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Welcome

السلام عليكم

صباح الخير

إنه لشرف لي أن أكون هنا

أشكركم على استضافتي



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Dr Maitland Hyslop

The Importance Of Knowledge In Societal Development: Challenges To Knowledge Development



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Background, Definitions, History Some Basic Challenges



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Truth, Knowledge, Belief, Faith

Truth is a true proposition that a person is justified in holding as true. It is the first building block of knowledge. Hence the use of a hypothesis.

Knowledge is true facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject based on truth. (1)

Beliefs are things (at least) people have. They don't exist outside the mind.

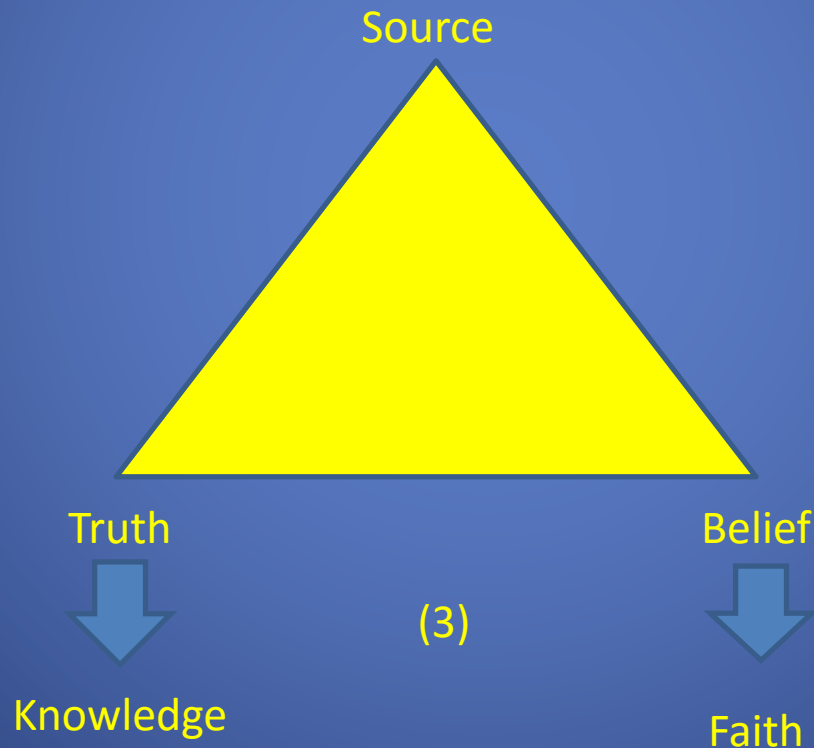
So a belief, simply, is a proposition that a person *accepts* as representing the way the world actually is. Beliefs can be about false propositions and thus be "wrong" because the person *accepts them as* true. This is a critical distinction. While a proposition has to be true or false, beliefs can be about true or false propositions even though a person always *accepts* them as being true.

Faith is the strong belief in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual conviction rather than proof. (2)



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Arab/Islamic Thought





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Arab Philosophy

- Early Arab Islamic political philosophy emphasized an inexorable link between science and religion and emphasized the process of ijtihad to find truth;
- Ibn al-Haytham (Alhacen) (AKA The Physicist) reasoned that to discover the truth about nature, it is necessary to eliminate human opinion and error, and allow the universe to speak for itself. In his *Aporias against Ptolemy*, Ibn al-Haytham further wrote the following comments on truth:
 - "Truth is sought for itself [but] the truths, [he warns] are immersed in uncertainties [and the scientific authorities (such as Ptolemy, whom he greatly respected) are] not immune from error..."*
 - "Therefore, the seeker after the truth is not one who studies the writings of the ancients and, following his natural disposition, puts his trust in them, but rather the one who suspects his faith in them and questions what he gathers from them, the one who submits to argument and demonstration, and not to the sayings of a human being whose nature is fraught with all kinds of imperfection and deficiency. Thus the duty of the man who investigates the writings of scientists, if learning the truth is his goal, is to make himself an enemy of all that he reads, and, applying his mind to the core and margins of its content, attack it from every side. He should also suspect himself as he performs his critical examination of it, so that he may avoid falling into either prejudice or leniency."²*
 - "I constantly sought knowledge and truth, and it became my belief that for gaining access to the effulgence and closeness to God, there is no better way than that of searching for truth and knowledge."⁽⁴⁾*



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Arab Golden Age 750 – 1258

The educational standards during the Abbasid era were high. Elementary education, both for boys and for girls, flourished. Theological colleges were maintained, and extension courses from mosques as centres radiated outward to areas beyond.

