

**The Indiana University Conscience Autobiography
For Healthcare Professionals
Completed with Commentary Pertinent to Islam**

By John E. Sullivan, MSW

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Introduction: There is a course conducted annually in the late summer at the Indiana University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry entitled Conscience Centered Psychiatric Ethics (CCPE). It is now in its second decade. An early feature and highlight of the course was an interview with a professional. The interview was conscience sensitive in nature and the professional, invited to help course participants understand how personal conscience figured in professionalism and ethics was, accordingly, known as ‘the professional of conscience’. Among those who agreed to be interviewed were social workers, psychiatric and other physicians, a businessman who was a survivor of the Holocaust, and a minister who had become an activist on behalf of gay rights and persons living with HIV. Each guest was remarkable in his or her willingness to participate in self-disclosure for the sake of illuminating the transformation of conscience from personal to professional. For those privileged to be present to hear them—or better put: to bear them witness—the interviews were moving, moral, human encounters. A few of the guests are now deceased. None of their interviews were recorded except in memory.

In time, CCPE changed. Room was needed for other courses in an expanding curriculum and, when the time allotted CCPE was reduced, the interview of ‘a professional of conscience’ was one of the features lost. However, balancing this loss of role modeling, a more interactive group experience was gained in which participants became engaged in responding to inquiries about themselves undergoing their own transformation as persons to professionals of conscience. Nonetheless, the preceptors of the course, now among the editorial staff of **Conscience Works**) remember how richly rewarding it was to have seasoned professionals in conversation about conscience.

Efforts have been made by the editorial staff of **Conscience Works** to preserve responses to semi-structured interviews of diverse persons telling how they became professionals of conscience. Two years ago, an article entitled “Trying on the Rings of Glaucon: Conscience Centered Medical Ethics” appeared in the *Conscience and Ethics* department of **Conscience Works** Vol. II, no.2, 1-23. The position taken by the authors was that a secular examination of the professional’s conscience could be conducted with the help of conscience sensitive clinical educators and that such an examination would have at least *instrumental* and *contributory* value, and perhaps *intrinsic* and *original* value as well, with respect to a practical, coherent, as well as more fully self-aware approach to bio-ethical concerns.

In that article, readers were introduced to the *IU Health-care Professional Conscience Interview* and the *IU Conscience Autobiography for Healthcare*

Professionals (IUCAP) each of which was illustrated with narrative responses from a physician.

The IUCAP consists of 15 sets of questions beginning with a request for a general definition of conscience:

To begin, write about how you conceive of conscience. It's all right to speculate, draw analogies or use metaphors. What is it? How does it work?

Subsequently the semi-structured narrative guide proceeds with inquiries relevant to how the (auto) biographee experiences the self historically in each of the domains of conscience. A developmental perspective is encouraged as s/he is asked to retrieve moral memories from childhood, then from medical, nursing or other allied health-professional schools and finally from clinical experiences. Self-awareness with an appreciation for moralized attachment is prefigured by these inquiries. The so-called 'Rings of Glaucon' are invitations to reflect upon psycho-physiological, mood-related and other changes in inner states as well as how s/he believes these changes are evinced or concealed in the presence of others. Varying conditions of approbation and disapprobation are specified to enhance appreciation of shifts in moral emotions as well as vicissitudes in imagined conduct. Particular attention is given to the biographee's amendatory and reparative responses to the moral emotions that accompany the assumption of agentic responsibilities. There follows a survey of moral mandates active in the biographee's conscience with an invitation to link these to moral attachment figures and underlying values. The mandates and underlying values may be recognized in intergenerational transmission or described as originating within the self. They may be instrumental/pragmatic rather than moral in which case the questions subsequently posed regarding best reasons for complying--or not--with the mandates may uncover the moral value. Questions probe discernment of, and strategies for, resolving moral dilemmas (right vs. right issues). The biographee proceeds in the narrative account by responding to questions pertaining to attitudes towards self- and others' agency and concludes by envisioning future developments in conscience.

As it happened, one of the physicians who responded to conscience sensitive inquiry for the aforementioned article professed Christian and the other, Hindu beliefs. Both physicians found the self-examination to be invaluable in better appreciating the relationship between religious background and professional ethics. When in 2006, Mr. John Sullivan, a mental health clinician and both a convert to Islam as well as an Islamic scholar, began attending and contributing ideas at meetings of The Conscience Project, the editors of **Conscience Works** seized the opportunity to ask him if he would complete the IUCAP. On their minds, perhaps, was sustaining the tradition of having a guest professional relate a personal odyssey in conscience. Mr. Sullivan graciously agreed and added detailed commentary pertinent to Islamic teachings. On the occasion of making his responses and reflections available on **Conscience Works**, it is good to again declare a debt of gratitude to all the distinguished professionals who have participated in this tradition.

The IUCAP inquiries appear in blue. Mr. Sullivan's responses appear in black. For the sake of brevity, selections from the IUCAP, which elicited 'Not Applicable' or no response, have been deleted. The IUCAP form is available

elsewhere on this website.

The Editors.

The Conscience Autobiography Completed with Commentary Pertinent to Islam

By John E. Sullivan, MSW

Conscience Works: *Conscience and Ethics 2 (2): 24-63, 2007*

DATE: 5-11-06

NAME: John E. Sullivan AGE: 59 SEX: **M**

RACE: Caucasian

CULTURAL BACKGROUND: American (Irish/German ancestry)

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

The order of your birth among siblings in your family of origin: 2nd of two male children

Father: Deceased age 77.

Your age when he died: 39

Mother: Deceased age 67.

Your age when she died: 37

Identify other important caregivers by relationship to you: **N/A**

Which best describes your parents' or parental caregivers' relationship during your childhood and adolescence? (Check one):

- intact marriage with less than usual marital conflicts
- intact marriage with usual marital conflicts
- intact marriage with more than usual marital conflicts
- separated (Your age when they separated _____)
- divorced (Your age when they divorced _____)

Using only the degree of detail with which you are comfortable, characterize LIFE EVENTS or enduring circumstances to which you attribute especially significant and positive impact upon your childhood and adolescent or young adult development (mention your age or age span at the time): **My brother 6 years older went to help maternal grandparents on their farm when I was 6. I was raised basically as an only child. From 5th grade through high school the greatest influence on me was the street-life of St. Louis. Before 5th grade it was my parents. My chief mentor in high school was my basketball coach.**

Using only the degree of detail with which you are comfortable, characterize LIFE EVENTS or enduring circumstances to which you attribute especially significant and negative impact upon your childhood and adolescent or young adult development (mention your age or age span at the time): **It is what I call my “time in the streets” which had some negative, but mostly positive impact. The greatest negative impact on my life from 7th grade through high school was from police in St. Louis who would rather beat you than arrest you.**

Describe your RELIGIOUS background: **I never became a member of a church, but I frequently went with my family to the Presbyterian Church.**

Name of affiliation:

Do you have a current religious affiliation (circle one): **(Y)** N.

Muslim since 1974.

MARITAL STATUS (circle one): **(Married)**

Your age (s) when married or remarried: **wife 20 and I was 23 – she died. Remarried: wife 30 and I was 34.**

If you have children,

How many children, genetically related to you, have you had? 2

What are their age (s)? 36, 37

How many stepchildren? 1

What are their age (s)? 32

EDUCATION AND WORK EXPERIENCE

Elementary (circle one): **(public)** parochial (religious private) secular private other _____.

Middle School (circle one): **(public)** parochial (religious private) secular private other _____.

High School (circle one): **(public)** parochial (religious private) secular private other _____.

Undergraduate (circle one): **(public)** parochial (religious private) secular private other _____.

Undergraduate Degrees (indicate each degree and major area in which it was earned): **BS Degree in Sociology.**

Undergraduate minor areas: **Economics.**

Post-Graduate Education (identify degrees earned and area in which you studies): **MSW Degree.**

Years of non-mental health professional work experience: **1978-1986.**

Describe the nature of this work: Director of Prison Outreach Program – Islamic Teaching Center of North America.

For each question that follows, feel free to continue your narrative on the back of each sheet or add sheets (I added sheets).

What about compared to your peers?

1 2 3 (4) 5
Much less often Less often About as often **More often** Much more often

DESCRIBE YOUR OWN CONSCIENCE

Do you think of it as located in a particular part of your body? Which part(s)?

How does your conscience work? Give one or more specific examples.

My conscience is an aspect of my soul described above as ‘the soul which blames’. It communicates with me via what is called in our culture, ‘that little voice within’. When I can become still (quiet, serene), it tugs at me; and when I experience stress, it can become quite loud as it attempts to communicate through the “noise of stress” as it were.

The information (data) it provides to me is sometimes correct and sometimes not. This is why Islam teaches that I need to consult with what is contained in the two primary sources of Islam (Qur’an and Sunnah) in order to know whether or not to follow what my conscience tells me. (1)

The conscience as a source of data, what Islam refers to as the “dialogue of the soul” may at times be confused with what is called *waswas* or the “whisperings of Shaytan” (Satan). The latter are suggestions which come to mind. The secondary source of data in Islam clearly explains how to distinguish between “the dialogue of the soul” and the “whisperings of Satan”. My conscience can be sensed and even felt (somatic manifestation) in the center left area of my chest and as a sensation in the intestines as in, “I feel it in my heart and soul” and I feel it in my gut” respectively.

Question 3A: PLEASING THE CONSCIENCE

When you have pleased your conscience by doing something good, do you discern any change or changes in your inner state?

It is a general sense of well being—not located in any particular part of the body.

Describe the change or changes.

My inner state is peaceful without nagging doubts is the change I notice.

Do you experience these changes in any particular place or places in your body?

I feel what I call contentment (ease) in what I call my *deep center* (core), which could be said to be in the area of the ‘belly button’.

What happens externally?

My demeanor is calm and the muscles in my face are relaxed.

Is the change discernible to others {how does it show}?

Yes, because sometimes they comment that my demeanor and facial expressions are different. They would see a different demeanor and changed facial expressions.

What are the reactions in others around you?

**People give me feedback when I'm at peace by saying, "You don't seem upset."
"You appear calm." "You don't over react."**

Question 3B: PLEASING THE CONSCIENCE...IF NO ONE KNOWS

Write about a time when you did something good/right and nobody knew about it.

