, particularly in influencing emotions that are central to the formation and expression of individual identities.

The main arguments of the concept of hypermodernity are the intensification of values, the cultures of excess and an overwhelming cascade of products that result in consumption. Hypermodernity is characterised by an emphasis on individualism, the pursuit of self-identity, the prioritisation of aesthetics, exponential marketisation,

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1 Nave 2018, 10.
2 Newell 2019, 1–2.

hyper-shows and hyper-events, culminating in what is often referred to as aesthetic capitalism—a peak manifestation of capitalism itself. The prefix *hyper* signifies the intensification of values rooted in postmodernity, now amplified to extremes of consumption and individualism. Furthermore, hypermodernity highlights the rapidity and intensity of collective activities, which contribute to a pervasive sense of accelerated time. As such, hypermodernity provides a more apt conceptual framework for understanding the heightened pace of temporal experience in contemporary society.[3] We live in what Paul Virilio, in his concept of *dromology*, describes as a society of speed and acceleration, which emphasises the pivotal role of velocity in shaping history. In this framework, the city becomes merely a transient waypoint along a synoptic trajectory, similar to ancient military glacis, ridge roads, frontiers or riverbanks, where the observer's perspective is intrinsically tied to the speed of movement. Within this context, all cities emerge as inherently uncertain spaces.[4]

In our *cities of uncertainties*, *hypermodernity* resides in *the realm of the "in-between"*—a liminal space, a purgatory, a transient domain that perhaps predates the division between objects and subjects and can only be articulated and understood in the context of the specific historical conditions we currently inhabit. This state of "in-betweenness" induces a form of *mental disorientation concerning life itself.* Religious extremists and hypermodern Islamophobes alike cling to monolithic and absolutist categories, each forged from their respective sources—both religious and secular. This hypermodern analysis is grounded in what might be termed the "*uncertainty principle*", which links the logic of speed to the intensification and complex interconnections of contemporary organisations and institutions. The hypermodern city is thus a city of *risks*, depression and frustration. Its cause, as Virilio posits, lies in what he refers to as "technological fundamentalism". "*Just as there is religious "essentialism", there is a technical "essentialism" through technical fundamentalism, just as frightening as religious fundamentalism*".[5]

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3 Oliveira 2018, 12–13.
4 Virilio 2006, 8.
5 Portillo/Costa 2010, 3.

Just like there is a Jewish fundamentalism, or an Islamic or Christian one, you have also now got a technological fundamentalism. It is the religion of those who believe in the absolute power of technology, a ubiquitous, instantaneous and immediate technology. I think a balance is needed to remain free vis-a-vis technology, a balance which consists of a knowledge of religion, even if this entails the risks of fundamentalism and intolerance. Without this knowledge one is without balance, and one cannot face the threats of *technological fundamentalism*, of cyberspace and of the extreme lunacy of social cybernetics.[6]

Technological fundamentalism amplifies the sense of uncertainty inherent in urban life. This uncertainty, as indicated by Virilio, is what Ulrich Beck in contemporary social philosophy highlighted as the centrality of risk *as a defining characteristic of modern society*. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in urban environments, which are increasingly shaped by complex and interconnected challenges within the context of a dynamic and globalised world. *Urban risks* arise from a range of structural and socioeconomic tensions, including the widening disparity between wealth and poverty, demographic shifts marked by aging populations or youth-dominated societies, increased human mobility, the rapid diffusion of technological innovations, and varied occupational and environmental conditions within a technopolis—a term denoting a highly industrialised and rapidly evolving urban landscape. Against the backdrop of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, Beck explored these issues in his seminal work *Risikogesellschaft* (Risk Society), published in Germany in 1986. Its English translation, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, was released in 1992. According to Beck's argument, in western cultures, the latter half of the twentieth century has been described as an epoch of flux, uncertainty and rapid social change. We inhabit a "runaway world" characterised by pervasive dangers, including military conflicts and environmental crises. Consequently, a growing portion of daily life is devoted to navigating change, managing uncertainty, and evaluating the personal implications of situations that often seem beyond individual control. In many respects, the defining features of modern society

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6 Armitage 2000, 44.

are inextricably linked to the phenomenon of risk. Within contemporary culture, risk has emerged as an omnipresent concern, casting its shadow across a wide spectrum of practices and experiences.[7]

A *risk society* necessitates a greater emphasis on interculturality, which prioritises dialogue over mere multicultural coexistence. Genuine dialogue can, however, only occur when individuals actively engage with and consider the perspectives of others. Simply presenting concurrent monologues aimed at persuading others does not constitute meaningful dialogue. Monologues are limited to the articulation of a single perspective, whereas dialogue involves the exchange of insights and mutual learning. This process fosters the development of positions that integrate and reflect multiple viewpoints, encouraging a more comprehensive understanding. The urban landscape of diversity demands a more strategically developed approach to education, one that prioritises intercultural *dialogue* centred on a well-cultivated sense of conscience and civility.

To engage in *meaningful dialogue*, it is essential to acknowledge the possibility that our perspectives may not represent the sole, the best or even the correct viewpoints. Such openness, however, is often challenging, as one's perspective is deeply intertwined with one's world view—a foundational framework that shapes one's understanding of reality. Questioning this world view can feel profoundly unsettling, as it calls into question not only individual beliefs but also the very structures through which reality is interpreted. World views are informed by ideologies—complex systems of beliefs designed to explain and justify social and political arrangements. These deeply ingrained ideologies and world views often impede our ability to recognise the provisional and contingent nature of our perspectives. Instead, we tend to operate from *positions of certainty*, which can stifle *civility* and hinder constructive engagement between individuals with differing viewpoints.[8]

*Dialogue* is an effective form of pedagogy for *critical teacher education*. In contemporary teacher education, particularly within the context of religious studies and religious education, the intersection of *conscience* with critical attitude takes on a pivotal role. Religion is

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7  Mythen 2004, 1–10.
8  Nave 2018, 11.

increasingly seen as a field for public discourse and public learning. This is due to the fact that religion actually provides society with a vision of *civility* based on moral structures and values. This is not a new discovery, as the moral contribution of religions to social life is inherent in the very fabric of religion itself. The need for morality as *civility* is fundamental to human nature.