The Ummah at that time included infidels.

Private as well as public libraries were common, and one street alone in Baghdad contained a thousand book sellers' shops. Paper, introduced from China via Samarkand, was manufactured in the provinces from vegetable fibre.

Music was cultivated, and among the musicians mentioned was one Ibrahim al-Mousili who, "could detect a false note among thirty lute-players, and tell the player to tighten up her string." He received as much as (equivalent) US \$20,000 for one song from the doting Haroun al-Rashid.

All this time, while Europe was almost illiterate and Charlemagne himself could hardly write his name, a great intellectual awakening was taking place in which the Arab, with nothing but an intellect stimulated by great mental curiosity and a language which had then been the vehicle only of revelation and desert poetry, took a great and glorious part.

The currents of learning and culture which had earlier originated in Egypt, Babylonia, Phoenicia had been funnelled into Greece, and having been there assimilated and vastly augmented by the Greek mind, had spread again in the form of Hellenism to the adjoining world. Among the centres of Hellenism one remembers Edessa, Antioch and Alexandria.

(5)



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Societal Development

- ‘Societal’ development is a bit of a trick question;
- The term “societal” is to be distinguished from the term “social”;
- While “social” refers to the various dimensions of the productive capacities of the human being and of communities (health, age, education, poverty, employment, hunger etc.) “societal” refers to the relational capacities of a citizen and of a community (capacity for plurality, acceptance and affirmation of the value of otherness, relativization of one’s own identity, values and visions, etc.).
- “Societal” describes the understanding of one’s own human dignity and human rights and implicitly the recognition of the human rights and dignity of the other.
- “Societal” includes, most importantly, the capacity for otherness and for a plurality of identities, the ability to relativize one’s own position and identity and the ability to move into public space, interacting democratically with others in the definition and implementation of the common good.
- “Societal” refers to the capacity of the human being for living in dignity with others as well as the capacity for change/development and for a vision of the future. The “social” and the “societal” dimensions of our peace and security
- Talk to Imam Ibrahim in Al Fatah Mosque and you will understand ‘Societal’.

(6)



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Current Position



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GCC PISA RANKINGS 2015

Ranking

GDP % Increase (If All 15 Year
Olds Literate and SME Focussed)

- 45 UAE 1000% –
- 57 Bahrain 1000% +
- 66 Saudi Arabia 1000% +
- 68 Qatar 1000% +
- 72 Oman 1000% +
- – Kuwait 1000% +

(7)



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Traditional Barriers To Knowledge Development



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Oppression

- Imperial
 - Colonisation – Mongols, UK, USA, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland;
- Political
 - Non-Benign Absolute Rule, One Party States;
- Religious
 - Various interpretations of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism;
- Trade
 - Certain types of trade dominance and tariff barriers (defence is an example, also palm oil, chocolate);
- Educational
 - Historical and current (not always so – the line between Washington DC and Moscow during the Cold War was the opposite);
- Societal
 - Perceptions of people's role in societal development and society;
- Gender
 - Not equally treated – men v women (family, education, work, politics);
- Familial
 - Promogenitur (First born male)



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Access and Resources

- Funds
 - Direction;
- Teachers
 - Quality and gender;
- Population
 - Policy;
- Raw Material
 - Availability, access, development;
- Food
 - Availability, diet ;
- Jobs
 - Availability, Policy;
- Economic Development
 - Strategy, Indigenisation;
- Technology
 - Availability;
- Communication
 - Internet.



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Less Traditional Barriers



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The Virtual World

- Virtual world is a threat to knowledge all on its own:
 - Fake news – Arab Spring (Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, BBC);
 - Fake degrees – Indian and other ‘Universities’;
 - False identities – Paedophiles;
 - False promises – Sales;
 - Belief masquerading as truth;
 - Faith masquerading as knowledge;
 - Propaganda;
 - Lawless.