Following Friday congregational prayer (*Jum'ah Salah*) I saw a brand new Muslim who I knew didn't know a box would be passed around for tithes. So that he would not be caught off guard I gave him some money to put in the box.

Following this deed I had an urge to tell someone what I had done. Instead I recognized this urge as coming from a desire for someone to think positively of me. I remembered that the Creator knew what I did at all time and that if I sought praise from people then that would be my reward for the deed. If, on the other hand, I sought as my reward something from the Creator in this life and/or the next, then *that* would be my reward—it all depended upon my intention behind the deed and the Will of the Creator rather than the deed itself.

Did you discern any change or changes in your inner state?

Yes.

Describe the change or changes.

The initial act of giving him the money elicited a general sense of well being, but the realization that followed (that the Creator knew of my act, etc.) promoted a *deep-seated feeling* of having conquered my desire in this case to be *seen* by others and *praised* by them. I felt victorious over the desire from my lower stage of development of the self and victorious over the whisperings of Satan promoting me to "show off". This feeling of victory came from having won a *jihad* (struggle) against these sources of prompting. (2)

Were these changes experienced in any particular place or places in your body?

Again, I felt what I call contentment (ease) a sense of satisfaction in what I call my *deep center* (core), which could be said to be in the area of the 'belly button'.

What happened externally?

Basically, instead of seeking out someone to tell what I had done, I simply walked out and went home.

Was the change discernible to others (how did it show)?

No one knew or suspected what I had done and since that was not my intention behind the deed—it didn't matter once my rational mind had clarified the event for me. In this particular case I don't think there was any noticeable change. I felt the whole affair was private, between the Creator and myself at that point.

Question 4A: DISPLEASING THE CONSCIENCE

When you have gone against your conscience and done something morally wrong (bad), do you discern any change or changes in your inner state?

In these cases I feel a slight agitation that I describe as static within me. I get an unsettled feeling.

Do you experience these changes in any particular place or places in your body?

Basically across the top of my chest.

What happens externally?

I get what people call a “frown in my brow”.

If someone were to look at you, how would s/he know what is happening inside you?

Someone may not know what was going on inside of me but they know something is bothering me—I’m not at peace within myself.

What are the reactions in others around you?

The reaction of others is to ask what is wrong. They seem to be uncomfortable because they are used to seeing me more peaceful.

Question 4B: DISPLEASING THE CONSCIENCE...IF NO ONE KNOWS

Write about a time when you did something wrong and no one found out.

While in the 7th grade I had a job selling papers. My first and last day on this job was on a Sunday. I was selling them in front of a restaurant. Some people would purchase a paper from me and go into the restaurant to read it while they ate. A few people left the paper at their table when they finished their meal. I went into the restaurant and got the paper and resold it, pocketing the money made on the resold papers.

Did you discern any changes in your inner state?

I knew it was wrong and this sense of doing wrong did resonate within me. I felt the pangs of guilt.

Were these changes experienced in any particular place or places in your body?

I experienced the guilt as a pressure around the collarbone and in the area of my heart (faster heart rate). I also felt excitement within me.

What happened externally?

The only external change was in my behavior. I was sneaky and more vigilant about who might spot me. No one seemed to take notice of me, but basically I don’t know since no one said anything to me. I left after selling my papers and never returned to that job. It showed through my sneaky behavior.

Had someone been there to look at you, would s/he have been able to tell you had done something wrong?

I don’t believe so because once I got the “sold paper” back outside to my stand I felt relief and busied myself with selling more papers.

Did other people suspect or figure it out?

Not to my knowledge.

Question 5: REPARATION AND HEALING

When you have gone against your conscience by doing something wrong or bad, what do you do to make things right? Repair the damage? What do you do to feel better, to soothe your conscience?

To soothe my conscience I need closure. When possible I address the wrong (the issue) with the party involved. If an apology is required, I do so. When possible I do a good deed to offset the wrong. Sometimes this is not possible.

If the issue is addressed (and even when it can't be) at this level (horizontal axis) I move for closure on the vertical axis, that is, my relationship with the Creator. This process goes both ways, sometimes beginning with the vertical axis and moving to the horizontal axis.

On the vertical axis I seek closure by making repentance, which from the Islamic perspective involves:

- a) acknowledging the wrong
- b) seeking forgiveness
- c) having genuine remorse (*See note #1 below*)
- d) recommitment to not repeating the wrong (*See note #2 below*)
- e) not repeating the wrong (*See note #3 below*)

Note #1 One either has genuine remorse or not, it can't be manufactured. On those occasions when I do not experience remorse, I look at the condition of my heart and question my lack of remorse. The question I must ask myself at this point is, "What is the condition of my heart?"

Note #2 This recommitment (new intention) is made with the understanding that I will make future errors as this is part of the nature of the creature known as human being.

Note #3 This involves striving to not repeat this wrong and asking the Creator for the guidance and awareness not to.

Question 6A: FIRST MEMORIES OF GOODNESS

Now think back as far as you can in your life. What is the very first thing you can remember doing that was affirmed as "good or right"?

I was raised during a time when it was simply *expected* that you did what your parents told you to do. There was no mass media implying, suggesting, recommending, and modeling otherwise. It wasn't so much that I was told I was good for doing this or that. It was that I knew I wasn't bad when I did what they told me to do. Even when I didn't do what I was told to do I wasn't called bad or told I wasn't good. I was just made to do what I hadn't done.

The real difference was between doing what I was told, *because I was told*, and doing what I was told because my parents *had to make me* do what they said. The latter felt "not good" and, in this sense, was a bad thing.

Most, if not all of this was an internal experience since my parents never said I was bad for not doing something; they simply made me do it. There was no "labeling", just action.

Story:

My first recollection of doing something that was recognized by others as good was age 11 (5th grade) when I began walking a neighbor lady's dog. I would walk her dog every day and then visit with her. I am pretty sure the dog liked me doing this and the lady seemed pleased although I don't remember her saying so. I felt my mom was proud of me because I was doing this, but again I don't recall her saying so. I think she believed this was a good thing because she allowed me to do this and I can't recall her letting me do bad things.

Does that memory have special significance or meaning for you?

Yes.

What meaning?

As I write this, I realize that then and now I never required or expected someone to acknowledge that I was doing something good in order for me to: 1) do something; 2) consider what I was doing to be good! I guess this particular

realization is at the same time the meaning I got out of this and other early experiences of doing good. That is, learn to initiate and to use your own judgment.

The bottom line is I apparently was not and am not in need of a great deal of external confirmation for my behavior.

Does the story have a moral?

Perhaps the moral of this story is you can check within—if you trust what is within—to let you know if something is good or bad. You can, therefore rely on—count on your conscience.

Question 6B: FIRST MEMORIES OF GOODNESS IN PROFESSIONAL/VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

What is the very first thing you can remember doing in School that was affirmed as “good or right”?

It was easy to know if you were *doing* and *being* good when I attended elementary school since they gave you grades for your schoolwork as well as ‘citizenship marks’. So, it was black and white if you were doing and being good.

Story:

Regarding professional school my first recollection of being told I did something good was in my first semester of graduate school. I was assigned to a “welfare family” to be their caseworker. I went to the home of my client to “work with the 11 year old son”. I went into his room to talk to him and he was in his bed completely submerged under his bedcovers, refusing to converse. I decided the way to get him to “come out” was to ignore him and to begin playing with his toys. I did this and even made noises (like boys are wont to do) as I played with his cars and superheroes. He could not tolerate this and came out from under the covers to see what I was up to. Eventually we began talking.

When I returned to the seminar associated with this field placement I explained to the class how I approached this 11 year-old male client. The professor was ecstatic! She went on and on about what she called my “technique”. She definitely let me know this was good. A year later she was still talking about what I did during that home visit! This “good action” was affirmed and reinforced.

Does that memory have special significance or meaning for you?

Yes

What meaning?

As far as the meaning of all of this, I guess my interpretation was rather cynical. To me it meant my professor had not actually worked with clients for a long, long time otherwise she would not have been so impressed. I did not view what I had done as being nearly as “impressive” as she claimed.

Does the story have a moral?

The moral of this story: Approach people on their level. Do not be paternalistic towards clients even if they are 11 years old.

Question 7A: FIRST MEMORIES OF BADNESS

Thinking back again as far as you can in your life, what is the very first thing you can remember doing that was identified as “bad or wrong”?

Significantly, my first memory of doing something bad is much earlier than my first memory of doing something good. I believe I was 4 or 5. It was before I attended school.

Story:

My mom had a beautiful blue china clock, which set on a table in the living room. It had roman numerals on its face as did my maternal grandmother’s grandfather clock, so I learned to tell time using roman numerals (side note). I had been told repeatedly not to touch that clock! Still one day I moved the hands on the clock. I was so young I didn’t realize the moment my parents saw the wrong time on the clock they would know I did it. My mom did not hesitate to ‘call me on the carpet’. I do not remember the punishment. What I do remember was her tone and the seriousness of what I had done and the threat of real punishment if I every touched that clock again. I never touched it again, even when I was older and could have—even after my parents passed away. I could have touched it but I felt sure that if I did touch it I would vividly recall her tone and the seriousness of the situation years ago.

Does that memory have special significance or meaning?

Yes.

What meaning?

Punishment comes in many forms. When I felt punished, I was punished.

Does the story have a moral?

Yes. The moral impact: Trust is regained (built) when you do not repeat the offense.

Question 7B: FIRST MEMORIES OF BADNESS IN PROFESSIONAL/VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

What is the very first thing you can remember doing in School that was identified as “bad or wrong (not simply mistaken)”?

In our graduate school of social work (University of Missouri) the MSW degree was a two-year program, which included a six month internship in a hospital. At one point in my first semester I was called into the Dean’s office. I was told that I needed to cite references from the Social Work Journal in my papers. It was made clear that without making this adjustment I could actually be put out of the school. Having an undergraduate degree in sociology, I had continued citing sociology journals in my social work papers and this was a “no, no”. It was identified as such by my professors and the punishment was clear.

Does that memory have special significance or meaning for you?

Yes

What meaning?

When in Rome do as the Romans do.

Does the story have a moral?

The moral impact: Follow the rules, especially when dealing with the graduate school of social work, a discipline that has felt chronically inferior to the other social sciences and sociology in particular.

Question 8A: SELF-ESTEEM IN THE EYES OF CONSCIENCE

1) Do you feel like a good person most of the time?

