

## EDITORIAL NOTE

At the Department of Philosophy, University of the Punjab, Lahore, we are a small community of scholars, both faculty and students, dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge in an atmosphere that is as free as possible from cant and clamour. We attempt to proceed with ardent regard for truth, beauty and goodness in a context of mutual respect and camaraderie. We do not always agree with one another, but we agree to disagree. Our curriculum is known for what it excludes as well as for what it offers. We do not presume to do everything. That which we do is done in a collegial interdisciplinary fashion.

I deem it a great honour to edit Volume 18 (1998) issue of *Al-Hikmat* – the research journal of the Department. I believe that the founding fathers of this Department very wisely chose the title *Al-Hikmat* for this journal as their focus was on developing a theoretical and philosophical matrix of inquiry and providing a methodology for dealing with Western thought from an Islamic perspective. Surely they had also in mind the classical etymological definition of philosophy as love of/for wisdom and wisdom in our parlance is translated as *Hikmat* (or simply '*hikmah*'). So they had fixed their gaze both on the Western philosophical corpus as well as the Islamic sapiential thought covered under a very deep and profound Quranic term '*hikmah*'.

The two components of *hikmah* are the pristine and uncorrupted human nature (or *fitrah*) and the pure and undefiled intellect (or *aql*). The term "nature" or *fitrah* is used here in the sense of the truths and inclinations that are inherent within the human spiritual soul. It has the capability to recognize its object of love and adoration, its highest ideal, its ultimate concern – Almighty God. Similarly, the intellect (or *aql*) has the capability to decipher the signs that are found everywhere in the world of nature as well as within one's own self, and to help the human spirit in its search for ultimate reality and the highest ideal. When the two faculties work in league with each other, free from the corrupting influences of the baser self and using the empirical reality or the world of nature as a source of clues and signs, the result is the attainment of *hikmah*. This supreme gift of the Creator can be defined as that stage of intellectual and spiritual maturity where the human being is able to clearly distinguish between right and wrong, with a decisive inclination towards good and a strong aversion towards evil. *Hikmah* constitutes the inner light with which a person is able to go beyond appearances and to judge

and cognize things as they really are. The paradigm of Knowledge for science is observation and experimentation, for philosophy it is reason and logic, for mysticism it is spiritual intuition and insight. Compare these with the methodology of *hikmah*: it takes advantage of the truths of nature that are inherent within the spiritual soul, it makes full use of the faculty of intellect and reason and it thoughtfully observes the book of nature while appreciating the signs that reveal ultimate reality.

At the Department of Philosophy, the feeling of community reaches beyond the academic programmes. The faculty and the ideal students of the Department are capable of self-disciplined individual research and constructive corporate interchange. We cultivate creativity while acknowledging our constant obligation to reality. We prize freedom of spirit within the horizon of academic responsibility. Together, in a real team spirit, we aim at the end of the modern predicament of an all-pervasive human alienation – a theme which provides much of the animus for the soul-searching debate in the Western encounter with modernity, scepticism and nihilism.

In the end, the editor wishes to emphasize that the views published in this journal are those of the contributors and are essentially meant for motivating thought and discussion. It is to invite you – in protest, agreement, excitement, or disagreement – to offer comparable alternative reflections. This in fact is the essential spirit of philosophical thinking.

*Absar Ahmad*