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Islamic and Christian Cultures: Conflict or Dialogue

Bulgarian Philosophical Studies, III

Edited by
Plamen Makariev

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Preface

Islamic and Christian Cultures: Conflict or Dialogue

George F. McLean

Relations between Islamic and Western Cultures

A major problem in the relations between Islamic and “Western-type” cultures is a deficiency of mutual understanding. An especially negative specific effect of this incommensurability is the frightening image of Islam. Islam is perceived in many cases as intolerant, and culturally inflexible; that is, it is unready to make compromises for the sake of peaceful coexistence with Western types of social behavior.

The contrast between Western and Islamic cultural models is often interpreted as a comparison between modern and traditional society, the former being forward-looking, constructive and open to development, and the latter being orientated towards the past, conservative and unproductive. Moreover, the historical records of offensive political undertakings and extremist acts, which have been in one way or another associated with Islam, have given credence to theories which represent Islam as an ideology of aggression. The fundamentalist prioritization of religious norms in the social life of some Islamic countries has also contributed to the negative image of this culture in the West, contradicting the ideals of civil society.

By comparison, research conducted on the basic Islamic religious texts and the history of the influences of that religion on science, art, economy, everyday life, etc., reveals a “face” of tolerance and pluralism. The discrepancy between this image of Islamic culture, which is known to a few experts in the West, and its negative appearance, which is better known, is a paradox and is in great need of scholarly discussion.

Is it due to ideological speculations, which produce a distorted “picture” of Islam with the aim of justifying imperialist policies towards a region with enormous natural and human resources? Or is Islamic culture really of a dual nature, applying different standards to different social phenomena? Or could it be that Islamic values are misused as an instrument of manipulation on behalf of political forces in the struggle for establishing a new, postcolonial and even postimperialist world order? Hypotheses regarding this paradox need to be tested by an interdisciplinary study and conference on the relations between Islamic and Christian cultures.

The findings of such a study and discussion should by no means be confined to a purely theoretical clarification of an interesting point. It is to be expected that an exchange of opinions on the issue would have a positive public effect on the mutual understanding between these cultures. A serious analysis of the factors producing confrontation between the cultures, especially if it also finds due place in the mass media, could contribute to the dialogue, as a means of improving interethnic and international relations.

Objectives of the Conference on Islamic and Christian Cultures

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (Washington, D.C.), Sofia University, “St. Kliment Ohridski,” and the Minerva Foundation (Sofia) organized a conference on the theme “Islamic and Christian Cultures – Conflict or Dialogue” which was held on November 12-15, 1998 in Sofia, Bulgaria. Scholars from different disciplines, relevant to the theme, were invited: Cultural Studies, Islamic Studies, Theology, Cultural Anthropology, Intercultural

Communication, Social Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, History and Philosophy. This interdisciplinary event provided a meeting to present different points of view on the issue, to overcome the one-sidedness of the various approaches and to attempt to give a satisfactory answer to many important questions concerning the antagonisms between the Islamic and Christian worlds.

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy was founded as an international organization to identify issues in need of research, regarding the meaning, values and development of social life, and to draw together the specialized competencies needed in order to carry out studies of these issues.

Sofia University is the oldest, largest and most prestigious university in Bulgaria. It has a tradition of teaching and research on intercultural relations. One of the first M.A. programmes at this university was on Intercultural Dialogue, which dealt primarily with issues concerning the relations among the Bulgarian, Turkish and Romanian ethnocultural communities in the country.

The Minerva Foundation supports the Intercultural Dialogue Programme. It has established a large project in intercultural education, financed by the Phare Democracy Programme of the European Community and is presently at work on a second project.

Bulgaria is an ideal location for a scholarly event on the relations between Islamic and Christian cultures. Being a country on the frontier between these two worlds, Bulgaria, with the exception of the final years of the Communist rule, has been a place of peaceful coexistence for the two cultures. Even the irresponsible actions of the Communist authorities between 1984 and 1989 were not able to destroy the events in certain other Balkan countries. The conference, "Islamic and Christian Cultures – Conflict or Dialogue" profited from the positive atmosphere in Sofia and was an important step towards resolving the key issues in the relations between these two world cultures.

Introduction

Plamen Makariev

This volume reflects the work of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP): (a) in identifying an issue of concern for social life, namely, the relation between Islamic and Christian cultures; (b) in bringing together the competencies in philosophy and related human sciences needed to study professionally the issue, for it brings together scholars not only from Eastern Europe (which is the focus of the study) but from Africa and America, from Central and South Asia and even from the far reach of New Zealand; and (c) this with the prospect of the publication of this work and other draft volumes from the region which also were discussed on that occasion.

The theme, "Islamic and Christian Cultures: Conflict or Dialogue," is an issue of vital and urgent importance, in a time of considerable and growing instability. It took place where the conflict not only is thoroughly engaged, but even constituted by the meeting of the cultures; yet it is a peaceful place where balanced reflection is possible. This indeed is perhaps the greatest tribute to the Bulgarian people.

In approaching this topic it was the interest of the conference's Chairperson, Plamen Makariev, that the issue be treated not only in theory, but also in terms of the real deficiencies in perception, theory and practices. As stated in his description of the theme, theocratic research into the texts and history of Islam shows the influence of religion on science, art, economy and everyday life to be one of tolerance and pluralism. Concretely, however, there is a common perception from one point of view that Islam is past-oriented, conservative and unproductive, whereas the West is future-oriented, constructive, open and developing. This view undoubtedly is matched by an equally common and opposing perception from the other point of view that the West is unfaithful and prejudiced, materialist and pragmatic, whereas Islam is faithful and spiritual, and for this is persecuted. Plamen Makariev asks, Granted that Islam is so perceived, what changes or developments are possible and how can the concrete, public effect of mutual understanding and cooperation be achieved?

This is a great challenge. Are progress and achievement possible after so long a time? It would seem so because this is a time of great change on both sides. On the one hand, there is currently a global opening, both horizontally across the world and vertically into the deep, interior reaches of persons and communities and into the significance of culture in general and hence of other cultures and faiths. On the other hand, developments, e.g., in Iran, indicate that whereas the people took a step back from development which appeared to be leading away from faith, there is today a recognition that faith alone will not suffice and that a proper autonomy and relation of religious and political orders needs to be stabilized. People speak of "grassroots" and look forward to structures as yet undefined that are faith-inspired. These new developments from both directions open the way for progress. It is toward this goal that the present conference is directed.

If we look concretely into the opportunities which are now open for progress in the relation between Islamic and Christian cultures and, indeed, in the perceptions of each toward the other, we find such a great and decisive contrast between the beginning of modernity and the present that we appear now to be at the end of a great, four-hundred-year "modern" period and in the midst of a truly epochal, indeed, millennial change.

What was exceptional about that time four centuries ago was its strong rejection of tradition. Bacon called for the destruction of the "idols" which were the experience of humankind throughout the ages; Descartes put all under doubt; Locke called for a mind like a tabula rasa from which all was erased. All was to be discovered afresh, however, in reality not all was to be taken into account, but only what could be stated in terms of ideas for Descartes or senses for Locke. This would, henceforth, be considered the sole honest situation for scientific and public discourse. It was a great experiment and would have been truly fascinating had it been carried out in a laboratory. Indeed, it was the aim of Locke to apply the methods more broadly to human life, an aim achieved in the 20th century by John Dewey.

In most recent times this is reflected in John Rawls' *Political Liberalism*. Rawls' position reflects the particular Protestant form of Christian theology so formative in the period of John Locke, namely, that human nature was corrupted in the fall and, hence, that reason had no role in faith. As a result, the various faiths stood isolated from each other, and reason could play no role in their relation.

As a result, in order to have social interaction it was necessary to remove all faiths or integrating visions of life from the public sphere and to place them behind a so-called "veil of ignorance." Religion and its sense of human brotherhood could be allowed only in the private sphere; the public sphere must be rigorously secular in which people were atomic individuals. Any sense of basic relatedness or community, whether ethnic or cultural, was seen as subversive and retrogressive to human freedom. Hence, as noted above, Islamic culture was seen as past-oriented, conservative and unproductive.

This theological fundamentalism, reordering all of life along the theological interpretation of one sector of Christianity was politically imposed. As an ideology, it not only parallels that of the capitalist free market, but is part of its necessary conditions, i.e., the removal of anything that would complicate making decisions in exclusively economic terms.

From this point of view, not only Islamic, but any faith commitment regarding public life is seen as retrogressive, traditionalist and unproductive, and hence as an untrustworthy, if not a dangerous partner in public life. Thus, the military repression of the democratic will of the people in Turkey is applauded, for it is an effort to impose a secular view of society. Despite liberal pretenses, ideology counts more than freedom.

There are reasons to think, however, that we are now at a point of change, both socially and philosophically. Socially, the Cold War would appear to have been the logical denouement of the process of ideas, taken by the clever competencies of technical reason to their logical extreme. The logic of community, first distinguishing and then suppressing all individuality imploded in 1989 through lack of sufficient creative initiative to provide for itself. Ten years later the ideology of the atomistic individualism of the free market collapsed when globalized, monetary transfers made it possible to destroy national and even regional economies. And last, it came to be recognized that it could be reasonable for a country to put restrictions on the flow of funds. This volume would hope to respond to the need to rebuild.

Within this context, the present volume raises the question of whether conflict is inevitable between the Islamic and Christian cultures or if dialogue is a possibility and a rational alternative. The work of fourteen authors on this subject has been categorized into three divisions.

In Part 1, the religious traditions of Islam and Christianity are explored in their historical and current contexts. In Chapter 1, "The Sense of the Past in the New Testament and the Qur'an," Gregory Dawes compares Christianity, Islam and Mormonism to facilitate understanding by analyzing their different approaches to their common religious past. Comprehension of the past then becomes an interpretive device to explain the present.

George F. McLean in "The Relation between Islamic and Christian Cultures," Chapter 2, articulates the challenge of this millennium: how to unite in a cooperative balance both increasing global unity and augmented appreciation for cultural diversity arising from differing religious traditions. Through analysis of relations between the human and the Divine, between faith and reason and between religions, McLean explores theoretical and actual methods of cooperation.

As a prerequisite to avoiding religious conflict, Milko Youroukov in Chapter 3, entitled "Dialogue between Religious Traditions as a Barrier against Cases of Extreme Religious Fundamentalism," contextualizes dialogue as between cultures with religion nestled within culture. Hereby, interreligious dialogue can occur and can dispel extreme religious fundamentalism, seen as conflictual.

In "Islam, Christianity and Unbelievers: Ways of Mutuality," Alexander Andonov examines in Chapter 4 the universal ontological reality of trans-cultural values as ends in themselves. Religion is perceived to be the expression of means to these ends. Andonov continues his reflection by exploring the extent to which a religion honors this ontological reality.

Burhanettin Tatar pronounces that a prerequisite for dialogue is the difference between cultures and religions in Chapter 5, entitled "The Problem of Textual Authority in the Context of Intercultural Dialogue." Upon this foundation, Tatar works through the examination of Quranic textual authority by locating its meaning between the writings and historical interpretations.

In Part 2, Dialogue between Cultures in Religious and Secular Contexts, the perceptions of Islamic society by nonMuslim and Western societies are analyzed. Yuriy Pochta, in his work, "Clash of Civilizations or Restorying Mankind," in Chapter 6, reexamines Western analysis and ideas of Islamic society. By utilizing deconstructionist and reconstructionist theories, Pochta debunks myths and argues for true perceptions.

Tolerance is the pivotal issue for Basia Nikiforova in "The Tendency of Tolerance in Islamic-Christian Relations," Chapter 7. Nikiforova defines tolerance and explores its limits, its societal expression and its inherence in Islam.

For Plamen Makariev in "Framework for Intercultural Understanding: Islam as a Challenge," Chapter 8, the point of departure is the importance of communication between cultures and the utility of frameworks for intercultural understanding. His philosophical study centers on the analysis of Islamic scholarly treatment of the status of women in Muslim society and its perception by the world.

In Chapter 9 entitled "Islamic and Christian Cultures: Reopening the Lost Dialogue," Nur Kirabaev unveils Islamic civilization as an integral part of Mediterranean culture and civilization. Kirabaev explores Islamic cultural, scientific and philosophical traditions as well as Islamic humanism.

Part 3 of the volume focuses on the combination of social and political factors that impact Islamic and Christian cultural identity and ideas. In this respect, this section begins with Chapter 10 by Jurate Morkuniene, who in "Social Identity as a Basis for Dialogue in Society" presents a comprehensive study of the current problems, challenges and threats to the personal and collective social identity in Lithuania. Set in an historical context, the development of Lithuanian society over the past fifty years points to the need for dialogue in order to provide equal sociopolitical opportunities for all Lithuanian citizens.

Mariangela Veikou in "Ethnic Identity of Greek-Albanian Immigrants," Chapter 11, elaborates on ethnographic case studies of Albanian immigrant families of Greek origin who relocated to Athens, Greece, chronicling their difficulties and successes in making the transition. The impact of locality is identified as a key factor by which the ethnic identity of Greeks from Albania was formed and practiced.

Chapter 12, "Religious Values, Social Conflict and Economic Development: Toward Civility, Peace and Democracy," by S.K. Kuthiala is an in-depth, comparative survey, treating the chief topics of religious history and traditions as well as the social, economic and political development of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

In Chapter 13, “Human Rights and Islam,” J. Stefan Lupp assesses the civil and political rights inherent in Islam. Stefan addresses the issue that international human rights instruments are primarily based on liberalism and democracy which are of Western origin and, therefore, may be incompatible with Islam. He explores the cultural and economic bases of these instruments and asserts that ideas of liberalism and democracy are currently taking root in the Islamic world.

The volume ends with Chapter 14, “True and False Pluralism in Relation to the West and Islam,” by Richard K. Khuri who defines pluralism, differentiating between true and false pluralism, as expressed in the Western and Islamic worlds. The relationship of pluralism to morality -- inter and outer morality -- as well as to monolithism and to cultural diversity is analyzed in terms of its transcendent foundation.

Appreciation is extended to all who participated in this seminar and to George F. McLean who organized and directed it.

Sofia, Bulgaria
November 12-15, 1998

Part I
Islamic and Christian Traditions

Chapter I

The Sense of the Past in the New Testament and the Qur'an

Gregory W. Dawes

Gregory W. Dawes (Ph.D., Otago 1995) is Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. He is the author of *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33* Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998) and has recently edited *The Historical Jesus Quest* (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 1999 and Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000). His other publications include articles on New Testament interpretation, the academic study of religion, and interpretation theory."

The New Testament and the Qur'an are each faced with the task of reinterpreting Israel's religious history. The present paper examines the differing ways in which this reinterpretation is achieved. It argues that both the New Testament authors and early Christian interpreters recognize a novelty in God's dealings with humanity but are embarrassed by it. They, therefore, attempt to downplay this novelty by interpretative techniques which underscore the continuity between the old age and the new. The Qur'an removes this embarrassment by reinterpreting history as paradigm: as one would expect, God's dealings with humanity follow the same pattern from age to age. Something resembling the Qur'anic point of view is to be found in the 19th-century Christian scriptures produced by the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith. While retaining the Bible's narrative structure, the Book of Mormon resembles the Qur'an in adopting a paradigmatic understanding of past and present, in which differences between then and now are collapsed into the timelessness of a divine plan of salvation.

Introduction

The present paper is a first attempt at that most hazardous of undertakings: the comparative study of two religious traditions. It is a hazardous undertaking because, even when the field of comparison is strictly demarcated, there is the danger of forcing a rich and diverse tradition into the procrustean bed of some comparative schema or of condemning one tradition for not conforming to standards drawn from another. The history of religious studies is littered with such scholarly failures. Yet the value of comparative studies is not thereby negated: they continue to be a very useful way of understanding religious phenomena. It is true that, when carried out in a superficial or hasty manner, they can lead us to overlook the uniqueness of the phenomena with which we are faced. When carried out carefully, they can be a powerful way of heightening our awareness of religious diversity. In attempting a comparative study of the New Testament, the Qur'an, and, by way of further comparison, the Book of Mormon, this paper does not attempt to force all three sets of scriptures into the same categories. On the contrary, it attempts to understand the peculiar genius of each by exploring the differing ways in which they have approached their common religious past.

The paper grew out of a course which I have been teaching on "The Bible and the Qur'an." The question with which I have been grappling is: What sense of the past emerges from a careful reading of both the New Testament and the Qur'an? In particular, how do these two sets of scriptures view that section of the past which is the history of Israel? So the major part of my paper falls naturally into two sections: the first concerned with the understanding of the past in the New Testament and the second with the understanding of the past in the Qur'an. In the present essay I will venture one step further, by looking at the new set of Christian scriptures which emerged from the work of Joseph Smith in nineteenth-century North America. For these scriptures also embody a distinctive view of Israel's history, which offers a striking parallel to the Qur'an's appropriation of its Jewish past.

The New Testament: An Embarrassing Novelty

How did the New Testament writers view the history of Israel? There were of course a variety of early Christian strategies for dealing with the Jewish past (some of which we will examine below), but I will begin by venturing a suggestion which seems to be true of them all. All these early Christian strategies assume – and indeed in many cases are prompted by – the recognition of a certain novelty in the history of God's dealings with humanity. At first sight, this might seem to be a truism: the idea that something new has happened in the history of Israel is apparently implicit in the very idea of a "New" Testament. Nonetheless, this assertion of novelty cannot be taken for granted, for it was, of course, later Christian history which gave that title to this collection of writings. Within the New Testament itself, the assertion of novelty is particularly evident in the Apostle Paul's attitude to the *Torah.* It is found also in the resumé of the history of salvation, the first 14 verses of St. John's Gospel, and (most radically) in the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. 8). It is the assertion that the Sinai covenant has now been made redundant, an assertion justified by reference to the alleged infidelity of Israel. The Book of Hebrews uses the phrase *kainê diathêkê* ("new covenant") in this context, although the phrase is already found in the Lucan and Pauline account of the Last Supper and in 2 Corinthians 3 (where it is contrasted with the *palaia diathêhê* ["old covenant"], apparently already in the sense of the collection of writings attributed to Moses. The assertion that God has done something new in Israel's history is, therefore, characteristic of the New Testament literature as a whole. Indeed as Anthony Tyrrell Hanson writes (1983:233), one of the characteristics of the New Testament's view of the events it narrates is that of "the utter unexpectedness of God's mode of salvation in Christ."

Of course, this novelty was problematic, both for the New Testament writers and for later generations of Christian interpreters. The first problem here was a general cultural prejudice in favor of the old. In general terms, we may say that for the ancient world – unlike the modern – something was not necessarily good because it was new. On the contrary, it was novelty, and not antiquity, that would undermine the credibility of a religious position. (Then as now, new religious traditions would attempt to construct for themselves a venerable ancestry.) The second problem, however, was a more serious one, because it was a more distinctively *theological* problem. For the assertion of novelty suggests that God's ways with humanity have changed. This was particularly the case in the attitude of Pauline Christianity towards the Sinai covenant and the *Torah*. For the idea that the *Torah* is no longer binding seems to imply an inconsistency in the Divinity. What sort of God is it who apparently changes his mind and revokes his promises (cf. Rom. 11:29)? For this reason, the New Testament writers employ a variety of devices to minimize or to explain this novelty.

Typology

The first of these devices is typology. The events of the new dispensation are described in terms which call to mind the old. Although typology can also be used to highlight the contrast between the past and the present (as Paul's use of the typological relationship between Adam and Christ in Romans 5 reminds us), a major role of typological thinking is undoubtedly that of bridging an apparent historical distance. The present is written about in terms that recall the past and which emphasize the continuity in God's dealings with humanity. A good example of this would seem to be the way in which Matthew's Gospel describes the birth of Jesus, which calls to mind the experience of the Hebrews in Egypt and the events of the Exodus. Typological thought may also be extended into the present, where it comes to represent an *ongoing* pattern of divine action and human response. At this point it comes closest to that way of thinking about history which – following Jacob Neusner (1996, 1997, 1998) – I will refer to below as "paradigmatic." Again the infancy narratives of Matthew's Gospel offer an excellent example of the technique. As Raymond Brown suggests in his study of the infancy narratives (1993), the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel not only refer to the birth of Jesus in terms taken from the Exodus, but also contain an implicit reference to how the message of Jesus will be received in the Apostolic age, by suggesting that the events of each age follow the same pattern.

Promise and Fulfillment

A second strategy employed by the New Testament authors is that of invoking the prophetic idea of promise and fulfillment. As Hanson writes (1983:233-34), even when commenting on "the unexpectedness of God's mode of salvation in Christ," New Testament writers do so by citing Old Testament texts which are seen as predicting what has happened ("The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" [Ps. 118:22] or "I do a deed in your days, a deed you will never believe, if one declares it to you" [Hab. 1:5]). It may be true that God has done "a new thing" in our day. New Testament writers are convinced that even this novelty must be demonstrably rooted in the past, insofar as it is predicted by the prophets.

Allegorical Interpretation

In the letters of the Apostle Paul, we find a particular insistence on the idea that something new has occurred in Israel's history. The reason is clear: this insistence on novelty forms the foundation of his argument against those who insisted on continued observance of the *Torah*. It is because a new era has dawned in God's dealings with humanity that the *Torah* is no longer binding. Yet it is to Paul that we owe the earliest example of a third technique for overcoming the scandal of historical novelty: the allegorical reading of the Old Testament. Of course, this technique has ample precedent. It was employed in dealing with classical literature and could be utilized to great effect by a Jewish author such as Philo of Alexandria. But the first employment of allegorical interpretation by a Christian author is to be found in Paul's interpretation of the story of Sarah and Hagar in Gal. 4:22-31. Something akin to a "paradigmatic" reading of history is also found in the argument of Romans 4, where Paul invokes the example of Abraham, to demonstrate that even the great father of the Jewish people was justified by faith before the giving of the Law (Romans 4). Once again, the Apostle relates the history of Israel in such a way that the pattern of divine action in different ages is seen to be the same. Neither interpretative strategy may seem very convincing to the modern reader, but – to the Apostle's credit – Paul is also the only New Testament author to grapple in an explicit way with the theological problem of historical novelty (in Romans 9-11).

A Hidden Mystery, Now Revealed

The deutero-Pauline Letters (Colossians and Ephesians) deal with the question of historical novelty in a fourth way. They do so by describing God's action in Christ as the revelation of a mystery hidden from the foundation of the world, but now revealed to his saints (cf. Eph. 1:4, 3:5 and Col. 1:26). The idea of a mystery, once hidden and now revealed, serves the same purpose as typological redescription, the appeal to prophecy, or the allegorical interpretation of Old Testament texts. This technique, too, allows New Testament authors to maintain that the novelty of God's action in Christ implies no inconsistency on his part. For while the salvation established in Christ might *appear* to be a novelty, it was in fact intended by God from the beginning. Yet like typology, the appeal to prophecy, and allegorical interpretation, the appeal to a hidden mystery does not deny the *appearance* of novelty. What has now happened may have been intended by God from the beginning, but at least the *revelation* of this plan is something new. In both Eph. 3:5 and Col. 1:26, for example, there is a clear contrast between "other generations" and the present: it is only now (*nun*) that the mystery has been made known. Once again, the New Testament writers are faced with the difficult task of asserting the existence of historical novelty, while simultaneously demonstrating that even this novelty is firmly rooted in Israel's past.

Early Christian Interpretation

In the light of the later developments which we are about to examine, we should note that the others of the Jewish past is also a theme in later Christian tradition. In particular, the Christian writers of the generations following the New Testament period are also aware of the novelty of God's action in Christ. This affirmation is all the more striking because for them, too, it was a source of difficulty and indeed of scandal. Among the church fathers it was Augustine who dealt with this problem head-on in his work, *De Doctrina Christiana* (*On Christian Teaching*: iii 22 / §3). Here he first of all warns the Christian reader against imitating some of the actions of the Old Testament figures (such as taking a number of wives). There are actions which may have been permissible to them but are not permissible to us, for "many things were done in those times (*illo tempore*) out of duty which cannot be done now except out of lust" (Augustine 1995:164-65). Similarly, in his *Confessions* (iii 7 / §13) Augustine offers a response to those who complain "that something was allowed to the just in that age (*illo saeculo*) are not permitted in ours, and that God gave them one commandment and has given us another" (1991:44; cf. 1992:28). His response is instructive:

> In one and the same person on a single day and in the same house they may see one action fitting for one member to perform, another action fitting for another. What has been allowed during a long period is not permitted one hour later. An act allowed or commanded in one corner is forbidden and subject to punishment if done in an adjacent corner. Does that mean that justice is “liable to variation and change”? No. The times which it rules over are not identical, for the simple reason that they are times. [*Numquid iustitia varia est et mutabilis? Sed tempora quibus praesidet, non pariter eunt; tempora enim sunt.*] (1991:444-45; cf. 1992:28).

It is true that the commandments of God given in different ages seem to differ. But this is simply because the ages themselves differ: the commandments of God vary according to the requirements of the age in which they are given.

Of course, this idea that times change and that the requirements of religion can change with them seems an extraordinary one. It could easily lead to what we would call an historical relativism in matters of religion and ethics (foreshadowed in Augustine's rhetorical question, "Does that mean that justice is 'liable to variation and change'?"). So it is interesting that Augustine has to deal with what we would be inclined to think of as a very modern issue. He must counter the charge that justice is variable insofar as it differs from age to age and from person to person. He does so (once again in his *De Doctrina Christiana*: iii 22 / §52) by asserting that – whatever the variety of human customs – the command that we should do to others as we would like them to do to us is universal in its scope. It follows that, whatever their differences, there are *elements* in both the Old and the New Testament dispensations which are timeless.

> Some people have been struck by the enormous diversity of social practices and in a state of drowsiness, as I would put it – for they were neither sunk in the deep sleep of stupidity nor capable of staying awake to greet the light of wisdom – have concluded that justice has no absolute existence but that each race views its own practices as just. So since the practices of all races are diverse, whereas justice ought to remain unchangeable, there is clearly no such thing as justice anywhere. To say no more, they have not realized that the injunction "do not do to another what you would not wish to be done to yourself" can in no way be modified by racial differences [*nullo modo posse ulla eorum gentili diversitate variari*]. (1995:154-55).

As we have already seen, a standard response to those Old Testament passages which Christians could not accept in their literal sense was to offer an allegorical reading. Augustine continues this tradition (once again in his *De Doctrina Christiana*, iii 15 / §54) by suggesting that in reading the Bible, what should be sought is an interpretation "contributing to the reign of charity." If the literal sense of an expression contributes to charity, the expression should be understood literally; if not, it can be understood figuratively (cf. 1995:154-57). Indeed the realization that the scriptures could (and at times should) be read figuratively was an important step on the road to Augustine's conversion. For it offered a response to the Manichean accusation that parts of the Old Testament were unworthy and incredible. According to the *Confessions* (vi 4 / §6; cf. 1991:94-95; 1992:61) it was Ambrose who led Augustine to this conviction, by citing the text from 2 Cor. 3:6: "the Letter kills, the spirit however gives life" (*littera occidit, spiritus autem vivificat*). An allegorical reading of the Old Testament enables one to reinterpret those passages which from a Christian point of view appear scandalous. It also suggests that the apparent novelty of what God did in Christ was not really a novelty, for in a hidden form "it was there all along." Yet like the other interpretative techniques examined above, allegorical reading does not amount to a denial of the otherness of the Jewish past. Rather, it must be counted among the strategies which Christians developed for minimizing its scandal. The allegorical interpreter recognizes that the text has a literal meaning, but insists that this meaning is not the one to be followed. The generation of the church fathers, like that of the New Testament writers, was faced with the twofold task of recognizing the fact of historical novelty, while downplaying its theological scandal.

The Qur'an: History as Paradigm

What, then, of the Qur'an? The first and most obvious difference between the Christian Bible and the Qur'an is that the Qur'an does not have the Bible's narrative structure. While it is true that not every part of the Bible is narrative, the collection as a whole does form a continuous story line, from creation to apocalypse. This fact is not in itself of critical significance, for a narrative structure can go hand in hand with the view that the past and the present are essentially the same, cut of the same cloth (as it were). I will later argue that this is the case with the Book of Mormon, which has a narrative structure but lacks the New Testament's sense of the "otherness of the past." As we have already seen, from a religious point of view, a sense of the otherness of the past is intensely problematic. For what would one expect of God, if not that his actions should remain unchanged from one generation to the next? For the believer, therefore, the Qur'anic picture of God seems more consistent than that of the New Testament. In the Qur'an the actions of God towards humanity follow the same pattern from age to age, a fact which is both explicitly stated and is implicit in the way in which the Qur'an recounts the stories of Israel's prophets.

Explicit Statements about the Past

It is not difficult to find Qur'anic verses which state quite explicitly that God's ways are unchanging from age to age. Fazlur Rahman, for example (1980:51-52), cites the following *âyât* as examples. While they deal with a variety of topics, Rahman notes that they embody a consistent view of the past. (All Qur'anic quotations here are given in Yusuf Ali's translation.)

> [This was Our] way with the Messengers we sent before thee: thou wilt find no change in Our ways. (Q. 17:77)
>
> There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to him as a duty. It was the practice [approved] of Allah amongst those of old that have passed away. And the command of Allah is a decree determined. (Q. 33:38).
>
> [Such was] the practice approved of Allah among those who lived aforetime: no change wilt thou find in the practice [approved] of Allah. (Q. 33:62)
>
> The plotting of evil will hem in only the authors thereof. Now are they but looking for the way the ancients were dealt with? But no change wilt thou find in Allah's way [of dealing]: no turning off wilt thou found in Allah's way [of dealing]. (Q. 35:43)
>
> [Such has been] the practice of Allah already in the past: no change wilt thou find in the practice of Allah. (Q. 48:23)

The Qur'anic understanding of history is aptly represented by a verse which discusses the reaction of the Meccans to the Prophet Muhammad's proclamation:

> They say: "We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we do guide ourselves by their footsteps." Just in the same way, whenever We sent a Warner before thee to any people, the wealthy ones among them said: "We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we will certainly follow in their footsteps." (Q. 43:22-23)

The assumption in this passage is that the past offers the model against which the present can be understood. We might note that this sense of the past corresponds very closely to what philosopher Michael Oakeshott (1983:36-37) calls the “practical past.” There is no attempt made to understand the past on its own terms; the Qur'an looks to the past to provide a series of models for understanding the present. Of course, this is also true of the Bible. For the New Testament writers, in particular, the chief value of the Old Testament lies in the light which it sheds on the events of the present.

Oakeshott contrasts this "practical" attitude to the past with that of the modern historian, whose more detached mode of study aims at understanding the past in its own right. In this respect the New Testament and the Qur'an resemble each other: neither has that attitude to the past that one would expect of a piece of modern-history writing. The difference between the two scriptures lies in the consistency with which the Qur'an maintains that the past and the present are essentially the same. The ways in which the people of Mecca are responding to the Prophet Muhammad, for example, are essentially the same as the ways in which they responded to other prophets in the past. The same pattern recurs from age to age.

An Implicit View of the Past

Not only in its explicit statements, but also in the way it retells the Biblical stories, the Qur'an presents the history of Israel (as well as the history of the other prophets whose stories it relates) as a series of paradigms, a pattern which is repeated from one generation to the next. Many examples could be given of this paradigmatic way of viewing the past, but one of the clearest is found in *surat al-shu`arâ* (Sura 26). The theme of the Sura is set by the opening verses, in which God notes that "there never comes a new Reminder to the people from the Gracious One, but that they turn away from it." This statement is then illustrated by reference to the history of God's dealings with humanity, beginning with Moses' mission to Pharaoh and Pharaoh's rejection of that mission, continuing (with little concern for what the Biblical reader would regard as important, namely historical sequence) with the account of Abraham and his rejection by his father and his father's people, moving on to Noah's rejection, and adding stories of the Arab prophets Hud (rejected by his people the `Ad) and Salih (rejected by the Thamud). The story of Lot is told, again from the same perspective, namely that of rejection, and the account is given of the prophet Shu`ayb, and of his rejection by the people to whom he was sent. The Sura ends by returning to the theme of the rejection of the present revelation by the people of Mecca. Each account follows the same pattern and illustrates the same principle of divine warning and rejection. Finally, at the end of the Sura, that unchanging principle is applied to the present.