Yes, I feel like a good person most of the time.

Do you think you were born “good” or “bad”?

Before I became a Muslim I used to think people were born as a ‘clean slate’—neither good nor bad. As a Muslim I learned about what is called *fitrah*, which is the primordial disposition. It is the inborn purity of the soul, which can be corrupted. Islamic literature explains that the radical discord between the concept of *fitrah* and the Christian doctrine of ‘original sin’ lies behind many of the divergences between Muslims and Christian spirituality and anthropology.

2) What are the good things about you?

- a) **I am sincere**
- b) **I am able to communicate this sincerity, which has not only helped me as a person, but I believe as a therapist as well.**
- c) **I have a keen sense of fending for myself (learned very early on in the streets of St. Louis)**
- d) **I continually study and apply what I have learned in my ongoing attempt to develop and improve the condition of my soul**

3) What are bad things about you?

The two things I struggle against the most are: 1) procrastination; 2) avoidant behavior. Beyond this I can at times be very stingy with giving of my time to those outside of my immediate family.

Question 8B: DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL ESTEEM

1) Do you feel like a good professional person most of the time?

Yes, I take pride in this.

2) What are the good things you as a professional person?

I treat people with respect and I have a great deal of patience when working with adult patients. Also, I study and learn on an ongoing basis so as to improve my skills as a therapist (I am not referring to canned CEU presentations here).

3) What are the bad things about you as a professional person?

I balk at filling out forms. For example, when I first learned to do evaluations writing narrative was important to paint a clinical picture as it were. Now forms are more checklists and filling in the blanks. I still write my narrative wherever I find space regardless of the section headings.

Question 8C: PROFESSIONAL IDEAL

1) What do you think makes someone good in your profession? (What ideal do you aspire to in your chosen profession?)

Being perceptive is very important as a therapist. To me this means having the ability to ascertain what the person is saying with the totality of their being (body language, language of the eyes, behaviors, when they do *not* respond sometimes). It includes awareness of the various avenues through which people express what is really going on with them. Sorting this out necessitates being a good interviewer and then a good listener as well.

Next the ability to tap into one's own self *while* doing individual or group therapy in order to use your experiences and reactions to facilitate what you are doing. The combination of being a good listener and synthesizing what you hear in a way that you can give back to the patient insights and information they can use to learn and grow. Growth here means to make adjustments, changes and corrections as they develop new (more functional) patterns.

2) Who do you think of as most closely embodying your ideal?

After some 35 years in this profession and having worked with many individuals in the disciplines of: a) psychiatric nursing; b) psychiatric social work; c) psychology and d) psychiatry, I turn to the top 4 psychiatrists I have worked with as "most closely embodying my ideal". I have seen the entire continuum. I have been involved in the training of medical students and those doing their residency in psychiatry as well as a slew of psychiatrists in these 3 ½ decades. Since the question was, "Who do I think of", I assume you want names. *The following are listed by the order in which I worked with these doctors.* I place all four at the same high level of excellence after having worked closely with each of them:

Dr. B----
Dr. R-----
Dr. A-----
Dr. A-----

3) In what ways do you most nearly match your ideal?

It is not my style to talk about me, place myself on any sort of a pedestal as a rule. However, to honestly respond to this question I will say this:

All four of these physicians have referred to me as a "Master therapist" at various times—not a therapist with a Masters degree, but as a Master therapist. I believe this is because I am perceptive, a good interviewer and I am a good listener. I have learned to tap into what goes on within me when working with patients individually or in a group setting. Finally, I have learned with experience to give feedback that can assist patients in their growth by synthesizing what they have said and feeding it back. Dr. A---- summed all of this up once when he said to me, "You have a good sniffer." If you know him you know he doesn't give many compliments and this quote sounds just like him. Once he told me my penmanship was worse than a doctor's, so he was always frank in his appraisal of anyone.

4) In what ways do you most fall short of your ideal?

There are times when I rush and do not give full attention to patients. I work in an Intensive Outpatient Program for adult mental health patients many of them (more than ever) should be in the hospital, but insurance won't allow for this. To have several of these high acuity patients in the program at the same time can be challenging. When I find myself not fully attentive, I take a vacation.

Question 9: WHO CARES ABOUT YOUR GOODNESS?

Other than yourself, who in your life has been most pleased when you have done something good?

My children appear to be the most pleased whereas others seem to expect this of me or even take it for granted. My children simply say "Thank you", when they think I have done something good. This has been true for as long as they were old enough to express themselves.

How do these persons show they care about your goodness?

The opinion my oldest son (35) and my step-son who has been with me since age nine and this is because I am impressed by their intellect and gift of insight and empathy when relating to others.

What about since entering professional/vocational school – have you added new people to your list of those who care when you’ve done something good?

Yes, I have added three people to my list.

How did they get to be on your list?

Basically, having worked closely with them I have come to respect their opinions about, among other things, judging character.

Of these persons, whose good opinion do you most want to have or keep?

At this point it is the person I now work with Dr. A----- . This is because I believe he sees consistency and integrity as excellent qualities for someone to have. Therefore, if his opinion of me was tarnished, I believe that would be because I was inconsistent or did something to put my integrity in question.

NOTE: As a Muslim, I need to add that doing something to diminish my relationship with the Creator is by far more important than any opinion others may have of me. While the opinions of both other people and the Creator count, I give more weight to the latter. Those who understand the bedrock concept in Islam, which is *tawhid*, are better able to understand the addition of this last comment. Simply, put *tawhid* is a concept, which relates everything back to the Uncaused cause of all causes. The concept of *tawhid* may be expressed as:

The Prophet’s message (Revelation) linked the whole of life to the name of Allah. That is the *starting point* for all knowledge all culture all civilization and all actions of humans must be centered on one pivot and that is the name of Allah. (The Islamic definition of a truly “holistic approach” to life.)

Question 10: WHO CARES WHEN YOU’RE BAD?

Other than yourself, who in your life has been most displeased when you have done something bad?

Despite the fact that my mother was the most vocal of my parents about wanting me to be a good person, I would have to say my father was the most affected. But both of my parents would be displeased. This was for most of my life (they are deceased). It is amazing how deeply I feel my father to be at the top of this list while at the same time struggling to explain why I make this claim. The closest I can come to relating my belief that he was the most displeased in my formative years was his comments to me about the opportunities in life available to people who were firm with their handshake, trustworthy, honest, dependable and just. This was his way of getting the message across that he wanted and even expected all these things from me. He never said, “You should be a good boy/man.” Instead he said, “Good people can get x, y or z out of life.” In sum, good people have more opportunities in life than bad people.

Has this been true all your life?

It was true for as long as he lived.

How do these persons show they care when you’re bad?

Whenever I did something he considered bad disappointment and consternation appeared on his face. And I sensed some anger as an undercurrent, but he never lashed out at me, either physically or with words. When I became a man, however, he would simply tell me he was disappointed—he would be very direct when I became 17 and older.

Of these persons, whose bad opinion do you most want to avoid?

I always wanted to avoid my parents having a bad opinion of me but I most wanted to avoid my dad having a negative opinion of me. Perhaps this was because I felt (knew) my mom would be the most forgiving? Or I assumed she would 'get over it'? (This last part is something I just came to while responding to this section, hence the question marks.)

What about since entering professional/vocational school – have you added new people to your list of those who care when you've done something bad?

Yes, I have added many people to this list.

How did they get to be on your list?

They got on the list due to the responsibility I feel for providing modeling behavior to my patients.

Of these persons, whose bad opinion do you most want to avoid?

I don't consider this answer a cop out, but there is no single patient ("whose bad opinion I most want to avoid"). Instead it is any patient I work with. Again, it is because I am trying to model behavior for them. I also know there will be patients who will consider me "bad" when I don't agree with them or when I am working to get them to do things they really don't want to do. If they are my patients, they are on my list.

Question 11: CONSCIENCE DRAWING

Use your imagination and put on paper your image of your conscience. This could be a pictorial drawing or perhaps a schematic diagram or some other two-dimensional rendering. Should you be particularly self-conscious about drawing you may provide a description of how you would draw your conscience.

Description:

I have learned through my study of Islam that the *conscience* is the lower stage of development of the *nafs* (aspect of the soul) called "the soul which blames". It is not that we have more than one soul and this is "the soul which blames". Instead it is understood that our one soul has *aspects* to it and the lower aspect is "the soul which blames". This would be illustrated as the confluence of the heart of hearts, the soul and the physical heart. The "location" of this confluence would be the exact area that one points to *instinctively* when you say to them, "Point to yourself". The area people point to is precisely (without thinking) left of the center of their chest.

***NOTE:* This illustration is *not* meant to suggest that the soul "has a location" or that this area "is *the* location" of the soul. Rather, this is the area where the aspect of the soul known as conscience "*interacts*" with the heart of hearts (spiritual heart) and the physical heart. As stated before Islam teaches that the soul "runs" throughout the body as sap runs through a tree. Furthermore, Islamic literature vividly describes the removal of the soul by the angels assigned to do so at the time of death. It describes a stark contrast between this experience for someone whose good deeds outweighed their bad deeds and the person whose bad deeds outweighed the good deeds in this realm of existence. Muslims use the Qur'an as the criterion for right and wrong. Another name for the Qur'an is *Fur'qan*, which means *criterion*.**

The removal of the soul is smooth, gentle and peaceful for the person whose good deeds outweighed their bad deeds. However, when the bad deeds outweighed the good deeds, the removal of the soul is likened to attempting to "extract a thorny branch from wet corded wool". This is because this person developed their soul in a way that resulted in their soul seeking the rewards of this world at the expense of the next. As such the soul clings to the very cells and muscle fiber of that

person which is all it can cling to at death since the soul takes none of what we have worked so hard to accumulate in this life.

On the other hand, there are *three things that go before us* which can benefit us on the Day of Accountability and in the next world: a) our good deeds; b) something we have left behind that benefits others (a library, scholarly work, a financial foundation that assists people, etc); c) the prayers of an offspring that is a practicing Muslim.

Question 12A: MANDATE LISTS

List the main rules (principles) in your conscience.

NOTE: From the *Islamic perspective* I must list the “main rules (principles)” **REGARDING** my conscience **PRIOR TO** listing the “main rules (principles) IN (or as part of) my conscience which the question calls for me to do. This step is necessary for two reasons: 1) the “rules/principles” regarding the conscience itself exist; 2) as such they provide the *context* for the “rules/principles” in (or as part of) my conscience.