In hypermodernity, religious individuals not only preserve traditional practices and characteristics associated with encountering and experiencing what is sacred but also embrace innovative forms of expression of faith enabled by digital media and cyberspace. These include virtual, imaginative and symbolic modes of religious engagement. Such individuals are profoundly shaped by their encounter with what is sacred, which fundamentally transforms their being and existence. This transformative process allows them to participate in acts of prayer, sacrifice and faith-driven practices, thus positioning them as interlocutors who actively respond to the manifestation of sacredness. The role of civility is central to this experience, which emerges as a crucial element in navigating and articulating these sacred encounters. What is sacred thus becomes both the focal point of personal experience and the enduring "object" of divine action,[9] situated within the broader conceptual framework of a Sacred Canopy.

In that sense, Peter L. Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* continues to underscore the enduring relevance of religion, particularly in its role as a provider of moral frameworks that shape and guide private life.[10] Although Peter L. Berger was a leading proponent of the "secularisation thesis" early in his career, in *The Desecularization of the World* (1999), he famously retracted his earlier conclusions, declaring them untenable in light of global empirical evidence—except in two specific cases. The first, referred to as "Euro-secularity", pertains to Western Europe, where the secularisation thesis was initially developed, and where a connection between modernisation and secularisation remains plausible. The second case involves the global intelligentsia, who, having adopted the epistemological frameworks of Western education, function as secular elites, even in

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9  Oliveira 2018, 17.
10  Berger 1969, 147.

regions where religious movements are experiencing a resurgence.[11] Although the dominance of the secularisation thesis has been challenged in sociological theory for some time, it was not until 2014 that Berger presented his first systematic effort to develop an alternative theoretical framework. In this work, he argued that modernity does not lead to secularisation, but rather to *pluralism*, which he defined as the coexistence of multiple religions alongside a pervasive secular discourse.[12]

In the context of *intercultural* and *interreligious coexistence* within a secular yet *hypermodern* society, this chapter explores the concepts of *conscience* and *civility*, highlighting their importance in equipping educators with the intercultural competence necessary for teaching in increasingly diverse classrooms. It purposefully distinguishes between interreligious learning, an academic pursuit, and interreligious dialogue, which is more sociological, psychological or political in nature. Rather than conflating these approaches, this chapter adopts an analytical framework to examine *the foundational concepts of conscience and civility, which should guide teacher education*, with *a particular focus on Islamic contributions to intercultural forms of pedagogy* in a society that, nonetheless, operates etsi Deus non daretur ("as if God did not exist", a dictum by Hugo Grotius).

## 1. The Difference between Conscience and Consciousness

Before examining the role of conscience and civility in Islamic epistemology, it is essential to first *distinguish* between the terms conscience and consciousness, as they are often used interchangeably. *Consciousness* has been a subject of classical discourse among academics, philosophers and theologians throughout history and across cultures. It is often regarded as a complex and multifaceted issue, raising questions such as: What is consciousness? How should it be approached? In what ways is it discussed? What objectives guide its study? The broad scope and interdisciplinary nature of

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11  Berger 1999, 1–18.
12  Timol 2020 / Also see: Berger 2014.

the topic make consciousness a compelling area of inquiry across diverse fields of study.

*Consciousness* has long been a subject of *intense debate within academic circles*. Perspectives on how it is conceptualised and addressed vary significantly based on expertise, cultural context and belief systems. Within the Western intellectual tradition of the 20th century, consciousness was often regarded as a matter of common sense or even as a taboo topic, rather than as a legitimate object of study. However, *in the 21st century*, with growing existential inquiries and a renewed emphasis on spirituality, consciousness has emerged as a central topic in both academic and popular discourse. Scholars, scientists and proponents of New Age philosophies have engaged enthusiastically in these discussions. Furthermore, non-Western intellectual traditions—often described as philosophical or as encompassing *the esoteric dimensions of religion*—such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Sufism have been increasingly explored to enrich and challenge the value-neutral standards of Western academic frameworks. On the one hand, consciousness is closely tied to the mind–body debate, often framed within the *Cartesian dichotomy*, and on the other, it intersects with discussions on spirituality, such as those explored in Maslow's *humanistic psychology*. *Inquiries into consciousness* can be classified into *definitional*, *phenomenological*, *epistemological*, *ontological* and *axiological* dimensions. However, a detailed exploration of these aspects falls outside the scope of this chapter.

In the Western Muslim academic community, efforts to integrate science, philosophy and spirituality into Islamic tradition were notably advanced by scholars such as Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas and Malik Badri in the late 1970s. Their work is inspired by the scientific achievements of the Islamic Golden Age. Prominent scholars from this era, including Al-Kindi, Al-Balkhi, Al-Razi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al-Farabi and Al-Ghazali, continue to influence contemporary Muslim psychologists who seek to revive the Islamic tradition of studying the soul, known as *'ilm al-nafs* (now referred to as Islamic psychology). This discipline aims to address the spiritual dimension of an individual—the heart—by cultivating virtues and purifying the soul through *tazkiya al-nafs* ("purifying the self"). Islamic psychology reintroduces moral sensibility into mental health practices for Muslim communities, offering an al-

ternative to contemporary Freudian psychoanalysis, which is often viewed as incompatible with Islamic principles.[13] While it has faced academic criticism, including from some Muslim psychologists, it has gained practical appreciation among Muslim communities, particularly those residing in the West, where there is a growing demand for mental health approaches that align with Islamic values.[14] Although significant, this noteworthy development in Islamic psychology is not the focus of this chapter.