In this sense, the Qur'an's understanding of the past moves both forwards and backwards, understanding the present in the light of a past which is itself conceived on the model of the present. Abraham's conflict with the people of his hometown, for instance, is presented on the model of the Prophet Muhammad's conflict with the people of Mecca, so that Abraham, too, must engage in a *hijra*, an "emigration" comparable to that of Muhammad and his followers to Medina (Q. 21:58, 68-71). Abraham and Lot thus become the first to make a *hijra* ("emigration") in the cause of Allah:

> But Lot believed him. He said: "I will leave home [*annî muhâjiru*] for the sake of my Lord. For He is Exalted in might, and Wise." (Q. 29:26)

Moreover, the actions of Abraham and of the Prophet Muhammad himself are paradigmatic for later Muslims, who are also called to migrate in the cause of God (either literally or metaphorically).

> He who forsakes his home in the cause of Allah [*waman tuhâjir fi sabîli 'Llahî*] finds in the earth many a refuge. And abundance should he die as a refugee from home for Allah and His messenger. His reward becomes due and sure with Allah: and Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (Q. 4:100)

We may conclude that the Qur'an's depiction of history takes the form of a series of models, which each age exemplifies without changing the pattern. This paradigmatic structure sets the Qur'an’s understanding of the past apart from that found in the developing narrative of the Christian Bible, which asserts the existence of historical novelty, even as it insists that this novelty is grounded in God's actions in the past. For the Qur'an, the pattern and the means of salvation are the same from age to age, corresponding to the timelessness of God Himself. The Qur'an's message is what Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1981:72) describes as "a truth without history."

Once again, it would be dangerous to draw too sharp a contrast between the New Testament and the Qur'an. For – as we have already seen – the New Testament writers are keen to find the Christian present foreshadowed in the Jewish past. One of the ways in which they do this is by a typological recasting of either the Christian present (as in Matthew 1-2) or the Jewish past (as in Romans 4). However, even this typological recasting of history (which comes close to a paradigmatic understanding) is but one of a number of strategies for dealing with the recognized fact of novelty. The New Testament, we might say, both recognizes novelty and attempts to downplay it. The Qur'an simply denies that any novelty has occurred.

Kashrût in the New Testament and the Qur'an

There is one point at which the Qur'an and the New Testament display what at first sight appears to be a similar attitude towards Jewish history. This occurs in their treatment of the dietary laws found in the *Torah*, which therefore provides an important test case for the thesis of this paper. The question to be faced here is, do the two sets of scriptures have the same attitude to at least this part of the Jewish past? In the writings of the Apostle Paul we find a strong affirmation that the dietary laws are no longer binding: like the rest of the *Torah*, they belonged to a period in the history of God's dealing with humanity which is now past. They were binding, for (whatever its other disadvantages) "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12). However, in the present age (*nuni*) "the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from law" (Rom. 3:21). Of course, the Apostle adds immediately that this was "attested by the Law and the Prophets": what Christ achieved was certainly foretold in the ancient scriptures. Nonetheless, what has happened is something genuinely new.

The Qur'an also wants to insist that the majority of the Jewish dietary laws are no longer binding. Its line of argumentation, however, is subtly but significantly different. The original command of God – it maintains – was in no way as restrictive as the commands found in the *Torah* (Arabic *tawrah*). These more restrictive commands were certainly from God, but they were imposed as a result of Israel's iniquity.

> All food was lawful to the Children of Israel except what Israel made unlawful for himself before the Torah was revealed. (Q. 3:93).
>
> For the iniquity of the Jews We made unlawful for them certain [foods] good and wholesome which had been lawful for them; – and that they hindered many from Allah's way. (Q. 4:160)
>
> For those who followed the Jewish Law, We forbade every [animal] with undivided hoof, and We forbade them the fat of the ox, and the sheep, except what adheres to their backs or their entrails, or is mixed up with a bone; this in recompense for their willful disobedience [*dhâlika jazaynâhum bibaghyîhim*], for We are true [in Our ordinances]. (Q. 6:146)

As a contemporary Muslim commentator writes, echoing a widespread traditional interpretation:

> in the religions revealed prior to Islam there were some prohibitions and permissions which were legislated for a temporary period, in relation to the specific conditions of the people and their environments. For example, Allah prohibited some good things to the Children of Israel as a punishment for their rebellious attitude (al-Qaradawi 1985:5).

Interestingly, the Qur'an declares that one of the reasons God sent the prophet Jesus was to lift some of these restrictions (Q. 3:50) although Muslims would generally argue that, under the influence of the Apostle Paul, Christians have gone too far, insofar as they have removed all of them (cf. al-Qaradawi 1985:40). It follows that the Qur'an's attitude to the Jewish dietary laws corresponds to its attitude to Christianity and Judaism in general. Islam represents, not a new stage in the history of salvation, but the restoration of an original religion, that of Abraham, which corresponds to neither current Jewish nor Christian practice.

> Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian; but he was upright [*hanîf*^{an}], and bowed his will to Allah's [*muslim*^{an}], . . . and he joined not gods with Allah. (Q. 3:67)
>
> And they say, "Become Jews or Christians if you would be guided [to salvation]." Say thou: "Nay! [I would rather] the religion of Abraham, the true [*hanîf*^{an}], and he joined not gods to Allah." Say ye: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to [all] prophets from their Lord: we make no difference between one and another of them, and we submit to Allah." (Q. 2:135)

There is no distinction between the Messengers of one age and the next. If the Mosaic law seems to demand a more restrictive practice in the way of dietary laws than that which Islam demands, this is not because something radically new has occurred with the coming of Islam. It is, rather, because Islam corresponds to the original practice and a more restrictive practice was imposed on the Children of Israel as a punishment for their infidelity.

It is true that the New Testament makes what might appear (at first sight) to be a similar claim. For Paul also wants to return to the example of Abraham and to argue that Abraham was justified by an act of faith which was historically prior to the revelation of the *Torah* and prior even to the command of circumcision (Romans 4). However, even here there is a subtle difference. For the Qur'an, the Jewish dietary laws were an aberration: they were imposed by God, but only as a punishment for Israel's wrongdoing (cf. Q. 6:147). What Islam institutes is not something new, made possible only by a new action of God, but simply a restoration of the original practice. For Paul, too, *Torah* can be said to have been "added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19). But the sense here is not that the *Torah* is a punishment. It is rather that the Law is added to reveal – or even to provoke – sin (cf. Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:20 and 7:7,13). In doing this, the Law fulfils a good and necessary function: it is in this sense that the Law is a *paidagôgos* (cf. Gal 3:24). What has taken its place in the new, Christian era is not a restoration of the original law, but something quite different. The Apostle's argument is that a means of salvation has now appeared which makes the *Torah* simply irrelevant.

It is true that there is a certain tension in Paul's argument in Romans 4. For if Abraham could be justified by faith even before the coming of Christ, then why was the coming of Christ necessary? This tension may be regarded as a consequence of Paul's attempt to downplay the existence of historical novelty. Even so, Paul's attitude differs from that of the Qur'an. For the Qur'an, the Jewish dietary laws are an (wholly contingent) aberration in the history of God's dealing with humanity. For Pauline theology, by way of contrast, the dietary laws along with the rest of the *Torah* represent a necessary stage in the history of God's dealings with humanity.

The Depiction of Biblical Characters

Finally, the Qur'an's depiction of the Biblical characters does not present its readers with the problems which faced the Christian readers of the Old Testament. That is to say, there is nothing in their behavior which would cause moral concern, and therefore, there is no need to reinterpret these texts figuratively. A good instance of this is to be found in the Qur'an's depiction of the prophet Noah. The depiction of Noah is found in a number of places in the Qur'an: in Sura 11, which recounts the story of the Flood (cf. also Q. 7:60), as well as in *surat al-shu`arâ* (Sura 26), as cited above. Notably absent, however, is the account of Noah's naked drunkenness, as found in Gen. 9:20-27. The Qur'an also speaks about Jonah: while it admits that he committed an offence by fleeing from God's command (Q. 37:139-148; cf. 21:87), it omits the Bible's descriptions of his regret that God did not destroy Nineveh. Similarly with David, who is remembered as a wise ruler and as the writer of the psalms, as well as the young man who defeated Goliath. Of his sin with Bathsheba, however, there is nothing: only a brief hint in one verse (Q. 38:17) of his repentance, and this for an apparently unrelated offence.

We have already seen that the Old Testament's depiction of the human weaknesses and moral failings of the Biblical patriarchs was a source of scandal to Christians as well as Muslims. Christians reacted to this by distinguishing sharply between what was commanded in one age and what was commanded in another. Muslims, on the other hand, as the recipients of a restored and uncorrupted revelation, regard these stories as evidence of the corruption of the existing Jewish and Christian scriptures. Muslim apologists still cite "the earthly, sordid pictures of Biblical prophets as cited in the present day Bible" and contrast them with "the ideal descriptions of them in the Qur'ân" (Khalifa 1989:146). Indeed even the New Testament's depiction of Jesus can be subject to similar criticisms (see, for example, al-Hilali, 1985). In his famous study *The Venture of Islam*, Marshall Hodgson remarks that "to an outsider, it must seem a calamity that the Muslims rejected the Hebrew Bible (including its profoundly human narrative of the struggles of David and the prophets with their God) and failed to respect the study of Hebrew" (1974: 439). However, so radical is the Qur'an's critique of the Biblical presentation of the figures of the past that it is difficult to see how the Hebrew Bible could have been retained.

What, then, do we find? In its sense of the past, the Qur'an represents a resolution of certain tensions which are found within the Christian Bible -- tensions which bothered its early interpreters (as Augustine's grappling with these issues reminds us). Admittedly, in the Qur'an these tensions are not resolved in the way in which a Christian might desire. (For a comparable, but in content very different resolution, we will shortly examine the Book of Mormon.) However, it remains a resolution, and one which contributes to our understanding of the religious power and attractiveness of the Qur'an.

The Bible and the Qur'an

What emerges from these all-too-brief discussions? First of all, it is clear that neither the Qur'an nor the New Testament has that sense of the past which we associate with modern historical writing. However, there is in the New Testament the beginnings of a recognition that the past can be different from “other than” the present. The New Testament writers may wish to minimize this difference, but insofar as they are staking out a new and distinctively religious claim over against Judaism and insofar as they do so by *reinterpreting* rather than *rewriting* the Hebrew Bible, that difference is ineradicable. By way of contrast, the Qur'an's sense of the past may be described as much more consistently paradigmatic.

These differences can be understood as the result of two different strategies for dealing with a sacred but awkward past. For both religions, Israel's history was seen to be religiously normative, but – equally for both religions – that history needed to be reinterpreted. However, for the New Testament writers, the record of that past which stood in the Hebrew Bible was authoritative: it represented the only sacred scriptures they knew. (The New Testament itself became sacred scripture only in a later age.) They could not eradicate the record of Israel's past, even if it did not appear to correspond to the Christian present. Given their claim that something new had happened in the history of God's dealings with humanity, their only choice was to reinterpret those ancient texts.

The Qur'an, however, approaches that past quite differently, with the suggestion that both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament may not be reliable records, or at the very least that they have not been correctly interpreted by Jews and Christians.

> Allah did aforetime take a covenant from the children of Israel, and We appointed twelve chieftains among them. . . . But because of their breach of the covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard. They change the words from their [right] places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them. From those, too, who call themselves Christians We did take a covenant, but they forgot a good part of the message that was sent them, so we stirred up enmity and hatred between the one and the other to the Day of Judgment, and soon will Allah show them what it is they have done. (Q. 5:12-14)

These suggestions were taken up and developed in the widely (but not universally) held Muslim doctrine of the "corruption" (*tahrîf*) of the earlier scriptures. In this sense, the Qur'an is not so much a supplement to, or a reinterpretation of, the Jewish and Christian scriptures; it is effectively a replacement, an alternative view of the history of Israel.

> To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety; so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the truth that hath come to thee. (Q. 5:48)

It is not my intention to judge between these two ways of viewing the history of Israel. Indeed, it is not at all clear how one could do so. It may be that each way of viewing the past serves a different religious purpose. The Christian view highlights the idea that the message of God has been entrusted to human beings, who come to understand it only gradually. The Muslim view, on the other hand, highlights the idea that from God's side (as it were) the message has always been the same, reflecting the unity and simplicity of God himself. In this sense, the Bible may be more true to the (perhaps relatively trivial) facts of what we call "history," while the Qur'an – under the guise of history – is suggesting that there exists a "transcendent unity of religions" (cf. Schuon 1975). If so, the Qur'an's perspective may be more clearly seen in a story told by a later Muslim writer and cited by Aldous Huxley (1958:283; I have been unable to trace the original source):

> The shaykh took my hand and led me into the convent. I sat down in the portico, and the shaykh picked up a book and began to read. As is the way of scholars, I could not help wondering what the book was. The shaykh perceived my thoughts. "Abu Sa'id," he said, "all the hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets were sent to preach one word. They bade the people say, "Allah," and devote themselves to Him.

However, to follow up these suggestions would take us beyond the scope of this paper. My purpose here is merely to note the differences.

The Book of Mormon: History as Christian Paradigm

We have seen note that, insofar as Christianity opted to retain the Hebrew Bible as part of the canon, the same difficulty was faced by later Christian interpreters as faced the New Testament writers. Paul's allegorical interpretation of the story of Sarah and Hagar is the first of a long line of Christian reinterpretations of the Jewish scriptures. The problem is that – while Christianity retains the Old Testament as sacred scripture – it continues to be faced with the otherness of the Jewish past. Especially if allegorical interpretation is rejected, as it generally was by the Protestant reformers, this otherness can only be a continuing source of embarrassment to Christian interpreters. The genius of Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormons), was to realize that the only solution to this problem was to produce a new set of scriptures, one in which what is ineradicable in the Bible could be finally eradicated. In doing so, Smith adopts a strategy which is very similar to that adopted by the Qur'an. In the scriptures of this nineteenth-century, North American Christian group, the Christian and the Muslim attitude to the Jewish past come to resemble one another.

To eradicate the otherness of the Jewish past, Joseph Smith had first to deal with the existence of the Old Testament. In a way which parallels the Qur'an's claim that the Bible is not a reliable record, the Book of Mormon insists that the clearest parts of the Bible have been lost. For the Book of Mormon claims that the "great and abominable church" had removed from the Bible "many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away" (1 Ne. 13:26). For Mormon interpreters, the idea that the Bible is incomplete is reinforced by the fact that the Bible makes reference to works which are now lost (cf. McConkie 1979:454). Moreover, the Book of Mormon claims that the parts of the Bible which were removed were those which "were plain unto the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God" (1 Ne. 13:29).

Indeed, we find that "plainness" is a recurring theme in the Book of Mormon. Within the Book itself, large sections are devoted to the reproduction and explication of Biblical texts, especially from the prophet Isaiah, with a view to clarifying their Christian interpretation. As the American prophet, Nephi, writes in 2 Nephi:

> Wherefore hearken, I my people, which are of the house of Israel, and give ear to my words; for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy, which is in me; wherefore I shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me from the time that I came out from

> Jerusalem with my father; for behold, my soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they may learn. (2 Nephi 25:4)

At the end of his life, Joseph Smith was still engaged in a re-"translation" of the Bible itself: a reworking of the Biblical text which would clarify its Christian meaning.

The "plainness" which the Biblical writings have lost and which is restored by the Book of Mormon consists in clear references to the coming of Christ and to the salvation which he would bring. For the Book of Mormon, like the Qur'an, views the past paradigmatically, although it differs from the Qur'an in two important respects. Firstly, like the Bible it has a narrative structure. Secondly, it offers itself as a supplement to, rather than a replacement of, the traditional Christian scriptures. But despite its narrative structure, the Book of Mormon's view of the past remains consistently paradigmatic. In particular, it insists that even those who lived before the coming of Christ are saved by faith in him. There is, in other words, no difference in the means of salvation between the third century CE and the third century BCE. Thus, for instance, in the Book of Enos (dated ca. 420 BCE), Enos is at prayer when he hears a heavenly voice:

> And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee and thou shalt be blessed. And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie, wherefore, my guilt was swept away. And I said: Lord, how is it done? And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years shall pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole. (Enos 5-8)

Indeed, in the Book of Mormon, believers are already called "Christians" almost a century before Christ's birth (cf. Alma 46:13-14).

In the Book of Mormon there is, furthermore, no development in the understanding of revelation over time. God's plan to save human beings in Christ is all there from the beginning, not hidden under the literal meaning of the text (as Christians had long been finding Christian truth figuratively expressed in the Old Testament), but explicit, in the literal sense of this allegedly ancient text. For instance, the Pauline doctrine of the relationship of the Law to Christ, so painfully arrived at in the New Testament writings, is already found in the Book of Jacob, the father of Enos (dated between 544 and 421 BCE). Jacob explains why this history has been recorded:

> For, for this intent have we written these things, that they [our children] may know that we knew of Christ, and had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. Behold, they believed in Christ and worshipped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him; and for this cause it is sanctified unto us for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness to be obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son. (Jacob 4:4-5)

The Book of Helaman even takes the opportunity of tidying up the issue of the Ptolemaic and Copernican views of the universe, with an allusion to that passage in the Biblical Book of Joshua (10:12-14) which caused so much difficulty in the dispute over Galileo's work:

> Yea, if he say unto the earth – Thou shalt go back, that it lengthen out the day for many hours – it is done; And thus according to his word the earth goeth back, and it appeareth unto man that the sun standeth still; yea, and behold, this is so; for *surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun*. (Hel 12:14-15; emphasis mine)

Once again, a passage in the Old Testament whose "otherness" (this time with regard to our modern scientific world view) could cause embarrassment is brought into conformity with what we now believe to be true.

It follows that the Book of Mormon represents a third strategy for dealing with a religiously normative but awkward past, one which is in many respects parallel to that of the Qur'an, but which remains within the general Christian world of thought. Like the Qur'an, the Book of Mormon offers the believer what can only seem a more consistent and, in that sense, more religiously satisfying view of the history of God's dealings with humanity. In this way it assists the believer in his or her attempts to appropriate the past for contemporary use. Of course, in any such attempt there is both gain and loss. Not only is the Book of Mormon's claim to be ancient scripture deeply questionable – my own description of its origins has assumed that Joseph Smith was its author – but its rewriting of the history of the Jewish people could easily lend itself to a new form of Christian anti-Semitism. But once again, my purpose here is not to evaluate these trends. It is merely to describe them. From this point of view, the Book of Mormon remains a valuable witness to a way of dealing with the past which, in a Christian context, closely resembles that found in the Qur'an.

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Chapter II

The Relation between Islamic and Christian Cultures

George F. Mclean

The Challenge of Globalization: Unity in Diversity

We come together to face a momentous choice, namely, the pathways to be taken by two extensive portions of humankind in the millennium which is about to begin: must they be conflictual; can they be cooperative? In this the task of philosophy is not to make that choice by constructing a determining ideology, for that would destroy rather than promote the responsible freedom in which the special dignity of humankind consists. Rather, the task of philosophy is to search for understanding in depth of the present juncture, to clarify the values involved and to envisage creatively possible ways for their realization.

Seen philosophically, this turn of the millennium is not then a matter of mere numbers or even of chronology, but truly an historic juncture for civilizations and cultures. The totemic and mythic stages of the great cultures were essentially religious. These was formulated in the great religious traditions -- earlier in the East, and in the first millennium by Christianity and Islam. In the second millennium Western culture focused on human reason, beginning with the reintroduction of Aristotelian logic and its concomitant scientific capabilities. This was radicalized in the rationalism of the Enlightenment, whose denouement was the pogroms and holocaust of World War II followed by the Cold War and its threat of mutual annihilation. The millennium has come to a spectacular end in the implosion of communism ten years ago and the questioning of an uncontrolled market in these last months. Such a total end necessitates a new beginning. What then is to follow: which are the pathways into the future?

Two major formative factors stand out. The first is horizontal -- globalization. With the sudden end of the bipolar world system, we are now in a rapid reorganization without borders. This is driven by economic opportunity grounded in the needs of a burgeoning population; it is implemented by rapidly advancing technology and communications.

The second formative factor is vertical -- the opening to deeper dimensions of the human person. Negatively this appeared in the overthrowing of the totalitarian and colonial structures which had ruled in the 1930s. At a positive philosophical level it consisted in recapturing human subjectivity through the development of existential and phenomenological insight which has made manifest the uniqueness of the exercise of freedom. Socially this has meant a renewed sense not only of the universality of human rights, but of respect for the affective dimensions of human life, for the uniqueness of cultures and their religious foundations. Today there is an emerging sense of the distinctive character of cultures and of the diversity this entails among civilizations.

In this lies the present challenge, namely, how to relate both the increasing unity of globalization and the increasing appreciation of the uniqueness and diversity of peoples and cultures with their religious roots. Indeed, the domination of either unity or diversity, here at the cost of the other, would lead to a great impoverishment of human life both materially and spiritually. Economic and cultural globalization at the expense of the diversity of persons and cultures entails a spiritual reduction and blandness to human life; diversity at the expense of effective interchange leads to physical impoverishment and cultural conflict.

Cooperation between Religions as Convergent

The Divine as Context for Human Meaning

A response to this challenge must not flee the economic order of human interchange. Hegel and Marx were correct in underlining this as fundamental; any response must begin there. Globalization consists really (though by no means exclusively) in the intensification of economic interchange to unheard of degrees. Such goods, however, can be traded, but are not truly shared: what one possesses, the other does not. This mutual exclusivity of physical goods bases competition which, left to itself, leads to conflict. In the past, land and its resources have been the basis for wars whose outcome was the physical expropriation of the losers in favor of the victors. It is important to look for ways of cooperating on physical resources, but the willingness to do so is part of a broader set of concerns and must be inspired by higher values. It must be enabled by an imagination which is not enslaved to material goods, but capable of ordering and reordering these goods for higher human purposes.

The political is a second level and is concerned with the exercise of power. This, too, is a major realm of human competition. Indeed, while the physical, technical and economic issues, e.g., of oil exploration and transportation, are daunting, they have been soluble. It is the political concerns which raise the greatest difficulties. Here the divergent interests of peoples enter and constitute broader patterns of overall national concerns and of the international power by which these are advanced or thwarted.

Whether these can be related harmoniously depends upon the bases upon which power is exercised. If this be the economic goods involved, then political will becomes hostage to the mutually exclusive competition of expropriation and appropriation noted above. As has been said classically, politics then becomes war by other means. Hence, the challenge here is to set these political concerns in the service of peoples by developing a cooperative pattern in which all share. But if power be exercised only for power's sake, then again the result will be a pattern of dominance and subordination which can only lay the basis for economic or physical conflict or war.

To break beyond this it is necessary to reach for principles of coordination at a third level, beyond the physical and the political. These must be goods which are not marked by exclusive possession, as is the economic order, or by competition, as is the political order, but which can be shared, as are the spiritual goods of the mind and heart. Knowledge, for example, can be shared without thereby being lost. Indeed, it is in discussion that ideas are cross-pollinated, bear fruit and unfold their full potential.

This is mirrored in the overall sequence of the work of Kant. His first critique provided an understanding of the universal and necessary laws which rule the physical sciences. His second critique articulated the nature of the laws which rule the exercise of freedom. Then only did he recognize the need for a third critique, that of aesthetic reason, in order that both might be lived in harmony. This suggests that in an analogous manner at this time of conjoined globalization (corresponding to the first critique) and personalization (corresponding to the second critique) -- that is, of universalization and diversification -- we must look for a third religious sphere in which both dimensions can be harmonized. This third awareness is not superstructure but infrastructure; it has been present in all the cultures since their totemic origins. It needs to be brought out from behind Enlightenment hubris as the ground for creative relationships in the new millennium.

This, indeed, is the thrust of the recent encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*.[1] This is an extended disquisition on the dialectic of faith in evoking reason, of reason in guiding faith, and of the synthesis of the two in inspiring and mobilizing human action. The philosophical level alone responds only speculatively to the present challenge; it would not inspire people with a living vision or mobilize them to act accordingly.

Here Muhammad Iqbal provides important orientation. Iqbal does not proceed far in his classic *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*[2] before coming to the heart of the matter, namely, that human consciousness consists of multiple levels, all of which are rooted in an awareness of the total Infinite[3] in which they find their possibility as well as their meaning.

He analyses deeply the nature of the scientific disciplines and their ability to serve humankind as instruments of our engagement in our environment. But the human issue is how people can rise above merely being a part of that order and subject to being manipulated and exploited, in order to become truly the masters of their work. He locates this in the ability of the human mind to transcend the physical order, like climbing above the trees of a forest in order to be able to see it as a whole and thereby to engage it with creative freedom. This, in turn, he bases upon the fact that the human spirit is created by and grounded in a total Absolute Being which frees the human person from being a slave of nature and installs him as Vice Regent of the world.

But even this awareness may not be sufficient, for it might still be conceived in terms of possession and control. For this it would be sufficient simply to develop a system of management. But where the interests involved are so deeply human that they carry the hopes and fears of a people, much more is involved and must be addressed. Thus, Iqbal speaks of the need to recognize not only the physical and social realities and their corresponding sciences, or even philosophy as a matter of understanding. It is necessary to go beyond to the religious bases where the meaning of life, human values and personal and social commitment are anchored.

> The aspiration of religion soars higher than that of philosophy. Philosophy is an intellectual view of things; and as such, does not care to go beyond a concept which can reduce all the rich variety of experience to a system. It sees Reality from a distance as it were. Religion seeks a closer contact with Reality. The one is theory; the other is living experiences, association, intimacy. In order to achieve this intimacy, thought must rise higher than itself and find its fulfillment in an attitude of mind which religion describes as prayer -- one of the last words on the lips of the Prophet of Islam.[4]
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> Metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the ultimate reality. It is here that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness.[5]

This has a twofold implication. First, religion is a matter of personal commitment on the part of persons and peoples. It engages not only their minds, but their freedom and moral sentiment, which are the great mobilizers of human action. Secondly, it does so in terms of the divine life expressed by such names of God as “Just” and “Loving,” “Provident” and “Caring.” It contributes to orienting the great technical projects of our day in ways that constitute a world that is marked by these same characteristics.

Here Islam's devotion to the prophet is its unique strength. The human mind left to itself seeks clarity and control by a process of simplification. In contrast, the role of the prophet is to give voice in time to the Absolute ground of our being. It thereby reminds us that all of life, if it is to be understood and lived properly, must express in time the divine justice and love. The prophet does not leave this to surmise or indirect reasoning, but proclaims it with a voice that echoes through time -- not to mention through the neighborhoods of a city such as Cairo today.

The Human as Participation in the Divine

When now we turn to the human, it is crucial to retain this total response to the Absolute, without which human life loses its meaning and value. In order to uncover the real meaning of human history, it is essential to see how the divine, as source of being and meaning, is expressed in and through creation. This is a matter not merely of the beginnings of the universe, but of the creative exercise of human life through history, today and into the future.

This is the forgotten essence of the issue of peace for all humankind. Where rocks and plants just happen and animals live by instinct, humans are challenged by the need to shape their lives according to their self-understanding. In this they face a choice among three basic paths.

Forgetfulness of the Divine. The first path is to forget or to prescind from the divine ground of human life and to proceed as if humans were self-sufficient. In 1700 J.B. Vico foresaw that this emerging modern attitude would lead to a new barbarism of conflict, meaninglessness and despair which has turned the 20th century into the bloodiest of them all. Islam has rightly rejected such "enlightenment."

For this, however, Islam has suffered a considerable, if largely unintended, penalty. According to Enlightenment theory, as elaborated, e.g., by John Rawls in his *Political Liberalism*,[6] where there exist multiple integrating visions of life, one draws before these a "veil of ignorance." They are simply excluded from the public sphere which is thereby constituted as a neutral forum where all can interact indifferently. From this interaction there emerge patterns of agreements regarding human interchange. Those will be similar to the formal set of principles which Rawls himself worked out earlier in his *Theory of Justice*.[7] In the title, *Political Liberalism,* the word "political" opens some possibilities of adjustment of these formal patterns to particular circumstances of place and time.

In this approach, though a person may be religious in private life, as regards all public interchange the Islamic, Christian or any religious person prescinds from his or her religious vision and becomes effectively secular. This privatization of religion and secularization of public life is, of course, itself the theology described in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.[8] Only from that position does such a secularization of public life appear neutral, rather than neutering. This fundamentalism -- unrecognized and hence unwitting in much of the West -- has been the basis for the well-founded suspicions that liberal values will prove corrosive to Islam and destructive of its society. Indeed, Thomas Bridges describes this as its historically inevitable derivative.[9] Religious cultures, including Moslem societies, could never accept this without ceasing to be themselves, indeed, without ceasing to be. It is essential that the West desist from desiring and expecting Islamic societies to do so.

Forgetfulness of the Human. There is a second path, opposite to the first, namely, not to exclude religion in order to proceed with the work of history, but to reject history in order to preserve the religious meaning of life. This is the path of another fundamentalism, equally as radical as the first. All that was not found at the time of a Buddha or a Christ, or explicit in the text of the Bible or other sacred scriptures is seen as contrary and unfaithful thereto. In this way, the attempt to protect the religious meaning of life contradicts the development of such human institutions as legislatures and courts by which that meaning is lived concretely.

Chief Justice Muhammad Said al-Ashmawy of Egypt has written *Islam and Political Order*[10] in order to defend such institutions from the charge of being incompatible with Islam. But perhaps more important still, a number of younger Islamic scholars from Iran and Turkey have been working on this through the hermeneutic branch of philosophy. Seyed Musa Dibadj in *The Authenticity of the Text in Hermeneutics*[11] and Burhanettin Tatar in *Interpretation and the Problem of the Intention of the Author*[12] have shown how the text and the intention of its author live through history, continue to speak in the unfolding circumstances of human life, and inspire religiously creative responses thereto. This is to be faithful, indeed.

Participation of the Human in the Divine. The damage done by the two exclusive paths, focused, respectively, upon the secular to the exclusion of the religious and upon the religious to the exclusion of the human, points to a third path. This sees the human as expression of the divine, which in turn promotes, guides and norms human development. This is the basic insight of Islamic as well as of Christian culture, not to mention the Hindu and Buddhist cultures of the East and the totemic basis of African, and, indeed, all cultures. The articulation of this vision in Islamic culture I would leave to those who have lived it with devotion, but I have included a chapter on al-Ghazali in my recent work on these matters, *Ways to God*.[13]

This sense of the divine pervaded the totemic and mythic periods when all, even nature, was expressed in terms of gods. Later, at the very beginnings of Western philosophical reflection, Parmenides elaborately developed what would become the basic insight for Iqbal. Parmenides showed that to choose the path of life over death (of being over nothingness) is to see its source and goal not as a mixture of the two but as being or life itself. This transcends the world of multiple and changing things available to our senses; it is more perfect than could be appreciated in the graphic figures of the imagination which defined human thinking in its mythic stage. Thus, at the very beginning of philosophy Parmenides immediately discerned the necessity of an Absolute, Eternal, Self-sufficient Being as the creative source of all else.[14] Without this all limited beings would be radically compromised -- especially human beings. It is not surprising, therefore, that Aristotle would conclude the search in his *Metaphysics* for the nature of being with a description of divine life.[15]

The issue then is not whether the notion of the divine is conciliable with human thought and life; both emerge from and depend upon the divine. Without that which is absolute and hence one, humans and nature would be at odds, and humankind would lack social cohesion; without that which is self-sufficient, thinking would be the same as not thinking, and being would be the same as nonbeing.

