

Nevertheless, these reservations are outweighed by the work's considerable strengths. By offering clear, well-organized foundational information across an exceptionally wide geographical and historical range, the book functions as an invaluable gateway to regions beyond the reader's immediate specialization, fostering comparative reflection and situating specialized knowledge within a broader and more integrated historical landscape. Even with its limitations, the book stands as a major synthetic achievement that invites—rather than forecloses—continued historical and theoretical reflection and remains an indispensable resource for understanding the Muslim world in its global dimensions.

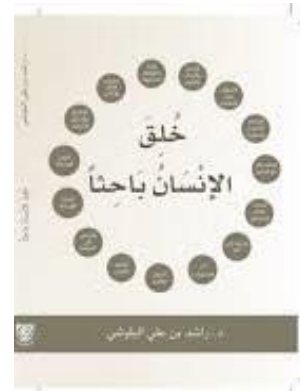
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Rashid b. Ali Al-Balushi. *Khuliqa al-Insān Bāḥithan (Humans are Created as Researchers)*. Oman: AlKhalil bin Ahmed ALFarahidi Center for Arabic Studies and Humanities, University of Nizwa, 2025. ISBN: 9-78-57-99969-978. Pp. 228.

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In this book, Rashid Al-Balushi argues that human beings are created with a built-in drive to inquire, and that learning and researching are two parts of the same natural process. In the introduction, he begins by presenting different interpretations of the Qur'ānic verse (23:14). While commentators argue that the difference between humans and other creatures lies in the soul, the author argues that it lies in the intellect and provides evidence for this. This distinction supports the central claim that Allah endowed humans with both the ability and the duty to seek the truth, a quality that distinguishes them from other creatures, such as angels and animals. While angels follow without being tested, humans are unique in their capacity to choose, question, and take responsibility for their choices, which makes them eligible for being rewarded and held accountable by Allah. The book also maintains that when humans sincerely exercise this divine gift of inquiry, they are guided towards recognizing Allah's existence.



Chapter One, divided into six sections, connects the idea of humans being created as researchers to language acquisition. In the first section, Al-Baludhi interprets the Qur'ānic story of Adam (peace be on him) being taught “all the names” as evidence of the centrality of language in human uniqueness. “All names,” therefore, are presented as all languages and all disciplines. Section two discusses the nature of language and how the first five to six years of a

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child's life demonstrate inquiry in action, linking it to research in section three, in which the author demonstrates how language acquisition and research are the same, as during this stage, children progress from silence and listening to detecting sound patterns, understanding meanings, and producing words and sentences. At the same time, they effectively test small theories by combining words, receiving feedback, and adjusting their language, which is similar to how researchers form hypotheses and revise them after research. The fourth section then highlights the nature of humans and the purpose of their existence, connecting it to research. In section five, Al-Balushi references Qur'ānic verses and discussions that affirm that humans are born ready to learn and make right decisions, which is *fiṭrah*. In the last section, he displays two sides of "Ahl al-Fatrah" and takes the position of rejecting the side that they are not accounted, which is not new against the concept; however, he rejects the concept altogether by addressing their main arguments and providing compelling evidence against it.

Chapter Two applies this framework to the lives of prophets, using them as case studies for how inquiry should manifest in practice. Prophet Adam represents intellectual honesty after error; Prophet Noah (peace be on him) symbolizes patience and perseverance; Prophet Abraham (peace be on him) embodies logical reasoning and courage in challenging falsehood; and Prophet Moses (peace be on him) exemplifies persistent, well-timed questioning and the pursuit of learning opportunities. Other prophets illustrate additional research virtues such as carrying the burden of proof, maintaining effort in the face of difficulty, exercising patience all the time, and refusing weak explanations. Through these narratives, the author argues that genuine inquiry requires moral integrity, courage, humility, and ethical responsibility. This chapter concludes that those who are part of research are the closest to *fiṭrah*, which is manifested in prophets.