In terms of the definitional dimension, Vithoulkas G. Muresanu defines "consciousness" as the cognitive function of the human mind that encompasses receiving, processing and evaluating information before either storing or discarding it. This process relies on the interplay of the five senses, reasoning, imagination, emotion and memory. The five senses gather information, imagination and emotion assist in processing it, reason evaluates its validity, and memory determines whether it is retained or dismissed.[15]

An individual's conscience reflects their character, guiding them to do what is right in accordance with their moral awareness, particularly when there is no external oversight of their behaviour. It functions as an internal authority, rooted in an individual's mental grasp of moral standards. Whether one defines conscience as a faculty of the soul or something else, it pertains to the workings of subjectivity, being internal to the individual, yet it is also linked to societal notions of law and the collective understanding of moral good. Conscience is not an independent principle or authority, but operates dynamically in relation to the moral standards of society, even when an individual, in good conscience, chooses to dissent from them.[16] The concept of "conscience", particularly in its moral sense, refers to the innate capacity of a healthy human being to discern between right and wrong and, based on this discernment, to regulate, evaluate and guide their actions. Ethical values such as right and wrong, good and evil, justice and injustice, and fairness and unfairness have been integral to human history, though they are

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13 Rassool 2021, 3–53.
14 Naufanita/Nurwahidin/Ghozali 2023, 66.
15 For a detailed analysis of the concept, see Muresanu 2013.
16 Heck 2014, 292.

also influenced by an individual's cultural, political and economic context. The extent to which one's internal state of conscience aligns with a higher perception of these moral ideals—such as goodness, justice and fairness—determines the strength of one's conscience. Acting in accordance with these principles tends to reduce physical stress and fosters a sense of inner harmony. Conscience can be viewed as a measure of an individual's integrity and honesty, as it governs and evaluates the quality of one's actions. Acting with a "clear conscience" provides the psychological advantage of inner peace, which helps mitigate the physiological effects of stress. Furthermore, conscience serves as the "highest authority" in moral evaluation, assessing the ethical quality of actions, whether they are good or evil, fair or unfair, and so on. Consequently, conscience surpasses consciousness in rank and significance, as it not only evaluates information but also determines its application, whether for good or for harm. The formation of "conscience" through the ages is the highest spiritual characteristic of human beings. In the field of moral conduct, there are various self-evident truths which an average, normal person usually accepts, e.g., "do not to others what you would not wish to be done to yourself", "parents should be honoured", etc.[17]

## 2. Conscience (*damïr / wijdān*) in Islamic Epistemology

Most Western conceptions of conscience have no direct counterparts in Islam. It would be challenging to reconcile many modern and postmodern views of conscience, such as those proposed by Nietzsche or Freud, with Islamic thought. Indeed, aligning these views with Judaism or Christianity would also be difficult. However, it is still possible to engage in cross-cultural and cross-religious reflection on a moral life and civility through a discussion of the "importance of conscience" in teacher education. Arabic, the language of Islam, holds a special significance as the language of the Qur'an, even though non-Muslim Arabs, particularly Christians, also use it for liturgical and religious purposes. The term commonly used in

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17 Muresanu 2013, 105.

contemporary Arabic for conscience, *damïr*, does not appear in the Qur'an or in the Hadith, the collection of prophetic sayings. Though *damïr* has a long history in Islam, it acquired its moral and judicial connotations only during the colonial and postcolonial periods, coming to represent the concept of conscience as understood in the Christian West.[18]

However, there is another term in Islamic literature that is as prevalent as *damïr*: *wijdān*. If teacher education, particularly in the context of religious studies and theology, aims to cultivate a deeper understanding of the human condition in its diversity, then this condition is intricately linked to our capacity for, and potential to develop, a "good conscience" and "civility".

Etymologically, the word *wijdān* is linked to the concept of a hidden quality. In modern Arabic, *wijdān* has come to signify conscience or moral consciousness, and its etymology suggests a strong inward orientation, referring to an internal moral voice. What is particularly notable about this term is its derivation from the root word *wujūd*, which means "being" or "existence". This connection indicates that moral consciousness and existential awareness are intertwined in the concept's meaning. The root *wujūd* itself comes from the Arabic verb meaning "to find", suggesting that existence is fundamentally about discovery. Something that is "found" is, in some sense, present, which implies that it exists. Thus, *wujūd* can be understood as both "being" and "finding". This root also gives rise to the term *wijdān* (consciousness) as well as *wajd*, which refers to "spiritual joy" or "bliss". There is, therefore, a profound connection between being/finding, moral consciousness and bliss. The act of "finding" oneself, and through this self-awareness, experiencing bliss, represents the highest level of conscience.

> Conscience is not simply about you and God or you and yourself even when it depends on internal consultation, nor is it a tool to get you to conform to the status quo in society. Rather, it involves recognition of a moral good beyond oneself against which one evaluates one's own choices and actions—and potentially those of others as well! (The ego is never wholly alone.) In Islam, some things are not to be transgressed by the state: the inviolability of innocent life (*hurmat al-nafs*), religion

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18  Heck 2014, 296.

(*hurmat al-dīn*), property (*hurmat al-māl*), and even personal honor (*hurmat al-ʿird*).[19]

The recognition of a moral good beyond oneself is closely tied to the purification of both the heart and the mind. The texts of Islam use various terms to describe the inner life upon which "conscience is built": *fitra* (innate nature), *qalb* (heart), *aql* (mind), *nafs* (self), *sirr* (secret) and others.