NOTE: For those who have not extensively studied and/or lived the Way of Life (*Deen*) known as Islam, it is difficult to comprehend how comprehensive is this Way of Life. Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet and the Revelation (Guidance) he received is the final Revelation precisely because it is totally comprehensive (leaving out nothing that human beings need in the way of Guidance). Room does not permit a further explanation of this teaching. In the Qur’an it states that the Prophet is told:

This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion (5:4).

As such between the Qur’an (primary source for teachings of Islam) and the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, secondary source for Islam) there exists guidance for all the needs of human beings. This is why there exist in this Revelation such things as “rule/principles regarding one’s conscience as well as “rules/principles” in (or as part of) one’s conscience.

First List: “Rules/principles” regarding (related to) the conscience:

- 1) The Creator has no beginning, no end.
- 2) All things created come to an end in this realm.
- 3) The soul with all of its aspects ends in this realm in terms of its function and “kind”. It continues in the next world at a different degree or level of reality. In this since it “ends” in one sense, but not in another sense.
- 4) As a created thing, the conscience is subject to guidance from its Creator. The development of the soul and all its aspects is delineated in the two main sources of Islam mentioned above.
- 5) All of creation is here for human beings and human beings are here for the Creator.
- 6) Therefore, we are responsible for the development of our soul in this realm. That is, we are responsible for following the *guidance* for its development.

Second List: “Rules/principles” in (or as part of) my conscience:

- 1) **The highest possible functioning of the conscience in this realm, from the Islamic perspective, is to adopt as the “stuff” of our conscience what the Creator has Revealed to be praiseworthy and blameworthy “in the eyes of the Creator”(3). As stated in a previous paper, Conscience: A Way of Life, “Once the soul enters this realm the conscience has the potential to be informed on an ongoing basis. What informs the conscience in this phase of its existence is Revelation”. In other words, what is pleasing to our Creator makes for a peaceful conscience. That is these actions activate our conscience in a way that reinforces our conduct. The knowledge that we are doing what the Creator has defined as Praiseworthy is what soothes our conscience. Conversely, actions that are defined as blameworthy makes a disturbance within us. When referring to this “disturbance” associated with conscience we say something has “pricked our conscience” or “my conscience is bothering me”. All of this leads to making amends for our conduct. When people are *not* “disturbed” by such actions, the condition of the soul which is impacting the condition of our heart comes into question.**
- 2) **The development of our soul which impacts the condition or state of our heart, which, in turn, leads to our deeds enables us to develop a sort of radar that alerts us to thoughts and deeds which corrupt our soul if repeated or become habitual. This early warning system gives us an opportunity to correct our thoughts and deeds before they become habitual. The healthy person, one with a balanced heart and soul, is able to benefit from this early warning system and can see things as they really are. This prevents us from be so easily duped by the lower stage of development of our soul and by the whisperings (suggestions) that Satan assails us with on a regular basis.**
- 3) **When we are alerted by our conscience of a wrong we can immediately seek refuge from our lower self and the whisperings of Satan by occupying our heart with the remembrance of the Creator (calling to mind the Creator). This calling to mind referred to in Arabic as *zikr Allah* includes calling to mind (remembering) what the Creator has Revealed (Guidance from Revelation) to be the correct thinking and behavior in a particular situation. When we lapse and become heedless we are responsible for ceasing in this action and immediately make *tawba* (the process of repentance and seeking forgiveness) and, when possible, offset the bad deed with a good deed in order to regain balance.**
- 4) **When we are in doubt as to the good or bad of something, we are instructed to not proceed until we can ascertain if it is praiseworthy or blameworthy.**

Question 12B: UNDERLYING VALUES

Beside each main rule (principle) you and your conscience have adopted, identify the main value you believe to underlie that rule (principle).

NOTE: Again, I need to begin with the List of “main rules/principles” regarding (related to) the conscience:

- 1) **The Creator has no beginning, no end. All else in creation has a beginning and an end except human beings and jinn who have life, death and afterlife.**

- 2) **The soul with all of its aspects ends in this realm in terms of its function and “kind”. It continues in the next world at a different degree or level of reality. Therefore, it “ends” in one sense, but not in another sense.**
- 3) **As a created thing, the conscience is subject to guidance from its Creator. This guided development of the soul and all its aspects is delineated in the two main sources of Islam mentioned above.**
- 4) **All of creation is here for human beings and human beings are here for the Creator.**
- 5) **Therefore, we are responsible for the development of our soul in this realm. That is, we are responsible for following the *guidance* for its development.**

Related values:

- 1) **Value *this life* even though it is short in duration because this is where we set the “standard of living” as it were in the next life. And value the *next life* since this is where we will exist forever. (Scholars)**
- 2) **Do not become overly attached to anything in this realm as it is fleeting and perishable. Its value is not intrinsic, but lies in how it can be used by us to improve our existence in the next life. (Scholars)**
- 3) **Value the soul and what it takes to maximize its development in this life in preparation for its existence in the next life. (Hamza Yusuf/Omar Abdullah)**
- 4) **Value knowledge and education that can be obtained in this realm and apply it to the development of the soul. Knowledge and education is defined in Islam as that knowledge and education which benefits us in this world *and the next*. (Hamza Yusuf/Omar Abdullah)**
- 5) **Value all of creation. The environment must be valued which means taken care of and not wasted or corrupted in any manner. To value people and the environment (all of creation) is not to be confused with worshipping either people or any aspect of the creation (i.e. sun worshippers) since worship is for the Creator of people and the environment alone (*tawhid*). (Hamza Yusuf/Omar Abdullah)**
- 6) **Value Revelation. We do this by following the guidance found therein. We devalue it when we choose to follow another source of guidance thereby placing this other source above Revelation via our actions. (Scholars)**

List of “main rules/principles” in my conscience:

- 1) **Value the state of serenity and peace. We demonstrate that we value this state by a) striving to attain this state; b) by approaching others while in this state; c) guiding others to this state *if and when* they seek our advice (no compulsion in religion). (4) (Scholars)**
- 2) **Value our *whole being* and not just aspects of our being. This means taking responsibility for our heart and soul by taking responsibility for the**

development of both. This development will be manifested in our deeds (behavior) and if it is not the case, then we have not truly developed either, but have only given lip service to doing so. Value what has been revealed as the way to make our *whole self* healthy and to maintain this state of well being. (Dr. Malik Badri)

This means using Revelation as the means to health vs. following one fad after another in constant search for something that is already at our disposal (the means to holistic health).

Value the information revealed by the Creator about the creature known as Satan. This means behaving in accordance with the knowledge that this creature: 1) does exist; 2) is our natural enemy; 3) has no power over us save what we give him through capitulation. (Scholars)

- 3) Value the state (condition) of our soul and heart. This means being aware of the relationship between the health of both and our ability to see things as they really are (truly relate to reality). Value the 'radar system' that can be developed within us to prevent corruption of the self discussed above. Value the Creator, which means acknowledging that the only refuge from our lower stage of development of the nafs (self) and Satan is the Creator. Value the information Revealed in the Fur'qan (another name for the Qur'an) which means *criterion* for right and wrong. That is, what is praiseworthy or blameworthy as defined by Revelation. This means using this criterion and not preferring the ever-changing criteria constructed by human beings. (Dr. Malik Badri)
- 4) Value our limitations as a creature. This means submitting to the Reality that human beings do not and cannot know everything or what is always best for themselves in all circumstances. Value being humble. This means being humble with ease and comfort. (Scholars)

Value doubt, which is at the same time to value certainty. This means acceding to and making use of what we call doubt by using it as a "yellow caution light" not to proceed until we can gain access to guidance from the Fur'qan (criterion) which is available to all human beings in the form of the still existing Pristine Revelation. (Scholars)

Question 13): MANDATE AUTHORS

Beside the main rules (principles) and values you have listed, write the name of the person(s) who has helped you and your conscience the most in adopting that rule (principle) / embracing that value.

My responses to Questions 12A and 12B related to my post-professional education. Primarily, this is because my professional school did not address these issues. Therefore, I noted *scholars in Islam* both inside the USA and those I have sat with in other parts of the world. I don't recall their names except for two inside the USA Hamza Yusuf and Omar Abdullah and one outside the USA Dr. Malik Badri (author of the book I presented to members of The Conscience Project).

Circle which of the main rules (principles) / values are new since you entered professional school. Underline which of the main rules (principles) / values, although present before have become more important since you entered professional school.

Again, for me all of this was post-professional educational experience. Therefore, I did not circle or underline this section. Primarily, this is because my professional school did not address these issues.

Question 14A): VALUATION AND DEFENSES

Sometimes there are reasons for living in accordance with rules; sometimes there are reasons for not doing so. Reflecting upon the main rules (principles) you have listed, select one and answer the following questions about it:

Selected value: Value my limitations as a creature.

**This means submitting to the Reality that human beings do not and cannot know everything or what is always best for themselves in all circumstances. Value being humble which means being humble with ease and comfort.
(Scholars)**

Questions based on the selected value:

- 1) What are the best reasons for placing value on my limitations as a creature?**

Response: Placing value on reality contributes to the acceptance of reality, the first step in adjusting to reality. We are incredibly limited creatures. (5) That we have capacities and abilities that no other creature has does not mean we do not have severe limitations as delineated in Endnote Five. Accepting the reality of Revelation as a source of information and guidance otherwise not available to us enables us to: 1) turn to this source for guidance; 2) not panic when we discover that we can't know the answer to every question. Simply because we possess limited ability to answer every question germane to humankind does not mean these questions have not been addressed.

- 2) What are my best reasons for not placing value on my limitations as a creature?**

Response: To answer this question I must revert to my pre-Islamic perspective since I know of no reason to not value my limitations as a Muslim. My pre-Islamic perspective is that I need not limit myself in this or any other way. To do so would limit my growth and development as a person. My self-image might suffer and as they say in the 12-Step Recovery Program, "Good is the enemy of best". This means if I settle for the "good" as in "this is good enough for me", then I won't strive for the best as in "what is best for me". The logic of the pre-Islamic perspective and the Islamic perspective, therefore, lies in the premise.