The real issue is how effectively to open this recognition of the divine to the full range of human history. In short, there is need to enable the divine source and goal to provide the basis for the human search for meaning and to inspire a vigorous itinerary of the human heart.

To understand this Plato developed the notion of participation, expressing the many as deriving their being from the One which they manifest and toward which they are oriented and directed. This operates on all levels because it is the mode of being itself. Hence, participating in the divine is not something beings do; it is what they are. The self-sufficient and infinite One or Good is that in which all things share or participate for their being and identity, truth and goodness.

This is truly a third way. It does not prescind from God -- the formula of *Paradise Lost* -- nor does it prescind from humankind and human history. Instead, God is affirmed in the creativity of His creation and the human is affirmed through creation by its divine source and goal. Thus, the religious basis of cultures inspires their processes of human exploration and creativity.

In sum, instead of considering the religious basis of culture to be inimicable to human progress and undertaking a futile effort at exiling it from human life, this suggests recognizing that the religious view is an essential and necessary foundation of human life and meaning. This implies searching out how this view can be enabled to fulfill its task of founding truth and inspiring efforts toward the good in all aspects of life.

The Convergence of Islam and Christianity

In these terms there is a great convergence between Islam and Christianity. One can see how this convergence is perceived and responded to by Christianity in the text of the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church. The time was the early 1960s when the new sense of the person was emerging after World War II. At that point rather than simply fighting the new in order to repeat the past, this largest Christian body convoked its 3,000 Bishops from all parts of the globe in a most solemn three-year session. Its significance can be gauged from the fact that a Council has been held only at points of high crisis which generally emerge only once in two centuries. In order to work out the implications of the new interior sense of the life of the person for religion in the modern times the assembled Bishops reviewed all phases of the life of the Church. Over 700 pages of official conclusions were drafted, deeply discussed, amended and adopted. It was a magnificent example of the structural strength of the Church to respond positively, creatively and with authority to the developments of the times. Hence, its statement on Islam can be taken as a uniquely authentic religious appreciation of Islam in our times.

The statement begins with the statement that the Church looks upon the Moslems with esteem and with appreciation of their high value. It proceeds to give the reason for this esteem, namely, that:

- they adore God who is one;
- they adore God who is living;
- they adore God who is enduring;
- they adore God who is merciful;
- they adore God who is all powerful;
- they adore God who is the maker of heaven and earth;
- they adore God who is speaker to men when they submit to His decrees, even when inscrutable after the example of our father Abraham;
- they honor Christ and Mary, his virgin mother;
- they await the day of judgment which will bring the resurrection and reward of each according to his or her due; and finally;
- they worship God in prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Moreover, this esteem of Vatican II for Islam was not only notional, but practical. Thus, it noted the fact of past quarrels and hostilities, which it would not be realistic to ignore. But the Council then drew itself up to its full stature to declare that: "This most Sacred Synod urges all to forget this and to strive rather for mutual understanding."

On this basis the Council looked forward to cooperation in safeguarding and fostering those virtues which are shared by all religions and exemplified eminently in Islam, namely, social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.

In view of the above, we can conclude then that there is a shared religious base to all cultures, that this envisages all creation as participations in a unique, unlimited and absolute source and goal;

and that this entails a radical compatibility, though not homogeneity, of cultures and their religious bases.

This is important to remember precisely because there is no lack of misunderstanding and fear. It has been said well that whatever humans can do, they can do broadly. This is true also of religion as a virtue and work of man. The exercising of this virtue inevitably is affected by all the human pressures from within and without, not least of which can be an ardent, if less wise or balanced, desire to serve God in one's own manner. This had led some groups, even acting in good faith, to ways that seem to impose unduly upon others in proposing their faith or even in suppressing the freedom of others to express or exercise their belief.

Vatican II devoted a whole document to this issue of religious liberty as an acquisition of our times and called upon all to recognize, protect and promote it. If a small minority of unenlightened but ardent Christians or Moslems lack adequate respect for the beliefs of others, it is important that this not be allowed to hide the tolerance long revered by Moslems or the freedom newly proclaimed by Christians. Extreme minorities, precisely as such, do not reflect the deep truth and convergence of these two religious cultures. It is important that they not be allowed to cloud the issue, and that other religions not take them as expressing the authentic meaning and thrust of a culture or a people.

Moreover, it can be said with the highest and broadest authority that this applies to practice as well as to principle; that the beliefs of Islam are shared by Christians; that Moslems are admired and appreciated for professing their beliefs and for the intensity and completeness with which they dedicate themselves thereto; and that Christians, individually and corporately, in living their beliefs need and wish to learn from the deep faith of Islam.

This unity of vision makes it possible and urgent for Christianity to take up common cause on behalf of all humankind in safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom. But it is important to see that this can happen not only on the basis of the ways in which they are similar, but also or the basis of the ways in which they differ.

Cooperation between Religions as Diverse

External Cooperation

By external cooperation we mean ways in which religious cultures can cooperate in facing challenges from outside of both. Today, we have a new reality. In earlier centuries the meeting of our cultures was carried out on the frontiers where the relations were often external, military and violent. There were the long combat with Byzantium, the Crusades, the wars of the Balkans. Now commerce brings materials, notably oil, from afar and makes it an indispensable part of everyday life; the new technology of communications brings distant realities into our homes; the development of education makes them part of our growth and learning; the emerging sense of human subjectivity encourages us to interiorize these elements in our hearts and minds. We meet these phenomena inescapably in every facet of our lives. Consequently, we can cooperate and we must learn to do so. But in doing so we must not destroy what is distinctive of each and thereby impoverish all, but engage what is distinctive in a shared cause. This can be done through learning from each other.

Islam with its rich sense of faithfulness to God, based on its sense of His unity and primacy, can contribute to the religious life of the West what is most essential, namely, the sense of God.

In return, the Church in the West has struggled for many centuries with the threats that Islam most fears, namely, reductivism, rationalism and materialism. It has learned by its failures as well as its successes how to live religiously in a culture that is distracted by possessions and inundated by images. These are projected by techniques drawn from sophisticated psychological research and generally are at the service of commercial and ideological interests, often contrary to religion. It could be expected that Christianity, which has grown with these challenges in the West, might have insights which could be helpful in protecting and promoting religious life in Islam in these times of change.

To recount these lessons would be a long study in its own right. They would include the need to distinguish the multiple orders of human awareness and to locate that which is proper to the religious; the process of relating religion in each of these modes with the levels of theoretical and practical consciousness to the mutual benefit of both; and, not least, the Vatican II document on religious liberty, affirming as a modern accomplishment the need to recognize the rights of conscience of every person with regard to his or her religious belief. This it considered less a deductive than an inductive insight drawing from human experience.

In his book, *Seize the Moment*,[16] Richard Nixon suggests a principle for such mutual Islamic-Christian exchange, namely, that it is not one's business to determine what others will be or do, but only to help them become what they will to be. This reflects well the new sense of the person and the new respect for the interiority of the spirit and hence for human freedom. It echoes the classical sense of the love of benevolence in which the good is willed for the other without seeking what it will do for us. We have all experienced this in our families where we first came to experience God's creative benevolence in our lives.

This is the suggestion of Vatican II, namely, that we have much to share and we have the ability to cooperate in facing challenges from outside both Christianity and Islam, e.g., in safeguarding and fostering social justice and moral virtues. It is essential for religions to cooperate creatively in developing for the next millennium a broader world civilization which prospers through productive interchange, shared benevolence and peace.

Internal Cooperation

There is also need for internal cooperation, that is, in helping one another to be able effectively to withstand contemporary challenges and even to draw more richly on our own resources.

In the introduction, the challenge was stated to consist not only in globalization in which one reaches out to others and discovers points of convergent principle or experience, but in personalization in which there emerges a greater consciousness of the differences between peoples. Were dialogue and cooperation to result only from the ways we are the same then the road to peace would lie in suppressing that which is distinctive of persons and their cultures or rendering it inoperative in the public square. This has been a strong factor in the liberal "approach." If, instead, personal life is appreciated as creative and, hence, as differentiating the pattern of one's life and culture, then it is necessary to find ways in which even the differences in human and cultural formation can be principles of cooperation, indeed even a means for the internal enrichment of traditions from their proper resources. Only this will make it possible truly to turn swords into plowshares for the tasks of the new millennium.

To understand how this can be so it is necessary first to see how cultures are constituted of the cumulative exercise of that human freedom. If for a living being "to be is to live," then for a human being "to be is to live consciously, creatively and responsibly." Inevitably this creates the uniqueness and, hence, the diversity of our lives as we respond to different physical and social challenges with distinctive resources, each in our own manner. Further, as this is identically to live out our participation in the divine which is the essence of religion, we can expect that not only our cultures will be diverse, but also the religious roots of these cultures.

As seen above, relation to the divine as shared by all peoples provides the basis for cooperation between the many peoples in their efforts at development. But, this is not a matter of theory separated from life or of practice separated from vision. It is, in fact, the wisdom core of the distinctive cultural tradition into which we are born and through which we interpret and respond to the challenges of development in cooperation with others in an ever more interconnected world.

In order then to look for the bases of peace in the process of development, we must search not only for possible convergences of interests, but for the distinctive cultural contexts in terms of which these interests are defined; we must look also for the possibility of one culture contributing to the internal and self-consistent growth of another. This entails three issues: the uniqueness of cultural traditions; their roots in the religious commitment of each people; and the way in which peoples with diverse cultural and religious commitments can contribute positively one to another, not only through that in which they concur, as was noted above, but through their cultural divergences as well.

The Distinctness of Cultural Traditions

Culture. A culture can be understood as that complex of values and virtues by which a people lives. The term `value' was derived from the economic sphere where it meant the amount of a commodity required in order to bring a certain price. This is reflected also in the term `axiology,' the root of which means "weighing as much" or "worth as much." This has objective content, for the good must really "weigh in" -- it must make a real difference.[17]

‘Value’ expresses this good especially as related to persons who actually acknowledge it as a good and respond to it as desirable. Thus, different individuals or groups, or possibly the same group but at different periods, may have distinct sets of values as they become sensitive to, and prize, alternate sets of goods. More generally, over time a subtle shift takes place in the distinctive ranking of the degree to which various goods are prized.

By so doing, among objective moral goods a certain pattern of values is delineated which in a more stable fashion mirrors the corporate free choices of a people. Further, the exercise of these choices develops special capabilities or virtues, as it is in these ways of acting and reacting that we are practiced. These capabilities constitute the basic topology of a culture; as repeatedly reaffirmed through time, they build a tradition or heritage.

By giving shape to the culture, values and virtues constitute the prime pattern and gradation of goods experienced from their earliest years by persons born into that heritage. In these terms they interpret and shape the development of their relations with other persons and groups. Thus, young persons, as it were, peer out at the world through cultural lenses which were formed by their family and ancestors and which reflect the pattern of choices made by their community through its long history -- often in its most trying circumstances. Like a pair of glasses, values do not create the object, but reveal and focus attention upon certain goods and patterns of goods, rather than upon others.

In this way values and virtues become the basic orienting factor for one's intellectual, affective and emotional life. Over time, they encourage certain patterns of action -- and even of physical growth -- which, in turn, reinforce the pattern of values and virtues. Through this process we constitute our universe of moral concern in which we struggle to achieve, mourn our failures and celebrate our successes. This is our world of hopes and fears in terms of which, as Plato wrote in the *Laches*, our lives have moral meaning[18] and we can speak properly of values. It is of this that the Prophet speaks the words of God.

Cultural Traditions. To relate culture to tradition John Caputo, in *Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development*,[19] notes that from the very beginning one's life is lived with others. Even before birth, one's consciousness emerges as awareness of the biological rhythms of one's mother. Upon birth there follows a progressively broader sharing in the life of parents and siblings. In this context one is fully at peace, and, hence, most open to personal growth and social development. Hence, from its beginning one's life is social and historical: one learns from one's family which had learned from earlier generations. This is the universal condition of each person, and consequently of the development of human awareness and of knowledge.

Interpersonal dependence is then not unnatural -- quite the contrary, we depend for our being upon our creator, we are conceived in dependence upon our parents, and we are nurtured by them with care and concern. Through the years we depend continually upon our family and peers, school and community.

We turn to other persons whom we recognize as superior in terms not of their will, but of their insights and judgment -- and precisely in those matters where truth, reason and balanced judgment are required. The preeminence or authority of wise persons in the community is not something they usurp or with which they are arbitrarily endowed. It is based upon their capabilities and acknowledged in our free and reasoned response. Thus, the burden of Plat o's *Republic* is precisely the education of the future leader to be able to exercise authority.

From this notion of authority in a cultural community, it is possible to construct that of tradition by taking account of the preceding generations with their accumulation of human insight, predicated upon the wealth of their human experience through time. As a process of trial and error, of continual correction and addition, history constitutes a type of learning and testing laboratory in which the strengths of various insights can be identified and reinforced, while their deficiencies are corrected and complemented. We learn from experience what promotes and what destroys life, and accordingly we make pragmatic adjustments. The cumulative results of this extended process of learning and testing constitute tradition.

But even this language remains too abstract, too limited to method or technique, too unidimensional. While tradition can be described in terms of feedback mechanisms and might seem merely to concern how to cope in daily life, what is being spoken about are free acts. These express passionate human commitment and personal sacrifice in responding to concrete dangers, building and rebuilding family alliances, and constructing and defending one's nation.

Moreover, this wisdom is not a matter of mere tactical adjustments to temporary concerns. It concerns rather the meaning we are able to envision for life and which we desire to achieve through all such adjustments over a period of generations: it is what is truly worth striving for.

This points us beyond the horizontal plane of the various ages of history and directs our attention vertically to its ground and, hence, to the religious bases of the values we seek to realize in concrete circumstances. The history of Abraham, our common father in faith, is a concrete account of the process through history of deep wisdom in interaction with the divine.

The content of a tradition serves as a model and exemplar, not because of personal inertia, but because of the corporate character of learning. This was built out of experience, consisting of the free and wise acts of the successive generations of a people in reevaluating, reaffirming, preserving and passing on what has been learned. The content of any long tradition has passed the test of countless generations. Standing, as it were, on the shoulders of our forebears, those who come later are able to discover possibilities and evaluate situations with the help of their vision of the elders because of the sensitivity they developed and communicated to us. Without this we could not even choose the topics to be investigated or awaken within ourselves the desire to study those problems.

Cultural traditions, then, are not simply everything that ever happened, but only what has appeared significant to a particular distinctive people, been judged as life giving, and actively transmitted to their next generation. It is by definition then the good as humanely appreciated by a people; its presentation by different voices draws out its many aspects. Thus, a cultural tradition is not an object in itself, but a rich and flowing river from which multiple themes can be drawn according to the motivation and interest of the inquirer. It needs to be accepted and embraced, affirmed and cultivated. Here the emphasis is neither upon the past nor the present, but upon a people living through time.

Tradition is not a passive storehouse of materials to be drawn upon and shaped at the arbitrary will of the present inquirer. Rather, it presents insight and wisdom that is normative for life in the present and future, for its harmony of measure and fullness suggest a way for the mature and perfect formation of the members of this people.[20] Such a vision is both historical and normative: historical, because it arises in time and presents the characteristic manner in which a people preserves and promotes human life through time; and normative, because it presents a basis upon which to judge past ages, present actions and options for the future. The fact of human striving manifests that every humanism, far from being indifferent, is committed to the realization of some such classical and perduring model of perfection.

Relations between Religious Cultures

The danger, of course, and one that is foundational for this conference, is whether the combination of the deep immersion in, and commitment to, one's cultural tradition thereby traps one in insuperable opposition to the interests and strivings of those in other traditions. Can we overcome such opposition? Indeed, can the commitments we have to our own cultural tradition become a means for other peoples to look into their own traditions? If so, this would provide the key to effective cooperation between religions and cultures.

It should be understood that cultural traditions will be multiple, according to the historical groupings of people, the diverse circumstances in which they shape their lives and the specific challenges to which they respond and, in so doing, ever more profoundly shape themselves. More foundationally, they reflect the specific mode in which God chooses to speak to his peoples and the message he conveys through his prophets to help peoples find their way on their pilgrimages.

Contemporary attention to the person enables us to be more conscious of the distinctive formative pattern of our proper culture and its religious foundations. This can enable us to appreciate it as uniquely different from others. However, being situated among one's own people and hearing the same stories told in the same way, one's appreciation of the rich content of one's tradition could remain limited.

The way to break out of this limitation of the human condition is to encounter other peoples with other experiences in order to check one's bearings. This is not to copy the other or to graft alien elements onto one's culture. It is rather to be stimulated by the experience of others and thus enabled to go more deeply into one's own cultural heritage and sacred books. Here the aim is to draw out meaning which had always been there in the infinite ground of my culture, but which thus far had not been sounded.

Rather than abandoning or lessening allegiance to one's cultural tradition, this is a higher fidelity thereto. It is built on the conviction that my tradition, as grounded in the infinite divine, is richer than

I or my people have thus far been able to sound, that it has more to say to me, and hence that I need to be open to new dimensions of its meaning.

This is the special opportunity of our time of globalization, communication and mutual interaction. Rather than looking upon the other as a threat, communication with other cultures as they plumb their own religious tradition can enable one to draw more fully upon one's own. This enables one to cooperate with others in the development of their own cultures from the resources of their own religious tradition. In this way all religious cultures are promoted, each in its unique character. This is more than a dialogue between differences; it is cooperation in developing distinct but convergent pathways for the coming millennium.

Notes

1. John Paul II, “The Encyclical Letter: Fides et Ratio,” in *Faith, Reason and Philosophy*, Series I: Cultures and Values, vol. 20 and Series IIA: Islam, vol. 7, ed. George F. McLean (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2000).

2. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, ed. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore: Iqbal Academy of Pakistan and the Institute of Islamic Culture, 1986).

3. *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

6. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

7. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1971).

8. (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994).

9. (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998).

10. *The Culture of Citizenship; Inventing Postmodern Civil Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), chap. I.

11. (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998).

12. (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999).

13. (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999).

14. Parmenides, Fragment 8, see McLean and Aspell, *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, NY: Prentice Hall, 1990).

15. Fragments in G.F. McLean and P. Aspell, *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970), pp. 39-44. Neither being nor thought makes sense if being is the same as nonbeing, for then to do, say or be anything would be the same as not doing, not saying or not being. But the real must be irreducible to nothing and being to nonbeing if there is anything or any meaning whatsoever. Hence, being must have about it the self-sufficiency expressed by Parmenides' notion of the absolute One.

16. Richard Nixon, *Seize the Moment* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

17. Ivor Leclerc, "The Metaphysics of the Good," *Review of Metaphysics*, 35 (1981), 3-5. See also *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, ed. André Lalande (Paris: PUF, 1956), pp. 1182-1186.

18. J. Mehta, *Martin Heidegger: The Way and the Vision* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1967), pp. 90-91.

19. R. Carnap, *Vienna Manifesto*, trans. A. Blumberg in G. Kreyche and J. Mann, *Perspectives on Reality* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), p. 485.

20. H.G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1975), pp. 240, 246-247, 305-310.

Chapter III

Dialogue between Religious Traditions as a Barrier against Cases of Extreme Religious Fundamentalism

Milko Youroukov

Introduction

The content of my presentation is closely related to the topic, "Islamic and Christian Cultures: Conflict or Dialogue," about which this conference is convoked. The title itself offers the dilemma, conflict or dialogue, and it also raises questions. From a religious viewpoint, interesting questions arise, such as, What does dialogue between cultures mean for religions? What are the qualities that make certain attitudes appropriate for dialogue and others inappropriate? How are these attitudes grounded in human conscience? If we want to answer these questions and discuss the issues together, it is because we believe that possible one-sidedness of perspectives and conclusions can be avoided only if we employ philosophy together with all the other humanitarian disciplines, religious studies being one of them. It is in this sense that I would like to express my gratitude to the Faculty of Philosophy at Sofia University for inviting specialists of different fields to participate in this conference.

My presentation focuses on the issues of "dialogue" and "conflict" between cultures from a perspective of human attitudes grounded in religious beliefs. The attitudes themselves are considered in the light of a quality which I call "dialogical." This quality is shown as both a feature of human conscience as well as a ground for a particular human attitude. Accordingly, a variety of attitudes that stand between "dialogical" and its opposite—"conflictive"—will be analyzed. In my presentation I proceed according to the following plan of organization: firstly, I pose the question about the relationship between religion and culture and the role of religion with regard to culture. Secondly, the explanation that follows allows me to place religion within culture and then look at the dialogue between cultures in the light of dialogue between religions.

The dilemma of "dialogue or conflict between cultures" is the second point to be discussed. I link my answer to the dilemma with the issue of "religious fundamentalism," which appears as an item under discussion in the conference list. This is not by chance, since fundamentalism is a highly disputable phenomenon, and its influence cannot be judged as simply positive or simply negative.[1] The suggested linkage between religious fundamentalism and interreligious conflicts would predetermine a totally negative interpretation to the former, unless some clarifications are made. Originally, the term fundamentalism would refer to an evangelical, anti-modernist movement from the beginning of the 20th century.[2] At that time, the term was used only in a Christian context, but later on, it was applied to other religious movements. As far as Christian-Muslim relations are concerned, a number of scholars of Islam, Muslims as well as Christians, are worried that the term "fundamentalism" could become misleading when it is drawn from the Christian context and applied carelessly to Islam.[3] In order to avoid bafflement, further on in this presentation, I offer a brief discussion on the history and meaning of this term. A tendency for an increasingly negative usage of the term "fundamentalism," due to its confusion with some other phenomena, "extremism" being the main one, makes this discussion necessary. Often, the meaning of the terms "fundamentalism" and "extremism" are jumbled, or the terms themselves are used interchangeably without the necessary discrimination. Today's mass media, for example, uses the term "fundamentalist" widely, but often uncritically, to identify a person of the attitude of extremist groups within religions such as

Christianity, Islam, Judaism or Hinduism.[4] In order to preserve the original (and not necessarily negative) meaning of the term "religious fundamentalism," I choose to use different terms—such as "extreme" or "radical" religious fundamentalism—to which I can attribute most negative influences. Besides, I hold that conflicting situations come to occur when extremism, which is grounded in religious fundamentalism, takes over and predetermines the circumstances for such occurrence. Accordingly, what I call "radical fundamentalism" manifests attitudes that contain fundamentalist as well as extremist features.[5] The combination of these two, I believe, provides the basis for most of the interreligious conflicts in the world. With a view of clarity, this presentation discusses the importance of interreligious dialogue between cultures and the usefulness of dialogue for avoiding conflicts, according to three main points, as follows:

1. In its objectivization, religion represents this essential element, inseparable from culture, on which the establishment develops and the enduring of culture itself depends.

2. The establishment of dialogue between religions is the indispensable condition for the existence and further expansion of intercultural dialogue.

3. Dialogue appears to be the only humanly meaningful option for intercultural and interreligious relations and the only hopeful remedy against further occurrences of interreligious and interethnic conflicts.

To provide evidence for the three statements above, I first stress the vital importance of religion within culture and their factual inseparability. Secondly, I shift the attention from the importance of religion to the importance of interreligious dialogue for the dialogue between cultures. Dialogues between religions and cultures always take place together and can be only distinguished—never separated. To defend this point, I make use of Clifford Geertz's and Peter Berger's theories of religion. Geertz explains religion as a cultural system, while Berger shows its role in human society as a "distinctive lace" in the never completed enterprise of building a "humanly meaningful world."[6]

Finally, the dilemma between dialogue and conflict urged me to demonstrate the incompatibility between the former and the latter and opt for the dialogue. I suggest that interreligious dialogue and extreme religious fundamentalism are incompatible not only as notions, but also as phenomena, and so are the human attitudes that stand behind them. The very objective of intercultural and interreligious relations shows that conflict cannot and must not be an option, otherwise no communication is attainable. On the contrary, interreligious dialogue—which I maintain is intrinsically implied in the dialogue between cultures—cultivates attitudes which are anticonflictive and which facilitate communication. By influencing people in this way, dialogue can be used as a means against the spread of extreme religious fundamentalism throughout the world. I believe that dialogue, when it is successfully established and regularly maintained, can clear away the seeds of the conflictive attitude out of which extreme fundamentalism arises.

Dialogue between Religious Traditions as a Basis for Dialogue between Cultures

With this assumption I do not play down the notion of culture. Rather, I intend to emphasize the essential link between culture and religion and the importance of the latter within the former. While religion can be distinguished within culture, it is not a separate element. There is no analysis that can thoroughly clarify the content of these two notions, nor is an exhaustive definition of either of these possible.[7] Furthermore, no definition can perfectly determine the distinction between "cultural" and "religious." The paradox always remains: the more deeply we analyze the religious and cultural phenomena, the less complete our analysis becomes, and the less true any definition will sound. This is what Clifford Geertz means when he reports that cultural analysis is "intrinsically incomplete,"[8] but I think that Geertz's conclusion applies to the analysis of religion as well. Definitions are not hopeful, but still, a distinction between religion and culture is necessary and thinkable from the viewpoint of meaning. Here, I suggest that, as a cultural system, religion exemplifies the way in which humans seek to accomplish their ideals of liberation and fullness of life.[9] As such, religion appears to be a most basic source of meaning within culture, but, in fact, there are many religions in the world, just as there are many cultures. So far, I have used the term religion in general, applying it sometimes in the singular and sometimes in the plural. This double usage can be confusing unless it is explained.

The term "religion" could be misleading, especially in reference to interreligious dialogue, if it implies only a general notion. In reality, dialogue only occurs between specific representatives of the various religious traditions, and, in this case, one should admit that no religion exists which is not a particular religion.[10] What we identify as "religion" is a much broader notion because in every human community something exists that can be called by this name. Until it is objectified and contextualized, however, religion cannot be a "valid object of inquiry or of concern either for the scholar or for the man of faith."[11] When externalized, religion stands outside of the subjective consciousness of the individual and attains the character of objective reality, just as the humanly produced cultural world does.[12] In its historical contextualization in the human world, religion appears as "religions" which are perceivable only as religious traditions. The dialogue between religions, therefore, means nothing else but a dialogue between religious traditions in which the respective cultures are rooted. Notwithstanding, the general notion of religion is inevitably used when theorizing about religion and its relationship to culture.

Many scholars believe that culture embraces the totality of all human products and would argue that the notion of culture contains the notion of religion within itself.[13] There will be some who would suggest the opposite, namely, that the notion of religion is more basic than the notion of culture.[14] I believe that when religion and culture are objectified through and within the society, the contents of these two terms somehow overlap. Just as culture consists of socially established structures of meaning, according to which people do things, so does religion. Accordingly, the importance of religion for culture does not come from the fact that religion comes "first in time" or somehow "before" culture—just like the opposite is not attainable—but rather that it supplies culture with meaning. Peter Berger emphasizes this importance of religion as a source of meaning by describing religion as a “distinctive lace” within culture and society.[15] It is only religion that supplies the various sociocultural structures with ultimate meaning and, thereby, keeps all together. Besides, religion has the unique capacity to spur the ultimate sense of rightness in the conscience of the individual with the result of uniting the individual with others for a common religious goal. It is for that reason that distinguished scholars, Panikkar being one of them, regard religion as the content and “soul” of culture.[16] Smith, who emphasizes the same idea in an even stronger manner, refers to religion as "the center of the total human orientation to life."[17] As such, religion takes the role of a most important guide for humans. By locating human phenomena within a cosmic frame of reference and by applying cosmization to human institutions, religion, in effect, points out the cosmos and its divine laws as the ultimate ground and validation of human *nomoi*—the rules and principles established to regulate human conduct.[18] Once religiously legitimated, the human *nomoi* become the primary regulators of human society, which provide the necessary order for a further cultural development.

The main protagonists of this historical process of consecration and validation--Berger calls it "cosmization in a sacred mode"--are the various religious institutions throughout the world. The persistence of religions from the very beginning, in contrast to some other social and cultural factors, shows religion to be a most basic sociocultural element on which the stability of the society and, thereby, the establishment and development of culture itself depend.[19] Through its system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms, religion shapes humans' attitudes toward life and directs the ways in which humans develop, communicate and perpetuate their culture.[20] As such, religion appears to be both the social and "anthropological phenomenon *par excellence*" and, thereby, the basic carrier and transmitter of culture.[21] The horizon reached as a result of the dialogue between religions will determine both the basis and the boundaries within which the dialogue of cultures can possibly expand.

By emphasizing the importance of religion within culture on the one hand and on the other declaring their inseparability, I, in fact, recognize that, in the process of their objectification, culture and religion come into being together. Put in Berger's terms these two both originate in and derive from human subjectivity, which continually produces and reproduces them.[22] The dialogue between cultures, then, always alludes to the dialogue between religions and has an essentially religious connotation, and vice versa; any dialogue between religions is inevitably cultural. This is the reason that the establishment of dialogue between religions appears to be such an important condition for the more general dialogue between cultures, but this also mean that, in the case of the occurrence of the former, the latter is always implied.

So far, I have emphasized the constitutive role of religion and dialogue between religions for the dialogue between cultures while simultaneously confirming the inseparability between interreligious and intercultural dialogues. In the second part of this presentation, I discuss the two basic, but mutually incompatible, subjects of dialogue and conflict; the latter, I assert, is most likely caused by a radical fundamentalist attitude. In this area questions arise such as, "In what does dialogue consist, and what is its purpose?" "What are major attitudes that the praxis of dialogue has already shown?" "How in the light of these attitudes can we interpret the radical attitude that inspires extreme religious fundamentalism?"

Hermeneutic Analysis of the Meaning of "Extreme Fundamentalist" and "Dialogical" in Reference to Human Attitudes

My second suggestion is that the establishment of dialogue, even at its lowest level, precludes extreme fundamentalism. A discussion on a choice of attitudes that characterize the praxis of dialogue—which I name "dialogical"—becomes necessary in order to evidence this assertion. The discussion will compare these attitudes with the attitude that confronts dialogue. An attempt to explain the criteria of "dialogical" and "conflictive" will be made after the clarification of the etymological meanings of the terms "dialogue," "fundamentalism" and "extremism."

As a noun "dialogue" derives from the Greek verb "□□□□□□□□□□" which in philosophical terms refers to an action through which we can reach the "□□□□□,"or the idea.[23] The term "□□□□□" could also refer to the "divine mind" or "word," if applied in a religious context. In its New Testament usage "□□□□□□□□□□" was the act of exercising one's powers of argument with a view of reaching the meaning of the Word of God: the Logos revealed in scripture through revelation. If revelation is defined in terms of "comprehensive declaration of the divine will, which sets all life in the light of the divine truth,"[24] then the word "dialogue" would have a different connotation in religion than in philosophy. Instead of reasoning with a view of reaching the truth, meaning that would suggest the philosophical usage of "dialogue," its religious use would imply the idea of reasoning upon the already given divine truth. It is in this sense of the word "reasoning" that the verb is used in Acts 17:2, where Paul is said to reason with the Jews from the Scriptures for three Sabbaths. The same meaning of "□□□□□□□□□□," is implied in Acts 17:17; 18:4, 19; 24:12.[25] Today, many scholars define the term, dialogue, in a similar way. Swidler, for example, outlines dialogue as a "conversation proceeding from systematic reasoned reflection upon the religious or ideological convictions between two or more persons with differing views."[26]

Much newer than the word dialogue, the term "fundamentalism" was coined in the United States in the early 20th century to describe first a certain kind of Christianity that was opposed to "modernism" in religion.[27] The opposition took expression through a series of pamphlets published between 1910 and 1915, entitled "The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth." These booklets were authored by leading evangelical churchmen and were circulated free of charge among clergymen and seminarians. A "fundamentalist" was defined as anyone who would hold to the "fundamentals." [28] The religious movement, which emerged out of "fundamentalism" was particularly distinguished by its struggle against the Darwinian theories of evolution and its upholding of a literal reading of the Bible. After the late 1950s, the term was applied more broadly to similar tendencies in other religious traditions, particularly in Islam. Today's usage of the term "fundamentalism" shifts its meaning from holding to some religious truths as fundamentals to narrow-mindedness, at best, and an opposition to everything modern that questions and challenges traditional religious teaching. As I have already noted, in its most negative application "fundamentalism" is often used as a synonym of "extremism," but here I will associate the latter with what I call "radical" or "extreme fundamentalism," which is grounded in a certain conflictive attitude. My analysis will show that the "radical fundamentalist attitude" is incompatible with other attitudes, which fit under the term "dialogical."