In the Islamic tradition, there is a saying attributed to the Prophet concerning ethical or moral *fiṭra*. As reported by al-Nawwās ibn Samʾān, the Prophet once said, "Goodness (*al-birr*) is good manners, and evil (*al-ithm*) is that which causes discomfort in your inner self (*al-ithmu mā ḥāka fī nafsika*) and you do not want people to know it (*wa-karihta an yaṭṭaliʾa ʾalayhi al-nās*)" (Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, 32: 6195 and 32: 6196). In another *ḥadīth*, Wābiṣah ibn Maʾbad reported that during his visit he was asked by the Prophet, "Have you come to inquire about 'goodness'?", to which he replied in the affirmative. Then the Prophet said, "*Ask your heart regarding it. Goodness is that which contents the soul and comforts the heart* (*al-birr mā iṭmaʾannat ilayhi al-nafs wa-iṭmaʾanna ilayhi al-qalb*), and *Evil is that which raises doubts and disturbs the heart* (*taraddada fī al-ṣadr*), even if people pronounce it lawful and give you verdicts on such matters again and again". From these Prophetic traditions we can infer that apart from being a breach of the laws and norms laid down by religion, there is a psychological aspect of sin as wrongdoing.[20] The heart serves as the ultimate arbiter, and one is advised to trust and follow it, even in the face of opposing counsel.

Within the framework of this Prophetic vision, the concept of "conscience" (*wijdān*) occupies a pivotal role in Islamic public theology. Classical Islamic scholars have devoted significant attention to the study of *wijdān*. The Hanafi scholar and theologian from Bukhara, Sadr al-Shariʿa (d. 747/1346) discusses the relationship between *wijdān* and the science of *kalām* in his seminal work *al-Tawḍīḥ*. After defining *kalām* as the discipline concerned with discerning what is in favour of or against (*mā lahā wa mā ʿalayhā*) an individual in terms of belief, Sadr al-Shariʿa extends this

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19  Heck 2014, 302.
20  Arif 2023, 90–91.

definition to encompass *wijḍāniyyāt / the principles of conscience*. He describes *wijḍāniyyāt* as "inner morals / conscience" (*akhlāq al-bāṭina*) and "spiritual capacities" (*malakāt al-nafsāniyya*). In this context, he highlights qualities integral to *wijḍāniyyāt*, including asceticism (*zuhd*), patience (*ṣabr*), contentment (*riḍā*) and cultivating divine consciousness (*ḥuḍūr al-qalb*) during prayer. A conscience enriched with these virtues is equipped to navigate complex situations with wisdom and integrity, underscoring its significance in ethical and spiritual decision-making. [21]

Similarly, Taftazani (born 1322 in Taftazan, Iran–died 1390 in Samarkand), who is described as following the Shafi'i school in jurisprudence but Hanafi in creed lists the types of necessary knowledge (*al-ulûm az-dharûriyya*) in his works *Sharh al-Maqasid* and *al-Mutawwal*, mentioning that experiential knowledge (*mushahadât*) is divided into two types: sensory knowledge (*hissiyyât*) and *wijdâniyyât*. He notes that judgements made by the intellect through external senses are called *hissiyyât*, while those made through internal senses (the five internal senses recognised in classical philosophy) are termed *wijdāniyyat*. Phrases like *hâlât-ı wijdāniyyah* (states of conscience) and *kayfiyyât-ı wijdāniyyah* (qualities of conscience) have been used in this context. [22]

The explanation of the term "*wijdān*" conscience in an extensive Sufi lexicon written in the first half of the 19th century aligns with the information conveyed above. In his work *Istılâhât-ı Insân-ı Kâmil* (*Terminology on the Perfect Human*) completed in 1824, Seyyid Mustafa Rasim Efendi defines *wijdān/vicdan* as follows: "*It is known that to find a state within oneself is called vicdan/wijdān… Similarly, to find the Divine (Hakk) through a vicdânî/wijdān perception is the same.*" [23]

Another example is İzmirli İsmail Hakkı of Istanbul at the turn of the 20th century. In his brief treatise *Tasnîf al-Ulûm* (The Classification of Sciences), İzmirli İsmail Hakkı categorises the sciences into three main sections: theoretical (*nazari*), practical (*amali*) and conscientious (*wijdāni*). Under the section titled "*Fiqh al-Wijdânî*"

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21  See Türker 2023, 19–54.
22  ibid., 26–27.
23  Köksal 2024. Transl.

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(Conscientious Jurisprudence), he addresses topics related to ethics and moral conscience. [24]

This nuanced approach by Muslim scholars effectively connects the human condition to conscience (*wijdān*), and, by extension, to civility. The pedagogical study of religion, both in relation to and within religious traditions, has historically been integral to the educational systems of civilised societies. As Mircea Eliade noted, "To live as human nature" is itself a religious act, with the awareness of a real and meaningful world being profoundly linked to the discovery of what is sacred. [25]

## 3.  Civility (*Tamaddon*) as "Being-in-the-World" with Care

Conscience and consciousness are contextually and critically linked to the concept of civility. In the study and teaching of religion, we often encounter the tension and interplay between the eschaton (apocalyptic or end times) and civility (worldly or urbanised times).