In Chapter Three, the discussion turns to education systems. Al-Balushi discusses traditional models centred on teachers, textbooks, and passive note-taking. Then, he advocates for "alternative education," a learner-centred approach that views inquiry as the default mode of learning. Unlike constructivism or multiple intelligences theories, this model is grounded in the analogy between language acquisition and research. Practical applications include cooperative learning, discussions, projects, problem-based tasks, and experiential activities. He also proposes dedicating class time to reflective thinking, allocating marks for critical thinking, and allowing students some autonomy in classes. Beyond schools, the book emphasizes the collective role of families, religious institutions, and media in nurturing a culture of inquiry. Parents should stimulate curiosity through puzzles and storytelling, schools should link lessons to real-world problems, and religious and media institutions should model values that honour questioning and intellectual honesty. In a nutshell, the author opines that humans are created as researchers, and so education systems must nurture their research abilities through things that use their abilities and skills.

One of the strongest features of the book is linking language acquisition with the process of research and inquiry. Al-Balushi not only proposes this connection theoretically but also illustrates it step by step, showing how stages of language development—silence, listening, pattern recognition, understanding, and production—mirror the stages of research: observation, hypothesis, testing, and conclusion. This systematic mapping makes the argument concrete and accessible (pp. 43-49, 152-153).

Another key strength lies in the clarity of explanation. The author provides real-life examples of children testing linguistic “theories,” such as experimenting with word order or meaning, to demonstrate that humans are natural researchers from early childhood (pp. 44-45). This makes the idea of innate curiosity both observable and credible.

The book also excels in presenting education as an ecosystem involving families, schools, religious institutions, and media. It offers actionable steps for each stakeholder: parents fostering curiosity through riddles and home presentations, teachers encouraging active discussions, and media promoting knowledge and inquiry (pp. 173-190).

Another strength of the book is that the author reframed prophetic stories (pp. 90-147) as case studies of research virtues. By portraying prophets not only as spiritual leaders but as exemplars of intellectual virtues such as patience, reasoning, and humility, he bridges religious narratives with modern research ethics. This transforms abstract moral lessons into engaging and relevant examples.

Finally, the emphasis on learner-centred education (pp. 11, 178-183) and innovative assessment practices (p. 182) enhances the book’s practicality. The notion that teachers should aim to produce students “better than themselves” (pp. 129-130) and prioritize originality over memorization adds a professional and ethical dimension to teaching. In summary, the book synthesizes theological, linguistic, and pedagogical insights into a coherent educational philosophy that feels both inspiring and applicable.

Despite its many strengths, the book has notable weaknesses that diminish its clarity and applicability. One of such weaknesses is the absence of a clear operational system for “alternative education.” Although Al-Balushi promotes this model passionately (pp. 149-172, 178-183), there is little explanation of how it functions in actual classrooms. The book lacks a concrete general framework for the system, principles, and philosophical foundations, and further details on the system. To enhance its value, the author should outline clear objectives, teaching strategies, and assessment tools illustrating what an “alternative education” classroom might look like and how it measures students’ progress.

While the theological foundation is significant, especially for Muslim readers, a further limitation in the book is the heavy reliance on Qur’ānic verses and religious reasoning as the primary evidence for its arguments, with relatively little engagement with contemporary scientific research. This may lead to difficulty in persuading audiences who seek empirical evidence from fields such as cognitive psychology, developmental linguistics, or neuroscience.

Providing such evidence would not only support the book's central claims but would also broaden its academic credibility.

While Al-Balushi presents many valuable ideas about human curiosity and learning, he overlooks an important verse that weakens his main argument. He fails to address the Qur'ānic verse: "And Allah brought you out of the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing, and gave you hearing, sight, and intellect so perhaps you would be thankful" (16:78). This verse clearly shows that humans are born without knowledge and learn gradually through experience and divine guidance. This idea seems to conflict with the book's central claim that humans are created as natural researchers. By not discussing this verse, the author leaves a gap between the book's idea and the verse's understanding of human knowledge. To strengthen the argument, he could have explained how the concept of being "created as researchers" can fit with the Qur'ānic view of learning.

Despite the above few limitations, the book overall blends theology, linguistics, and pedagogy to assert that inquiry is both innate and essential to faith and civilization.

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