3) What are my strongest motives for *placing value on my limitations as a creature?*

Response: Desires (wants) are part of one's natural disposition. With discipline, they can be managed and guided, but not eradicated. From the Islamic perspective the noblest of desires is to want what the Creator wants for you as delineated in the Qur'an and in the Sunnah. The highest want (desire) is to please the Creator. Therefore, the *strongest motive* for valuing my limitations is to fulfill my role within this realm, which is to submit my will to the Will of the Creator (which is the definition of the word 'Muslim'). In other words, my role is to propose (initiate) and the "role" of the Creator in this relationship is to dispose of affairs. That is, make what I propose (intend) happen or not. There is no limit on what I can propose other than my faculties of imagination and intellect. However, there is a limit to what I *should propose* and this limit is set when I agree to follow the criterion for what is good and bad as explained in the two main sources of Islam.

NOTE: What non-Muslims often fail to realize is that following the limits set by revelation is neither restrictive nor is it in any way "oppressive". This is because I can simply choose to no longer be Muslim. I can choose another Way of Life, system of belief or Faith.

NOTE: Muslim means *submission* of one's will to the Will of the Creator. It does not mean *surrendering* who you are. This is an important distinction. It means you do not give up who you are; rather, it enables you to return to your primordial nature (*fitrah*) which was the state of the soul when it testified to the Oneness of the Creator in pre-eternity discussed earlier. As such, as the years went by and someone would ask me, "Why did you become a Muslim?" my response came to be, "I was tired of being who I was not." (That is, living differently than what my soul committed to its pre-eternity testimony.)

Question 14B): MORAL DILEMMAS

Give an example of a moral dilemma (a right vs. wrong issue) with which you have wrestled since entering professional/vocational school. Give as full an account as possible.

The summer following the granting of my B.S. Degree in Sociology, I worked in a Community Mental Health Center associated with the University of Missouri Medical Center in Columbia, Missouri as part of fulfilling my obligation for the mental health grant I received from the State Department of Mental Health to continue my education. I was working on an inpatient mental health unit and the other social worker on the unit went on his summer vacation, leaving me to pretty much represent our discipline for a couple of weeks. During this time I discovered that I shared the "power" to be able to get people a deferment from the battle in Viet Nam. I also discovered that some people were getting themselves admitted to the mental hospital as a means to get this deferment. At the same time the State Department of Mental Health was paying for my graduate education and managed to get *me* a deferment.

As unit psychiatric social worker my evaluations and reports were part and parcel of the process that could keep someone from being drafted. Aside from this my personal views were and still are regarding that battle the following:

- 1) War could not be declared without Congress doing so and they never declared this a "war" which is why I refer to it as a "battle".

2) Had I not gotten a deferment I was considering applying for conscientious objector status. I felt the war was wrong because I viewed it as:

- a) an illegal war
- b) a civil war between North and South Viet Nam
- c) these people had never done anything to our country
- d) being fought for oil which could then be used as a conduit for imperialism and not for “freedom”. I valued the latter and would have fought for that but not for oil and power.

The truth of the matter is I went along with the staff when there was a decision to get someone a deferment even if the “diagnosis” was questionable at best. I hid in the medical model which says, rightly so, the final decision is that of the physician. My personal beliefs enabled me to justify my part in this process. I thought about it from time to time, but never experienced what I believe to be a ‘prick of conscience’ in relation to this complex, emotionally charged and at that time *very real affair* some 37 years ago.

In approaching, grappling with and/or resolving the moral dilemma to what extent did you rely upon:

	<i>Not at all ----- extremely</i>				
<i>moral intuition</i> _____	0	1	(2)	3	4
<i>reflection and moral reasoning</i> _____	0	1	(2)	3	4
guidance from a respected authority within your profession _____	(0)	1	2	3	4
guidance from a respected authority outside your profession (specify _____) _____	(0)	1	2	3	4
guidance from a peer within your profession _____	(0)	1	2	3	4
guidance from a peer or significant other outside your profession (specify: other students regarding the war not the mental health aspect) _____	0	1	2	(3)	4
your understanding of conventional practice very little _____	0	(1)	2	3	4
your understanding of medico-legal requirements _____					

(0) 1 2 3 4

How did you settle the matter?

I did my job. I completed my evaluations and reports (progress notes) factually. I did not speak up when these patients were staffed by the Chief Psychiatrist on the unit. I hid within the medical model in my lowly status at that time of “student social worker”.

Question 14C: RELATIVE STRENGTH OF VALUES

For each of the following values, check the most appropriate description of its strength in your conscience

	Absent	Weak	Present	Strong	Dominant
Active engagement (meeting challenges)	0	1	2	(3)	4
Attachment in relationships/ Connectedness in community	0	(1)	2	3	4
Knowledge acquisition of knowledge	0	1	2	3	(4)
contributing to knowledge	0	1	2	(3)	4
transmitting knowledge	0	1	2	(3)	4
Beneficence/ Helping	0	1	2	3	(4)
Compassion/ Empathy	0	1	2	(3)	4
Non-maleficence (Do not harm)	0	1	2	(3)	4
Individuality/ Autonomy/ Liberty	0	1	2	3	(4)
Authority/Tradition	0	1	2	3	(4)
Self-interest/Authenticity	0	1	2	(3)	4
Justice/Fairness	0	1	2	(3)	4
Balance/Harmony	0	1	2	3	(4)

Question 15A): SENSE OF CHANGE AND VOLITION

At what age did you become aware of making moral choices?

If by “moral choices” is meant as defined by my parents and teachers (other human beings), I would say age 9 (3rd grade) when it was emphasized by my parents and reinforced by my teachers that good students do not cheat. If, by “moral choices”, is meant as defined by the Creator, I would say age 10 when attending Sunday school.

What is the earliest memory of moral choosing?

At age 12 I recall making a moral choice when I made a distinction between what I would do (considered ‘ok’, *if not* good) and what I would not do (considered ‘not ok’ and bad). As I think back on this on, I see it now as a classic example of needing to know what the Creator defines as good and bad instead of simply relying on my conscience.

In my neighborhood ‘playing craps’ (shooting dice for money) was just another type of entertainment. Seeing it go beyond ‘entertainment’ when someone would get knifed by someone who thought they had been cheated, led me to make an interesting distinction. I agreed to be the ‘lookout’ for cops, but I would never get down on my knees and gamble. Being a ‘lookout’ was ‘not bad’ since I was ‘protecting my buddies’. Gambling was bad *because it was potentially dangerous* and not because it was bad in its own right to my thinking at that point in my life. Such cognitive gymnastics as I was displaying is precisely why human beings need a higher objective standard by which to gauge what their conscience informs them is good and bad.

How often do the choices you make affect/involve relations, with authorities?

1	2	3	(4)	5
Not at all	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often

with your self ?

1	2	3	4	(5)
Not at all	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often

with others?

1	2	(3)	4	5
Not at all	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often

During what period (s) of your life have you been most aware of changes in your conscience?

As stated above I spent an inordinate amount of time ‘in the streets’ of St. Louis. As such I saw many things going on around me. Between the ages of 11 (5th grade) and 17 I had to make choices about whether or not be a part of these activities. I was troubled by my conscience when involved in things I knew were wrong, but I had ‘gone along with the crowd’ (actually it would only be three or four of us). These activities ranged from mischievous to illegal. For example, my parents wanted me to eat lunch at the elementary school cafeteria. However once I was in the seventh grade the school permitted us to go off school grounds to eat. I choose to do so never telling my parents. The very act of hiding this from my parents let me know I was going against my conscience.

Once again when I experienced the freedom and independence of college I was aware when I was feeling discomfort within myself when doing what I had been taught was wrong.

At age 28 when I became Muslim I began to reference my conscience more and more. At first I continued to hang out with fellows I grew up with having moved my family back to St. Louis. I went to some of my old haunts, but no longer felt at ease in that environment. My old buddies would offer me a drink of wine and I would turn it down. One time when one of these guys offered me a hit off of a joint, he simple asked, “Johnnie, are you in or out?” I knew at that point I was “out” and had grown beyond these and other activities that I had justified to myself in the past. From that time on I spent less time with them and more time in the company of Muslims.

Describe the changes associated with these periods.

During the elementary school era I was beginning my ‘career’ in sports, eventually becoming the captain of my high school basketball team. In our neighborhood few people ‘get out’ into the bigger world. Many spent most of their lives in the neighborhood and more specifically on the corner accomplishing very little. However, if you were an athlete with some promise or potential you were protected. It wasn’t required that you be able to fight or steal (be bad) in order to earn a reputation and gain status. Conversely, your peers would actually *encourage you to stay away* from things that were wrong (illegal, bad for you)—they wanted to see someone from the neighborhood “make it” so years later they could crow, “I taught him every thing he knew...”

In college the change involved more freedom and therefore more responsibility when it came to making choices. I valued getting an education and had a strong sense of letting my parents down if I didn’t work to do this. I knew they were sacrificing so I could attend college. While none of my college activities were illegal, they were at times morally questionable. I found it increasingly more difficult to engage in them without feeling my conscience berating and scolding me.

The greatest change (understatement) was after becoming Muslim. Because Islam is not simply a “religion” and faith, but rather an entire Way of Life (Deen), I faced changing my: a) worldview; b) criterion for right and wrong; c) entire lifestyle; d) relationship with Reality. This metamorphosis was/is more than an ongoing event—it has become my life.

Have certain life events triggered, accelerated or modified changes in your conscience?

Yes. The “blue china clock incident” reported above at age 4 or 5 made me aware that it did not feel good to be bad and that my parents took my being good or bad very seriously!

An event at approximately age 14 led me to focus on my conscience for the longest span of time I know of prior to becoming a Muslim. It was one of several times my friends and I were throwing snowballs at cars. Afterwards, while walking home, a man approached us and managed to grab me by the collar saying I had hit his car. He threatened to take me to the police station and in his anger jerked my collar and in the process hit me in the jaw. I still have a dent in my jaw from that blow. I believed this scared him since *he* might get in trouble for hitting a kid. He put me in his car to drive to the police station, but let me out along the way. The pain in my jaw and in my conscience worked to make me think long and hard about the bad I had committed and the variety of ways I could get in trouble.

Finally, the life-altering event of becoming a Muslim had the greatest impact on my conscience. Before becoming a Muslim one is expected to study many faiths and forms of thought so that one makes an informed decision. This is a must since this particular choice alters, as stated above, one’s world view, relationship to Reality and lifestyle. To become a Muslim one bears witness that there is no god but God and that the final Prophet of God was Muhammad. This meant from that point on what is in the Qur’an and the Sunnah (Way) of the Prophet became the primary sources I used to inform my conscience, consciousness and behaviors.