> Civility is not only about politeness: its scope is greater in that it relates to adherence to social norms and its opposite, i.e. the breaking of social norms. It cannot be denied that religion, as one of the prime sources for moral conscience, order and social norms, is closely linked to civility, i.e. good manners and correct behaviour. [26]

Civility pertains to how we navigate our *being-in-the-world* with care. Understanding Islam through Heidegger's concept of "being-in-the-world" (In-der-Welt-sein) would provide valuable insight into Islam's nature by examining how it manifests itself in the world as a theologically and politically distinct religious phenomenon. [27]

Our *being-in-the-world* with care ultimately revolves around the principle of civility. Most religious traditions emphasise civility, embedding it within their core teachings. However, the principle of civility is often not realised in practice. According to the Pew Re-

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24  Şener 1996, 320.
25  Ene/Barna 2015, 35.
26  Frydenlund 2013, 112.
27  Milani 2024, 12.

search Center, approximately 80 % of the global population adheres to one of the five major world religions, indicating that a significant portion of humanity has, at times, engaged in uncivil behaviour despite following scriptures that explicitly oppose such actions. Religious faith does not endorse cruelty, mass violence, radicalisation or incivility; rather, it advocates equitable and respectful treatment of others. Ultimately, civility transcends religious, political and racial boundaries, emerging as a fundamental human and social issue.[28]

What is the ultimate purpose of any teacher in any subject, especially in the field of humanities? I think we can safely say that it is to contribute to the development of students' identities through establishing an understanding and awareness of how to navigate through life without much conflict. This is where the very fine art of speaking about moral conscience (*wijdān*) and civility (*tamaddon-madaniyyah*) comes in.

If civility is understood as "being-in-the-world" with care, then the purpose of education, particularly in the field of religious pedagogy, is to help students develop the ability to balance the eschaton with the present world. Civility entails tolerance for others, enabling individuals and groups with divergent views to coexist peacefully and work within a representative and participatory system to achieve their personal goals.[29] In Islamic tradition, civility is regarded as the highest social virtue, cultivated by Muslims through adherence to Islam's earthly ethical teachings, rather than solely to its legal or eschatological aspects. In other words, the spiritual and ethical dimensions of Islam take precedence over its legal and ritual practices. The full realisation of Islam's essential principles, therefore, can be meaningfully applied in the modern context, as values commonly considered "modern" (such as social and gender equality, democracy and individual freedom) have long been inherent in Islamic teachings.[30] Morality, where conscience operates, is the discretion exercised in the pursuit of absolute individual freedom.[31]

Morality and freedom converge in the concept of civility. This idea of civility (*at-tamaddon / al-madaniyah*) is deeply rooted in

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28  Newell 2019, 2–3.
29  An-Na'im 2005, 39.
30  Milad/Vassilios 2020, 4.
31  Taha 1987, 51.

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Islamic jurisprudence and theology, particularly through the principles of Maroof (the public or common good) and Taarof (living together in peace), which emphasise mutual respect and harmonious coexistence. Drawing on John Rawls' concept of a "reasonable overlapping consensus", these principles promote peaceful coexistence without undermining religious integrity. Rawls describes overlapping consensus as the agreement among diverse groups on justice/fairness principles that underpin societal institutions, despite differing foundational doctrines. This is the way we can create "reasonable pluralism".[32] This resonates with Islamic teachings on mutual cooperation/helping each other (*ta'awun: al-Maidah, 5: 2*)[33], shared goodness (*birr: al-Baqara 2:177*) and patience (*sabr, al-Asr, 103:3*), "controlling hate and anger" ("*kazemeeyn al-ghayz", Ali Imran 3:134*)[34] and forgiveness towards everyone (*ȧfeena 'ani-n'nâs, Ali Imran 3:134*), which provide a common form of ethical civility for public life. All these principles underline that the "difference" is the norm and that "civility" is the core of diversity in the Divine plan for human beings. In a society of diversity, "*a civilized person does not confuse ends with means, and he does not sacrifice ends for the sake of means. He is a man of principles and of moral values, one who has achieved a complete intellectual and emotional life*".[35]

The Qur'anic injunctions to refrain from being judgemental ("*alaina al-Hesab,*" al-Rad 13:40) and to "collaborate in goodness and righteousness" ("*taawunoo alal-birr wa't-taqwa,*" al-Maidah 5:2) further emphasise the compatibility of moral conscience with intercultural civility. These values, highlighted in the Qur'an, transcend religious and ethnic affiliations and are deeply embedded within the Islamic epistemological framework. They offer a model of civility that aligns with the demands of pluralistic societies. Notably, Peter Berger's concept of "civil Islam" suggests that Islamic values have the potential to shape global civil society, underlining their relevance to contemporary challenges related to diversity and coexistence. In Islamic epistemology and ontology, the very definition of *iman* (faith) refers to a reasoned and heartfelt awareness of

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32  Rawls 2001, 32–37.
33  Mazlan/Khairuldin 2018.
34  Gördük 2024.
35  Taha 1987, 51.

the distinction between good and bad. This is exemplified in the definition of *iman* by Abu Hanifa, the founder of the Ahl-e Sunnah (Orthodox) jurisprudential school, which emphasises the necessity of understanding what is good and bad for oneself (*marifat an-nafs ma laha wa maa alayha*). In Islam, faith (*iman*) is understood as a "Credo ut intelligam" ("I believe so that I can understand"), rather than a "Credo quia absurdum" ("I believe because it is absurd"), which highlights the rational and introspective nature of belief.

Moral conscience forms the foundation for critically engaging with interculturality. Educators who are grounded in moral conscience are better equipped to navigate the complexities of global citizenship, which necessitates an ethical commitment to diversity, tolerance and social justice. This ethical framework promotes a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of local and global challenges, such as climate change, which require collaborative and inclusive solutions. Additionally, it is rooted in an understanding of interreligious dialogue, which aligns with the concept of critical civility. Civility, in this context, prepares citizens for life in an interconnected, pluralistic society and is intrinsically linked to peace and tolerance.[36] According to the ideal, the civil citizen exercises tolerance in the face of deep disagreement about the good, respecting the rights of others and refraining from violence, harassment and coercion. Consequently, absolutist ideologies and world views, religious or secular, may collide with such an accommodation of positions in a plural setting.[37] It provides a strong "sense of a unity in diversity among progressive forces".[38]

A multiculturality ("interculturality" B.S.) must be created, politically produced, worked on, in the sweat of one's brow, in concrete history. The very quest for this oneness in difference, the struggle for it as a process, in and of itself is the beginning of a creation of multiculturality. Let us emphasize once more: multiculturality as a phenomenon involving the coexistence of different cultures in one and the same space is not something natural and spontaneous. It is a historical creation, involving decision, political determination, mobilization, and organization, on the part of each cultural group,

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36  Frydenlund 2013, 112.