In his book, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age*, Bruce Lawrence defines fundamentalism as "the affirmation of religious authority as holistic and absolute, admitting of neither criticism nor reduction; it is expressed through the collective demand that specific credal and ethical dictates derived from scripture be publicly recognized and legally enforced."[29] It is the nature of the demand to contain within itself the potential danger of going to extremes when an attempt for the completion of this demand is made. The demand for recognition and enforcement of certain credal and religious dictates over others does not make an exception to this general rule. Instead, the doctrinal support which backs it up makes this religious demand much stronger and, thereby, vulnerable to the danger of extremism. Cases of radical, religious fundamentalism occur when there is a moral acceptance of the violation of another person's rights as a means to an end.[30] This acceptance of violation may grow and take some monstrous forms in which terrorizing and even killing others become routine. Generally speaking, people, who represent cases of such extreme Christian or Islamic fundamentalism, claim much more than holding only to the fundamentals of their own faith. In contrast to fundamentalists who see themselves as guardians of the only true interpretation—usually to the exclusion of others' interpretation—of the Bible or the Qur'an, the extreme fundamentalists seem to demand and also enforce their demands by all means. Not only do the latter insist that the Bible or the Qur'an are to be understood as literally true, but also they literally apply some commandments that, they think, are divinely prescribed.[31] Extreme fundamentalists consider themselves to be in charge and judges of the nations of the world through a power that comes from the Highest—from God Himself.[32] This radical fundamentalist attitude, I argue, is infantile.[33] It is based on prematurely motivated human behavior and therefore is always abortive; that is, it inevitably brings the two opposite sides into conflict. In contrast with this extremist attitude, the attitudes that favor dialogue carry within themselves the eternal principal of maturation and as such are manifestations of a most authentic aspect of human consciousness. Contemporary hermeneutics calls this aspect "dialogical" and considers it to be reflected in the way in which the human mind functions. Humans seem to relate to the world, among themselves and to themselves, in a dialogical way, that is, in a way "absolutely and fundamentally verbal in nature."[34] There are different theories that attempt to explain the mechanism of this relatedness, but here I offer only my interpretation of Gadamer's hypothesis to the point, supporting it with some of Tracy's observations.

While commenting on Aquinas' explanation of the human act of thinking, Gadamer stresses the part when thinking is presented as a form of internal dialogue between human memory and mind. This emphasis allows Gadamer to explain humans as dialogical beings whose internal life represents a continuous dialogue of one's speaking with oneself. The dialogue begins when an emanation—of general notions shaped in words (interpretation mine)—proceeds from the memory and pauses on the mind.[35] The words, which reflect the things of the outside world, without however being able to contain them as a whole, bring this reflection to the mind. In the process of thinking the memory does not lose anything, although it gives to the mind, while the mind hurries from one thing to the other, seeking a perfect expression of its thoughts through inquiry. It is this inquiry of the mind that enriches the general concepts meant by the words. During the course of action, thinking goes in parallel with the memory's usage of pre-established words with general meanings and the process of word formation. The three simultaneous operations—those of memory's usage of pre-established words, word formation and thinking—reveal human consciousness as verbal in nature. Human consciousness widens ever more its experience during the process of thinking. This widening is rooted in the reflection of the similarities among things and shows the metaphorical way in which the human mind functions. Gadamer's concept of the inner unity of human thinking and speaking illustrates this great mystery of the human mind, its relationship to itself and to the world. Using the Trinitarian mystery of the Incarnation as a root metaphor for human internal unity, Gadamer assumes: "A person who thinks something—i.e., says it to himself—means by it the thing that he thinks . . . Being that can be understood is language."[36] It is in this sense that the American theologian David Tracy describes dialogue as both "a mode of human life and a manifestation of the dialogical reality of all human life."[37] Human internal life is “dialogical”; it represents a continuous and never-ceasing conversation. To understand is to interpret, according to Tracy, and to interpret is to converse, to participate in a discourse. [38] Gadamer, for whom the hermeneutical task of interpreting consists of a questioning of things, reflects the same view. Discourse, therefore, always takes a form of question and answer, whereas the essence of the question is to open up possibilities and keep them open until some kind of understanding is achieved.[39] The dialectic of questioning and answering always precedes and enables the acts of interpretation and understanding which otherwise are not conceivable.

This concise review of Gadamer's and Tracy's reflections on human language and thought leads us to some conclusions about how the "dialogical" attitude would refer to the act of understanding which is substantial for human life, in general and for any dialogue, in particular. Thus, if humans are, by their very nature, "conversation beings" who express and understand themselves in a dialogical way, then the acts of "questioning," "reasoning" and "answering," belong essentially to human conscience and its dialogical nature. From the perspective of this most essential aspect of the human psyche, some basic principles can be derived with regard to acts of interpretation and understanding of religious texts:

1) All the texts -- all the more, the traditional religious texts -- are to be interpreted in order to be understood.

2) No question, or an attempt for clarification, should be considered to be a taboo.

3) Any exemption from the continual challenge implied by the dialectic of questioning and answering would obstruct the process of understanding and learning and betray what is most genuinely human.

Quite opposite to these dialogical principles, the fundamentalists show an attitude that opposes questioning the sacred texts, and thus maintains a one-sided perspective. Explained in Gadamer's terms, this one-sided perspective comes as a result of the fundamentalists' refusal to employ tradition as a source of ever-prescient understanding. For Gadamer tradition is crucial. The tradition in which one is born and raised historically conditions the initial horizon—that is, one's pre-understanding—that makes interpretation and understanding possible. Understanding is dynamic and represents a constant change of the horizon of the interpreter.[40] The radical fundamentalists tend to enforce their one-sided perspective by all means. By denying dialogue and a free interpretation of the sacred texts and by enforcing strict adherence to their literal meaning, extreme fundamentalists resist learning and understanding "how the Bible originally came to be written and collected in the sacred cannon. . ."[41] By doing this, fundamentalism ends "in a hermeneutical leap from the Bible to contemporary life."[42] The Qur'an represents a different problem from a hermeneutical viewpoint, but still, there is a great deal of tension between the 7th-century Qur'anic prescriptions and the contemporary needs of the Muslim communities. Discussions and interpretations, therefore, are always necessary. The lack of understanding and unwillingness for a dialogue sets the ideal condition for the further deterioration of fundamentalism to the levels of fanaticism and extremism. It is at that level where the false confidence of some presumed infallibility based on scriptural texts encourages radical fundamentalists to feel totally free of guilt even when they do wrong.[43] Some quite monstrous forms of radical fundamentalism, characterized with literal interpretation and indiscriminate application of some passages of the sacred texts to the exclusion of others, prove well the statement above.[44] By justifying violence as a means of persuasion on the basis of these texts, the extreme fundamentalists fail to justify their behavior as truly religious, especially considering that religion is always about compassion and liberation, rather then oppression and terror. In contrast to the dialogical openness, which comes as a natural, human way of living and thinking, the extreme fundamentalist closeness (to the point of animosity) shows itself as a prematurely motivated and gradually adopted behavior which is alien to what is genuinely human. Conversely, the dialogical approach, manifested in the dialogical attitudes, with its innate openness represents what is most authentic in the human psyche: its dialogical nature.

From what I have submitted so far, further questions arise, such as, Which attitudes shown during the praxis of dialogue fit under the denominative "dialogical"? Why does the extreme fundamentalist attitude not stand along with the other dialogical attitudes? How should we define extreme religious fundamentalism on the basis of its distinctive attitude?

Extreme Religious Fundamentalism Analyzed in Light of the Praxis and Goal of Interreligious Dialogue.

My second assertion is that interreligious dialogue and extreme religious fundamentalism are incompatible -- not only as notions, but also as phenomena. From Swidler's definition, it follows that interreligious dialogue takes place among persons who identify with particular religious communities and defend different positions with regard to matters of religion, theology and philosophy. If it is natural for dialogue to manifest a variety of opinions during the discussions, then the question about the conditions of these discussions becomes crucial. On the other hand, there can be no talk about conditions of dialogue unless the issue of tolerance is brought up as a priority. For the adherents of interreligious dialogue, tolerance should become a basic criterion to judge attitudes toward one another and toward others' respective religions.

The praxis of dialogue has shown several possible attitudes for approaching the other or the other's religion. When theoretically analyzed, these attitudes—which I call "dialogical"—are named: "exclusivism," "inclusivism," "parallelism" and "pluralism."[45] In order to reveal the incompatibility between extreme fundamentalism and dialogue, I will first show the incompatibility between their respective attitudes, namely, the radical fundamentalist attitude with the four dialogical attitudes.

The first attitude is that of the exclusivists, adhering to the fundamentals of their faith as those are revealed in the scriptures. As such the exclusivists can rightly be named fundamentalists in the original usage of this term, in addition to which, however, the sense of narrow-mindedness is also presupposed. On the basis of "God's exclusive language" in scripture, exclusivists declare false anything different from the expression of truth found in their religion. By regarding other religions as "diabolical," or at best as human aberrations, exclusivists carry this name because they exclude any way of salvation different from their own way. The bearers of this attitude seem to underestimate the importance of the fact that human interpretations are strongly subjective. Hence, their exclusion of others or other religions does not appear to be justified, even if God is assumed to speak an exclusive language. It is only by means of interpretation that we determine what God does and does not exclude. In exclusivism, truth is perceived as purely logical, rather than relational with many facets. Today, most of the scholars in the field of religion consider exclusivism to be "an uncritical attitude of an epistemological naivete."[46] It is because of these two deficiencies, i.e., lack of mature epistemological reflection and lack of self-criticism, that the exclusivists are so inefficient in their effort to expand the limits of the religious horizon within which exclusivist ideas function. This limited horizon, in turn, affects the exclusivists' capability to participate in interreligious dialogue and renders their participation an exercise in proselytizing, rather than a real dialogue. Nevertheless, the exclusivist attitude can still be identified as dialogical because of the exclusivists' desire to participate in dialogue in order to convert others.

In contrast to exclusivists, inclusivists hold to the fundamentals of their religion without excluding other religions, or the right of their followers to hold some other particular doctrinal fundamentals. As such, the inclusivists can also be classified under the title "fundamentalists," but not exclusively. Inclusivists hold to the fundamentals of their faith, however, with the awareness of the importance of interpretation for understanding some difficult passages of the scriptures. This is why inclusivists manage to hold both to their religion and to consider positive and true values outside of its domain. Inclusivists, however, believe that their religion includes the whole truth, while other religions contain less truth or are corrupted. An umbrella pattern helping to embrace different thought systems is essential for the inclusivist approach.

The third attitude, which Panikkar defines as "parallelist," envisions religions running parallel without interfering with each other. In parallelism, the fundamentals of one's own faith are as important as the fundamentals of others' faiths, but still these fundamentals should be finally transcended. The parallelist attitude cannot be defined as "fundamentalist" because, in contrast to the exclusivists' and the inclusivists', attitude it does not consider any priority of holding to the fundamentals of one's own religion before those of some other religions. The variety of religions in the world is justified through the goal of the "*eschaton*," when, at the very end of human pilgrimage, all different ways of salvation will meet.[47] This ultimate meeting will happen for everyone in the depths of one's own tradition. No conversion would be necessary; rather, a deepening in one's own tradition would be required.

Pluralism is a perspective that recognizes the pluralistic quality of truth, affirming that truth is always relational. Accordingly, the pluralistic approach does not aim at finding a common truth, but rather the connection to truth in a given context. This is what distinguishes pluralism from all the other approaches, namely, that real pluralism can only be applied if we are "confronted with mutually exclusive and respectively contradictory ultimate systems."[48] In pluralism the questions arise, as to what is truth and how do we relate to truth rather than whether or not the fundamentals of a certain religion are true? Pluralism emphasizes understanding and harmony. Dialogue, from the pluralist perspective, is never about winning over the other through argumentation and disputation, but only about establishing a proper communication. Instead of aiming at total agreement, pluralism annihilates all problems created by mutual ignorance and misunderstanding.

It is necessary to see how these four attitudes stand between the two opposites, "dialogical" and "conflictive." From the summary above it follows that while "exclusivists" can be identified as "fundamentalists," "inclusivists" can be, in a sense, "parallelists" and the "pluralists" cannot be seen as such. Notwithstanding, bearers of all four attitudes participate in dialogue though on different levels and with different objectives. The term "fundamentalist," when this is applied in its original meaning, does not presuppose attitudes that should necessarily be characterized as "anti-dialogical" or "conflictive." It is only when fundamentalism decays to the level of fanaticism and extremism that it becomes incompatible with dialogue. There must be a major difference between the four dialogical attitudes and that attitude which identifies itself as anti-dialogical. My application of the hermeneutic analysis of human conscience shows two key features that characterize the notion of "dialogical," first, the natural desire for understanding and learning and secondly, openness and tolerance that allow such understanding and learning. On the basis of these basic dialogical features and in the light of the goal of dialogue, I will identify the exclusivist attitude as one that represents the lowest level of dialogue. Then I will compare this attitude with the radical fundamentalist attitude and discover what the main differences are between these two.

While Smith identifies the goal of dialogue with the understanding of the faith of other people, "without weakening our own,"[49] Swidler adds another element, that of learning. For the latter the primary purpose of dialogue is that each participant learns from the other so that "both can change and grow."[50] "Understanding" and "learning," however, are not possible without tolerance. The comparison between each one of the four groups—"exclusivists," "inclusivists," "parallelists," and "pluralists"—shows that understanding and learning, as well as tolerance, increases when we start from exclusivism and proceed toward pluralism.

Thus, for example, exclusivists, by ignoring other religions and ideas, limit the area of possible dialogue. Exclusivists justify their disregard by their reference to the exclusivist's particular understanding of truth. Exclusivists fail to recognize that their basis for judging what is true and what is not is their interpretation of truth rather than the truth itself. Exclusivism presupposes general tolerance towards other beings and concern for their salvation but not for their ideas and beliefs. That is why the exclusivists consider proselytizing and missionary work to be the only means through which God's will can be made known and the others saved. Here understanding and learning go in one direction because the exclusivists need not learn about others or understand them. The exclusivists believe that they possess the whole truth; therefore, others are supposed to learn from them and understand them.

While the exclusivists exclude other religions without enough epistemological reason, the inclusivists include these religions according to their own perspective. By doing so, inclusivists widen the area of discussion although they fail to recognize the independent intellectual content of truth in other religions. Inclusivists show greater tolerance, not only towards others but also towards their ideas and beliefs, with the exception that the latter are considered to reflect the same truth to some lesser degree. Here, understanding of others and their religion has a priority over the proclamation of some religious truth.

The perspective of parallelists expands further the zone of dialogue. Parallelists are ready to discuss and listen to every religion, regarding them as perfect illustrations of the entire human experience, equal to the other religious traditions. The limitation of the area of dialogue, however, comes from the fact that parallelism assumes no obligation of discussing real problems of interference or mutual influence between religions. The latter is accomplished in pluralism.

In contrast to inclusivists and exclusivists, parallelists admit the fullness of truth in all religions and, thereby, render proclamation obsolete. Parallelists are more interested in delving into the truth of their own religion, which they think would raise the general level of understanding of other religions. Just like inclusivists, parallelists show tolerance towards others and other religions and ideas. Understanding and learning, according to inclusivists and parallelists, come from both sides of the dialogue. Inclusivists hope to learn from others how the truth of their own religion is manifested through other religions (though to a lesser degree), while parallelists have already understood and learned that truth is equally represented in any religion.

It is only pluralism that takes into account our factual situation as real and does affirm that "in the actual polarities of our human existence we find our real being."[51] Accordingly, if two views are only apparently opposite and allow for a synthesis, we cannot speak of pluralism; rather, we speak of two different, mutually complementary attitudes. The issue of pluralism belongs to the ultimate level of dialogue and truth. As far as the pluralist attitude is concerned, it represents tolerance to such a degree that even totally unbridgeable human claims are conjoined. Pluralists—in contrast to parallelists—do not exclude proclamation, but rather harness it with a view of reaching an ever higher perspective of truth. By raising questions as to whether two mutually exclusive things can both be true, pluralism appears as the greatest manifestation of dialogical openness and thereby the ultimate possible catalyst for deepening dialogue. By allowing even opposite religious claims to be considered as witnesses to the truth, pluralists transcend classical Aristotelian logic, reaching for the very core of discussion about truth and meaning. The goal of dialogue for pluralists is not only proclamation, or learning, or even mutual understanding, but, before all, understanding about understanding. Accordingly, the pluralist attitude manifests the highest possible degree of tolerance, epistemological reflection and hermeneutical concern.

With the expansion of the boundaries of tolerance and philosophical reflection, the quality of dialogue also changes. On the level of exclusivism, dialogue is superficial, lacking internal connection mainly because each side defends its own position without paying necessary attention to the other side. Dialogue here is on the level of debate. On this level, dialogue is not well-established and can be rightly described as two (or more) different monologues going on at the same time.[52] The desire for dialogue is, however, evident. In contrast to exclusivism, inclusivism essentially presupposes, looks for and establishes dialogue. While the exclusivists aim at winning the debate and eventually convincing others to change their position, the inclusivists try to understand others. Understanding, here, has a greater priority than that of persuading others to change their perspectives. With the change of the priorities of the dialogue, from convincing others to understanding them, the character of dialogue also changes from that of debate to a higher level of dialectics. In inclusivism, regression to the level of debate is still possible, but only with an intention of achieving a higher level of understanding through dialectics. The inclusivists' goal of understanding others, by analyzing their religions and ideas under the larger umbrella pattern of some particular perspective, pushes dialogue away from the level of debate to a more sophisticated type of dialogue, i.e., dialectical dialogue. Accordingly, dialogue at the "inclusivists' level" is not superficial and does not consist in different monologues in opposition to one another.

The parallelists' perspective is the first that precludes the possible development of dialogue at the level of debate, but it remains within the zone of "dialectical dialogue." The pluralist position, however, breaks with "dialectics" and goes to a qualitatively different, dialogical level. At this level questions arise in relation to the nature of truth and meaning rather than which one of two different assertions is true.[53]

The question still remains, "What is it that distinguishes the lowest level of dialogical attitude—that of the exclusivists—from the radical fundamentalist attitude?" The first difference between exclusivists and extreme fundamentalists is the concern for others. The exclusivists demonstrate love and concern for the other people, albeit in their particular way, while extreme fundamentalists do not. The exclusivists deny the truthfulness of other religions, yet they want to share the truth of their own religion with others in order to save them. Conversely, extreme fundamentalists do not appear to have love and concern for others. They show an attitude that justifies hatred in the minds of its adherents.[54] Furthermore, extreme fundamentalists have been known to kill people for religious reasons. Seen in the light of the previous analyses, the extreme fundamentalists' attitude seems to lack all the various degrees of dialogical openness, understanding and interest for learning, as well as tolerance and concern for the others. Even the most basic degree of existential tolerance -- the human tolerance toward the lives of other human beings -- seems to be missing here, not to mention tolerance and concern for other religions, ideas and values. The extreme fundamentalists' lack of tolerance and concern for others determines the second difference between them and exclusivists: the interest in dialogue itself.

Whether it is colored with its effort to proselytize or not, the exclusivists' participation in dialogue contrasts sharply with the extremists' rejection of such participation. In contrast to all the other groups that undertake dialogue—exclusivists with a view to proclaim, inclusivists to proclaim and understand, parallelists to deepen in understanding and pluralists to understand understanding itself—the radical fundamentalists deny dialogue. As such, the radical fundamentalists manifest an attitude that goes against the most essential aspect of human conscience, namely, its "dialogical" nature.

On the basis of these major differences, the radical fundamentalist attitude can be described as an erosion of the natural human need and ability to change and grow, to carry on dialogue within itself and to engage in dialogue with others. Because of its disastrous effect on human beings, extreme fundamentalism can be qualified as both godless and antihuman. When represented in such an extreme, fundamentalism goes not only against human nature, but also against that which people believe God is—Unconditional Love.

Conclusion

What has been accomplished so far is believed to be in accordance with the main task initially undertaken: namely, to consider the problem of dialogue between cultures and its impact on religious fundamentalism from a religious perspective. After establishing the necessary link between the notions of "religion" and "culture," this study suggested that interreligious dialogue at all its levels is to be used to avoid the occurrence of extreme cases of religious fundamentalism. Incompatible with the radical attitude that inspires extreme religious fundamentalism, the attitude cultivated by interreligious dialogue proves to be the indispensable basis for the existence and further expansion of intercultural dialogue.

Secondly, the study affirmed the incompatibility of dialogue and extreme religious fundamentalism. The analysis of the four dialogical attitudes toward others and their religions helped the study to situate extreme fundamentalism in the light of the praxis and goal of dialogue. Besides, this analysis aimed at finding a remedy against the spread of extreme fundamentalism. The antidialogical and radical attitude on which extreme fundamentalism is embedded has unveiled itself as a prematurely motivated and gradually learned, hostile behavior that estranges humans from their true nature and from one another. Only the successfully established and systematically practiced dialogue can combat this ever-premature and infantile human behavior. The gradual decay from fundamentalism to fanaticism and from there to extreme fundamentalism and terrorism represents a long period of intensive brainwashing in which lack of understanding and false motivations finally bring about a particular attitude. It is in the stage of exclusivism—which is, in fact, fundamentalism—when dialogue, in all its aspects, can still prevent such a decline.[55] This study has shown these aspects of dialogue to be proclamation, understanding, learning and mutual growth in knowledge and love, as they are manifested in the various attitudes. The argument then shifted to a demonstration of how dialogue, in all of its stages and aspects, precludes fundamentalism. Even the lowest level of dialogue and tolerance, that is, the exclusivist level, proved to be radically different from extreme fundamentalism. The most basic human concern, that for the salvation of others, has been found in all levels of dialogue but not in extreme fundamentalism where it is totally missing. The praxis of dialogue, which essentially implies concern for others, their salvation, their instruction and, finally, their acceptance and their appreciation, appears to be the most hopeful remedy against the further formation of the extreme fundamentalist attitude.

Notes

1. See the discussion on fundamentalism in William M. Shea, "Catholic Reaction to Fundamentalism," *Theological Studies* 57 (March, 1996) 264-285. See also John F. Whealon, "Challenging Fundamentalism," America 155 (September 27, 1986) 136-38 as quoted by Shea.

2. Jaroslav Pelikan, "'Fundamentalism and/or Orthodoxy?' Toward an Understanding of the Fundamentalist Phenomenon," in *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*. ed., Norman J. Cohen (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1990), p. 2.

3. For more information on the Muslim reaction see S.H.Nasr, “Present Tendencies, Future Trends,” in *Islam: The Religious and Political Life of a World Communitv*. ed., Marjorie Kelly (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 279. See Fredric M. Denny, *Islam and Muslim Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 117, about similar concerns by Christian scholars of Islam.

4. Not only the secular mass-media but also most of the sources of the periodical Christian literature, as well as a number of books written by Christian authors, regard fundamentalism as a threat, or at best as radically incomplete, or even "false" Christianity, which is inadequate or distorted. For more information see Richard Chilson, *Full Chrístianíty: A Catholic Response to Fundamental Questions* (New York: Paulist, 1985); O'Meara, *Fundamentalism: A Catholic Response;* Damien Kraus, “Catholic Fundamentalism: A Look at the Problem," *Living Light* 19 (Spring 1982) 8-16; as quoted by Shea, "Catholic," p. 267. Similar is the attitude towards Islamic fundamentalism, which often is confused with extremism and terrorism. The religious

fundamentalists are said to prepare military attacks, to hijack, to hold hostages and finally to kill. See James M. Wall, "Shi'ite Fundamentalist Leads '85 Newsmaker," The Christian Century 103 (January 1, 1986) 3-4.

5. "Radical fundamentalism" refers to those manifestations of "extreme religious fundamentalism" (I will use these two synonyms interchangeably) which are materialized as terrorists' acts, including acts of killing people. By applying the adjectives "radical" and "extreme" I avoid abolishing the positive meaning implied by the term "fundamentalism," whose etymology will be discussed further in this paper.

6. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p. 28. Berger derives his general theoretical perspective from the sociology of knowledge and applies it to the phenomenon of religion.

7. Berger believes that definitions, if they are possible at all, can be only more useful or less so, but never "true" or "false." Even the discrepancies between definitions of religions would raise discussion which still is useful. See *Ibid*., pp. 175, 76.

8. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 29.

9. My assertion about religion does not exclude the possibility that some ideologies and even sciences may perform the same role. The question, however, goes deeper: "Up to what level is faith represented in the scientific and ideological endeavor, so that these two represent religious features as well?" Contemporary hermeneutics shows clearly how even in science, which before was considered to be a purely experimental and rational discipline, intuition, personal choice and faith are involved. For more information on the hermeneutical nature of science see David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*. (San Francisco. CA: Harper and Raw, 1987), pp. 33, 34.

10. Every living and healthy religion, Santayana says, "has a marked idiosyncrasy. Its power consists in its special and surprising message and in the bias which that revelation gives to life. . . Any attempt to speak without speaking any particular language is not more hopeless than the attempt to have a religion that shall be no religion in particular. . ." as quoted by Geertz, *The Interpretation,* p. 87.

11. Wilfred Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Tradition of Mankind.* (1963), p. 15.

12. Berger, *The Sacred* pp. 9, 10,

13. *Ibid.,* p. 6.

14. Berdiaev, the famous Russian philosopher, thinks that the very name "culture" shows the dependency of the notion of culture, from religion which gives the "cult" that is the root of "cult-ure."

15. *Ibid.,* p. 3.

16. Raimundo Panikkar, "La transformacion de la mision cristiana en dialogo.*" Pliegos de encuentro islamo-crisitano* 15 (Madrid: 1992), p. 14. If we agree with Berger that to be in culture means "to share in a particular world of objectivities with others. . ." and that "everything genuinely human—including the need for sharing (emphasis mine)—is ipso facto religious. . ." then we can understand what Panikkar means when talking about religion being the soul of culture. See Berger, *The Sacred* pp.10, 177.

17. Smith, *The Meaning* p.14.

18. By legitimizing human *nomoi,* religion also legitimizes social institutions "by bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status." It is in this sense that religion regulates human society which is not only "an outcome of culture, but a necessary condition of the latter."

Accordingly, here I do not focus on the question of whether or not religion is a constitutive factor for human well-being, but suggest that it is constitutive for the society and culture. See Berger, *The Sacred* pp. 10, 32, 33, 182.

19. Through its "religious acts and religious legitimations, rituals and mythology . . ." religion serves "to recall the traditional meanings embodied in the culture and its major institutions." *Ibid.,* p. 41.

20. Here, by symbolic forms, I understand and imply Geertz's notion of symbols as embodiments of historically transmitted patterns of meanings communicated from generation to generation. Geertz sees religion as a system of symbols which act "to establish powerful pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations." See Geertz, *The Interpretation* pp. 90, 119.

21. Berger, *The Sacred,* p. 177.

22. *Ibid.,* p. 9. Berger's understanding of religion as a human projection "grounded in specific infrastructures of human history. . ." does not preclude the logical "possibility that the projected meaning may have an ultimate status, independent of man." For more information see *Ibid.,* pp. 180, 81.

23. In Socrates "□□□□□□□□□□" takes the form of question and answer, which is to carry a conversation directed toward reaching a decision or settlement. The English verb "to confer" is very close to this meaning in its basic uses, such as "to give," "to meet" "to exchange" views or "to negotiate." In Plato and Aristotle the meaning remains generally the same, with the emphasis on "treating" something, or "conferring." In *Philo,* "dialogue" means nothing more than "conversation" or "speech," and only once does it meant "disputation." For more details see Gottlob Schrenk, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* Gergard Friedrich et al. eds. Geoffrey Bromiley tr. (Grand Rapids, MI, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974) II, 93.

24. *Ibid*., p.94

25. The text of Acts 17:17 better characterizes this usage: "Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the market place daily with those who happened to be there."

26. Leonard Swidler, "Interreligious and Interideological Dialogue: The Matrix for All Systematic Reflection Today," *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* ed. Leonard Swidler (Maryknoll, New York 10545: Orbis Books, 1987) p.12. The reason for this opposition was the loss of influence of the traditional revivalism. The decline of revivalism was attributed to the growth of the liberating trends of German biblical criticism as well as to the invasion of Darwinian theories into the field of religion. Claiming a "scientific explanation" of the origin of the universe—as opposed to the traditional religious explanation—the Darwinian theories overstepped the boundaries of science and entered the religious field. They had an enormous influence on people and eventually turned some of them away from religious beliefs. This caused a resistance to these influences from the side of some religious circles.

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4) the substitutionary atonement; 5) the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ and his future bodily return to earth. For more details see Pelikan, "Fundamentalism," p. 2. Muslims have their own fundamentals, the main being the inerrancy of their scripture, the Quran.

29. As quoted by Steven Jones, *Fundamentalism* [database on-line]; available from http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/nrms/fund.htiml; Internet; accessed 30 October 1998, p. 2.

30. Scott Gibson, "There's Nothing Extreme about Religious Conservatism" *No Extremism Here* [database on-line]; available from http://www.issuesets.org/chargod.htm; Internet; accessed 03 December 1998.

31. In the Bible and the Qur'an there are passages that must not be taken literally; see for example Ex. 21:24; Matt. 5:29; Mark 9:47; Qur'an 9:5. An example of such literal usage is the statement made by the radical Islamic fundamentalist Sheikh Usamah Bin-Muhammad Bin-Ladin who is leader of the Jihad Group in Egypt. The text which urges Jihad against Americans was published in Al-Quds al-`Arabi on February 23, 1998 and is accessible in Yarom Schweitzer, Osama Bin Ladin: "Wealth Plus Extremism Equals Terrorism" [data-base on line]; available from http://www.ictorg.il/articles/bin-ladin.htm; Internet; accessed 10 January 1998. Applying literally verse 9:5 from the Qur'an and backing it with another verse from the Hadith, and referring these verses to his own mission, Bin Ladin encouraged his followers in the following way: ". . . fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war)." Then he quotes the Prophet, Muhammad saying: "I have been sent with the sword between my hands to ensure that no one but God is worshipped, God who put my livelihood under the shadow of my spear and who inflicts humiliation and scorn on those who disobey my orders."

32. See "Religious Extremism, Religious Truth," *Christian Century* (December 20-27, 1995) 1235-1237. There we have two reports. One is on Rabin's assassination by Amir and the other reflects the killing of two abortion clinic workers in Brookline by a man. The first of the murderers reported that he had acted "on orders from God," while the second said that he did it "in the name of Jesus."

33. John O'Donohue, "Fundamentalism: A Psychological Problem," in *African Ecciestastical Reviéw* 29 (1987) 344-52 as quoted by Shea, "Catholic," p. 268.

34. Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995), p. 476.

35. Aquinas' usage of "words" in plural stresses the fact the human word is imperfect in contrast to the word of God, which is always completed and by nature one. Due to their imperfection, human words cannot fully reflect the things of the world. Human words are many and need be constantly renewed, i.e., while some of them die, others are newly formed. See *Ibid.,* pp. 425, 426.

36. *Ibid*., pp. 426, 474.

37. Tracy calls humans "conversation beings." Conversation, for him, is a game in which the player of the game is willing "to follow the question wherever it may go." Conversation, "is not a confrontation. It is not an exam. It is questioning itself." Tracy, *Plurality*, pp. 18, 28.

38. *Ibid.,* pp. 9, 20.