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Management

- Management skills have also been a difficulty: understanding context, risk management, dependencies, governance, compliance;
- In Saudi Arabia today the greatest barrier to the Crown Prince's 2030 Vision is a lack of knowledge in the indigenous population. There simply are not enough indigenous managers to achieve his aim.



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Health

Health and disease issues are additional constraints:

- Inherited/genetic issues;
- Fertility: male and female;
- Diet;
- Fitness;
- Lack of Personal Resilience.



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Doctrinal: West v Al Qaeda

Western/Northern Alliance

- Believe They Are Right
- Have Lots To Lose
- Have Money
- Have Little Faith
- Geographically Concentrated
- Perceived As Strong, Arrogant
- Not Used To Fighting
- Hi-Technology Dependent
- Family In Decay
- High Crime
- Weak Group Cohesion
- Lowering Education
- 'Own' Resources, Especially Food And Water
- Use Lots Of Resources
- Believe In Capitalism
- Has Massive Conventional Military Power
- Does Not Use Terrorism
- Visible
- Timing: Operate To Short Term Goals Driven By Political Considerations

An Al Qaeda Type Alliance

- Believe They Are Right
- Have Not Much To Lose
- Have Less Money
- Have Lots Of Faith
- Geographically Dispersed
- Perceived As Weak
- Used To Fighting
- Technology Independent, Parasitic
- Family Strong
- Low Crime
- Strong Group Cohesion
- Rising (Islamic) Education
- 'Own' Fewer Resources, Especially Food And Water
- Use Fewer Resources
- Believe In A God/Mohammad (PBUH)
- Has Limited Conventional Military Power
- Does Use Terrorism
- Not Easily Visible
- Timing: Operate To Long Term Goals Driven By A Sense Of History



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Weather

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Lack of Debate

**"Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress."
*Mahatma Gandhi***

- The process of debate offers profound and lasting benefits for individuals, for societies and for the global community as a whole. With its emphasis on critical thinking, effective communication, independent research and teamwork, debate teaches skills that serve individuals well in school, in the workplace, in political life and in fulfilling their responsibilities as citizens of democratic societies. Once students have learned how to debate, they are better able to critically examine the pronouncements of their political representatives and to make informed judgments about crucial issues.

Debate and Society

- The individual skills learned through debate have a broader impact on society as well. Debate can help fledgling democracies heal from the wounds inflicted by oppressive dictatorships and ethnic violence by providing a forum where these volatile issues can be openly discussed. Newly enfranchised citizens engaged in such debates learn first-hand how democracy works. Additionally, because it teaches the principles of tolerance, nonviolence and respect for different points of view, debate can close the gap between minority and majority cultures, and other groups divided by long-standing animosities.



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Professor David Alexander

- Professor Alexander of Institute for Risk and Disaster reduction at UCL says:
“We live in a new baroque age...an age of tension of opposites.”
- We are here in Bahrain (Dilmun) famous for pearls. The term Baroque relates to an irregular pearl and contrasts the emotional, excessive, redundant and noisy Baroque Period with the sober and focussed Renaissance that preceded it and the Enlightenment that followed it.
- Truth shines in the periods of Renaissance and Enlightenment; beliefs dominate in the Baroque (Catholic Church).



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Happiness (Lack Of)

- Many people do not understand why HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum appointed a Minister of Happiness in Dubai;
- Happiness is an essential in the development of a knowledge economy;
- Courses at Wellington School and Cambridge University in the UK now have courses on happiness – because of its relevance to the acquisition of knowledge.



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Concluding



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Personal Analogy

- Yesterday (21 Mach 2017) IRA leader Martin McGuinness died;
- He was the last person I arrested in Northern Ireland;
- I lost 22 friends in Northern Ireland and elsewhere to people with different beliefs;
- I worked well in Northern Ireland because I could tell the Catholics from the Protestants;
- I eventually **knew** this was wrong because the war was based on **beliefs not truth**;
- I then worked with Cooperation Ireland, including McGuinness and friends, to bring reconciliation;
- I know it is possible to reconcile different beliefs;
- Debate is important to set and to work towards common goals.



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Finally

Just because someone *believes* something different and has a different *faith* doesn't mean they cannot be a *true* and *knowledgeable* friend in *developing society*.

So the challenge to Universities is to find a way for everyone to contribute to societal development.



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Thank you!



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