

Blood, oil, and water flow. Science studies these diverse liquids; its discoveries are then used to develop technologies that use these liquids to foster life or eliminate it.

All religious traditions view blood, oil and water from their own unique perspectives and build belief systems, ideas, and concepts which change these materials into symbols, making it possible for us to transcend the physical realm. Thus transfixed between the physical and the non-physical realms, blood, oil and water assume new meanings, now accentuated by a war that has desecrated these veritable representatives of profound mysteries in a manner and at a scale that has brought humanity to a catastrophe of unprecedented proportions.

As this inaugural issue of *Islam & Science* goes to press, this menacing catastrophe looms large in the foreground: dreadful images and sounds, originating in the battlefields located in ancient centers of civilization, are spreading to all parts of the world. Techniques used in the making of these images, weapons being used in the war and the way news is reaching millions of human beings are all products of technologies that did not exist a decade ago.

Dehumanized and made abstract through technologically generated images, the human suffering caused by lethal weapons is being depicted as if it were merely a computer simulation, as if men, women and children who were walking on Abū Ṭālib Street in Baghdad a day ago and who have now been charred beyond recognition were not real human beings with feelings, desires and aspirations, but merely caricatures designed by a computer graphics program. This callous attempt to subtract the human element from the tragedy is only possible because there exists a fundamental disconnect between contemporary science, technologies produced through its application and values which define humanity as a distinct species capable of establishing an inalienable bond with the transcendental reality. In the absence of such a linkage with the transcendent, science and its products have become demonic tools which are being used to plunge humanity into an abyss, the like of which has never before been witnessed.

This chasm, that runs through the entire fabric of contemporary scientific enterprise, is observable at the social plane in an eerie silence that characterizes the response of the scientific community toward a war in which the lethal weapons being used are products of research carried out by scientists who take no responsibility in the death and destruction caused by their research. The short-lived activism of the scientific community which had opened a small window of hope after the horrific events of World War II is dead. It has left us nothing but a few axioms and reflections by a handful of leading scientists who felt pangs of guilt and remorse.

Since World War II, science has marched from one summit to another. It has also been a period during which the scientific community has fallen deeper and deeper into an immoral acquiescence to the demands of politicians and empire builders, without taking any responsibility for its deeds, as if the handiwork accomplished in the laboratory had no connection with real life. Throughout this period, while new connections were being established between the laboratory and the market, helping science find monetary resources it needed to flourish, it was simultaneously being robbed of all values, by stripping the scientific community of its essential humanness which alone can keep it connected with the larger body of humanity. This disconnect between a scientist's research and the ethical and moral questions which emerge through the use of this research has now reached such terrible proportions that even the annihilation of thousands of human lives through weapons created by the use of scientific and technological discoveries and inventions has produced no response among the scientific community, as if it lives on another planet.

As we watch the descent of the human race into an abysmal state in which no one is willing to take responsibility for unleashing the destructive power of new inventions and discoveries, this appalling silence of the scientific community has itself become a solitary cry in the wilderness, calling out for a reflective reexamination of the role scientists are playing in the wanton destruction of our humanness.