37  ibid., 113.

38  Freire 1994, 30.

in view of common purposes. Thus, it calls for a certain educational practice, one that will be consistent with these objectives. It calls for a new ethics, founded on respect for differences. [39]

What Paulo Freire refers to as multiculturality in the 1990s can now be understood as the concept of interculturality that we strive for today. It is this interculturality that should be placed at the core of education, with civility and critical conscience at its heart. This approach is essential for reconciling it with the "civilizing power of religions" through an overlapping consensus. Ultimately, civility encompasses a set of "civic values", such as respect, compassion, tolerance, non-violence and a focus on public welfare and the common good. In traditional Islamic jurisprudence and theology, the concept of civility (*tamaddon*) is closely linked to the ideas of *marūf* and *ta'āruf*, which can be translated as "living together" in harmony. This concept aligns with John Rawls' notion of an overlapping consensus in his *Theory of Justice*, where diverse groups agree on shared principles of justice and fairness.

In his contribution to *Religion in Global Civil Society*, edited by Mark Juergensmeyer (2005), the late sociologist Peter Berger contrasts Protestantism with Islam within the context of civil society. Berger posits that the emergence of what he terms "civil Islam" represents a potential future development. While his use of the phrase "in the future" may carry implicit connotations of orientalism and condescension, his argument remains a thoughtful and substantive one. [40] Civil Islam is also about civility in the intercultural social space.

Civility, as Edward Shils defines it, involves restraints on "particularistic ends".

> Civility is a belief which affirms the possibility of the common good; it is a belief in the community of contending parties within a morally valid unity of society. It is a belief in the validity or legitimacy of the governmental institutions which lay down rules and resolve conflicts. Civility is a virtue expressed in action on behalf of the whole society, on behalf of the good of all members of the society to which public liberties and representative institutions are integral. Civility is an attitude in

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39 Freire 1994, 147.
40 Berger 2005, 18–19.

individuals which recommends that consensus about the maintenance of the order of society should exist alongside the conflict of interests and ideals. [41]

Civility, as Shils emphasises, encompasses much more than merely "good manners in face-to-face interactions". [42] It would thus seem to be the virtue of knowing how to compromise between various competing virtues. It is the virtue of knowing when not to be too obsessed with virtue. According to Eiko Ikegami, sociologically, civility might be thought as a ritual technology of interpersonal exchanges or the cultural grammar of sociability that shapes a kind of intermediate zone of social relationships between the intimate and the hostile. Civility provides a basis for communication between people who may otherwise be very different, its codes also help to establish a quasi-trust in the routine actions of impersonal social relations. [43]

The concept of civility, which is often associated with confrontation and intolerance, is crucial for understanding how religious actors contribute to community reconstruction in both violent and non-violent conflicts at local, regional and global levels. Civility is particularly valuable in intercultural and interreligious contexts as it is closely linked to the principle of holism. Religion plays a central role in promoting holistic values, thus offering a framework for unity amid political and economic fragmentation. Holism emphasises the integrity of a whole—spanning from the cosmic to the individual—through synergistic relationships rather than mere additive connections. This dynamic notion of integrity highlights the relational nature of cultural and social coherence, underscoring the importance of integration through cooperation rather than isolation. [44]

Religions carry distinct perspectives on the ultimate order of the world and its impact on social structures. This underscores the crucial role of education in developing teachers' ability to engage in intercultural interactions, a skill now essential in our interconnected world. Challenges once seen as local or national, such as climate

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41  Shils 1997, 4.
42  ibid., 49.
43  Ikegami 2005, 28–29.
44  Herrington/Mckay/Haynes 2015, 96–101.

change, now have global implications, which highlights the need for human cooperation and intercultural dialogue that transcends borders.

In this context, cultivating both a moral and a critical conscience is essential for developing well-rounded educators and global citizens capable of navigating today's interconnected world. Civil society comprises diverse voluntary associations, with religion serving as an autonomous intermediary between societal associations and the state. Civility, in this framework, refers to the civilised resolution of differences, not their absence. These differences arise from distinct world views that shape interpretations of reality, leading to potential conflicts. Religion plays a crucial role in this respect by providing the moral foundations for resolving these differences through respect, responsibility and accountability. In a pluralistic community, religions engage with one another by presenting their world views with respect and tolerance, fostering a collective responsibility for maintaining an orderly, harmonious society. Respect entails recognising and affirming differences, while responsibility focuses on promoting the common good. Accountability ensures that all members of the community are answerable for their actions and the well-being of society.[45]

Religion calls on society to embrace *civility*, emphasising respect, responsibility and accountability—core moral principles rooted in religious teachings. In today's dynamic world, educators must adapt to the growing diversity of cultural, linguistic and social identities shaping students' experiences. To navigate this complexity, educators should cultivate a moral conscience (*wijdān*) as the foundation for intercultural coexistence. This conscience serves as the basis for students engaging with interculturality, prompting educators to prioritise critical interculturality, which goes beyond surface-level cultural differences to foster transformative cross-cultural experiences. Such approaches can be integrated into teacher education programmes, thus emphasising immersive engagement in diverse communities, both locally and globally.