39. Gadamer, *Truth*, pp. 269,270.

40. Gadamer explains this dynamism as a movement from "fore-understanding" to "understanding," a back and forth. While the former represents the text being familiar and belonging to a tradition, the latter envisions it as an intended object which is distantiated historically. The play itself is the participatory transformation into the structure of the text which reveals a horizon as a field of vision from a determinate standpoint. The interpreter must surrender his standpoint i.e., his initial horizon of pre-understanding in order to be able to interpret further. The surrender takes form

in a fusion of horizons, that of the text with this of the interpreter in which a new understanding is born. *Ibid.,* 281.

41. As quoted from the "Pastoral Statement on Biblical Fundamentalism" published in *Origins* 17 (November 5, 1987) 376-77 by Shea, "Catholic," p. 270.

42. Shea, "Catholic," p. 270

43. This situation is quite correctly formulated by Tracy who says: "Persons willing to converse are always at one major disadvantage from those who do not. The former always consider the possibility that they may be wrong." Tracy, *Plurality,* p. 23.

44. See footnote # 30.

45. No schema can perfectly distinguish and classify different human attitudes and approaches. Still, with a view of clarity, using theoretical schematizations is useful and necessary. Here, I make use of Panikkar's classification of the variety of approaches that people disclose during the praxis of dialogue.

46. Panikkar Raimon, *The Intra-religious dialogue,* (New York, N.Y.: Paulist Press1978), xiv.

47. *Ibid.,* xvii.

48. Panikkar, "The Invisible," *Toward* ed. Swidler, 125.

49. Smith, *The Meaning* p.14.

50. Swidler, "Interreligious," 12.

51. Panikkar *The Intra-religious*, xvii.

52. Hence, for Swidler the very nature of dialogue forges a systematic reflection upon its object, which in this case is religion (or ideology). This, he says, implies two things: first, that the dialogue is not a debate and secondly, that dialogue is "the most appropriate matrix" within which all thinkers ought to carry out their systematic reflections about the most fundamental things concerning the meaning of life.

53. In contrast to the "dialectical area," the area of the Logos, characterized by internal struggle between opposites, the "dialogical area" belongs to the zone of Spirit and Myth, where even mutually opposed witnesses to religious experience are accepted.

54. In his hypertext essay "Why The `Fundamentalist' Approach to Religion Must Be Wrong," Scott Bidstrup quotes Randall Terry, extreme fundamentalist and a founder of Operation Rescue The News-Sentinel, Fort Wayne, Indiana. August 16, 1993. Terry addressed his followers with the following words: "I want you to just let a wave of intolerance wash over you. I want you to let a wave of hatred wash over you. We have a Biblical duty, we are called by God, to conquer this country. We don't want equal time. We don't want pluralism." The text is available from http://pe.net/~bidstrup/religion.htm; Internet; accessed 30 October 1998, p. 1.

55. In footnote #27 I have already made reference to O'Donohue's article, "Fundamentalism: A Psychological Problem." In this article, he suggests that the only adequate response to fundamentalism—which is for him infantilism—is to invite the fundamentalist, "him or her to grow up, painful and even agonizing though this process must always be." This invitation and process of growing up, I believe, can take place by participating in dialogue. It is only dialogue that lets the fundamentalist stop the process of brainwashing which would keep his or her motivation in an ever-premature stage.

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Chapter IV

Islam, Christianity and Unbelievers: Ways of Mutuality

Alexander Andonov

1. On the Need of Universal Values

In his book, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance*, Jay Newman advances the hypothesis that "there are some abstract, basic trans-cultural values" and that "almost all known societies are built upon a foundation of a limited number" of such values. Newman argues that those basic trans-cultural values "are essentially *ends* and people in different religious or political or ethnic groups disagree as to what the appropriate means to these ends are."[1] The author reasons:

> If there were no trans-cultural values, then we would be left with radical ethical relativism and an empty concept of civilization. But if there are universal ethical *termini*, no matter how abstract... then intercultural dialogue on ethical questions is possible, and we can learn from people in other societies about ways of more rapidly realizing common ideals.[2]

Indeed, there are arguments in favor of the hypothesis that only justice, peace and wisdom are trans-cultural values.

2. Creativity: A Universal Principle

From an ontological perspective, people - just like all living creatures - are, to a certain extent, a self-creating reality in the sense that they are responsible for their own lives. They build their own lives since this is a process *sui generis* and no one can replace them, no matter how skillful s/he is or how much s/he wants to. People, just like all living creatures, must do their own breathing, eating, growing, etc. Needless to say, people are different from animals. They are producers. They have a particular way of life and can invent a new one. This is an ontological fact. Trans-cultural values are arguably easier to identify from the perspective of this philosophical idea. The problem is to what extent a particular religion respects this basic ontological reality of humankind.

3. The Universality of Islam

In his paper, "Islamic Government," Ayatullah Ruhullah Khumayni writes:

> The colonialists found in the Muslim world their long-sought object. To achieve their colonialist ambitions, the colonialists sought to create the right conditions leading to the annihilation of Islam. . . . Islam is the religion of the strugglers who want right and justice, the religion of those demanding freedom and independence and those who do want to allow infidels to dominate the believers.[3]

Ayatullah Khumayni does not mean that the colonialists want to turn Muslims into Christians "after driving them away from Islam." The colonialists are not believers. Their sole objective is "control and domination," and Islam appears to be the main obstacle to that. According to Ayatullah Khumayni, that is why Islam was treated unjustly and was presumed to have evil intents.

> The hands of the missionaries, the orientalists and of information media - all of whom are in the service of the colonialist countries, - have cooperated to distort the facts of Islam in a manner that caused many people, especially the educated among them, to steer away from Islam and to be unable to find a way to reach Islam.[4]

Khumayni wants to unite the Muslim nation and "the only means"[5] of achieving this objective is establishment of Islamic government (ibid. p. 319). "The Islamic government is the government of the law and God alone is the ruler and the legislator."[6]

Here is how the Mullah in a Shi'ite Iranian village responded to the question about the responsibility of man in Reinhold Loeffler's 1970-1971 and 1976 surveys:

> God's punishment for disobeying the rules is hell in the next world and in this world it is whatever the Qur'anic laws prescribe: cutting off a finger for stealing a small amount, the hand for more, death for murder.[7]

The problem is: How can people from different religions, and even unbelievers, live together in peace and harmony? We will read the following even in a holy book:

> Verily I am with you; wherefore confirm those who believe. I will cast a dread into the hearts of the unbelievers. Therefore strike off *their* heads, and strike off all the ends of their *fingers*. This *shall they suffer*, because they have resisted God and his apostle: and whosoever shall oppose God and his apostle, verily God *will be* severe in punishing *him*. This *shall be your punishment*; taste it therefore: and the infidels shall *also* suffer the torment of *hell* fire.[8]

The quote is from the English translation of the Qur’an. By comparison, the Bulgarian translation is different, with "beat" instead of "strike off."[9] Since I do not know Arabic, I cannot comment on the three versions of the same passage. Another English translation of the Qur’an has "smite off" instead of "strike off."

Relations between Muslims and unbelievers are regulated by a "declaration of immunity from God and his apostle unto the idolaters, with whom ye have entered into league."[10] Chapter IX says the following:

> Wherefore perform the covenant *which ye shall have made* with them, until their time *shall be* elapsed; for God loveth those who fear *him*. And when the months *wherein* ye *are not* allowed to *attack them* shall be past, kill the idolaters wheresoever ye shall find them, and take them *prisoners*, and besiege them, and lay wait for them in every convenient place. But if they shall repent and observe the appointed times of prayer, and pay the legal alms, dismiss them freely: for God *is* gracious *and*merciful . . . This *shall thou do*, because they are people which know not *the excellency of the religion thou preachest.*[11]

4. Islam as a Threat

Muslim expansionism, the Islamic threat, is perhaps the main problem in relations between Christians and Muslims. To quote John Esposito:

> The Islamic ideal was to fashion a world in which, under Muslim rule, idolatry and paganism would be eliminated, and all people of the book could live in a society guided and protected by Muslim power. While Islam was regarded as the final and perfect religion of God, others were to be invited, through persuasion first rather than the sword, to convert to Islam.[12]

The Prophet's successors achieved the ideal of Muslim domination on a grand scale, the following historical account shows:

> Within one hundred years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the successors (caliphs) of Muhammad had established an empire greater than Rome at its zenith. The shock to the international order and more specifically to Christendom was incalculable. That the tribes of Arabia could be united, let alone spill out of Arabia, overcome the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) and Persian (Sassanid) empires, and by the end of a century create an Islamic caliphate extending from North Africa to India, seemed unthinkable.[13]

To attain their objectives of Muslim expansion and domination in such an impressive manner, Muslims obviously had to invent the appropriate methods. I would say that one of those methods is the so-called "Declaration of Immunity." The methods employed by the Ottomans in their conquest of Eastern Europe are well documented:

> Ottoman power and glory rested upon the development of a system for training young men for military and administrative service. It produced a first-class bureaucracy and military which relied heavily upon the religious scholars (the *ulama*) and a corps of elite slave soldiers and officials, the Janissaries. Young Christian males were taken from conquered populations of the Balkans, and later from Anadola, converted to Islam, and sent to special schools which trained and produced generations of Ottoman officials.[14]

5. Looking for Common Ground

If we consider what all religions have in common, we may argue that since they all believe in God, all believers have the same feelings and are ready to help each other, respecting the beliefs of others. Something of the sort has been achieved in the new relationship between believers and activists. The subsequent result may be qualified as political and could greatly contribute to religious tolerance.

Certain authors assert that there is a difference between tolerating someone's beliefs and tolerating someone as a believer. This sounds reasonable. Yet, what about people who presume that unbelievers or believers in another god are in need of help? Such people cannot tolerate seeing others harm themselves. "They are worried about us, our souls, our spiritual lives. Sometimes they will go to great extremes to save us; they will torture us, burn us at the stake, deny us freedom or choice . . ."[15]

I propose that we look for an ontological common ground on the basis of which we could understand each other and transfer meaning among Christians, Muslims and unbelievers. I believe this common ground is the ontological Subject-ness[16] of all living creatures.

Notes

1. Newman, Jay. Foundations of Religious Tolerance. (University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 68.
2. Ibid., p. 69.
3. Khumayni, Ayatullah Ruhullah. “Islamic Government.” pp. 314-315.
4. Ibid., p. 315.
5. Ibid., p. 319.
6. Ibid., p. 317.
7. Loeffler, Reinhold. Islam in Practice, Religious Beliefs in a Persian Village. (State University of New York Press), p. 23.
8. *The Koran*, Translated into English from the original Arabic by George Sale. (New York: A. L. Burt Co.), Chapter VIII, pp. 165-166.
9. *Sveshteniya Koran: The Holy Koran*. Translated into Bulgarian from the original Arabic by Tsvetan Teofanov. (Taiba al-Hairiya, 1997), chap. 8, p. 12.
10. *The Glorious Ku’ran*. Translation and Commentary by Abdallah Yosuf Ali. (Libyan Arab Republic, May, 1973), p. 1393.
11. Sale, op. cit., p. 171.
12. Esposito, John I. *The Islamic Threat – Myth or Reality?* 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 39.
13. Ibid., p. 31.
14. Ibid., p. 44.
15. Newman, op. cit., p. 12.
16. Subject-ness: the ontological capacity of reality to self-create and to advance self-creation.

Chapter V

The Problem of Textual Authority in the Context of Intercultural Dialogue

Burhanettin Tatar

It makes sense to talk about dialogue between Islamic and Christian cultures since the academic and political circles have debated the celebrated thesis of "the clash of civilizations," proposed by Samuel P. Huntington.[1] Whether Huntington's thesis validates or invalidates the picture drawn formerly by F. Fukuyama in his work, *The End of History and the Last Man,* remains an unanswered question.[2] What interests us here is the general question of whether the differences between the cultures and civilizations (and, of course, religions) can entirely be taken into account as the source of the prophesied clash of civilizations and cultures. And what kind of role do the authoritative texts, specifically sacred scriptures, play in the constitution of this difference between the book-centered,[3] i.e., scriptural cultures and societies?[4]

If the aforementioned word “difference” is taken to mean "absolute distance" or "absolute otherness," then talking about dialogue between different cultures and religions would be an inconsequential, theoretical talk about the question of how to bridge an insurmountable gap between them. Nevertheless, when Hegel's celebrated objection -- that to recognize the limit is already to have gone beyond it[5] -- is applied to this context, we can conceive that the idea of absolute distance or absolute otherness between the cultures is merely a matter of fallacious abstraction. However, if the notion of dialogue is to acquire a practical meaning, we must show that differences between the cultures and religions are rather a condition for a dialogue between them.[6] Nonetheless, this puts before us a specific question in the context of textual authority, How is it possible for different scriptural cultures to have a constant dialogue with each other by sustaining the differences between the authoritative texts? In this paper, I shall argue that a constant dialogue between the book-centered, i.e., scriptural cultures (and religions) is possible so long as the authoritative texts are interpreted in terms of the horizons, which the texts open with infinite potentiality of their content.

The notion of textual authority seems to lack clarity of meaning when taken in isolation from its historical appearances. This is because the notion of "textual authority" in its practical sense presupposes a community of readers (or hearers) who holds the text as claiming something true;[7] namely, a text can establish its authority on the mediation of its historical interpretations. If this is the case, since the practical sense of the authoritative text is always situational and contextual, then the locus of the being (meaning) of the text lies in between its written form and its historical interpretations.[8] Nevertheless, this approach should not be taken as collapsing the being (meaning) of the text into its historical appearances by following the reception hermeneutics[9] as well as the deconstructionism. Otherwise, the notion of textual authority would be an almost entirely empty one to be filled according to ever-changing contexts. Given that textual authority implies also the historical continuity of the content of the text, we can conceive that text transcends each particular historical horizon by putting up "an invincible resistance to being transformed into the identity of the concept."[10] I will attempt to reveal this by making some brief remarks on the history of the Qur'anic text as an impersonal authority in Islamic societies.

The question of how the Qur'anic text established its authority in the beginning within the pagan Arabic society requires a much deeper examination than what we can conduct here. Obviously, the authority of God as the Supreme Being, the reliability of Muhammad before the advent of Islam, and later his charismatic leadership within the Muslim society played great roles in the establishment of the authority of the Qur'an. However, it should be noted that since both the authority of God and the charismatic leadership of the Prophet Muhammad are considered within the category of personal authority, they differ from the impersonal authority of the Qur'anic text. Given that before the arrival of Islam the Arabs were familiar customarily with personal authorities -- whose legitimacy was based on the oral texts conveyed in the form of narratives (*rivay_t*) -- we can observe a radical transformation within the Arabic consciousness from the authority of the oral texts (tradition)[11] toward the impersonal authority of the written text of the Qur'an.[12]

Indubitably, at the outset, the establishment of the authority of the Qur'an was resisted by the traditional narratives which had historically played a tremendous role in shaping the pagan beliefs of the Arabs. It is interesting to note that, when casting a logical doubt upon the act of legitimization of the common pagan beliefs on the ground of historical narratives, the Qur'an proposed a large narrative according to which all prophets from Adam to Muhammad had conveyed the same divine message throughout the history of mankind. In this sense, it was not revealing a totally new message. But, by maintaining that it was the last message sent by God to humanity, the Qur'an linked the beginning of human history with the end of it on the basis of its content. In this sense, it was the re-"presentation" (*Vorstellung*) of the divine Truth in human language which God used.

The fusion of human language (temporal) with divine message (eternal) in the case of Qur'an[13] can be taken as an account for the event-character of the revelation.[14] F. Rahman indicates the immediacy (happening) of the revelation as follows:

> We see, then, that the Qur'an and the genesis of the Islamic community occurred in the light of history and against a social-historical background. The Qur'an is a response to that situation, and for most part it consists of moral, religious, and social pronouncements that respond to specific problems confronted in concrete historical situations.[15]

The Qur'an was an epoch-making event which designated a discontinuity within the general course (continuity) of history. This discontinuity revealed itself with the Qur'an's re-interpretation of the past history in such a way that what was "true" in the past started to address humanity in a new world view (*weltanschauung*).[6] The engaging power of truth, revealed through the Arabic language of the Qur'an, can be seen as the basis of the impersonal authority of the Qur'anic text. The Qur'anic text was apprehended by its first hearers as something which speaks to people, not as something which talks about someone/something else. In other words, the Qur'anic text appeared in the first, not third, person, as a "Thou" facing the "I" of the human beings.[17] Hence, we can observe a kind of dialogical relationship between the Qur'anic text and its hearers.[18] In this dialogical relation, the Qur'an does not exist only as an answer to the problems, as Rahman contended[19] but also as a text which questions the source of the problems, that is, as a text which questions the answers given from a traditional, pagan perspective.[20]

Nevertheless, due to the variety of reasons, such as sociopolitical, economic, environmental, cultural, etc., the history of Islam has witnessed a diversity of appropriations of the authority of the Qur'anic text. For instance, in the first appearance of the group known as Kharijite, we observe an acute rejection of the mediation of interpretation (personal authority) in such a way that "interpretation" was set as diametrically opposite to the authority of the Qur'an. They expressed this by their strict adherence to the Qur'anic idea that "authority belongs only to God" (*la hukma illa li-llah*). By virtue of their naive realistic viewpoint, the Kharijite group represents the most radical understanding of the authority of the Qur'anic text. From their perspective, the Qur'an looked to be a text whose meaning was as if wholly present out there – complete and outside of the personal context. While the Kharijite group was eliminating everything human with regard to the authority of the Qur'an, Mu'aviya, the Governor of Damascus and the leader of the group fighting against Khalifa authority of the Qur'anic text, was in favor of his personal political interest.[21]

Shi'ite understanding of the Qur'an revealed itself first by linking the impersonal authority of the written text of the Qur'an with its authoritative (personal) interpretations in an extreme form. Accordingly, the personal authority of Imams became the most authentic mediation of the Qur'anic meaning. From another perspective, Shi'ite understanding can be seen as an interesting example of the mistrustfulness of the interpretations whose legitimacy is based on the common practice of language. Therefore, by establishing the authority of the Qur'an, Shi'a understood the "mediation" of this authority as an extraordinary (epoch-making) event itself.

In contrast to the act of anchoring the meaning (and authority) of the Qur'an within the personal interpretation of Imam in Shi'a, the Zahirites accepted that the authority of the Qur'anic text reveals itself through its literal, apparent meaning as determined by its original historical context.[22] To rehabilitate the impersonal authority of the Qur'an and to eliminate every kind of manipulation of the Qur'an for personal interests, they saw it necessary to re-establish the original meaning of the Qur'anic language as practiced in the lifetime of the Prophet. Nevertheless, they failed to see that, with regard to ever-changing contexts, this was, at the same time, paving the way toward restricting the impersonal authority of the Qur'anic text and opening a constantly broadening territory for the personal, and perhaps arbitrary, authority of the interpreters.

In mystical interpretations of the Qur'an, the authority of the sacred text seems to be appropriated in terms of ontology of experience.[23] The Qur'anic text does not stand merely as an "other" over against the community of its interpreters, but it also exists at a different existential level when its "world" is shared/experienced by its particular readers. Hence, it seems possible to differentiate the authority of the text on individual consciousness from its authority on social consciousness. This becomes apparent specifically when the mystics attribute a symbolic function to the textual meaning as appropriated traditionally. If we put aside the extreme trends in Islamic mysticism, we can contend that it would be misleading to argue that the Muslim mystics put the commonly practiced meaning of the sacred text diametrically opposite to its inner appropriation. I suppose they saw it as a one-sided idea that the authority of the Qur'anic text reveals itself basically through the controlling function of language, which is fundamentally social.

No matter how much the variety of appropriations of the Qur'anic text can be detected in the history of Islam, it remains true to contend that Muslim people have understood the text commonly as a divine message to be understood and applied to ever-changing contexts. In short, it is a text which speaks on something which has been already shared by its readers. Perhaps, the most striking feature of the authority of the Qur'anic text is to make its followers turn toward the future by opening an absolute horizon (eternal life before God) with regard to which the accurate meaning of the past and the present will be determined. Accordingly, the Qur'an is a text which constantly creates a tension by reminding us that human being exists in between the ambiguous past and, yet, open future headed for an absolute horizon. Because of this tension which it creates, it is capable of opening new horizons -- and, hence, of establishing its authority -- whenever its meaning is mediated. Therefore, without considering the event-character (immediacy) of what it says, it does not seem possible to have a genuine dialogue with the Qur'anic text.

Consequently, it seems to be a requirement to propose the concept of dynamic identity of Qur'anic text. This dynamism reveals itself in the constant mediation of the authority of the text by ever-changing contexts. The fact that the meaning of the sacred text cannot be totally identified (i.e., presented) within a particular appearance (interpretation) signifies that the oneness of meaning toward the future (other) is an intrinsic feature of the text itself.

In conclusion, we identify basically two features of the authoritative text: (1) the happening (event-character) of its meaning, and (2) its openness toward future (other) interpretations. I presume they reveal the fact that "difference" is an essential ontological dimension of the textual identity. Precisely because of this ontological dimension, it is possible to have a constant dialogue with the text, given that the notion of constant dialogue presupposes the process of contextualization of textual meaning.[24] If we really want to have a dialogue with the other (Islamic or Christian) culture, our basic responsibility is, then, to let the authoritative texts speak to us on the problems common to both sides, and never to forget the historicity of our understanding (interpretations) of the texts. The real danger facing dialogue is to attempt to fix a static identity of the texts.

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Notes

1. Huntington proposed his thesis of "the clash of civilizations" in *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993), 22-49.

2. F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

3. Though the term "the societies of the Book/book" is applied mainly to Muslim, Christian and Jewish societies, it can be broadened to include the societies within which nonreligious text constitutes the basic reference point to the mediation of its particular (authoritative) interpretation.

4. For instance, the contemporary French Catholic theologian, Jacques Jomier, author of *The Bible and the Koran*, tran., Edward P. Arbez (New York: Desclee, 1964) argues that Islam and Christianity, as products of their respective scriptures, are "two separate worlds." With regard to the respective scriptures (and the doctrines they present), there is fundamentally nothing in common. See for further discussion on his position, F. Peter Ford, Jr., "The Qur'an as Sacred Scripture: An Assessment of Contemporary Christian Perspectives," *The Muslim World* LXXXIII, No. 2 (April, 1993), 145-146.

5. Hegel directed this objection against the Kantian distinction between noumenon and phenomenon.

6. I think the appearance of a work like *The Challenge of the Scriptures: The Bible and the Qur'an* (New York: Orbis Books, 1989) can be considered as a vindication of this supposition. See it for a philosophical discussion on the role of the "other" as the basis of dialogue and self-reflection. David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990).

7. Obviously, we do not take into consideration here the notion of "absolute text" which does not presuppose any reader and, hence, is cut off from interpretive context.

8. With this approach, I follow Heidegger's and Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics which view "text" as an autonomous being that reveals itself on the mediation of its interpretations. See H.-G. Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diana P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), pp. 21-51; "Religious and Poetical Speaking," in *Myth, Symbol, and Reality*, ed. Alan M. Olson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), pp. 86-98.

9. Farid Esack and W.C. Smith seem to follow reception hermeneutics when they approach the Qur'anic text. See Farid Esack, "Qur'anic Hermeneutics: Problems and Prospects," *The Muslim Middle Eastern Studies*, 11:4 (July 1980), 490. I do not see how Smith's argument for the active role of the Qur'an in the history of Islam can be reconciled with his concluding remark that "The meaning of the Qur'an as scripture lies not in the text, but in the minds and hearts of Muslims." *Ibid.*, pp. 498, 505. While in the first argument the Qur'an seems to be an autonomous text, in the concluding remark its being is reduced into the consciousness of the Muslims.

10. Gadamer, "Reflections on My Philosophic Journey," in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed., L.E. Hahn (Illinois: Open Court, 1997), p. 44; see also Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and Logocentrism," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diana P. Michelfelder and R.E. Palmer (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), pp. 114-125. From this approach, F. Rahman's objective (and functionalist) hermeneutics does not seem to be satisfactory since it bases itself on the subject-object ontology which separates universal meaning from its applications when attempting to disclose self-identical meaning of the Qur'an with regard to its particular historical context. See Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

11. This is not to say that the authority of oral text was diminished within Arabic societies after the event of the Qur'an. In the history of Hadith (tradition of the Prophet), we can observe the continuation of the authority of oral text in the form of narrative. Later, by establishing the so-called authentic Hadith Corpus, Muslim scholars tried to restrict the authority of oral text (Hadith) in order to prevent the innovation of Hadith on the name of the Prophet. See for further information, Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History*, 2nd reprint (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1984).

12. In this context, we do not deal with the question of how the transformation occurred from the Qur'an as an authoritative "discourse" toward the Qur'an as an authoritative "text."

13. Due to this fusion, the Qur'an has been considered also as an event of language, which the doctrine of *I'jaz* (inimitability of the Qur'an) attempts to clarify. In this context, see Issa J. Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'an: *I'jaz* and Related Topic," in A. Rippin, *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 139-157. This fusion can be considered as the background of the historical theological discussions between the Mu'tazilite and Sunni (orthodox) scholars on the question of whether the Qur'an is the created or uncreated (eternal) speech of Allah.

14. See for the event-character of the Qur'an, Smith, "The True Meaning of Scripture," p. 490; *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 161-162; Kenneth Cragg, *The Event of the Qur'an: Islam in Its Scripture* (London: George Allen and Unwin., 1971), 13-17. See for an analysis on Cragg's view of the Qur'an, Andreas D'Souza, "Christian Approaches to the Study of Islam: An Analysis of the Writings of Watt and Cragg," *The Bulletin* (July-Dec., 1992), 33-80.

15. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 5.

16. Hence, by overlooking the historical effect of the Qur'anic meaning on the tradition of its interpretations, to move from the original historical context to the Qur'anic meaning, as the so-called "occasions of revelation" (Esbab-1 Nuzul) suggests, would be taking the text as one-sided. This is because meaning as an event changes even the sense of its original historical context. For instance, after the advent of Islam, the earlier periods were considered as a period of ignorance (*Jahiliyya*) and everything in this period was evaluated from this new perspective.

17. Precisely for this reason, Ibn Hazm, the great Zahirite scholar of Cordova, based his linguistic theory "upon an analysis of the imperative mode since, in its most radical and verbal form,

the Qur'an, according to Ibn Hazm, is a text controlled by two paradigmatic imperatives, *iqra*: read, or recite, and*qull*: tell." E. Said, "The Text, the World, the Critic," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed., J.V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 167-171.

18. In this context, M. Arkoun remarks: "The principal idea is that of a recitation conforming to a discourse that is heard, not read. That is why I prefer to speak of Qur'anic discourse and not of text in the initial phase of enunciation by the Prophet." See M. Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers*, trans. and ed. by R.D. Lee (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. 30.

19. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity,* p. 5. I think, it is Rahman's contribution to rehabilitate the hermeneutics of the Qur'an by indicating that the act of interpretation of the Qur'an should start from the consciousness of the problems. In fact, this consciousness was the starting point of the legal hermeneutics of the Qur'an in the first centuries of Islam. Nonetheless, after a while, we can observe that a priority was given to "answers" over against "questions.” In other words, in the following centuries, since the answers were considered as the locus of truth, the questions acquired a negative sense, and hence, the dialectical relation between question and answer was dissolved.

20. Therefore, I think, it is a mistake to approach the Qur'anic meaning only from a functionalist perspective by considering it solely as an answer. Rather, by engaging the power of its questions, the Qur'an resists being taken as a tool "ready to hand,” (*Zuhanden*), (i.e., manipulability), and being objectified as something "present at hand" (*vorhanden*), to use Heidegger's language. See also, Arkoun, *ibid.*, p. 34.

21. As this historical phenomenon signifies, it is also possible for text to become "an instrument of authority and a way of excluding others and regulating their access to it." See Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam* (New York: 1982), p. 31; Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 161-169. Due to this fact, some Muslim scholars who are critical of Islamic tradition tend to separate "text" from its interpretations.

22. This is because, according to Ibn Hazm, the leading Zahirite scholar, "There exists in language a reality, instituted by God." See R. Arnaldez, "Ibn Hazm," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edition (Leiden: 1979). See for a structuralist analysis of the Zahirite view of the Qur'an, Said, *ibid.*

23. See G.L. Bruns, *Hermeneutics: Ancient and Modern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 124-136.

24. In this context, Ricoeur accepts that the text must be able to "decontextualize" itself in such a way that it can be "recontextualized" in a new situation. See P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. K. Blamey and J.B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), p. 83. Gadamer refers to this process with his celebrated notion of "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontenverschmelzung*). See Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, 5th ed. (Tübingen: J.B. Mohr, 1986), p. 310, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p. 305.

Part II

Dialogue between Cultures in Religious and Secular Contexts

Chapter VI

Clash of Civilizations or Restorying Mankind?

Yuriy Pochta

> The study of Islam in the West has been undergoing a profound crisis. For the first time in its history Western Orientalism confronts encroachments on its privileged domains of study that come from other disciplines (from the social sciences, from Marxism, from psychoanalysis and from the very region being studied). The net positive effect of such encroachments is that for the first time Orientalism is being asked critically to examine not only the truth or the falseness of its methodology and its investigative results, but its relation both to the culture from which it is derived and from the historical period in which its main ideas were advanced. -- Edward W. Said, *Islam, the Philological Vocation, and French Culture: Renan and Massignon*

For many years I have been interested in the Islamic society, its religion, culture and civilization from their origin up to the present state. While studying the works of the Western scholars on this subject, I was struck by some evidently distorted representations of this society. I tried to explain it first to myself and then to others. It was necessary to find out why the intentions and words of those scholars differed so much, why terms they were using betrayed them, and at last why they were so intolerant. For this purpose I used deconstruction as a mode of philosophizing. In the late 1970s, not knowing about postmodern philosophy, I called my approach to the writings of the outstanding thinkers a critical methodological analysis. But this does not imply that I was not interested in the technique of deconstruction. On the contrary, it is a pity that I could not use it in its contemporary, well-defined form at that time, thereby saving me much time and energy. Nevertheless, it can be very useful for me now. Moreover, the great achievement of postmodern philosophy is that deconstruction is supplemented by reconstruction. The latter, as I see it, has positive, constructive meaning, so important in this contemporary world.

The purpose of this paper is to show: 1) my achievements in deconstructive analysis of the Western scientific stories about the Islamic society and 2) possible directions for reconstruction of these stories.

Deconstruction of the Western Scientific Stories about the Islamic Society

There is a long-standing tradition of radical distortion of the Islamic society in Western culture and science. The main reason for this is the Christian basis of the Western culture. The most complete fulfillment of this influence was in the Christian Providentialism of the Middle Ages. It contained an idea that there could be only one true revelation of religion in the world and, correspondingly, only one true society based on it. From this point of view, Islam, which appeared in the Christian world several centuries later than Christianity itself, had been understood as something anti-Christian, or at least as a providentially created tool to secure the transition of pagans to Christianity. Accordingly, the Muslim society was interpreted as wrong, pagan, an empire of evil. This Christian attitude to the Muslim society then influenced the civilizational analysis which was created in the European philosophy of history in the 18th century. Even the Marxist explanation of the Islamic society based on the socio-economic formation theory contained this influence, though implicitly. It means that in Western society the Christian interpretation of Islamic history became the original story. This religious influence on the scientific mind can be described in postmodern philosophy's terms as contexts within contexts.

Eurocentrism is one of the important a priori principles of the civilizational analysis. It implies the overwhelming superiority of the European civilization over any other, including the Islamic civilization. This principle develops the traditional Christian attitude towards the Islamic society, but in a transformed, rational form. Eurocentrism represents, in a disguised form, the position of Western thinkers. It implies that the Christian society overrides the Muslim one as much as civilization overrides barbarism. The idea of Christianity's superiority over Islam is usually expressed implicitly. And the idea about the Muslim society's barbaric character is expressed explicitly, with reference to history, to the laws governing the development of a society and to such notions as historicism, progress, freedom and democracy. That is why the Western civilizational meta-narrative of the Muslim society's history contains two contradictory variants: one related to the philosophy of history and another to the philosophy of religion. In most cases the latter (in its pantheistic or deistic form) determines the first. In writings of a concrete Western thinker these variants are often mixed and at the same time lead to opposite evaluations of the Islamic civilization (Leibnitz); only a few thinkers can interconnect them (Hegel).