How did they (this event) affect your conscience?

The way this event affected my conscience was very direct in that once I accepted that there was a Creator and that the Creator was All-Knowing then if I did something defined by the Creator in Revelation as praiseworthy, I was not troubled or overly concerned what others thought of me or what I was doing. According to Islamic teachings, if this results in arrogance and self-righteousness, then it is a misuse of the knowledge gained. If, on the other hand, this results in one being more humble, then gaining this knowledge has had a healthy (good) affect on your heart, soul, conscience and resultant behavior.

Since the bottom line in Islam is not your deeds but your intention behind those deeds, a Muslim must constantly take inventory of his/her intentions. This is done by asking oneself, “Why am I doing this?” “For whom am I doing this?” The best of intentions (refer to *Hierarchy of Intentions* in the paper, **Conscience: A Way of Life) is doing something for the pleasure of the Creator. This is because one does not want to tarnish the relationship you are developing with the Creator or to corrupt one’s soul and heart. (The fear that you might tarnish the developing relationship with the Creator is the fear referred to when Muslims say they “fear Allah”. It is *not* a ‘fire and brimstone’ perception of the Creator. The *single* Qur’anic concept which refers to this level of awareness, “fear”, consciousness and conscience is called *Taqwa*.)**

Of course, “good intentions” do not allow one to commit a wrong/bad deed. Again, another name for the Qur’an (Revelation) is Fur’qan which means *criterion*. In this case the criterion for what is a wrong/bad deed. An action that goes against this criterion/guidance is bad even when the intention is good.

Which changes have unfolded without obvious association to life events?

This was the most difficult question for me to respond to *until* I stopped trying to answer it from my perspective *before* becoming Muslim. Once I made the paradigm shift to *how I understand things now that I am a Muslim*, the answer came to me.

From my *pre-Islamic perspective* the process I used to answer this question was to first of all identify a particular change. However, I inevitably associated the change with a life event. The best I could come up with was that *a certain dynamic associated with change* unfolded through a synthesis of past experiences in which I was confronted with making a choice between good and bad. While each choice was related to an obvious life event there was a *formation of conscience* that was going on as a result of an *accumulative effect* of life events (*the dynamic associated with changed* referred to above). This might be described as a meta-formation (metamorphosis) related to an accumulation of life events rather than a single life event.

Shifting to my perspective as a Muslim allowed me to respond as follows. To begin with it immediately became easier to identify the *unfolding changes in my conscience not obviously associated with life events* as the question asks. I could comprehend a process *beyond* simply the cause and effect relationship between my developing conscience and learned experiences. What I am alluding to here is the ‘role’, if you will, of the Creator in conscience development.

For example, I may want to change my conscience and I may want to take steps to do so which may be called “my will at work”, but if simultaneous to my will, the Will of the Creator is not for this to happen, it *will not happen*. However, if simultaneously the Creator Wills (specifies) this to happen, and then it *will happen*.

From this perspective the “unfolding changes in my conscience” is a Mercy from the Creator Whose Will is actually the Cause of it unfolding. To my understanding, it is what in The Conscience Project has been referred to as the “Big Because”. (See Appendix A for an explanation of the *Will of the Creator* and *specificity*)

***NOTE:* As with the followers of any faith one may be a faith member their entire life and this does not insure they comprehend that faith. In other words, different students (Muslims from overseas or from here in America) will have different *levels of understanding* of the teachings of Islam. Therefore *their ability* to make the connection between the Islamic view of life and the concepts from The Conscience Project may also vary.**

The reader may find the way in which my answer to this particular question unfolded to be interesting. I offer this and this entire autobiography as a case study in shifting from a *pre-Islamic way of thinking* to the *new way of thinking* once an individual becomes a *practicing Muslim*. A *practicing Muslim* is defined here as “an individual who actually *applies the teachings of Islam to everyday life*”. In other words, Islam is truly a *Way of Life* (Deen) for this person.

Which changes have been deliberately directed by yourself?

My deliberate study and research into what Islam defines as a holistic approach to understanding human beings. Islam includes in this definition the soul and heart. For the last five years I have read what Islamic scholars versed in the Qur’an and Sunnah have written about the soul and the heart.

This prepared me to discuss the role of conscience, referred to in Islam as ‘the soul which blames’ in responding to this document. This study has led me to this work with The Conscience Project group. That this happened reminds me of a quote from the AA literature:

Coincidence is when the God chooses to remain anonymous. (6)

How has professional/vocational school contributed to changes in your conscience?

Social issues were brought to my attention and I was expected to respond to them in a way that took me beyond pure emotion and which forced me to think in terms of solutions. However this was more about expanding my consciousness than having to do with my conscience since I did not feel I was contributing to the social woes I was studying.

Question 15B: ATTITUDE TOWARDS AGENCY

- 1) Which of the following best describes your philosophical attitude or intuitions about choices?
- i) The actions of human beings are completely determined by causal lines (interactive strings of causes and events) which, in principle, have no interruptions. If ever one could know all the laws governing the universe and one could specify the state of the universe at any particular time, one could predict the state of the universe at any other time. I believe there is no room for free will in such a universe. To say I make a choice or that I am responsible for choosing is simply to express the fact that certain processes in my brain exist at the point of convergence of these uninterrupted causal lines.
 - ii) I agree with the principle of determinism expressed above; however I also believe that free will in the sense of making choices is compatible with the principle.
 - iii) I believe in free will and can not reconcile this belief with a completely determined universe.
 - iv) I believe in neither free will nor determinism. There are interruptions in the lines of cause and effect because the universe is probabilistic and chance plays its part. But there is no free will, chance is not choice.
 - v) I have not formed an opinion on this subject.
 - vi) I do not think about this subject.
 - vii) I have given this subject some thought but have decided the question is not meaningful or susceptible of an answer.

(See Appendix B for Islamic perspective on determinism and choice)

- 2) Designate the truth value of each of these statements for you as a clinician
- i) It is easier for me to empathically respond to a patient whose illness or condition has not come about because of poor lifestyle choices.

DEFINITELY NOT TRUE	DOUBTFUL	SOMEWHAT TRUE	TRUE	VERY TRUE
(1)	2	3	4	5

- ii) I find it especially difficult to empathize with patients who lack empathy for others.

DEFINITELY NOT TRUE	DOUBTFUL	SOMEWHAT TRUE	TRUE	VERY TRUE
(1)	2	3	4	5

iii) I find it especially difficult to treat patients who are only partially compliant or non compliant with my best recommendations.

DEFINITELY NOT TRUE (1)	DOUBTFUL 2	SOMEWHAT TRUE 3	TRUE 4	VERY TRUE 5
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iv) My task is to make a diagnosis, present my findings and recommendations. I respect my patient's choice whether or not to accept my findings and recommendations and am willing to work further with a patient who does not.

DEFINITELY NOT TRUE 1	DOUBTFUL 2	SOMEWHAT TRUE (3)	TRUE 4	VERY TRUE 5
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v) I counsel patients who do not accept my recommendations to seek help from someone else.

DEFINITELY NOT TRUE (1)	DOUBTFUL 2	SOMEWHAT TRUE 3	TRUE 4	VERY TRUE 5
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vi) Irrespective of the circumstances that have shaped their lives, patients should be encouraged to take responsibility for themselves with respect to their illness/condition, especially if lifestyle or psychological change will contribute to better health.

DEFINITELY NOT TRUE 1	DOUBTFUL 2	SOMEWHAT TRUE 3	TRUE 4	VERY TRUE (5)
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vii) There are definite constraints that genetic endowment and adverse life experiences place upon patients in their capacity to take responsibility for themselves. In order for healing to occur, these constraints must be acknowledged empathically by the clinician.

DEFINITELY NOT TRUE 1	DOUBTFUL 2	SOMEWHAT TRUE 3	TRUE (4)	VERY TRUE 5
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Question 15C: ENVISIONING FUTURE CONSCIENCE DEVELOPMENTS

Since starting professional/vocational school, do you have a different attitude than you used to have regarding conscience?

Within my professional school classes there was nothing related to the development of conscience or consciousness that would have impacted my conscience. However, during my six-month internship at a State Hospital in Missouri I had numerous experiences that brought into question treatment approaches, the living conditions of the patients and my role in their treatment. These questions stirred my conscience and often led to self-reflection.

***I did become more aware of existing attitudes and some were definitely influenced by my experiences.**

Are you trying to change your conscience?

Yes, through ongoing study and questioning things that directly and indirectly affects me. I see this as an ongoing process.

What do you envision as helping most in the further development of your conscience in your chosen profession/vocation?

I envision two things that could further the development of my conscience, but more importantly help others gain interest in this field of study:

- a) **The continued study of the brain and its functions. There are questions whose answers are sought through brain study. At the same time many of the answers, they seek do not lie in the brain, but in some of the aspects of human beings discussed in this writing. It is my hope that this will be acknowledged as researchers exhaust their efforts to locate ‘all answers’ in the brain.**
- b) **An increase in dual diagnosis programming can help my conscience development and the development of conscience work in the field of psychiatry as the medical profession interfaces with the 12-Step Recovery Program as a treatment modality. I say this because the 12-Step Program is in essence a *spiritual program* as is made clear in the 12th Step:**

Having had a *spiritual awakening* as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in our affairs (my emphasis added).

NOTE: From the Muslim perspective what is important about human beings and the treatment of their ailments is: “Everything that makes them human”. This is the Islamic understanding of a ‘holistic approach to health’. As such the student who is Muslim and is, at the same time, sound in his/her understanding of Islam welcomes gaining knowledge of the brain, soul, spirit, heart, and conscience leaving no aspect of the human being behind. This approach to studying the human being is not new to Islam. It was also known to the Greeks before the original meaning of the word ‘psyche’ (soul) was jettisoned from the practice of medicine.(7)

What do you envision as the greatest threat to your professional conscience development?

I do not see a threat since independent study while not preferable is always an option. However, I do see the refusal to acknowledge all of the aspects that contribute to us being the unique creature called “human being” as a hindrance. This stance does not facilitate my inquiry into aspects other than the brain, cognitive processes and behavior modification, thereby necessitating my continued independent study.