These programmes, which go beyond mere proximity to host communities and their customs, play a crucial role in reshaping ed-

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45  Beyers 2011, 250.

ucators' personal and professional identities. Such experiences in-
form and transform their teaching approaches, fostering the devel-
opment of a critical conscience, an inclusive sense of identity and
enhanced communicative competence. This empowers educators
to navigate and enrich their work in diverse, interconnected edu-
cational environments. Teaching about religion, which is distinct
from the teaching of religion, requires nuanced understanding of
the moral conscience and civility. A comprehensive education in-
cludes the study of comparative religion and its historical role in
shaping civilisation. Effective teaching demands skills in facilitating
open, non-judgemental discussions, while supporting students' re-
flective processes. Educators must engage with students' lived ex-
periences, transforming the classroom into a space for critical ex-
ploration of personal and collective issues. This approach requires
a deep commitment to both education and the personal growth of
students, appreciating religions as frameworks for understanding
human nature and transcendence across traditions.[46]

Civility is essential for community building and ethical delibera-
tion. In *Civility* (1998), Stephen Carter identifies a tension between
two impulses: a "cynical" drive to dominate others and a "generous"
impulse to engage hospitably and deliberatively. This tension high-
lights the need for tolerance and pluralism in fostering coexistence.
Tolerance involves maintaining civility despite disagreement, while
pluralism goes further by not only upholding civility but also seek-
ing a deeper understanding of others' perspectives and identifying
shared values or common ground.[47]

The role of religion in global civil society remains a topic of schol-
arly debate, with recent studies highlighting its growing influence
on political behaviour, thus challenging secularisation theories. Re-
ligions manifest themselves through various self-constituted groups
and organisations that facilitate communal participation and the
dissemination of beliefs. For example, Buddhism expands through
the sangha, Christianity through churches, parishes and missionary
movements, and Islam through mosques, da'wa organisations and
Sufi orders. Jewish communities gather in synagogues and centres,

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46  Hannam 2024, 253.
47  Biondo / Fiala 2014, 37–77.

focusing on social networking and charitable work aligned with *tikkun olam* (healing the world). These diverse religious organisations continually adapt their structures and activities to meet the evolving needs of their members, ensuring their relevance in contemporary civil society.[48]

Educators must understand the framework of a pluralistic moral conscience and civility to navigate the complexities of teaching in a diverse, interconnected world. This framework is essential for fostering an inclusive educational environment that engages with cultural and moral diversity. Addressing the challenges of twenty-first century education is not only the responsibility of students but also of educators. It requires reshaping institutional norms and practices while recognising when power imbalances conflict with the goals of interdisciplinary, collaborative problem-solving.[49]

Teacher education is fundamentally rooted in "conscience-raising", where educators are encouraged to critically examine their own biases and blind spots, understanding how they may influence their teaching practices. An individual's religious background and identity can significantly shape their approach to education, particularly in influencing the implicit and null curriculum within the classroom. Pre-service teachers are consistently prompted to reflect on various aspects of their identities, including race, gender and socioeconomic status, and to consider how these intersecting identities inform their perspectives on their roles as educators, their relationships with students and colleagues, and their engagement with the subject matter. This framework underscores the transformative potential of teacher education in fostering critical and ethical engagement within diverse sociocultural contexts. Teachers are transmitters of knowledge, and therefore, when teachers are misinformed about religion, we risk creating misinformed students. The majority of teachers who explicitly teach about religion do so in the context of the humanities and social sciences—history, world cultures or geography classes.[50]

Philosophically, debates concerning teachers' religious beliefs in education have focused upon issues of indoctrination, confession-

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48  Rowe 2016, 2–4.
49  Imbruce et al. 2024, 2.
50  Soules/Jafralie 2021, 46–48.

alism, neutrality and impartiality. What is needed is a non-confessional, impartial approach which is secular, though not "secularist" or relativist, and makes space for teachers' beliefs. Teaching impartially means that teachers may draw upon their personal views, provided they do this with academic integrity and without the aim of persuading students to adopt their views. How do teachers understand the purpose of teaching about world religions? In what way do the teachers' personal beliefs influence how they represent world religions?[51]

A critical conscience requires a relational orientation—learning with, from and about others. This understanding is realised through the intentional cultivation of a moral conscience (*wijdān*). Educators are called upon to pursue what John Rawls terms "reflexive equilibrium", which aligns with the Qur'anic principle of *al-Qıst* —"justice as fairness". This principle fosters an "overlapping consensus", where individuals from diverse backgrounds find common ground.

Teacher education programmes must guide educators in developing both intercultural competence and moral growth. These programmes should also cultivate a cultural conscience, enabling educators to engage with diverse communities. By focusing on both individual development and collective understanding, teacher education can prepare educators to navigate global complexities and contribute to a more just and equitable world.


## Conclusion

In today's diverse educational landscape, intercultural teacher education programmes are essential for preparing educators to engage effectively with students from various cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. The purpose of education has long been debated, with competing answers. A key goal of teacher education should be to cultivate the skills and virtues of deliberation, enabling citizens in a pluralistic society to engage in "*conscious social reproduction in its most inclusive form*".[52] Critical thinking is

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51 Nelson / Yang 2023, 320–323.
52 Moore 2007, 10–11.

the type of thinking used in problem-solving, determining probable outcomes, formulating inferences, and making decisions. Critical thinking involves asking questions, defining a problem, examining evidence, analysing assumptions and biases, avoiding emotional reasoning, avoiding oversimplification, considering other interpretations and tolerating ambiguity.[53] Critical thinking generally involves descriptive facticity, scientific accuracy and correlative and normative judgement.[54]