During the 18th and the 19th centuries European Romanticists (F. Schlegel, Shatobrian and Carleil) put forward an idea about Christianity's civilizing role in the world. They came to the conclusion that only through Western intrusion could the Muslim world become a real civilization.

This idea was supported by Positivists (E. Renan and G. Lebon). They were trying to prove an ontological inadequacy and foreignness of the barbaric Muslim East compared to Western society. Here, in connection with Positivism's ideas about the Muslim society, we can discuss the notion of the so-called "Islamic fundamentalism.” Its origin and existence can be explained as a painful, ideological and political response of the Muslim society, being subjugated to forced Westernization. This was a reaction to attempts to make the Muslim narrative subordinate to the stories of Western modernity, to remove the lived experience of the Muslim peoples out of their contemporary, dominant stories. This phenomenon is an example of the ongoing conflict of civilizations in which the Muslim side saw itself as a victim. But is it possible to blame Western scholars for the creation of aggressive, nontolerant stories about the Muslim society?

At first it is necessary to explain the historical context in which Positivism was formed. At that time the real Western worldwide superiority, supplanted by the active colonization of the Muslim countries, was increasing Eurocentric tendencies in Western Islamology. Former naïve rational-universal, Enlightenment attitudes towards nonEuropean societies had been changed by another extreme: cultural-historical or racial-anthropological plurality, which admitted the European-type of social development as the only form of universalism. The Positivists supposed that, while sociology would bring them reliable knowledge about society, they could reform it. That is why they were interested in the Muslim East as a part of the world in which they could apply their reformatory activities. In the writings of E. Renan and G. Lebon, we find many ideas elaborated by the Enlightenment and by Romanticism, but these are integrated into race inequality theory. The Positivistic sociology aspired to discover race as the true substance of social life and civilization. In the sociological explanation we can discern two different attitudes toward society: its own naturalistic attitude and the rational attitude, inherited from the Enlightenment. As the Positivistic sociology was developing, these two attitudes were transformed into irrational and rational interpretations of the reasons for society's development. Depending on the inclination toward one or the other of these interpretations, scholars, while solving the problem of world unity, chose either an idea of unity or plurality of the historical process. The Positivistic philosophy of history, concerned with the fate of Western society and civilization, expresses both an optimistic intention to scientific study and the reformation of society (E. Renan) and a pessimistic apprehension that the far-reaching intentions of the scientific social transformation can undermine its natural foundations (G. Lebon).

Since only Western society possesses exact knowledge about Muslim society, Western social transformation becomes, inevitably, worldwide. According to the Positivists, Western civilization has potentially worldwide importance, but its mission is endangered by internal and external barbarity, and they have to get rid of this barbarity very actively without waiting for its natural historical disappearance.

Renan makes the claim that Muslim society fully represents external barbarity and that mankind must get rid of it by cultural and political means. Only when Western society can remove such major components of the Islamic civilization as the Islamic religion and the Arabic language, can it fruitfully use the human and natural resources of Eastern society on behalf of humanity.

Lebon's irrational and pessimistic apprehension of the world's development is, also, concerned with the fate of Muslim society. But because he doubts the possibility of a scientifically proved transformation of society, he does not look at Muslim society as an object of the European influence. He takes it as an example of inevitable action of the law of natural inequality of races and individuals. According to Lebon, this law has already caused the death of the Muslim civilization and threatens Western civilization.

It is quite obvious that, in general, Positivism follows Hegel's historicism with its opposition between the European and the Eastern principles of social development. Positivism produces additional reasons for the 18th century's Eurocentric idea that Western civilization will be able to become worldwide only when it subjects Muslim society to theoretical and practical negation.

I do not want to state that the Positivists, as well as some other Western thinkers, are directly responsible for the creation of Islamic fundamentalism. But, they encouraged the creation of this radical reaction of the Muslim society directed against Western influence in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Western positivist narrative of Islamic history, indeed, has produced these ideological and political consequences.

The previous material relates predominantly to the linear, one-dimensional understanding of civilizational development, the best-elaborated form of which was represented by Hegel Yet, the same can be said about a pluralistic, cyclical interpretation of civilizational development. According to this interpretation, there are many civilizations in the world that have natural limits for their existence. There is only one exception: the Western civilization can avoid cyclical, natural fatalism because it is based on Christianity (O. Spengler and A. Toynbee).

In Russia a narrative of the Muslim society's history was created in a different social and cultural context. In Russia during the early Middle Ages, there appeared ideas, based on the Christian universalistic outlook, about Islam as a phenomenon which had no ontological foundation and which could exist only in relation with Christianity as a self-sufficient unity. Explanation of the Islamic society was taking place amidst attempts at cultural self-identification of the Russian society, which had begun in the 17th century. In this story of world history, Russia was placed between the two civilizational entities: the West and the Islamic East. The West was understood as a dynamic society, but moving in the wrong direction of progressive development. It recognized that Muslim society had a glorious medieval past, but at the present, it was not part of the process of historical development. The history of Islamic society was predominantly narrated in Russia in the context of world history, interpreted as the process of the formation of the Christian God-mankind. Russian thinkers (P. Chaadaev, A. Khomiakov and V. Soloviev) believed that the latter would overcome Western civilization, which was the most developed and, hence, had outlived itself.

The Marxist narrative of Muslim society's history, being a product of the European Christian culture, necessarily implied the idea of the linear direction of historical development and the principle of Eurocentrism. Karl Marx, being confident of the inevitable impending destruction of Western civilization, created his understanding of world history as the latest historical stage of the European society, forming, instead, a post-civilizational, communist society. In this context, Muslim society could be understood as a relic of Eastern pre-capitalist society and the semi-colonial rear of world capitalism. This narrative was easily restoried in Soviet Russia in the 1920s through the 1930s. At that time, the Soviet communists came to the conclusion that, when they came to power in Russia, the revolutionary upheaval in the West was delayed and the Muslim East suddenly became a reserve of the world proletarian revolution. In any case, such an interpretation of Muslim society's story was temporal and provisional. The Russian historical experience in the 20th century shows that the Muslim problem was not solved there. Recent Russian reformers are again confronted with this problem. They ignore it and do not take into consideration the experience of their predecessors. The main question concerning Russia's future is whether Russia will maintain current multinational integrity and will not disintegrate into several pieces with Christian and Muslim populations.

It is remarkable that the European civilizational and the Marxist socio-economical formation's narratives of Muslim society's history have many common features. As it was said previously, both of them are Eurocentric because they are the products of the European culture. Both of them treat Islamic civilization as some waste of the world history (as Hegel understood it) and comprehend the Western mission in the Muslim East -- either imperial-colonial or Marxist revolutionary-proletarian -- as progressive and liberating. They unanimously reject any possibility of recognizing the uniqueness and ontological equality of Western and Islamic civilizations. Both of these narratives promote a missionary attitude towards Muslim society and an inclination for conducting large-scale experiments upon it.

Every civilization has its religious foundation. As we have shown, this basis is evident in the stories that European science tells us about Muslim society -- implicitly in the form of the religious Providentialism or explicitly in the rational-philosophical form. This circumstance allows us to state that there are certain limits for the universal, objective and scientific character of the Islamic society's narrative, limits created by the European philosophical imagination. In other words, the truth and meaning of this narrative are context-bound. Essentially, the Christian character of European culture and science does not cancel the necessity and possibility of a dialogue between Western and Islamic societies, based on restorying their narratives about each other.

Reconstruction of the Western Scientific Stories about Islamic Society

At present there are two extremes in the Western historical narrative that we should avoid. The first implies that, after the end of the Cold War, the West will see its values expand all over the world. Francis Fukuyama told this story in *The End of the History*. The second supposes that the end of the Cold War will inevitably cause a "clash of civilizations," Samuel Huntington's vision. Both of these stories are of Modernist origin, the first is optimistic about the final worldwide victory of Western civilization, and the second is pessimistic about the gradual decline of the West. Neither of these points of view can be accepted. We must give ourselves a chance to restory modern world history and to avoid any fatalistic comprehension of it. We will be able to do it with the help of postmodern philosophy. According to Michael White and David Epston, postmodernism does not devastate all previous languages. Instead, it allows us to understand that none of them are fixed or final. Or, as Efran Lukens says, none of today's constructions, which are only our means of portraying reality, are perfect; and none of them are final. Whatever exists can be reconstructed.

There are several possible conditions for restorying a positive Western comprehension of Muslim society's history using the narrative methodology of the postmodern philosophy. It is possible to externalize the dominant, negative narratives and to look for alternative positive ones. We can retrieve such stories and follow the example of some Western scholars who have already started this process (M. Hodgson, E. Said, A. Toynbee, B. Turner and A. Hourani). In the contemporary world, the importance of this task cannot be overestimated because, if it is not fulfilled, we will have to acknowledge the main ideas of S. Huntington's book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

Therefore, it is necessary to do the following:

(a) overcome Eurocentrism and the linear, one-dimensional understanding of civilizational development, i.e., recognize that there are several centers in the world, each with its own narrative about its role in the history of mankind: such features of the modern Western society as democracy, free-market capitalism and individualism are manifestations of its unique civilizational identity and are based on Western historical experience; hence, they are not universal and appropriate for all peoples. The great narrative of Western modernity that dominated other civilizations' stories for the last three centuries no longer appears adequate. It is necessary to rebuild humanity, to make it more just and free, based on worldwide civic values, as well as on the civic values of each civilization, thereby preserving the identity of both.

(b) recognize the ontological uniqueness of Islamic civilization as one of several different civilizations existing in the world and respect the real features of its social and cultural history, which are favorable to the creation of civic society in the Muslim countries;

(c) recognize the equal right of Islam to have its place in human society along with Christianity (according to Kant's ideas about the history of religions);

(d) avoid any kind of missionary or civilizing attitude towards the Muslim society, i.e., exclude attempts to impose the Western narrative upon the Islamic one;

(e) avoid a Eurocentric and instrumental attitude towards Islam in internal and foreign Russian policy: one of the preliminary steps for the solution of this problem is to recognize the diverse character of contemporary mankind, which includes, apart from the Western, the Islamic as well as the Russian civilizations.

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Chapter VII

The Tendency of Tolerance in Islamic-Christian Relations

Basia Nikiforova

The definition of "tolerance" is an important part of our project. “Tolerance” can be defined as a policy of patient forbearance in the presence of something, which is disapproved of or disliked. Tolerance is the recognition of the necessity to provide opportunities for other persons to be agents of their own ideas, faiths or behaviors. More importantly, the principle of tolerance promotes understanding and appreciation of many values espoused by various religions. On the scale of human relations, tolerance is not the highest point. It does not include such definitions as acceptance, openness and complementarity. Donald Freeman states the implicit message of tolerance: "We don't need you, and would rather that you were not around, but we will put up with you and leave you alone, so long as you leave as alone."[1]

The limits of tolerance are wide and mobile, ranging from indifferent neglect of "otherness" to the urge to support and protect it. In the historical sense, tolerance means to concede to a lesser evil in order to avoid a bigger one; i.e., it always means the priority of one's own values and, simultaneously, tolerance towards those who are different and often treated as inferior. Tolerance must be distinguished from freedom precisely because it implies the existence of something believed to be disagreeable or evil.

Tolerance is not only a policy or legislation, but also the emotional state of a person. It forms under the influence of social processes, as well as under individual experience. Tolerance depends on the level of society, traditionalism or modernity. Traditional society is characterized by its static nature, where information is transmitted via traditional channels and religion acts as an influence to maintain national moral values. In such a society the importation of new ideas is a weak process. In traditional societies, policy and legislation do not strongly influence the process of forming tolerance. Stronger and more important are the influences of family tradition, historical stereotypes and individual experience.

In the case of Islamic-Jewish-Christian dialogue, we have dealt with some traditional and modern societies. But the theoretical religious basis of all theological conceptions is nonviolence. The teaching of Islam requires the Muslim not to be an offender. The Qur’an states: "And you shall not be an offender, for God does not have offenders." Rather, a Muslim is expected to be forgiving and tolerant toward those who offend him. The term “nonviolence” has an equivalent in Arabic, meaning to tolerate others by saying "you may pardon and forgive, for God is forgiving and merciful." Islam recognizes the dignity of human beings regardless of religion, color or sex: "We have given dignity to Adam's children."

Islam recognizes Christianity and the Christian Gospel, Jesus as the Prophet of God, Judaism and the Torah as given to Moses. Judaism commands justice and truth, as does Christianity. The holy land and holy city of Jerusalem, where the empty tomb stands, are the source for many reflections. As Elias Chacour writes, "First the fundamental belief in human dignity is the foundation for nonviolence as the primary value of human life. Second, that the God in whom we believe is not a `regional' God. Third, that God is not a `tribal' God. We must refuse to say that God is God of the church or Christian, Muslim or Jewish."[2] From this view we understand that the cause of conflict and violence is not inherent in religion, but is a result of political and economical factors. Our question is, "What do Muslims (same as Christians and Jews) apply in their own religious teachings?"

The characteristics of belief give us the possibility to see two different views -- different degrees of commitment to the practical implementation of the principle of a given belief. To believe is the same as to have faith. Faith may be seen and understood in terms of the outcome of two quite different kinds of experiences. The first kind of experience is faith through birth into a society or a community where all of the members have a particular tradition of belief. In contrast the second is faith through personal conviction, which is a matter of the individual struggling to believe. This two-faith experience can lead to situations of tension and conflict, in the second case from the view of Islamic culture and to the integration of society from the view of Western and American culture. Some scholars admit that Islam and the West are at opposite poles with respect to human rights and tolerance. They conclude that notions of right or principle do not guide Islamic culture, as the West understands them. Governance of personalism and of pragmatism characterizes Islamic culture, where the ruling authority is "illegitimate and coercive almost by definition."[4]

Others admit that "the Islamic world is ill-suited to democratic conceptions of society and simply does not present the individual with those opportunities for freedom of action and association that are characteristic of Western Christianity."[5] The other view on this subject, as James Piscatori concluded, is that "Islamic theory does not present a notion of the rights of the individual. Rights do not attach to men qua men. It is more appropriate to refer to the privileges of man."[6]

The Islamic view seems committed to giving human rights status to freedom of religion and conscience, so long as those rights are properly restricted according to traditional teaching. If we would then be allowing Muslims the right to follow their own conscience and, thus, to act on the internationally isolated right to religious liberty, we will have two problems here. First, tolerating all possible policies and views, even the most intolerant ones, yields a contradictory result, especially when intolerance toward certain beliefs can be enforced. Equally troublesome will be the case of reciprocal repression of Muslim minorities in nonMuslim states. From the view of Charles Amjad-Ali "Without agreeing that a belief in freedom of religion entails tolerating any belief, even those that enforce intolerance, it does seem that the cultural differences over this question create some subtleties and perplexities for human rights advocates that are not present in respect to the more notorious violations, such as gross mistreatment of prisoners, political opponents, etc."[7] The author concludes that the subject of human rights, in general, and of religion, in particular, has suffered in the West from a fashionable, but unconvincing belief in relativism, and in the Islamic World from a failure to subject the Qur’anic foundations of Islamic faith to reexamination in light of the issues under consideration here.

Islam concentrated more on the problem of double laws, or two sorts of laws: "the way off Allah" and "the way of the world.” When we use the words "the way of the world," we think about differences between our law and Islamic law. It is meant that "the way of the world" is the Western way, and we must know how far Islamic law differs from the Western. The answer is partly given to us in the Qur’an. "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2:256) or "As for those who divide their religion and break up in to sects, thou hast no part in them in the least: Their offers on with Allah: he will in the end tell the trust of all that they did" (6:159).

For our discussion on religious conscience and liberty, we must more deeply research the meaning of Qur’anic text and its realization in contemporary social life. The case of Salman Rushdi gives us an example of how far the Arabic world is from the Western conception of religious and human rights. Also, this case demonstrates for us the deep tension in Islamic experience between tolerance and pluralistic spirit in the two kinds of relations: God-person relationship and person-person relationship.

Francis Fukuyama wrote in his famous book, *The End of Historyand the Last Man,* that the Islamic fundamentalist revival was not a case of "traditional values" surviving into the modern age. "The Islamic revival was rather the nostalgic re-assertion of an older, purer set of values."[8]

The definition of "syncretism" has become more popular and more discussed during the last years. Using this definition is a controversial subject from the point of view that for every national and religious majority, it means some kind of loss of identity. The case of the Turkish community gave strong impulse for the new vision and interpretation of this definition.

During the last 20 years, Western Europe and especially Germany gave us the case of Arabic-Muslim minority as community. The process of the Muslim community's integration to society is long but successful. Many famous researchers think that the culture and religion of the Muslim Turkish migrants in Germany is a case in point for studying the power and agency of syncretism. On the one hand, syncretism as a process in the religion of Muslim migrants is flourishing, but being refuted. On the other hand, syncretism within the dominant Christian religion and culture is blamed as postmodernism as well as secularism, but any hybridization between these two main world religions is highly contested and symbolically loaded.

The Muslim Turkish community's and the German society's views of one another's religiosity and religion are indexical to various other debates of modernity versus traditionalism, secularism versus fundamentalism, liberalism versus conservatism, integration versus ethnic isolation and, finally, racism versus multiculturalism -- debates which are indeed particular and global at the same time.

The case of intermarriage gives to us the possibility for more detailed understanding of what difference exists in the close contact of the two ethnic and religious groups. Many surveys on this subject of interfaith marriage open the basic question, "How can we recognize the other as really other?" One Christian woman with a Muslim partner, who spoke on educating children in an interfaith family, said: "[Another speaker] just now said that we, Christians and Muslims, believe the same. Many respondents think that the utmost importance for this world that we learn to accept that we do not believe the same, instead of burying our differences."

A struggle implies there are power factors at work. There is a power difference when one partner belongs to an ethnic minority. In our typical interfaith marriage, this power difference works the other way round. Another factor has to do with the socioeconomic situation of the partners. Often the European, Christian partner has the better job, better access to housing, and so on, and is also supported by his/her community. This can cause tensions in the relationship, which are frequently translated into a struggle about religion. When the partner who is the more "other" in the relationship feels he/she is not respected for who he/she is, he/she tries to win back self-respect by stressing what is central and most sacred to him/her: religion.

Another factor is that interfaith partners are seen as representatives of their communities. As Ge Speelman from Utrecht University wrote: "The Turkish Muslim represents the `terrible Turks' who have shaped the history of so many Eastern European countries. The German wife is the `imperialist European' whose community has been responsible for so much repression and bloodshed." Many problems in an interfaith marriage are exactly the same as those experienced by many other couples.

But what is at stake in the power struggle is not merely the winning of prestige or an easy life. Interfaith partners are looking for a way to maintain their identities. In everyone there is an inner core of conviction about who one is, what the world is, how God is spoken of and how self-respect the identity chosen for oneself, can be maintained. Loved ones want to be more than merely "that Christian," or "that Muslim." Of course, they are also "a Christian" and "a Muslim"; much of what we are ties up with our religious traditions.

Interfaith partners have to face this question of otherness, and it is the most important question in a dialogue between those of different religions. Ge Speelman offers four strategies used by couples; she calls them annexation, yielding, ignoring and negotiating.

Annexation and yielding are complementary. When one partner holds particularly strong religious convictions, he or she (mostly he/men have more difficulties in dealing with what is different) tries to convert the partner to his/her faith and way of life. The other may respond by attempting to annex her/his partner in turn (these marriages are not likely to last long) or by gradually yielding to all the demands.

Ignoring is the policy by which both partners, tacitly or not, try to deal with their differences. It may work for a time but leads to unexpected surprises when there is a family crisis. It may be a sorrowful experience (a parent of one partner dies; one partner has to face unemployment), or it may be joyful (the birth of a first child), but when crises arise, and especially when children come, real and existing differences cannot always be ignored.

The fourth strategy is the difficult and uncertain one of negotiation, which is like an open-ended story. Partners keep promising each other things, going back on their promises, bringing their resources into play in order to get the upper hand. But that is not the only story. If marriage was only a power struggle, why be married at all? If interfaith dialogue were only about who gets the upper hand, where would the world end? How can we be truly reconciled to our brother and our sister, and how can we be partners in an interfaith marriage or found a family if that is all there is?

We return to the question: How can we recognize the other as really other and still be reconciled to him/her? Ge Speelman tries to find an answer in Christian theology where self-respect is what every human being strives for. And Christian tradition says that this self-respect is due to every human being because we are all recognized and respected by God. That is the foundation of our selfhood and also of the relationship between human beings and God. As the Psalmist says: God is the One who knows us for what we are (Ps. 139).

Does this self-respect also lead to respect for the otherness of others? We have learned that there is only one unbroken and indivisible Truth that we should follow. How can we account for the otherness of others? I hope that these questions will give an impulse to future investigations.

Notes

1. *Religious Traditions and Limits of Tolerance*. Ed. by L.J. Hammann and H.M. Buck (Anima Books, 1988), p. 121.
2. Adda Bozeman, *The Future of Law in a Multicultural World* (Princeton, 1971), p. 76.
3. Max Steakhouse, *Creeds, Society, and Human Rights* (Grand Rapids, 1984), p. 40.
4. James P. Piscatori, "Human Rights in Islamic Political Cultures," in: *Moral Imperatives of Human Rights* (Washington, American University Press, 1980), p. 144.
5. Charles Amjad-Ali, "Text and Interpretation: Superfluity on Issues of Human Rights," in: *Religion and Human Rights* (Geneva, 1996), p. 31.
6. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (The Free Press, 1992), p. 236.
7. Charles Amjad-Ali, p. 31.
8. Francis Fukuyama, p. 236.

Chapter VIII

Framework for Intercultural Understanding: Islam as a Challenge

Plamen Makariev

This paper will not attempt to justify the need for intercultural understanding: an extensive subject which presumes a polemic on "two fronts" -- against the liberalist thesis that public social life should be culturally neutral, but also against the radical communitarian position of antagonism to alien cultural presence. Here we will simply postulate the value of communication between cultural communities and proceed to examine possible frameworks for intercultural understanding.

Mutual understanding becomes a problem when there is a clash of cultures that differ significantly. The level and substance of "cultural strangeness" vary greatly. There may be tensions in relations between cultural communities even if there is a low level of cultural difference -- when the latter serves only as an occasion for the establishment of relations of the "in-group versus out-group" type. In such cases, there are usually, also, other factors antagonizing the communities concerned. For example, one can consider the problems of the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Yugoslavia or of the Catalan and Basque ethnic groups in Spain.

There is a cultural conflict proper when ethnic confrontation is combined with religious or "civilizational" differences (Huntington, 96). Cases of the former type can be found both in modern societies and in societies where traditional custom prevails. The relations between Irish Catholics and Scottish Protestants in Northern Ireland are very typical in this respect, as are those between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, or between Muslims and Hindus in India.

Interactions between communities, which are on different sides of the dividing line between modern and traditional types of culture, are even more problematic. This applies, for instance, to relations between the Western and the Islamic worlds. The cultural contrast between modern and traditional is a prime concern of disciplines such as intercultural communication, which deal mainly with the interaction between business partners from the U.S. or Europe on the one hand, and from Asia or Latin America on the other.

As regards the substance of the cultural difference examined in this paper, it may be delineated best against the background of the concept of culture from which we are proceeding. We will regard culture as a coherent set of standards of behavior and codes of "deciphering" meanings (see Carbaugh 90:7). Hence in discussing interactions between cultures, we are not concerned with relations between organized formations such as states or political parties, but rather, with situations of harmony or confrontation between world views, attitudes and stereotypes. The "substance" of cultural conflict comprises the reactions of nonacceptance of what someone around you is doing that runs counter to your notions of proper or improper, and that he -- "He" will be used in this paper as a gender-neutral term -- is doing it not by chance or misunderstanding, but with all the self-confidence of a person following some unquestionable rules of conduct. We usually share such reactions with "our like" -- with like-minded people who have been formed as individuals in the spirit of traditions identical to ours and who have shared our views. Insofar as one of the main functions of culture is to ensure the predictability of actions and solidarity within the community (see Bohannan 95:50), the behavioral discord that emerges in cohabitation with cultural "otherness" could cause us considerable psychological discomfort.

Of course, a culture may tolerate a "foreign body" within its "fabric" painlessly if it has sufficiently powerful mechanisms of self-reproduction. In that case the "otherness" seems innocuous in any form whatsoever -- as long as it abides by some universal rules of human cohabitation. It doesn't matter if someone's dress or diet is peculiar or if the media, entertainment industry, educational institutions and public administration are constantly reasserting in countless ways one and the same invariable ideas of good and evil, of beautiful and ugly, of human dignity, of honor, of justice, etc. This creates the illusion of unproblematic multiculturality, which is typical of the self-awareness of modern societies and fosters the views of the relative insignificance of cultural differences.

The harmonization of interactions between cohabitant cultural communities presupposes dialogical relationships between them. If we use Habermas's term, their behavior towards each other ought to be of the communicative-action type, i.e., to be oriented towards mutual understanding (cf. Habermas, 90). Mutual recognition of validity claims is an important condition for the establishment of such a relationship. Particularly important in this regard are what Habermas defines as normative claims. Without respecting each other's normative claims, the parties cannot live together in harmony. Yet while those mutual claims can be harmonized through discourse in a culturally homogeneous environment -- the methodology of this activity is expounded in detail by the so-called "discourse ethics" -- interaction between different cultural communities seems quite problematic in this respect.

How can such a discourse proceed if the participants do not share a common life-world and if there are contradictions between their background moral values? To evaluate a validity claim, both the "hearer" and the "speaker" must have at least minimum intercultural competence with regard to one another. Otherwise the "speaker" will not know what to refer to in his argumentation, in order to make it acceptable to the "hearer.” And how could it be decided, in cases of contradiction between normative validity claims, who ought to give way, i.e., to make a compromise with his interests in the name of “understanding" (*Verständigung*)? Each party might sincerely claim that its interests are more substantially bound to the controversial normative matter. How can each of them judge whether the “other's” claim is right, provided that a judgment by analogy with one's own attitude to this matter of practical discourse cannot be reliable due to the cultural difference?

The problem of intercultural understanding may be studied from various aspects, applying the methods of cultural anthropology, social psychology, pedagogy, linguistics, literary theory, history, theology, philosophy, etc. A new, synthetic discipline has also been gaining ground in recent years: intercultural communication. Here we will confine ourselves to a philosophical case study: a study on the attempts of Islamic scholars to present the status of women in typical Muslim societies as morally justified in the eyes of the nonMuslim and, in particular, of the modern, Western world.

We believe that, notwithstanding the diversity in the treatment of this issue from an Islamic perspective (it is even difficult to talk of a single perspective that is exclusively representative of the entire Islamic world), several common features of the argumentation may be identified. A study of those features could help clarify the mechanisms of intercultural understanding as an element of intercultural communication. Here we will consistently evaluate the positions at a meta-level only, i.e., we are concerned not with the truthfulness or acceptability of a given thesis, but only with the technique of its justification. Our critique will not focus on the content of the statements under consideration, however provocative some of them might sound to the average European or North American reader. Still, we hope that an elaboration of the mechanisms of intercultural understanding – at which we are aiming– would be instrumental against manipulative argumentation of positions, whose content is unacceptable to the general public.

This particular choice of case study (the attempts to justify -- from an Islamic position -- as understandable and morally acceptable to the surrounding world a controversial feature of Islamic culture) is also indicative of the methodology of our paper, albeit in another respect. We will not be dealing with the unilateral examination of an alien culture. No matter how well someone comes to know the respective culture's internal mechanisms of functioning, he would, at best, attain predictability of the respective community's behavior, which are levers for its manipulation. Yet this certainly does not mean understanding the culture as such.

Monological attempts to "understand" an alien culture could be an expression of an imperialistic, colonialist attitude. Edward Said offers a classical analysis of this position in "Orientalism" (cf. Said 95: 3-5), showing how in this particular case "understanding" may be manipulative to the point where reconstruction is substituted for knowledge of the subject. Monological "understanding" could also take the form of bona fide misconception -- as the manifestations of the Subject-centered reason (Habermas 87:294) typical of modernity. Either way, however, the alien culture is treated as an object that is unilaterally controllable by the subject, even if this is done with the best of intentions. The "other" is not given the opportunity to speak of himself alone, to represent his own interests. He is denied maturity and autonomy that are equal to those of the subject. Apart from being unfair, such an approach to an alien culture is ineffective in establishing constructive, intercultural relations. Without truly equal partnership, harmony in cohabitation is impossible.

In their overwhelming majority, the ideas about intercultural understanding follow the same pattern: presentation of the external, empirical differences as an effect of identical fundamental causes. Understanding the "other" means to recognize "behind" his actions, (which might be incongruent with your ideas of proper and improper), the same cultural motives, which you follow yourself, but which are manifested in a different form.

From a sociopsychological perspective, R. Brislin examines intercultural understanding on a somewhat different plane. According to Brislin, the main purpose of this act is to achieve "isomorphism of the attributions" which the parties make concerning the same action of one of them. "This term refers to the ability to make the same attributions as the other person in the interaction" (Brislin 93:41). By "attribution" Brislin means the explanation attributed to a given action by the doer, insofar as he is aware of why he is acting in this particular way, as well as by an outside observer (who might also be a recipient of the action in question). There is understanding only when those explanations are identical. Since by rule a particular action is part of a continuous process of interaction, we usually have two parallel flows of attributions, which influence the real interaction and which are, even in the easiest intercultural relationship, only partly isomorphic. Indicatively, this concept of intercultural understanding presents the latter in its entire complexity.

It is very tempting to apply the pattern of "fundamental similarities -- different empirical manifestations" to the value hierarchies that are at the core of moral orientation within different cultures. Arguably, the ultimate values are identical, or at least similar, across the world, but are merely interpreted and applied in a different way depending on the geographical and historical circumstances. In his book on religious tolerance, Jay Newman, for example, coins the term "trans-cultural values," citing love, justice, peace, economic prosperity, wisdom, progress, self-realization, duty, honor (see Newman 82:66-67). Those values may be regarded as an ideal of what ought to be; cultural differences, as an expression of different views on the ways of realizing the ideal.

This position may fit into the conceptual background of both cultural evolutionism and cultural relativism. The author quoted above tends to apply the former, insofar as he assumes that any society or religious group may be rated higher or lower by a "scale of civilization," depending on "how much or how successfully its ideal values have been realized" (Newman 82:68). As the quote shows, Newman assumes that the degrees of realization of one and the same ideal in different cases can be commensurable. Although two or more cultural communities may use alternative means towards one and the same end, it is possible to evaluate their progress at a given moment.

This relation between end and means, however, may also be interpreted in the spirit of cultural relativism. If one acknowledges the possibility that the alternative means towards an end might be radically incommensurable, the attempts to divide cultures into those that are relatively advanced and relatively backward along the road to civilization would prove unjustified and even harmful, insofar as they fuel ambitions for the domination of some societies over others. If, for instance, we take human dignity as a common ideal in a modern and in a traditional value system, we will see that the actual behavior that abides by this ideal is entirely different in the two cases. Respect for the dignity of the modern person is manifested foremost in the guarantee of his individual autonomy -- inviolability of his private life, freedom of choice and responsibility in the light of universal norms of behavior. These norms are in some cases "dressed" in rather restrictive institutional frameworks. A person's dignity in a traditional environment is, by contrast, measured mainly in the person's belonging to his community. Precisely the independence of an individual from particularistic interests, which is a condition for the realization of his dignity in modernity, is counter-indicative for human dignity in traditional society. The closer someone's status is to the ideal of dignity in the one dimension, the further it is from the same ideal in the other dimension. In that case, how can one compare the progress made towards the end by either of the two means?