Question 16: YOUR ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Are there other aspects of your conscience that are important to address?

This document should not be construed to ignore the contributions of socialization, geography, folkways or mores or genetics in development of conscience.

Also, feel free to express your reactions to the Conscience Autobiography

In a word marvelous! In the response to the question: *What do you envision as the greatest threat to your professional conscience development?* I stated: “I see the refusal by the field of social sciences to acknowledge all of the aspects that contribute to us being the unique creature called “human being” as a hindrance. This stance does not facilitate my inquiry into aspects of humans other than the brain, cognitive processes and behavior modification, thereby necessitating my continued independent study. Conversely, The Conscience Project *does facilitate* such research.

My experience in doing this exercise was to gain valuable insights into how I came to operate as I do; insights that might not have been possible except through this avenue of inquiry. Even though the teachings of Islam provide me with a concrete way to understand and develop my conscience, the Conscience Autobiography enabled me to enrich my understanding. For that I thank, first and foremost, the Creator and then The Conscience Project pioneers. Islam teaches that if you can’t acknowledge the efforts of others, in this case these pioneers, then it is unrealistic to expect acknowledgement by the Creator of your own efforts in this realm of existence.

Starting from the Islamic premise that *everything in creation is here for human beings and we are here for the Creator* means my conscience (a created thing) is here for me. Therefore I need to learn how to get my conscience to work for me. The healthy functioning of my conscience is my responsibility. *How to have a healthy conscience and get it to work for me is explained in what Muslims believe to be the final and totally comprehensive Revelation (form of Guidance) from the Creator.*(8)

The availability of such comprehensive information does not discourage further research on the conscience or any other field of inquiry. The Islamic position is quite the contrary. This is because there is no conflict between faith and science in Islam and as such all avenues of scientific research are open and encouraged. There is no “fear” that science will discover something that will shake one’s faith since there is only One Lawmaker and that Lawmaker is All-Knowing. Therefore, it is not possible for there to be any contradiction between the laws placed in creation by the Creator to be discovered by scientists and the information contained in Revelation regarding the creature human being. As such there can be no contradiction between scientific facts and Revelation. There can be contradictions between scientific *theories* and Revelation.

NOTE: A fascinating thing to discover when studying what is contained in the Qur’an is that it is an organic miracle. It is Revelation that continually reveals itself to humans who are willing to expose themselves to its contents. That the Qur’an is the final Revelation and Muhammad was the final Prophet does not mean the process of Revelation stopped after the time of Muhammad. Since this Revelation is organic it continues to reveal itself. It is interesting that some topics presented in the Qur’an are broad-brush strokes of principles while there is extensive detail provided on other topics.

If one thinks of the broad brush strokes of information in the Qur’an as the “bare bones” of information, then one can view scientific discoveries as “putting meat on these bare bones”. On the other hand, in the Qur’an can be found incredible details and in these instances the bones and the meat are all there. Another source of “meat for the bones” is the Sunnah. The Sunnah is the delineation of what the Prophet Muhammad modeled for all of humanity. His Sunnah is,

considered by Muslims to be the “applied science” of what is contained in the Qur’an. When asked what was the personality of the Prophet his wife replied, “The Qur’an.”

There are incredible examples of how science is the conduit for the continual revelation of the Qur’an to human beings. Let me give but one. The developmental stages of the embryo are described in fascinating detail in the Qur’an. Science has confirmed this fact, but this confirmation did not happen until six centuries had passed after the time of the Prophet (See Appendix C).

This document is my attempt as a practicing Muslim to bridge the understanding of Conscience Project to the Islamic Perspective of the conscience and related topics.

**Wa Allahu ‘ilm
(And Allah Knows Best)**

**As Salaamu alaykum
(Peace Be Upon You)**

Endnotes

- 1) The Qur’an (Recitation) is considered by Muslims to be the last in a long line of Revelation (guidance) which has been available to human beings, beginning with Prophet Adam and ending with Prophet Muhammad. It is the *primary source* of information about Islam.

The Sunnah (Way/Path) of the Prophet Muhammad is a scientific documentation (Hadith Methodology) of the things the Prophet said (Hadith Literature), the behaviors he modeled and the things those around him did that were approved of by him as he was guided in his Prophethood. It is the second most important source of information about Islam after the Qur’an. These two sources provide explanations of what how Muslims are to live their lives.

Since the Creator is all-Knowing Muslims believe there is not better source of guidance available to human beings.

- 2) Islam teaches that the Devil (Satan) has no power over humans. When humans capitulate with Satan, they follow his suggestions. To not do so is an ongoing struggle which is the real definition of the word ‘*jihad*’.

No authority has Satan over those who believe and put their trust in their Sustainer (16:99)

3) Anthropomorphic expressions such as “in the eyes of the Creator” provide human beings a way to relate to what has been Revealed about the Creator in the Qur’an. Islam in no way considers the Creator to be like anything we could know about or imagine. The Islamic perspective says, “If you can imagine something about the Creator, be assured the Creator is not *that*.”

4) The Qur’an makes it clear there is no compulsion in religion:

Let there be no compulsion in religion (2:256)

5) It is only our arrogance keeping us from acknowledging how incredibly limited we are as a creature. For example, science tells us that we are seeing less than a billionth of the material stimuli at any given moment. We see less than a billionth of what is around us to stimulate our senses. Visible light is a very small spectrum on the electromagnetic spectrum. There is a very small spectrum within that electromagnetic continuum that we call “visible light” and that is what we see. That is the material world that is what we have identified *leaving out the entire unseen worlds* to which we do not have access through sight.

The overwhelming majority of the universe is dark matter. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the physical universe is not even perceived by us.

6) Things My Sponsors Taught Me (Introduction) Paul H. 1987 Hazelden Educational Materials

7) The Greeks knew that internal sources of human problems included the soul. In Biblical studies, the Greek term psucho/psyche is commonly translated as “soul” and this is obviously the word from which we get the modern term “psychology”.

8) That the Qur’an is totally comprehensive is difficult, if not impossible to comprehend, unless one has attempted to use it as a guide in all of one’s life. This feature of the Qur’an is not something to be “believed”. Rather, it is proven to individuals only when they engage in the Way of Life known as Islam. The foundational principles for any system a human being or a human society requires are found in the Qur’an and Sunnah.

GLOSSARY-1

al-nafs al-lawwamah	the blaming soul, the stage in the development of the soul where the soul begins to understand its own faults and blame itself for its shortcomings; what is called in the English language “ <i>conscience</i> ”.
Allah	The Arabic word for “ <i>the One God</i> ”. This word has no gender and there is no plural form. The Creator has no gender and is One, not many which makes this a fitting term.
Deen	Way of Life. Whereas “religion” has come to mean a mostly private part of life, Islam is a “ <i>deen</i> ”, that is, <i>a totally comprehensive Way of Life</i> .
Fitra	Primordial nature. The inborn purity of the soul which can be corrupted.
Fur’qan	One of the names of the Qur’an which means “Discernment,” “Criterion,”.
Hadith	(pl. <i>ahadith</i>). Saying of the Prophet of Islam. Ahadith is the second best interpretation of the Qur’an; other ayahs (verses) in the Qur’an being the <i>best interpretation</i> .

Islam	Surrender to the Will of the Creator.
Jihad	Literally, “ <i>effort</i> ” or “ <i>exertion</i> ”. <i>Jihad</i> in the widest sense means all action performed to establish equilibrium in life according to the norms of Islam.
Jihad al-nafs	the “ <i>effort</i> ”, “ <i>exertion</i> ”, “ <i>struggle</i> ” against one’s passion.
Jism	(pl. <i>ajism</i>). Body.
Muslim	One who has the attribute of “ <i>islam</i> ”. One (or that) which surrenders his/her/its will to the Will of the Creator
Nafs	The self, the soul. It refers to the human self, which lies between the spirit (<i>ruh</i>) and the body (<i>jism</i>). This is the corruptible dimension of the human being which must be reformed.

GLOSSARY-2

Qur’an

The word, “Qur’an” derives from the root *q, r, and ʿ, (ayn)* meaning recitation”. But the primary significance of the root is “gathering” and “collecting together”. The two primary names of the Holy Book *al-Qur’an* and *al-Furqan* together mean that the Qur’an “*gathers everything together*” (Qur’an) and at the same time “*separates everything out into clear and distinct domains*” (Furqan, criterion). {Perhaps this is why it is so perfect for this ambiguous realm and why when you consistently read the Qur’an one of two things happens over and over: 1) you either experience something and then read about it in the Qur’an; or 2) you read something in the Qur’an and then experience it shortly thereafter.

<u>Qur’an</u>	<u>jam</u>	(Allah) (Al-ism al-jami)
“ <i>gathering together</i> ”	“ <i>bringing together</i> ”	The Name of Allah which is All-Comprehensive since it <u>gathers together</u> in it all other Names.

Perfect man (al-kawn al-jami) is the all-comprehensive engendered thing because he gathers together within him everything in the Divine Reality (regarding Names and Attributes of Allah which are reflected in humans and everything in the cosmos).

The Qur’an is Al-Qur’an because it gathers together all the revealed scriptures that were sent down before it and thereby all knowledge of Allah.

Ruh	The Spirit, including both the Supreme Spirit and the spirit within man. The divine breath that the Creator blew into Adam’s clay. When “ <i>spirit</i> ” is differentiated from “ <i>soul</i> ”, it is typically understood as lying on a higher level and partaking of all attributes of the Creator in a direct manner.
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Shaytan	Satan.
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Sunnah	The tradition of the Prophet embracing his manner and actions in different life circumstances.
Taqwa	Piety. Also defined as the “fear” of the Creator. However, this “fear” is “ <i>fearing to do anything that would tarnish one’s relationship with the Creator.</i> It is not to be confused with what is known in other faiths as “God’s fire and brimstone” which elicits a fear akin to a stifling or “neurotic fear”. It is a higher state of consciousness and of the conscience leading to behavior that is Praiseworthy and therefore “Pleasing to the Creator”.
Tawba	Repentance before the Creator for one’s sins.
Tawhid	Unity, oneness. The affirmation of the Creator’s oneness, which is the first principle of faith and the ruling idea in Islam. This concept is expressed in the first of the Ten Commandments (first principle of Christianity) which states: <i>Thou shalt have none other gods before Me (Deuteronomy5:7).</i>
waswas	The “whisperings of Satan into the soul of humans”. Suggestions to mankind from the Devil.
Zikr Allah	Remembrance of the Creator. To bring to mind the Creator.