Equally important is the development of student teachers' identities. As they cultivate cultural sensitivity, employ responsive teaching strategies and engage in reflective practice, they refine their pedagogical skills and undergo a transformation in their professional identities. This transformation is essential for educators to be effective in diverse classrooms and committed to fostering inclusivity, equity and intercultural understanding. The development of a teacher's identity is influenced by their personality, which shapes how they approach religious content. As the adage suggests, "*Show me a teacher with a strong, dynamic, and exciting personality, and they will show you a religion lesson effectively taught*".[55]

Intercultural teacher education is not just about acquiring techniques; it is a process of personal and professional development. It involves becoming an educator capable of navigating the complexities of today's diverse world and inspiring students from all backgrounds. In this context, it is essential to explore how faith traditions offer public theologies that reflect their broader social ethics, particularly in ways that acknowledge and engage with cultural and religious diversity in the modern world. However, teachers must also deeply understand their students' contexts to know when, where and how to effectively engage with diversity and global learning. This approach should begin with meeting students where they are to ensure that diversity is integrated meaningfully and memorably into their learning experience.[56]

In educating student teachers in religious studies, we encourage undergraduate students—most of whom are not specialising in the

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53  Saidahmadovna 2024, 102.

54  Jarmer 2024, 11.

55  Michalski 2020, 182.

56  Lester 2024.

field—to engage critically with "religion". This involves encouraging self-reflection and challenging assumptions to identify and critique sociopolitical power dynamics. Historical evidence shows that faith traditions have often acted as civilising forces when they embraced inclusive attitudes toward the "other". This underscores the importance of fostering inclusivity within teacher education, guided by the ethical teachings of faith traditions, to better prepare educators for the challenges of an interconnected and pluralistic global society.

Any critical self-reflection, to say nothing of critical engagement with the concept of religion itself, requires forging new conceptual synapses through ongoing conversations that actively interrupt the students' preconceived notions about the study of religion and that challenge them to articulate coherent and convincing arguments rooted in scholarly knowledge. Cognizant of the peculiar place the study of religion has in our academy, and attendant to the fact that our students arrive with much baggage, all religion classes (no matter where they go whence forth) must therefore begin with the most basic and also the most difficult questions about "religion" in general: What is religion? What does it mean to say that religion is a social phenomenon? What is the study of religion? What is the relationship between [the] study of religion and religion as an object of scholarly investigation? Does studying religion enhance or illuminate our understanding of the human condition as such? And if so, in what ways? These are the right kind[s] of questions to ask in order to set our students on a path to possible discovery![57]

These questions recall the Global Ethics Project initiated by Hans Küng, centred on the concept of a "Global Ethic" rooted in the Golden Rule: "*What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others,*" or positively, "What you wish done to yourself, do to others." This principle aligns with the Prophet Muhammad's message: "*None of you becomes a true believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.*"[58] Such teachings form the foundation of Islamic pedagogy and anthropology, emphasising compassion, justice and the rejection of violence. The ongoing global challenges, such as the plight of Gaza, raise essential questions for educators:

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57  Hussain / Khurram 2024.
58  Nawawi / Imam 2014.

Should pedagogical frameworks remain silent in the face of injustice, or should they actively promote justice? Justice is central to Islamic teachings, as reflected in the Qur'anic injunction: "*Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness*" Qur'an, 5:8. Teacher education in religious studies should address questions of human existence and presence, viewing religion not just as a set of beliefs but as an integral part of life's complexities. This approach fosters a deeper engagement with religion, connecting it to real human experiences such as justice, hope, love, suffering and transcendence. In this way, *intercultural religious education* becomes essential to understanding and engaging with our shared world."[59]

Achieving this level of engagement, which fosters intercultural competence in young people both domestically and internationally, requires teachers and educators who have cultivated this sensitivity and can proficiently transmit it to others.[60] Intercultural education and training is a delicate and difficult endeavour that must be approached with the greatest of sensitivity.[61]

Intercultural competence cannot be fostered through a fixed formula but emerges at the intersection of civility and conscience. Civility in intercultural contexts thrives on diverse perspectives rather than uniformity, which are essential for a dynamic society. Incivility and polarisation stem not from disagreement but from disrespect, which is often rooted in misunderstanding. Therefore, teacher education in intercultural societies must prioritise civility and conscience.

In scriptural traditions, true belief engages the heart—the seat of *conscience*—in reflective reasoning. When religiosity shifts from thoughtful engagement to rigid legalism, core values erode. Thus, embedding *conscience* and *civility* in teacher education, particularly within intercultural contexts, is crucial. Reforming educational institutions, including schools and teacher training programmes, is imperative. Teachers who embody conscience (*wijdān*) and civility (*tamaddon*) are key agents of change, modelling and convey-

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59  Hannam/Patricia 2024, 251.

60  Cushner/Mahon 2009, 304.

61  Cushner/McClelland/Safford 2012, 153.

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ing transformative values that ripple outwards, fostering societal renewal.

In the poetry of Maulana Rumi, the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) discerned numerous instances of knowledge derived from *wijdān* (conscience) and *bāṭin* (the inner self), which often transcend the limits of the external senses (*ḥavās*). For Iqbal, the knowledge acquired through *conscience/wijdān* and *bāṭin* and that obtained through sensory perception were not mutually exclusive; rather, they existed within a delicate, interrelated framework of complementarity, mediated by a "critical eye" (*tanqīdī naẓar*) that holistically engaged both forms of knowing.[62]

Finally, broadening teachers' ability to think, communicate and interact across cultures and perspectives, as discussed in this chapter, will be a challenging task, particularly given what we know about cultural learning and resistance to change. However, this is an essential aspect of education that can no longer be overlooked.[63]

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62 Ahmad/Irfan 2017, 26–27.
63 Cushner 2009, 317.

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