Yet irrespective of whether the scheme of the relation between cultural differences and similarities is applied in an evolutionist or relativist context, it works equally well. In both cases it is possible to achieve validation of normative claims -- as long as the claims to tolerate cultural practices that contradict our beliefs are justified by means of values which coincide with some of our own moral regulatives.

If our critique -- that, say, arranged marriages are incompatible with the human dignity of the young people involved -- is countered by a simple reference to the respective ethnic community's traditions, this will not contribute to intercultural understanding. What moral binding power could alien cultural traditions have for us that would make us accept a situation that runs counter to our criteria of socially acceptable behavior? Yet if, instead, we are offered arguments, which show a culture-based difference in the very understanding of human dignity and justification of the thesis that in "that" cultural context this virtue is asserted precisely by the practice of arranged marriages, then it will be a step towards mutual understanding.

Naturally, we are talking about cogent argumentation, not about declarative short-circuiting of the facts with the argued thesis. We should have the freedom to challenge each argument -- in the case discussed above, we might very well fail to agree with the proffered justification of arranged marriages and remain firmly in opposition. Nevertheless, this would have been an attempt at intercultural communication.

How is the said scheme of validating normative claims applied by authors who are trying to "open up" Muslim culture, making it more understandable to the outside world? In the huge variety of positions and argumentative techniques, one can identify a selective approach to the universalistic justification of the specific features of the Muslim way of life: not everything in Islam can be defended or is worth defending. The traditional way of legitimating scripture-based reforms of sociocultural practices is by interpreting and reinterpreting scripture itself. If an author thinks that a particular practice ought to be changed, he tries to convince his readers that it is not directly prescribed by the word of God, but ensues from the latter's misinterpretation or distortion by the interpreters. This reformist approach is manifested in one way or another in the development of any religion. Here, however, we will cite two, not-so-trivial argumentations as a case of justifying changes in the Muslim way of life.

Zia Goekalp's approach to reforms in Islam is quite simple. He distinguishes two sources of the shari'ah: "one is scripture (*nass*) and the other -- local practice, mores, custom or convention (*'urf*)" (Khuri 98:307). Only the divine element of shari'ah is sacred and not subject to change. The sociocultural one is transitory and ought to be adjusted to the times and changing conditions.

The algorithm offered by another Islamic scholar, Fazlur Rahman, is more complicated. According to Rahman, the sacred text of the Qur'an has been offered to mortals in a concrete form, which corresponds to the specific historical conditions in Arab society in the age of the Qur'anic revelations. Were it not adapted to the needs and capacities of the people to whom it is addressed, the scripture would not have attained its divine purpose. Yet this means that one should distinguish between the principles enshrined in the Qur'an, which are sacred and eternal, and their concrete formulation, which is transitory and cannot be valid for other historical ages and peoples unless it is adapted accordingly.

The interpretation of the Qur'an must be updated by analogy. "The relationship between the eternal principles and Arabian life early in the seventh century (C.E.) must be precisely the same as that between the former and the various strands of Muslim life today" (Khuri 98:310). This means that the interpreter must have excellent knowledge of the situation during the original propagation of Islam and must be capable of, so to speak, translating backwards -- from the empirically available text of the scripture back to its principles -- in order to subsequently reproduce the relationship between those two levels with regard to the contemporary sociocultural situation.

After an author has argued his thesis about what in the Muslim way of life warrants receiving moral justification from the outside world, he faces the harder task: to present the cultural specificities in question as a realization of universal -- to quote Jay Newman, "trans-cultural" -- values. Contemporary studies usually focus on one or several historical factors which explain why the Muslim notion of a particular universal value differs from, say, the Western one. The practices which, to the outside observer, are in contradiction with a given value, are actually in harmony with the latter but -- due to certain contingent historical circumstances -- take a different form.

The traditional character of Muslim societies is cited as the primary factor in this respect. Indeed, from the perspective of Modernity it is easiest to understand cultural specificities that ensue from the difference between traditional and modern society because one can proceed from the latter's own history. When European or North American readers study the Islamic mores, they cannot refrain from analogies with what they know about the not-too-distant past of their own civilization. If we abstain from the evolutionistic inclination to evaluate cultural specificities by level of development, to "rate" cultures as superior and inferior -- in which case any similarity between someone's present and someone else's past suggests that the former is "lagging behind" the latter -- then the possibility of reasoning by analogy with one’s own history helps someone understand the other's specificity.

The category of "community" is particularly important in this respect. As is known, one of the main differences between traditional and modern societies is that relationships, of what F. Toennies defined as gemeinschaft, prevail in the former, and of gesellschaft, in the latter (see Toennies 57). Then, this is what could be so unusual and incomprehensible to us in the Muslim way of life if the latter gives priority to a type of relationship which, albeit by now less significant, is still present in our social reality. Admittedly, the validity of universal values differs in content when seen from the "angle" of exclusivistic communal solidarity, but what could be wrong about those relationships from our point of view?

The traditional nature of Muslim societies contributes to their cultural specificity also with regard to the social role of religion. Islam is notorious for its claims to regulate every sphere of social life in depth, in minute detail -- to maintain "a congruence of the *fanum*/sacred and *profanum*/profane sphere" (Trautner 99:I). Prima facie, this is a phenomenon all too familiar from the general history of religion, some sort of naive mysticism -- an inability to distinguish between the natural and the supernatural -- which attests to the primitive nature of communal mentality. This seems to be one of the "pains of growth" of any civilization from which society, in the course of its development and secularization, eventually breaks free.

Yet perhaps, the vehement resistance which secularization encounters in the Muslim world and which creates the impression that the Muslim world is, in a way, ultra-conservative, ought to be explained with, inter alia, a deeper cultural difference vis-a-vis the West. Let us remember that the general opposition between the material and the spiritual world is not new but dates back to Plato. Adopted by Christianity and asserted especially by St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, it steers Western civilization towards development in the spirit of a dualistic worldview. Islam is characterized by a holistic view of being, which is too conceptualized by the theoreticians of this religion to be attributed to some sort of ignorance. Contemporary scholars, for instance, offer entirely articulate arguments in favor of the thesis that "it is not human reason that judges the status of the law [i.e., of Muslim law, the shari'ah], but the law that directs the use of reason" (Khuri 98:302). Here Richard Khuri is quoting Seyyed Hossein Nassr and his essay, "The Shari'ah and Changing Historical Conditions." After all, today it is difficult to find firm believers in the absoluteness of reason anyway. In postmodern discourse it is preferred to talk about a plurality of rationalities. In this context the claims on a society, in which Muslim law has the status of an immediate embodiment of the Divine Will to conform its legislation to the standards of reason, look like an attempt to impose on it an alien rationality.

Another factor that places the Muslim way of life in a rather different relation to universal values is that Muslim countries are at a geopolitical disadvantage in regard to the West. Considering that the majority of these countries have been subject to colonial rule and that today all are the target of attempts at domination in one form or another, it is hardly surprising that a defensive position towards any modernization initiative is commonplace in Muslim societies. Such initiatives are often seen as a threat to the cultural identity of those peoples. This is due, inter alia, to the fact that, so far, most political regimes, which have committed themselves to modernizing reforms, have followed a course of despotism and corruption, thus reasserting their subjects' conviction that modernization brings moral corruption.

All this has asserted a selective attitude to universal moral regulatives, with a preference for those that close and isolate the in-group from the rest of the world. A corporativistic morality, which applies the ethical standards of behavior differently to "us" and "them," is maintained. Consequently, Islam appears to be amoral or, at best, with a morality of its own, which is radically different from the universally acceptable morality, as a result of which people from the Muslim world and those from the non-Muslim world are apparently not bound by any mutual moral commitments whatsoever.

So far, we have discussed in principle a scheme of moral justification of the specificities of the Muslim way of life from the perspective of universal values. Let us now demonstrate how it is applied in practice and how facts are harmonized with values, by correcting apparent incongruities through reference to the above-mentioned, or other, factors of their type. As noted at the beginning, this paper will focus on the issue of the status of women in Muslim societies: a problem that has sparked acute value-related conflicts between the West and the Muslim world.

The traditional rhetoric that justifies the underprivileged status of Muslim women in the public sphere lacks conviction for the outside observer. The opportunity of women to perform an important mission in the family, assigned to them by God, to keep the home as a "center of peace, civility, tranquility, and love, a safe haven and protection from the brutality of the outside world" (Haddad 98:5), is cited as moral "compensation" for their isolation from public life. Therefore, women have an opportunity for full self-realization as individuals because at home they can best realize their inborn feminine virtues, such as gentleness, compassion, intelligence, understanding. These virtues are invaluable in rearing children, but at the same time make women vulnerable in the outside world, which is a scene of conflicts and tensions, requiring a masculine strength of character.

From the outside point of view, such considerations are cold comfort for the unequal status of women in public life. It turns out that women are incapable of coping with the big issues in life, and insofar as they might be useful in some way, that is, to provide "logistical support" to men, to bring up their children and to deal with the everyday issues of family life. On the scale of universal values, this type of human existence is hopelessly inferior. That is the case, however, only if we ignore the special significance of the home and the family in the Islamic cultural context. Contemporary authors, who expound the Islamic position on the issue, conceptualize it with the help of a category that is universally comprehensible, insofar as it has been investigated in detail in international social sciences -- on a sociological and sociopsychological, as well as philosophical, plane. This is the category of "community."

As noted above, the role of the community in the Muslim way of life differs from that in the modern world. Richard Khuri characterizes this role by means of the category of "positive freedom." The latter implies a relationship between the group and its members, which binds, restricts, but also gives the individual a distinct identity -- an identity without which the individual cannot be positively free. The Muslim community (which is called by Khuri "enabling community") has treated its members "as integral persons so that it is taken for granted that the Muslim must be able to express his whole being no matter how encompassing this may be, within the framework laid out by the community." The "must" here refers not to the individual but to the community, which should provide all necessary conditions to its member, so that he can fully express his being within its framework. (Khuri 98:129).

While in contemporary Western society the boundaries between private and public life are, in general, also boundaries between spheres of community and gesellschaft-type relationships, in the Muslim world the community has a tangible presence in the public sphere, too. This civilizational specificity is used astutely by Islamic authors, who do not omit to stress that the Islamic family structure "is predicated by divine design as the paradigmatic social unit" (Haddad 98:19). In that case, the woman's important role in the family also proves to be socially significant, in general. Taking care of the "health" and viability of the family, building the character and value system of the young generation, the woman guarantees the cultural reproduction of society. In this context, the business activities of the man seem insignificant in their limitation and one-sidedness compared to the existential depth of the woman's mission. The fulfillment of this kind of task demands the woman's powerful individual presence in the community which, in its turn, is sufficient to justify the need of a high social status of women, as well as the prestige and self-confidence of being a full-fledged member of society.

When discussing the justification of the important social role of women from an Islamic perspective, one should keep in mind that the arguments rule out gender rivalry, in general. The leading position of men in both public life and the family is not called into question even in the boldest variants of emancipatory discourse (see Haddad 98:20). The level at which women can seek self-realization is not that of competition among individuals. The female and male roles in community life are assumed to be mutually complementary with, however, the "power-related" actions of dramatic decision-making, taking responsibility for the fate of the community in the clash with external circumstances, wholly confined to the sphere of male competence.

How do all those considerations fit into the debate on the cultural specificities of the Muslim way of life which, from the Western perspective, are in contradiction with universal values? For lack of space, we will not provide a representative picture of the clash of arguments in this sphere but will confine ourselves to a concrete problem, that of the honor of women. This problem is a textbook case of a value conflict between civilizations. To the Westerner it is incomprehensible why a religion should impose a number of limitations on women's behavior, which are not self-evidently justified and, by rule, do not apply to men. This seems to be a typical case of injustice, of discrimination against women.

In traditional Islamic discourse, which does not take into account the opening up of Islamic culture to the world, the limitations in question are associated with familiar interpretations of scripture that present women as inferior to men, as particularly sinful, sensuous creatures, as temptresses by nature, incapable of controlling their lusts sufficiently. Those interpretations are called into question by many contemporary scholars (cf. Esposito and Haddad 98; Schoening-Kalender 97; Luckau 91; Brink and Mencher 97). Insofar as there are attempts to harmonize the status of women as typical of Islam with moral regulatives respected elsewhere, those attempts stress the specific role of the community in the Muslim world and, albeit to a lesser extent, of the cohesion of religion and morality, as well as the defensive position towards the global imposition of Western culture.

It is thus shown, for instance, that it is entirely wrong to approach the question of the honor of Muslim women by analogy with the situation in individualistic European or North American societies. In the latter, women are as free as men to choose how they will behave. A woman's decision in this respect binds none other than herself. For the Muslim extended family, however, the behavior of a woman who belongs to them is representative of their mores. An immoral, defamatory action would disgrace each of the other members of the community. This would be catastrophic for the community's prestige and would affect its status in society and, eo ipso, the future of all its members. Considering that so much is at stake, shouldn't we approach with understanding the Muslim world's particular sensitivity to women's abidance by the moral norms? If a woman's dishonor would have such grave consequences and affect so many other people along with the woman herself, some authors also support the thesis that the responsibility of the woman in this respect covers the men outside her community, too. Because this is a social reality which abounds in complicated inter- and intra-community ties and is not atomized to relationships between autonomous individuals only, any illegitimate personal commitment, even the most innocuous flirting, could have unpredictable destructive consequences (see Abdul-Rauf 79:36). Isn't it justified for one and all to try to minimize the risk of women's disgrace? In this context, aren't the pedantic restrictions on women's behavior more acceptable from an outsider's point of view -- restrictions that aim to rule out even the slightest element of sexual provocation on the part of women and that seem like a gross intervention in their private life? Yet if we assume that those restrictions are necessary, we must also acknowledge the right of anybody to watch over their application.

This brings us to a somewhat different understanding of certain cases of sexual aggression in Muslim countries, which look like gross disrespect for women's dignity -- like actions whose express purpose is to humiliate women. This applies to sexual harassment in cases when, for instance, a woman is not dressed appropriately for the particular situation or when she appears in public without being escorted by a male relative if, by convention, she should have been. In such situations abuse may be seen as a sanction against socially undesirable behavior. This, of course, cannot justify aggression from the perspective of modernity, but could nevertheless contribute to intercultural understanding.

Such an attitude toward women takes an extreme form when sexual abuse is used as a weapon in a conflict between communities. One of the most brutal ways of humiliating a "hostile" community is to rape the women who belong to it. This is regarded as an extreme form of hostility virtually everywhere, but it has special meaning and significance in an Islamic cultural context. There is sufficient evidence of clashes of this type between Muslim and non-Muslim communities too, e.g., in the conflicts in former Yugoslavia. At that, the Muslim population was usually the object, rather than the agent, of such aggression, which attests to a sort of "intercultural competence" of the other party.

Along with more intensive community life, the cultural specificities of the Muslim world are explained -- in an effort to justify them in terms of universal values -- by an emphasis on the holistic nature of Islamic morality. Unlike the European-type morality, where analytical distinctions are made and an internal differentiation is developed, in Islamic morality the ethical regulatives are in total unity with the religious ones and constitute, along with the latter, a monolithic set of rules of conduct. Hence, there is the conservative and uncompromising nature of Islamic morality. "When a section of the moral edifice is allowed to be broken the whole structure weakens and gives in easily to pressure. And thus tolerance of an evil leads to other evils" (Abdul-Rauf 79:35). The author argues his thesis by referring to a scale of moral compromises typical of the Western world, which starts with apparently insignificant, harmless ones, such as female public exposure and premarital love, and rises steadily, without crossing any visible boundary between acceptable and unacceptable, to such a moral absurdity as, according to Abdul-Rauf, uni-sex marriages (ibid.).

So far we have described a technique applied by some authors in their quest for moral justification of the specific features of the Muslim way of life to the "outside world." We have seen how those specific features are presented as realization of universal values, which, however, is determined by specific historical circumstances and, therefore, differs at the empirical level from the realization of the self-same values in other cultures with a different history. We have shown how those authors associate restrictions on women's behavior that appear absurd to the outside observer, with universal values such as honor, dignity, duty, solidarity, purpose of life, etc. Yet how convincing are such associations? Aren't they a superficial, propagandist construct? How could the success of such attempts to justify normative (in Habermas's terms) claims be evaluated in general?

The examples discussed above show that formal logic cannot be counted on in such cases; it is virtually impossible to strictly deduce cultural standards of behavior from universal values. Besides, we certainly cannot trust some sort of intuitive, convincing power of argumentation. The situation of intercultural communication, itself, greatly impedes an intuitive understanding of the other's position and makes it difficult to establish what in this position is convincing and what is not.

We mentioned at the beginning that Jay Newman presents cultural differences as an expression of different strategies of realization of the same ideals: of the so-called "trans-cultural values." This approach can arguably be applied to evaluate arguments of the type under consideration. One can compare the end (some universal value) and the means (alternative sets of cultural standards), and judge which means are adequate to the end and to what extent. Newman cites cases of obvious incongruity between historical undertakings and the values in the name of which they have been allegedly launched. How could the attack on Poland in 1939 be adequate to Nazi declarations that the Third Reich was aspiring towards peace; or how could torture and burning at the stake be adequate to the Spanish Inquisition's claims that it was guided by love for thy fellow (see Newman 82:70)?

Anyone with some knowledge about the history of the events cited by Newman ought to realize that it is possible to provide certain arguments that the means were indeed adequate to the end in both cases. It is a historical fact that Nazi Germany accused Poland itself of aggression and presented the attack as justified resistance. It is also known that by causing physical suffering to the heretics, the Inquisition arguably helped them to atone for their sins and thus to save their souls. One could always claim that under particular circumstances a given action or standard of behavior is in harmony with the universal regulative. In Newman's examples, the means are so plainly inadequate to the ends only because of the historical distance from the events in question. If we take a closer look at the contemporary world, we will realize that it is far from easy to identify inadequacies similar to those cited above. Who could say for sure today, whether the Western military campaigns against Iraq or Yugoslavia were to the benefit of world peace, as claimed by the governments that waged them, or actually pursued entirely different goals?

Newman hopes that a mere "critical examination" (ibid.) is enough to distinguish adequate from inadequate means of realizing an ideal. This presumption seems rather optimistic. We believe that more powerful tools, e.g., publicity, ought to be used for the purpose. If anything can expose the demagogy of a claim that a particular cultural practice is in harmony with universal values, this is the free public clash of arguments "for" and "against." Of course, by publicity here we mean the discursive formation of the opinion and will of citizens (Habermas, 90), not the propaganda, brainwashing machine used in totalitarian societies. Given certain conditions, which are formulated in their idealized form by Habermas in the book quoted above -- rationality and "openness" of the process of communication, equality of participants, presence of a potential for self-transformation in communication -- publicity (*Öffentlichkeit*) could be relied on to winnow just from unjust normative claims.

Yet, this general possibility should not be taken for granted. Contemporary studies of publicity tend to overrate the homogeneity of the public sphere. The legitimating potential of public opinion drastically declines when the latter proves deeply divided in some respect. Even if, having taken our cue from Habermas and his idealizations, we ignore the possibilities for "faking" publicity, which ensue from the unequal distribution of the resources for participation in the public sphere, we should take into account the influence of cultural differences on the latter. Exclusion mechanisms are triggered almost automatically in regard to the representation of cultural "otherness" in the public sphere. This is quite clear in the Western discourse concerning Islamic culture, too. The latter has little if any possibility to represent itself in the Western public sphere. And this is not due only to lack of good will and material resources. There is, also, a deep mistrust and even suspicion of the normative claims of "the other side," an odd ring to its moral pathos, an apparent irrationality in the distribution of value priorities in the other culture.

How could one find a way out and use the otherwise huge, legitimating potential of publicity to clarify the relation of the specific Islamic cultural practices and the universally accepted moral values? We think that a direct campaign against the heterogeneity of the public sphere has little chance of success. It would be more feasible to focus on intensifying and advancing in-group dialogical discourse. If the problem of "opening up" Islamic culture towards modern culture becomes a standing and significant issue of free discussion in the Muslim world, and this process is accompanied by an analogical development "on the other side," it will be possible to evaluate not the only validity of the others' normative claims directly, with all their "intransparency," but also the formal, procedural quality of the public discourse that has produced them.

To establish whether public opinion-making in another culture is fair -- i.e., whether each person is free to uphold his position in a way that enjoys full respect, whether the end result of a debate on a given issue is the product of a reasonable exchange of arguments -- you do not necessarily have to go into the specificities of the others' cultural life. In that case, if "the other side's" in-group discourse meets the general formal criteria, you would be able to conclude that the normative claims formulated by this discourse really express the relation between the others' cultural practices and universal values, and are not yet another propaganda bluff. This will be a crucial step towards bringing empirical differences under the common denominator of fundamental similarities, which is the scheme of intercultural understanding promoted in this paper.

Of course, healthy skepticism demands consideration of the following questions: Isn't this approach to intercultural understanding yet another expression of cultural imperialism? Isn't this an attempt to impose a Western discursive procedure on Islamic culture? Will the Islamic position on any issue of interaction with other cultures be authentic if it is formulated by applying alien rules? Wouldn't it be legitimate to refuse to apply free and rational discourse to the elaboration of such a position simply because this procedure is against Islamic mores?

The fact that there are numerous publications on the problems of intercultural relations, which seriously and conscientiously promote the cultural "opening up" of the Islamic world "from within," suggests that in this particular case both sides have the will for meaningful and open dialogue. Admittedly, however, dialogue cannot start "from scratch" in principle. It is a higher form of interaction between cultures, which presumes the fulfillment of certain terms, the most important one of them being, it seems, that both parties should have attained at least a minimum level of cultural self-reflection.

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Chapter IX

Islamic and Christian Cultures: Reopening the Lost Dialogue

Nur Kirabaev

A major task faces philosophical sciences in these modern times -- the task of studying the unity of world history, not only through revealing the similar and coinciding traits of different civilizations (diversity in unity), but also through comprehending the fact that each one of them is a distinct form of development of definite human facets as a cultural-historical entity (unity in diversity).

In this approach, an important role belongs to the task of disclosing the paradigm of Islamic civilization and comprehension of its worldwide historical role, which not only reveals but also determines its sociocultural closeness to other civilizations in their all-human dimension. Analyzing a large variety of diverse cultural and ideological phenomena reveal this spiritual paradigm, first of all, of that historical period during which the paradigm acquired its complete, consistent form. Thus, philosophical reconstruction and description of the Islamic culture presupposes knowledge of, *what* (in the Heideggerian sense) determined the vision of the world and humankind. The comprehension of this "being what" presupposes a historical-philosophical consideration of the cultural phenomena and ideological images of an epoch. Consequently, both the philosophy of history and culture and the history of philosophy and culture should be considered as two sides of one uniform cognitive process.

In speaking about the values of Islamic, it is important to indicate the subject content of the generalized perception of concrete-historical types of people in relation to aims and norms of their behavior, which is embodied in a concentrated expression of the historical experience and meaning of culture in the Islamic civilization as well as in the world. The question is the spiritual orientations, with which the representatives of Islamic civilization, as individuals and social groups, correlate their actions and way of life. The values of Islamic culture and cultures of other civilizations are largely determined by so-called substantial values which constitute the basis of value-consciousness in their wholeness. The substantial values of Islamic culture are, to a large extent, determined by the specifics of the formation and development of the Arabic caliphate.

The characteristic features of classical Islamic culture as a paradigm of Islamic culture are largely determined by certain circumstances: (a) it was formed as an inalienable part of the single Mediterranean culture and civilization; (b) it has saved and enriched the cultural, scientific and philosophical traditions of Antiquity; (c) it developed the humanistic character of the Mediterranean culture, albeit, in different historical conditions.

By classical Islamic culture we mean the culture which is connected with the birth and strengthening of the Arabic caliphate; that which under the aegis of the new monotheistic religion of Islam, proclaimed by Muhammed in the 7th century, spread its authority and influence to a vast territory from Gibraltar to the banks of the Indus; and that which became the new center of interaction and mutual enrichment of diverse cultural traditions. The “Golden Age” which developed on the basis of Islamic culture occurred from the 9th to the 12th centuries precisely when the Islamic culture began to influence the world’s material and spiritual cultures.

One of the major characteristics of classical Islamic culture is the fact value-ideological trends more than Western European science play the role of structural elements, which define the character of cognition, interpretation and the sphere of the admissible understanding of the epistemological image of the world. Value-ideological trends have a common paradigm, in which are based a definite totality of evaluations and perceptions and which relate to the utmost basis of human existence in the world, in his/her own nature and in connection with the Cosmos, as reflected by the Islamic-world outlook. Precisely, within this problem field of knowledge -- the ideal of knowledge in Islam -- the thinkers of medieval Islam solved each and every problem of culture and politics, ethics and aesthetics, philosophy or law. All the major philosophical and sociopolitical trends of medieval Islamic society, although not limited only to specific subjects of cognition in relation to political problems, acted as political theory, to theories of philosophy - as philosophical, of law - as legal, and of morals - as ethical, etc.

The specifics of the ideal of knowledge in Islamic culture are defined by *Shariat*, in accordance with the fact that faith and reason not only contradict each other, but are complementary to each other in the problem field of knowledge. Thus, medieval Islamic culture developed to such an ideal of knowledge, which can be described as united, integral and even complex. For example, the work of the famous thinker al-Ghazali (1058 -1111), *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, can be equally regarded as a philosophical, legal, religious, linguistic and a cultural work, i.e., an interdisciplinary study, in the modern sense of this term. Moreover, the famous Averroes spoke about al-Ghazali, saying that with philosophers, he is a philosopher; with Sufists, he is a Sufi; with the Mutakallims, he is a Mutakallim. Many representatives of Kalam wrote their works not only on religious, but also on philosophical and natural science problems. The writings focused less on the weak differentiation of sciences and more on the specific, spiritual atmosphere of the Islamic culture, based on the famous dictum of Prophet Muhammed: "Go for knowledge, even to China."

In the medieval Arab-Islamic civilization, "knowledge" gained an all-embracing importance and status, which has no equivalence in other civilizations. The "knowledge" of which we speak is both secular and religious. However, its high status in the system of values of medieval Islamic society is by itself a significant indicator: it tells us, at least, that there were many educated people in that society. Even specialists, so far, cannot fathom the actual scale of Arab book publications: even the few manuscripts of that immense literature, which reached us more or less safely, number more than hundreds of thousands.

One can infer the character of value orientations from the behavior of the educated stratum of medieval Islamic society which was imitated by the majority of the educated. That group was the true embodiment of traits, which were obligatory for every cultured, educated person. This was the famous group, Adibs, who embodied the cultured and educated image. *Adab*, comprised an aggregation of the norms of being educated and well-mannered and presupposed both secular and religious knowledge, partially including philosophy, astronomy and mathematics as well as a definite model of behavior.

Factors which are important in understanding the paradigm of Islamic culture are the non-existence of church as an institution, and, accordingly, the lack of orthodoxy and heresy, in the sense understood in Christianity, and, especially, the widespread religious and legal pluralism within the framework of a uniform Islamic world view.

In describing the paradigm of Islamic culture and civilization, it is advisable to separate two dominant component parts: Islam and Hellenism. In its history, this culture has exhibited and continues to exhibit both its “Western features,” i.e., elements of Judaism, Christianity and Hellenism, and its "Eastern features." Considering the latter circumstance of departing from the essence of its component parts allows us to understand the humanistic character of Islamic culture, with its attempts to make man/woman more human and to facilitate the fulfillment of his/her desire for grandeur.

There are three aspects of humanism in medieval Islamic culture:

1. religious humanism, which proclaimed the human being as the highest of all of God's creatures;
2. *adab* humanism, whose ideal -- *Adab*, which was formed in the 9th century -- corresponds to the characteristic European 16th-century ideal of *humanitas*, i.e., the ideal of developing the physical, mental and moral capacities of every person, in the name of common good;
3. philosophical humanism, being more conceptualized, the essence of which Abu Haiyan at-Tawhidi shortly and sharply expressed in this dictum: “Man has become a problem for man.”

With respect for and recognition of the existence of universal traits and principles of humanism, it is a fact that every culture and civilization, at its peak of development and prosperity, works out its own model of humanism. Within the framework of Islamic culture, humanism reveals itself in different forms. This phenomenon appeared for the first time in the East during the rule of Khosrov Anushirvan and was represented by Barzue Pavel Pers and Salman Pak. This form was followed by another form of humanism, which developed under the influence of Hellenistic gnosticism, hermetism and neo-Platonism; this humanistic quest, which was concentrated around the theme of a "perfect human being" was represented by Ibn Arabi, Abd al-Karim al-Jili, al-Khallaja and Sukhrawardi. The last form of humanism directed its attention to the greatness of human reason, as in the Hadiths, where the Prophet, Muhammed, is ascribed to have said: "Anybody who cognizes God will cognize me,” and "The first thing created by God is reason." A major representative of this humanism is Muhammed Ibn Zakaria ar-Razi, who rejected the Revelation and affirmed the autonomy of human reason in the spirit of European Enlightenment.

The ambivalence of Islamic culture, grounded in the principles of *Shariat* and on the historical existence of the Arabic caliphate, is considered from the point of view of the correlation within it of the temporal and sacral, as well as of the exoteric and esoteric character of its “being what.” Taking into account the great role of *Shariat* in temporal affairs and the prevalence of earthly purposes in human behavior and thinking, it is necessary to point out that Islamic culture kept and keeps a consistent link between perceptions about the cosmos and ethics. This circumstance precisely allowed, in its time, "alien science" to be considered as philosophy, oriented on ancient tradition and established as an inalienable part and parcel of its Islamic culture. It, also, allows even today the door to be kept open for modern European science and culture.

The correlation of the exoteric and esoteric in the context of problems of reason and faith is noted the characteristic along with of their complementariness. An analysis -- on the theological-philosophical level of solving the problem of the correlation of reason and prescriptions of faith -- exhibits, in spite of the differences of various thinkers on this question, the majority of them belonged to the exoteric tradition, which gives priority to reason instead of faith. More so, they prepared the ground for Sufistic esoteric knowledge and its intellectual attempts to harmonize *Shariat* and *Tarikat* for the substantiation of their own Sufistic approach to the given problem. Sufism has not considered the correlation of reason and faith as "by itself a real problem,” but added it into the general system of Prescriptions of Faith, Ways and Truth (*Shariat-Tarikat-Hakikat*). Meanwhile, it is necessary to note that the *Shariat-Tarikat-Hakikat* system organized the "logical form" of action of the knowing subject in quest of his/her own absolute, thereby facilitating the emergence of many variations, one of which is the doctrine of al-Ghazali. Sufism is an historical and an integral phenomenon, and its study is thought to be important with due regard to the archetypes of Sufist culture.

A philosophical analysis of Islamic culture and the search for a philosophical basis of Islamic culture necessarily demand exposition in its paradigm of the stable and the changing in the course of historical development. A due regard to this problem is important in analyzing all conceptions oriented towards reforming or modernizing Islam. As a rule, all tasks undertaken hitherto in creating Western models of Islamic development have failed, owing to the fact that the traditional, fundamental principles, which constitute the spirit of the Islamic culture, were taken as historically surmountable and transient phenomena.

The sociohistorical and political realities inevitably show that the comprehension of the essence of traditional and modern are closely interconnected with the fundamental principles of the political-legal culture of Islam and the dominant ideological-cultural movements within the framework of developing Islam. An analysis of the classical theories of the state in Islamic political thought, conducted by such famous authors as al-Mawardi, al-Juweyni, al-Ghazali, shows that the *Shariat* principles, never obviated the historical realities of the Arabic caliphate, but largely fixed themselves as a lever on historical precedents. The doctrine that the state is but a conductor of the principles of *Shariat* is a permanent constituting part of these conceptions. But the whole issue comes down to three questions: Who holds real political power? In what ways are power and authority understood? and What are the consolidating element and moral-spiritual basis of the civil Islamic society? The idea of the unity of religion and state is rooted not only in religious feelings of solidarity, but also in the necessity of understanding that Islam is expected to establish equality and justice in socio-political and economic relations. The recognition of the fact that Islam is a way of life and a definite type of modern world outlook allows us to understand the essence of the idea of the Islamic state. A good example of this is the analysis undertaken in the study of the state ideology of Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism. An analysis of Wahhabism shows how the traditionalistic doctrine of Abd al-Wahab, based on Islamic traditionalism from Ibn Hanbal to Ibn Taymiya, maintains the spirit of Islamic culture and tries to provide answers to the challenges of the 20th century.