Appendix A

The Will of God and Specificity

Everything created, which is everything except the Creator, has attributes. Each of these attributes has infinite possibilities. All things temporal share a lot in common (attributes and possibilities). When something exists the question arises, “Does it exist by chance?” The answer is it is not possibility for anything to exist **by chance**. Statistically speaking, it is beyond possibility that the attributes of say, a glass of water, have infinite possibilities could convene **by chance**. Prince Charles of England expressed this fact by saying, “It would be like a tornado hitting a junkyard, leaving behind a Mercedes Benz.”

The All-Knowing Creator knows all possibilities **to/of** everything created. The Will of the Creator has the function of eliminating. The Will of the Creator is the Creator specifying something to be **as it is**. Everything is as it is and is as it should be by the Will (specificity) of the Creator. Will rules out from the sea of *infinite knowledge* and *infinite possibilities* and *infinite attributes* all except what is specified (Willed to be).

The Creator is All-Wise (al-Hakim). It is this attribute of the Creator (Revealed in the Qur’an) that **determines** what will be. Will **does not** create, it specifies. The Creator is All-Powerful (Al-Qadir The All-Powerful) and it is this attribute of the Creator (Revealed in the Qur’an) that **creates**.

Therefore the **Will** of the Creator **specifies** that “X” will be the way it is and Power brings it into existence (and takes out of existence). Will **focuses** on certain (attributes/possibilities) and rules out certain (attributes/possibilities) **based on the Wisdom of the Creator**. Power creates (brings into creation) according to what is Willed.

The Will/specificity of the Creator is summed up in the Quran as follows:

Verily when Allah intends a thing, the Command of the Creator is, “Be”, and it is! (36:82)

Appendix B

Free will and Determinism

The issue of *choices* and *determinism* raised in *Question 15B* necessitates this brief discourse to explain how the Islamic perspective compares and contrasts to selections (i-vii) in this question. The question of *choice* and *determinism* for Muslims is addressed in the sixth Article of faith—“Belief in *qadr*”.

The Six Articles of Faith in Islam include believing:

- 1) There is a Creator
- 2) That all Prophets are equals
- 3) In all Revealed books
- 4) In the existence of Angels
- 5) In the Day of Accountability
- 6) In *Qadr*.

The Arabic word ‘*qadr*’ may be defined as “the Divine Decree of the Creator”, “the duly proportioned measuring out of all things”. Muslims understand that this “measuring out” is done by al-Hakim. Al-Hakim is one of the 99 Names/Attributes of the Creator revealed in the Holy Qur’an. Al-Hakim means, “The Most Wise”. The word *Hikma* (wisdom) means doing what is correct, at the correct time, in the correct way and for the correct reason. Due to the limited understanding of human beings, we are not always able to grasp what can be called the “workings of God” within creation. That is, we do not always understand the wisdom (*hikma*) behind what we observe.

In some faiths this lack of understanding leads to the expression, “God works in *mysterious* ways”. Muslims do not consider actions of the Creator, which they do not comprehend to be “mysterious”. Instead such actions are explained by another Name/Attribute of the Creator, al-Lateef. Al-Lateef means “The Most Subtle”. Muslims say, therefore, “God works in *subtle* ways.”

When asked about this issue, ‘Ali, the fourth leader of the Muslim World after the Prophet Muhammad, responded to his questioner as follows: “Lift your left leg. Now without letting it down, lift your other leg.” The man said, “I can not.” ‘Ali said, “You are between these states of free will and *qadr* (Decree). You can *choose* to lift the left leg, but you *can not choose* to lift your right leg at the same time. You can do the former (that is free will), but it is determined you can not do the latter (that is *qadr*). You are between free will and determination. There are things you can do and things you can not do.” ‘Ali was letting this person know that these are co-existing states in this realm of ambiguity.

To better understand what ‘Ali meant when he said, “(Human beings exist) between the states of free will and determinism” an important distinction must be made. We must always separate “God’s point of view”—which is a corollary of the *incomparability* of the Creator—from “our own point of view”, which is a corollary of the *similarity* of the Creator. The *incomparability* of the Creator refers to the Creator

being unique, absolute and One. The *similarity* of the Creator refers to the multiplicity of the Names/Attributes of the Creator, which are reflected in the variety and multiplicity of creation. This is why when the Qur'an says, "the Essence of the Creator can not be known" and that "the Creator is closer to us than our jugular vein" these are not contradictory statements.

These two points of view, God's view and our view are at the same time, two ways to conceive of "divine commands". We need to be able to distinguish between two types of Command from the Creator. We become confused when we attempt to conceptualize the co-existence of *free will* and *determinism* without first understanding the distinction between these two divine commands.

In respect of the *first type of Command* (the **engendered** Command), Allah says, "Kun fia Kun" ("Be and it is!") and the whole cosmos comes into existence. In respect to the *second Command* (the **prescriptive** Command), He says to human beings, "Do this and avoid that, or you will fall into wretchedness".

The *first Command* known as "the **engendering** command" or the Command "**without** intermediary", that is *without the intermediary* of a prophet. The *second Command* is known as "the **prescriptive** command" or the command "**by** intermediary".

Nothing can disobey Allah's *desire* (as in His Command, when He *desires* a thing, is to say to it "Be!" and it is" (Qur'an 36:82). However men and jinn are **free to disobey** the command whereby Allah *prescribes* the Law for them. That is, limited free will is granted to both of these creatures.

The next point is crucial to understanding the source of confusion when attempting to explain the co-existing realities of "free will" and "determination" from the Islamic perspective:

Commands from the Creator can not be disobeyed. Therefore, we should know that what is called the prescriptive "command" is NOT really a "command" at all. To call it a "command" is to speak in grammatical terms, that is, to indicate that it takes the "imperative mood".

Confusion occurs because people confer the name "command" upon the **imperative mood**, though without doubt it is **not** a command, nor is the mood a desire. When Allah's "command" (which is in actuality an **imperative mood**) comes on the tongue of those who deliver His messages, these are **imperative moods** and not "commands".

It is for this reason the latter, **imperative moods**, can be disobeyed. This is also why *qadr* (Divine Decree) can not be used as an excuse for one's behavior.

Whatever humans do, they follow the first Command, the engendering command, but the **extent** to which they follow the so-called "second command", which is actually the imperative mood **determines** whether they will join the felicitous in the Garden or the wretched in the fire.

Figure 1 below summarizes the above discussion:

Figure 1
The two divine Commands

First Order of divine Command

Allah says, "Kun fia Kun" ("Be and it is!") and with this Command, the whole cosmos comes into being.

This "first order of divine Command" (al-amr al-takwini) means Command **without** intermediary, that is without the intermediary of a Prophet.

Second Order of divine "command"

Allah says to the human being, "Do this and Avoid that or you will fall into wretchedness."

This "second order of divine Command" is known as the Command **by** intermediary (al-amr al-taklifi).

The “Command **without** intermediary” is also known as the “**engendered** Command”.

This “first order” is truly a Command.

The “Command **with** intermediary” is also Known as the “**prescriptive** Command.”

This second order is referred to *grammatically* as a “command” but is *actually an imperative mood*.

Finally, it needs to be added that the Revealed Law (imperative mood, mistakenly called a “command”) is taken into account, then some obey and some disobey. People bring both good and evil down upon themselves in respect of the imperative mood.

Since humans follow the engendering command {The first Command “Be!”} in all cases, it is the imperative mood (prescriptive “command”) which brings into existence the *possibility* of opposing Allah. This possibility *must exist* since the One God is Infinite and Absolute (the Creator’s) infinitude implies that “the essence of the Creator” includes *all possibilities*. (Humans can not know the essence of the Creator, but we can know of the Creator what the Creator reveals to us in Revelation).

Were there no Revelation, (that is, prescriptive or second “command”) there would be no opposition (mukhalafa), only conformity (muwafaqa). Allah explains in the Qur’an that it is within the Creator’s power to have created a world with no opposition:

Do not the Believers know that had the Creator so Willed the Creator could have guided all humanity to the Right Path (13:31).

Nothing determines opposition except the *prescription of the law*. When the prescription is lifted (in the Hereafter), so also is lifted the property of opposition. Then nothing remains but constant conformity and the continual obedience of the possible thing to the Necessary Being. In actual fact, *at the time of opposition*, this is the situation, since the one who chooses to disobey is obedient to the Divine Will (mashi’a). He opposes only the “command” (*imperative mood*) by intermediary. Hence, the co-existence of Divine Decree (qadr) and free will as demonstrated by ‘Ali’s discussion with his questioner above.

As stated above, the “lifting of prescription” takes place in the next world, when works are no longer relevant to human *becoming*, since disobedience is impossible. This *becoming* on the part of the creature human being is one of many capacities that make us a unique creature and not a “fallen angel” or a “highly evolved animal” as is taught by some.

For example, unlike other creatures, human beings are not fixed in a specific ontological situation, but can change their situation through the gifts they have been given—such as knowledge, desire and speech—by following the prescriptive “command (imperative mood), the Scale of the Law. The moment an animal is born it is clear what it is and will be. But when a human being is born, only Allah knows what that person will be.

Further proof that free will is a reality for human beings is that we experience ourselves as free agents and that this freedom is sufficiently real in the divine scheme of things for Allah to have sent thousands of messengers warning human beings to make proper use of their freedom.

The Prophet Muhammad warned Muslims *in the strongest of terms* not to argue about this issue! He did not say, “Do not discuss it.” He said, “Do not *argue* about it.”

From the Islamic perspective the *highest form of good character = contentment with the Decree of Allah* (qadr).

Appendix C

Science as the Conduit of Organic Revelation

More than 14 centuries ago the *developmental stages of the human embryo* were Revealed in the Holy Qur'an. The part of the Qur'an is break taking in its detail. The extent of detail could not even be appreciated until "modern" science "revealed" exactly what was being said. As science advances it catches up with Revelation. The explanation of what is contained in this final Revelation will continue so long as science continues to advance. The following website addresses this point:

[A Brief Illustrated Guide To Understanding Islam](http://www.islam.guide.com/ch1-a.htm), see: *The Qur'an on Human Embryonic Development*:
<http://www.islam.guide.com/ch1-a.htm>