Modernity is usually regarded as the completeness of being, but history shows this is not entirely so. Research of Islamic culture and philosophy shows us not only a surface knowledge of it, but also frequently even a distorted image of it. In speaking about the problem of stereotypes, it is imperative to recognize that mistaken cultural-philosophical and political-ideological stereotypes of the Islamic civilization predominate even in different researches and in the consciousness of the masses. This is indicated by the widespread usage in the mass media of the term Islamic fundamentalism whose content is interpreted widely and arbitrarily and is misunderstood as religious extremism. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish Islamic fundamentalism from Islamic extremism. In general, stereotypes result from either insufficient knowledge or inadequate methodology and may be formed in accordance with the ideological and sociocultural purposes of the cognizing subject. In this work a critical examination is made of the European stereotypes in relation to Islamic culture; special attention is given to the critique of the methodology of European civilizational, Russian historiosophical and Marxist formational approaches towards Islamic society and its culture. The categories and methodology of studying Islamic culture have been worked out and have specified new alternative approaches to correct the commonly held stereotypes.

In examining the general cultural stereotypes, one can identify, for example, the attempts to portray Islam and Islamic culture according to the concepts and categories of the Christian tradition. As a rule, something analogous to Christian orthodoxy, theology, ideology, etc. is sought in Islam, but these phenomena simply do not exist in the Islamic culture. However, on the basis of such stereotypes, a stable image has been formed in the research tradition of so-called Eurocentrism. This image and similar perceptions, for example, regard Kalam as the orthodox and dominant theology in Islamic philosophy and culture. It is inappropriate to abstractly discuss Islam and Islamic culture without considering the fact that Islam and Islamic culture have their own specific features in different historical epochs and in different countries. More than this, attempts are undertaken to negate the humanistic character of Islamic culture and, for example, to regard the Sufism of Ibn Arabi as the single existing variant of Sufism as such. Sufism is no less multifarious in its manifestations, than Islam itself. The European civilizational, Russian historiosophical and Marxist formational approaches to Islamic society and its culture have much in common. For example, they commonly share the so-called missionary approach which views Western or Russian missions to the Islamic world as both progressive and emancipatory.

The specific features of Islamic culture and civilization, in general, should not be examined within the context of contrasting the so-called East and the so-called West, the old and the new, past and present, tradition and renewal, religious and national; but, on the basis of their mutual connections and mutual cooperation. The thrust of this study is devoted to an analysis of different points of views about how to compare, using the philosophical-value dimension, the classical Arab-Islamic culture, which was open to mutual cooperation with other cultures, and the modern Islamic culture, which, though not in confrontation, apparently is not receptive to the modern inter-civilizational dialogue. In the present world of Islamic culture, the singular, significant problem is to define, what is unchangeable and what should be retained in the solution to the question about the correlation of Islam, as a civilizational phenomenon, and nationalism, as a national-state dimension, within the context of the transition of the Islamic society of the East to an industrial and post-industrial stage of development.

Part III

Social Identity and Political Ideas within Islamic and Christian Cultures

Chapter X

Social Identity as a Basis for Dialogue in Society

Jurate Morkuniene

Lithuania is going through a period of transition and development. The problem of social identity is the actual problem of the real life of Lithuania. Can there be political democracy, i.e., dialogue in society without guaranteeing a basic minimum level of economic well-being? In other words, can people enjoy its social identity if they do not have access to the conditions requisite for a quality of life beyond subsistence?

The history of Lithuania is riddled with injustice, misfortune and social evils. Over the centuries, Lithuanians have been oppressed by a host of foreign invaders -- German, Russian, Polish. The territory of Lithuania has been just a "window to Europe" for Russian Tsars; it has been "Lebensraum" for the Germans in their centuries-long "Drang nach Osten.” Lithuanian people managed to preserve their national identity and their language over the last fifty years despite the ravages of World War II, including forced emigration, mass deportations, overt and covert russianization and general destruction of the very foundation of national cultural life.[1] For this the nation as a whole had to pay a high price in the form of depopulation and acculturation. The loss of a great number of conscientious, educated, cultured people cannot be easily and quickly compensated.

However, our interest is to describe the present threats to social and personal identity of the Lithuanian people collectively. For a multitude of people, the actual conditions of life have become worse. The destructiveness, social pathology, human decline contributed to an increasing loss of social identity.

When the Soviet system collapsed, many people -- the old, the young, the sick, the less able -- found themselves unable, for one reason or another, to succeed in the new system of government. Freedom seems to have provided opportunities only for those who are more energetic and often unscrupulous. Lithuanian society is becoming increasingly unequal and polarized in terms of opportunities, incomes and living conditions. Inequality in Lithuania is progressing in a cumulative way. It means that benefits tend to accumulate for certain groups. Lithuanian rebirth is set in a framework of disaster. The high mortality rate, decline of health, educational indicators, deteriorating standard of living and growth of unemployment -- all are in the danger zone. The number of homeless people is now rising sharply, partly as a result of the policy of restitution of house ownership.

The speed of political changes in Eastern and Central Europe is so rapid that the process of reform faces many difficulties. I do not agree with the researchers who argue that those difficulties "arise from the human mind's limited ability to accept the speed of the perceived changes,”[2] or that it is an "insufficient level of mental adaptation.”[3] The difficulties may be interpreted in terms of multidimensional reality. Naturally, in different countries, Lithuania among them, changes in the social identity of the people exhibit some specific features. On the one hand, the transition to a new historical epoch is similar to the abolition of slavery or the end of colonial repression. On the other hand, social and personal identity is lost under the new economic and political circumstances.

What does people's social identity consists of? It consists of the opportunity to acquire the skills or tools, i.e., knowledge and experience, which are needed to function effectively in a society-making process. The main indicators of social identity include professionally assisted birth, a safe and secure life space, an adequate diet, accessibility of health care services, a good and practical education, political participation, an economically productive life, protection against unemployment, a dignified old age, a decent burial.[4]

The social identity is mostly based on national identity, dignity, self-respect, self-esteem and responsibility of people. Social identity is expressed as knowing and, also, as the feeling of dependence on society and of responsibility to it as well as the wish to belong to it. It means that each member of the society is aware of identity (is educated); will belong to the society (he/she participates in social life); and can achieve identity (the social conditions ensure a worthy human life). I would like to present some basic facts which, I hope, will help to substantiate such an assertion. Through the interpretation of some quantitative data, we shall try to determine the main causes undermining social identity.

The main threats to social identity in Lithuania are poverty, unemployment and increasing criminality.[5] Poverty is an acute problem for the sustained social identity and social freedom. The meager salaries and pensions of most Lithuanian people make life difficult. As consumer prices and costs of services have increased, conversely, the real wages have decreased. Many people do not have enough money to buy even the essentials. In the current situation, it is difficult to understand how and from what a person and an entire family can earn a living. The living strategy of a lot families is very simple: from paycheck to paycheck, trying to survive, spending money only on the basic necessities, denying themselves even some necessities. Most families cannot afford their basic needs. A very high proportion of personal income goes towards food and nourishment. According to the Department of Statistics the subjective poverty-line in 1996 equaled 585 LTL ($146,250 USD), which was on average 1.7 times higher than the minimum subsistence level.[6] Indeed, Lithuania still has no official definition of poverty lines, even though the absolute poverty line is equivalent to the minimum subsistence level (MSL).[7]

As property and social differences increase, social differentiation of the population is becoming more pronounced than is acceptable for a normal society. The middle-class stratum – the basis of stability of democratic society -- is not increasing, but decreasing. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened. In 1995, the disposable income of the wealthiest 10 percent was 10 times as much as that of the poorest. Ten percent of the wealthiest households held 26.3 percent of all disposable income, while the poorest 10 percent held 2.8 percent (Lithuanian Human Development Report, 1996, 25). Actually, polarization is much greater than the survey data show, especially in the cities, because wealthy people avoid participating in such surveys and revealing their true incomes. For example, even within the budgetary sector, judges earn ten times more than teachers.[8]

These boundaries are strongly felt psychologically: the differences cause huge emotional conflicts. People remain silent even though their dissatisfaction is deep. It should be noted that the deep internal contradictions between socioeconomic and cultural capital of the same social group, also, deserve consideration. For instance, higher education jobs and even concrete occupations do not characterize either the individual or the position of his social group in the society. Thus, today the typical indicators of social status, used by Western sociology (income, education, occupation, wealth), can only partly show social differentiation in our society.

Alongside the property differences, the *contrasts in education* increase as well. Problems of accessibility of education in a broad sense are very crucial. In 1996-1997, 5 percent of 7- to 15-year-old children were not registered and not attending school (approximately 18,000-24,000).[9] According to an international expert-rated classification of education programs (ISCED), 25 percent of 20- to 24-year olds in Lithuania are now pursuing specialized and higher education. Not everyone wishing to obtain higher education can afford to do so.

Another serious social problem affecting social identity is emerging: the loss of job security and the steady increase in official and unofficial *unemployment.* Some categories of people who lost their jobs first are: elderly women, workers with disabilities, young people and those without specialization or profession. The social stigma of unemployment is strong in society, and many people cannot overcome this psychological barrier.

Harsh economic realities, accompanied by the uncertainties over the future and the erosion of traditional social norms, put additional strains on the individual. Disillusionment undermines people's abilities and causes apathy. People are becoming less careful with their lives and health and lack self-esteem. This lack of self-esteem can be directed towards the political system and can put the development of democracy at risk.[10]

Morbidity and mortality are rising in Lithuania, while life expectancy is falling and is now lower than it has been for two decades. The current life expectancy for men is lower than it was in 1960; while the life expectancy for women is at the same level as 1985;[11] (65 years for men and 76.1 years for women).[12]

Mortality is increasing most sharply among young people, who die mainly from nonmedical causes such as accidents and suicide. There has been a sudden jump in suicide, indicating growing human distress. Lithuania now has one of the highest suicide rates in the world (46 suicides per 100,000 population).[13] In 1995 the highest suicide indicator was among 40- to 49-year-old men. For every 100,000 residents, 135 men of this age committed suicide in urban areas; and 257 men, in rural areas. More than one-third were unemployed men, looking for work.[14]

The criminalization of society and the rise in the crime rate threaten personal security. Between 1991 and 1995, for every 10,000 inhabitants, there were, on average, 150.8 criminal acts in Lithuania. At the same time, the number of murders increased by 1.9 times. Nearly one in three murder victims was an adult male. Crimes are noticeably becoming more violent and are increasingly committed by young people.[15]

Economic poverty emphasizes breakdowns experienced in other areas, for example, the weakening and the breakdown of social ties, relationship difficulties, social discredit, exclusion and loss of identity. The personal and social impacts of unemployment, in their own turn, include poverty, financial hardship, debt, homelessness or overcrowding, the weakening of family ties or family dissolution, disintegration, isolation, erosion of confidence and self-esteem, atrophy of work skills, ill health. Poverty and unemployment keep individuals out of society.

Poverty-related social exclusion is the most persistent danger to social identity and social cohesion. On the other hand, we cannot describe the poor as a category or even a social class in the real sense of these terms. But poverty manifests itself not only in malnutrition, unemployment or homelessness. The biggest threat to social identity lies in the fact that poverty does not allow people to take full advantage of their citizenship. Many people, who may not actually be starving, are nonetheless unable to lead meaningful lives within the accepted values and norms and to participate in social life. They find it difficult to develop social contacts, to travel, to study, to buy books, to visit theatres, to subscribe to the papers. Relations of scientific workers with colleagues from abroad are not easy to maintain.

The most commonly used indicator of human developmental conditions in society is poverty. Besides the traditional, acknowledged manifestations of poverty, it can express itself in different, sometimes invisible, ways, and, thus, remain untreated and uncorrected in society. For example, social isolation and distress may be caused by changing consumption patterns: mass-media, theatres, telephone calls and friendly visits simply become unaffordable; this, at least, could account for the rising suicide rate. Phenomena of social pathology, causing suffering in the contemporary Lithuanian society, are rising because of limited opportunities of social contacts. Poverty hits the future of the nation. Statistics show that it is mostly concentrated among working-age people and young families with children. At the present time, young families often have to choose between two alternatives:

either to raise a child in poverty, or else not to have one. Consequently, Lithuania's population has been steadily decreasing since 1992.

It would be very difficult to determine the exact number of inhabitants who are severely marginalized, but judging from indirect evidence, it is possible to conclude that numbers have grown rapidly in the past 5 to 7 years. In 1996, approximately 18 percent of households had consumer expenditure below the real MSL. Many youths see a future not only of joblessness but of purposelessness: a life with little reward and no meaning. Even teaching is one of the lowest-paid professions. For example, in July 1994, a teacher's average salary was less than 300 LTL. ($75 USD) per month. Three-quarters of teachers survive only their earnings. Many teachers cannot subscribe to the necessary publications, cannot buy the latest materials or books and cannot attend concert or theatre performances. For the above reasons, the prestige of teachers in society is very low.

The aforementioned contrasts influence people's consciousness, make it shredded and split, even "schizoid." Alongside the loyalty to an independent state and national ideals, we can see national and civic nihilism. The former feeling of community in the days of revival has been replaced by disunity and disagreements. The indicated abnormal social differences and dysfunction serve to weaken such vital elements of social identity as a feeling of belonging to a community and a wish to belong to it. Loss of status leads to breakdowns in socialization and sociability networks.

Transition placed more responsibility on individuals, but disillusionment undermined people's abilities and caused apathy. It is remarkable that, in a country with a high literacy rate, sexually transmitted diseases are rapidly spreading at alarming rates among people of all education and income levels. The type of people, who have suppressed individuality, who are blind to noble values and who have no sense of civil responsibility, is multiplying. The transition period has given people a growing sense of insecurity and social isolation. Apathy, alienation, indifference, violence and brutality, growing skepticism, cynicism, fatalism and despair become the established practice. The moral disintegration, street violence, murders, etc., taking place in society, are indicative of the profound moral slump in our society. People, whose future is uncertain, become frightened; they look backwards and not forwards; they become more aggressive and are most likely to support an authoritarian rule which promises to implement rationality and justice by force.

The part of society with a low level of self-esteem and self-respect, in fact, a low level of social identity, can unconsciously project its own negative qualities into other parts of the nation and, consequently, react aggressively against them. The excluded either are outside society, or are simply defined as nonexistent. Marginalized and excluded people may then refuse to accept the ruler and the laws of society. Instead they "act out" and accept the rules of violence. Often, violence is understood as a last resource, when words and dialogue become impossible. There are other forms of violence, found in groups which are economically excluded. For example, there are those who do not accept democratic rules for personal, group interests but resort to corruption and reject the rights of "others."

The novel trends of the application of philosophical theory are characterized by the transition from spontaneous creation and application of philosophy towards an organized methodology. Philosophical conceptions cannot save the world. But, according to Vaclav Havel, "we must all behave as if we could save it."[16] For instance, classical philosophy raised the question about how the personality can remain self-adequate, i.e., to be human, to preserve inner humaneness; whereas the problem of the modern social philosophy is how the personality should act in order to preserve humaneness in other people, in the world, in humankind. Each one of us must "clean" one square meter around himself or herself. We hope that all these difficulties are only the beginning of a new era.

Abstract

The definition of social identity consists of two parts. First, it means protection against threats to a nation's existence and well-being. Second, it means the search for measures and possibilities to achieve the goals of social development and improvement. Social identity implies the creation and preservation of conditions in which each citizen can develop into an educated, creative, responsible personality.

Today, especially for nations throughout the former Soviet Union, the chief danger to social identity lies in the adverse conditions of continued underdevelopment. It follows that nowadays identity means, first of all, the development of our nation.

The essential condition for a small nation's identity and survival is based on people's resolution to rely upon themselves and the potential inherent within their own country. The modern strategy for ensuring social identity would principally rely on this principle: every citizen is part of the identity, i.e., each is an active agent contributing to the identity. For this reason, a strategic condition is to create equal starting possibilities, i.e., equality of opportunities for everyone.

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Notes

1. *Genocide of Lithuanian People* (Vilnius, 1992), p. 48.

2. Adam Biela, "Mental changes and Social Integration Perspective in Europe: Theoretical Framework and Research Strategies," *Journal for Mental Changes*, 1 (1995), 10.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

4. John Friedmann, "Rethinking Poverty: Empowerment and Citizen Rights," *International Social Science Journal*, 148 (1996), 169.

5. *Lithuanian Human Development Report*, 1996 (Vilnius, 1996).

6. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

16. Vaclav Havel and Maximilian Schell, "Europe at the Fin de Siècle," *Society*, 32 (1995), 71.

Chapter XI

Ethnic Identity of Greek-Albanian Immigrants

Mariangela Veikou

> . . . not ethnic cultures, but collective contingencies . . .
>
> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993

The paper presents some aspects of the ethnographic material that I have collected studying the identity negotiations of Albanian immigrant families of Greek origin, who currently reside in a middle-upper-class neighborhood in a suburb of Athens, Greece. The material is arranged in such a form to place specific emphasis on symbolic markers which the immigrants selectively use in shaping an "acceptable" identity for creating a sense of belonging in the host society. The different ways in which the immigrant families are actively and currently challenging their specific minority position have been addressed in an attempt to understand their identity representations. The paper reflects on the issues of ethnicity and location, focusing on aspects of cross-cultural identity in reference to place. It examines the relation between "history" as a determining factor of a people's ethnic identity and the "practice" of identification as a process having to do with the conditions of the present.

Studies of immigrant life are largely dominated by the assumption that the term "ethnic identity" connotes a definite, uniform content and assumes a timeless, meaning system or status of which people are members.[1] The latter entails an absolute association between groups of, is based in a homogeneous way on a “cultural heritage and tradition.” I would depart from such a view of ethnic identity which commonly assumes culture to be an entity with definite, uniform content, firmly located in particular places of shared tradition and future perspective. As E. Carter, et al., make clear, "the presumed certainties of cultural identity which housed traditional attachments to place, although may be reality for some, are increasingly disrupted in the case of migrating population.”[2]

Our task here is to recognize people's agency in the process of their identification before making assumptions about their ethnic identity. I focused this paper on the adaptive role of immigrants in making sense of their changing lives, particularly in reference to place.[3] Throughout the project I explore the way that their ethnic identity is being expressed in relation to a particular place. I would further suggest that the representations of the past are socially motivated and manifested with markers which are useful and appropriate to the specific present context.

The immigrant families described herein are engaged in a perpetual process of ordering their experiences according to their ethnic identity. The nature of their ethnic identification is crystallized under conditions depending on the social structure of the neighborhood in a particular city, instead of being defined solely in terms of patterns of association with common origin. Interest in the immigrant families' ethnic identity, as perceived in this paper, focuses on the individual’s attempts to link practices of identification with specific organizational or affective or ecological aspects of the social environment and throughout this process actively to represent their past.

The Greek-Albanian families realize their "differentness" in various social contexts and relate to the natives by rethinking their own identities and debating and negotiating the meanings of their cultural and past experiences. In this case, ethnic identification arises from specific patterns of social interaction. This empirical work finds that the ethnic identification can be theorized as a reflexive project, but it is still largely relationally shaped by the institutions of society. The emphasis is on identity as a social process that shifts according to social context.

Examining social interaction and the immigrants' "strategies" to adjust, I saw their efforts to organize their lives along family lines, informed by their concern and anxiety over how to create a sociocultural place for themselves in a big city -- a place that would give meaning to their status and identity.

The fact that immigrants are accompanied by their families is indicative of the image that they are trying to communicate. Immigration in families points, according to the Greek cultural values, to an idealized view of the immigrants' adjustment, with the household organization representing attachment to stable, traditional, cultural morals, dedication to family, education, work and social compliance. In these terms, a more "settled face" is perceived less threatening since the moral quality of the family life is culturally and socially appreciated as a solid, secure value. Consequently, any analysis of the families has to take into account the specific experiences that individuals have in Athens. I found that in all aspects of life they explicitly identify with what they distinctively saw to be characteristic and essential features of the Greek societal order and, by applying them, would justifiably make them "Greek" and, therefore, successfully integrated.

Forms of social interaction among natives and immigrants clearly should not be expected to have the same features in all societies or among all its minority groups. In order to understand this configuration of the "social interaction -- ethnic identification process," it is necessary to note that it depends on the cultural resources people have and use, on what they hope to achieve, consciously or not, and on the range of options available to them at the time. In other words, ethnic identification is their perception of the past, manifested with markers which are useful in the present and in appropriate contexts. Hence, an historical description of the immigrants' status in the Albanian village from where they emigrated could be useful in order to grasp the multiple processes which affect the formation of their present ethnic identification.

All the immigrant families of the study originated in the same Albanian village, situated almost on the border with the Greek state, called Grava, where they had the legal status of "Greek minority person."[4] However, many of the Greek-Albanians of the study and particularly their parents have vivid memories of the efforts made by the Albanian state, soon after the war, to form a homogeneous Albanian people. Greeks living in the south had the status of a national minority, allowing them to use their language, but in reality everyone, like it or not, was "made equal" to a significant extent. For instance, soon the minority members were all required to Albanize their names; a list of approved names was provided in a booklet distributed to every household by the state. These names were selected on the basis of a Latin origin, being untainted from any religious or ethnic undertones. So, for example, Fotis became Filippo, Ageliki became Adelina, Vasiliki became Valentina, and so forth. This was a significant experience for many Greek families who had to give different names to their children, so that they could pass for members of the larger Albanian population, which had, especially under that period, proved useful. Today, their children, the second generation of Greek-Albanians in Greece, know little or nothing about the events and the lives of the sizeable group of their grandparents and great-grandparents who happened to live once in Greek territory before becoming citizens of the Albanian state. Nevertheless, this legacy informs and conditions the living memories of the Greek-Albanian families still presently in Greece.

The name "Greek minority person" was couched ideologically and emotionally to express the people's orientation towards the "motherland " that they called Greece.[5] However, after 1990, when a large number of people arrived in Greece from ex-Communist Albania, a significant number of whom were coming from the "Greek minority zone," the Greek state mechanism and society in general were faced with a situation difficult to handle. Shortly, quite remarkably, the term "Greek minority person," previously acknowledging common ethnic origin to the "enslaved brothers," was replaced soon enough by the name, “Albanian immigrant,” which assumed negative connotations. Once the "Albanians" became a social group, it was only a matter of time before they would become a social problem, with all the usual connotations of the foreign danger bringing innate criminality. For example, "the Albanian immigrant" was associated with the young, male, political prisoner, who escaped confinement and is committing thefts. So these people's identity has been taken over by that of the invasive, threatening and parasitic immigrant. The terms “Albanian” and “immigrant,” in their various formulations, were interchangeable. They described a particular social caste. They may signal the whole impoverished, noxious mess encroaching from the East in the liberal imagination who also become synonymous with “victims” or “refugees”; or they may, also, signal the immigrant laborers as a flexible, exploitable, atypical and cheap work force.

This latter discourse, in some paradoxical way, implies an ambiguous ethnic identity which assumes tragic dimensions in the case of the immigrant families of the study. Their previous marginalization in the Albanian state, where they constituted a minority with deprived religious and cultural rights because of the Communist program, is replaced with a new one in the Greek environment where they are supposed to have joined their wider ethnic community. In fact, there is a double ambiguity. While these people were in Albania, they were considered "Greeks" by the Albanians and "the enslaved brothers" by the Greeks. Now in Greece the terms are reversed, they are considered "the Albanians" by the Greeks and the "compatriots" by the Albanians. The immigrants' identity profile as it is presented in the current "Greek dominant discourse" implies that these people are "between two cultures,” that is, not "purely and authentically" Greek, but combining Albanian and Greek cultural elements.

As Baumann suggests, one should avoid contemplating such a slippery issue, which inevitably raises far-reaching questions. What are the two pure cultures involved? Is there, on the one hand, a homogenous Greek culture and, on the other, perhaps some other type of culture which would be neither Greek nor Albanian in this "authentic" sense, which they shared while in Albania? Who has the authority to speak for a group's "authenticity"? What are the essential elements and boundaries of a culture, and so forth?[6]

Sharing his point of view, I would rather refer to them as people who are seen to reach across two cultures. Their case appears to me as a typical example of the ways that ethnic identification can be configured by blending different sources and traditions from different locales. By that it is meant to suggest that since the lives of the immigrant families have been recently ordered by the experience of displacement, the relation between the place and their "previous" identity is seriously challenged. The particular cultural aspects of the life in the Albanian village become increasingly difficult or purposeless to maintain in the Greek contemporary city. It is, in fact, the city which acts now as the place which houses and supports their social or ethnic identity. Though the families continue to resonate throughout the experience of where they are coming from, the ways in which their past home and their present home impact upon their identification are marked increasingly by today’s challenges. It seems to me that the only way to understand the identity orientations of the immigrant families and the manner in which they are restructuring their lives is to address the many and different ways in which they are currently and actively setting their own agendas and challenging their specific position as immigrants and poor, displaced people.

While in Albania, Greece retained for them a symbolic image as the embodiment of the ideal society to host them. The realization of “the dream of the return” and life in Athens, however, came to be inseparable from a constant striving for acceptance and achievement. Their only motivation, which is to create a place for themselves in Greek society, frames their orientation of present identity and identification.

Blending in with Greek society is thought to be not difficult to achieve by constructing a shared cultural identity centered around the Greek “labels,” rather than the other “labels” of their identity that also categorize them. In their efforts to define the essence of their Greek heritage, Greek-Albanians place a formal emphasis on language and religion as cornerstones of their Greek culture. These elements bind together symbolically Greek-Albanians with Greeks in important ways, as Yannis explains:

> . . . We are Greeks originally from Vorio-Epirus (North-Epirus). This is what our parents told us when we were born and that's how we know it ever since. In our villages we spoke Greek and even at the primary school we took some Greek courses. In our homes we kept up the Greek, Christian customs and traditions. We were Greeks at heart. We never tried to disguise our roots during communism. And that was hard to do because there even when you raised your glass to drink a toast, it had to be to the Party.

It seems, though, that their assertion of their Greek ethnic background has not helped them by itself to sustain a positive identity inside the Greek society. Apparently, their claims to “purity” have not convinced the native "jury" of authenticity. Perhaps, opposing them are more dominating alternatives such as what appear to be their different cultural customs and moral values more suitable to the “Albanian” way of life.

In fact, culture is more subtle and particular in everyday interaction, and, as it appears, it is likely to be renegotiated and redefined in response to the shifting set of current social challenges. Although the feeling of being "Greek" for all of the families was unified and clear in its significance, in certain cases, where their "Greekness" seems to be distinguished from the "Greekness" of the Athenians, then the actual consideration of what their ethnic identity consists of becomes meaningful and relevant. For these people, who have originally seen themselves as Greeks, analyzing their vision of Greekness is felt to be so unimportant and irrelevant even as it is purposeless for a group of people to discuss and analyze its system of values. However, they can clearly articulate, apart from the commonalities, some differences between them and their local Greek neighbors.

Being presented with this, I found, Greek-Albanians “choose” with which version of Greek culture to associate. This is not meant to imply that their ethnicity is a cultural artifact: the result of social factors and individual subjective interests which denies any kind of reproductive drives. It is precisely the field of conceptual and symbolic ethnicity that enables them constantly to reinterpret their symbolic capital and transform themselves continually as a result of changes in the cultural domain of the Greek society.

The fact that symbols are invented does not mean that people do not share any cultural idioms. Within this context, I find it more interesting to analyze the ethnic group as an "organizational type" that allows its members improved performance within the wider context in which they interact directly. In this sense I find their “Greek” identity to be situational, determined partly by interest and partly by embodiment and cultural association. There is neither a breakdown from the past nor a cultural-fixity paradigm of their ethnic-identity manifestations.

H. Moore and various anthropologists of the time made it possible to depart from a conception of culture as a finished product understandable only within an historically outlined picture, without reaching the reductionist approach which perceives the origins of cultural configurations in the socialization standards. Instead, her paradigm for the analysis of cultural-identity phenomena suggests some sort of cultural convergence. The body, she says, is a system of affections not of substance. Transformation of identity does not have to do with the “mind” but with the “body.” Therefore, social agents by changing their practices (bodily behavior) are converting their cultural standards (mind behavior). In the conversations I had with members of the families, it was implied in several cases that they were constantly preoccupied with considerations of "what is essential for the Greek neighbors.” Likewise, appropriating the conventions, the habits, the appearance of Greeks, they give out certain diacritical signs which should be seen by others as messages to be decoded, permitting the manipulation of stereotypes of who the Greek-Albanians actually are. According to R. D. Laing, "the body is an object in the world of others, it is necessary to dress it up and act, in effect, in accordance with the attributes these others are accustomed to, so that it may be recognized as a body."[7]

Differences do exist but immigrants claim that these have to do with the families' economic status and social role. As they see it, their image is still not the appropriate one. The immigrant families are constantly testing this latter possibility, and it is an issue on which they are focusing their strategies of integration. Ethnic identity is not the only factor of similarity or differentiation that counts in the inclusion or the exclusion discourses of the society as their case is concerned, they figure. Therefore, they often override their ethnic-identification puzzle by trying to keep up with the standard social status of the locality, which is the particular neighborhood where they live. To a certain extent an acceptable social image, according to these standards, could outweigh or counterbalance the differentiating features. If I am "dressed" as Greeks do, I look like a Greek, and I feel Greek.

Adelina, in her early thirties, is very well-adjusted to the new life-style. She is a mother of two children and works as a nurse for the elderly. When I asked why her husband calls her “Adelina” and her friends call her “Elli,” she explained that she changed her name because she had never heard the name “Adelina” in Athens; instead “Elli” is a name that a number of Greek women have.

Tilemaxos, in his late thirties, works most of the time as a gardener. He seemed comfortably adjusted to the life he is leading in Athens and tolerant of differences in people's behavior. But, at the same time, he sharply perceives differences in life-styles, “there” and “here.”

> Here people are dressed in a different way. You can see how much money they make just by looking at the way they dress. I always take care of the way that I am dressed, especially after work because otherwise people in the bus think that I am "Albanian.”

The problem, then, centers on the relation between the Greek social structure[8] and the socially appropriate acts of the immigrants,[9] as well as how this encounter is being realized in practice. Listening to the immigrants and observing their conduct, I raise the possibility that the current lack of actual understanding in this encounter between Greeks from Albania and Greeks in Greece is not due to cultural encapsulation on each part, as the popular view has it. Rather, it is a consequence of their differentiated social and economic status, exacerbated by a mutually alienating feeling among Greeks from Albania and Greeks in Greece, as a consequence of many years of living apart.

The focus then is on the locality, represented not merely as a locus of ethnicity but as an important medium through which people's identities are formed and practiced. For instance, Greek-Albanians are not accustomed to modern, urban life. Even their Greek accent, as well as their wordy way of speaking the Greek language, refers more to the idiom that was spoken in the Greek region before the settling of the borders, at the time of the formation of the Albanian state. Greeks, on the other hand, look down on them because, although they recognize some shared sense of ancestral ties, they raise the issue of divided loyalties since their ethnicity is understood by the Greek population as some kind of special Greek-Albanian blend. This is very painfully felt by the immigrants. They have mentioned that "in Albania we were the dirty Greeks, here in Greece we are the dirty Albanians."

It is important to recognize how difficult it is to observe ethnicity in action. Several dislocations and movements in the recent history of the families have influenced the formation of the Greek-Albanian identity in response to settlement in Athens. The bigger issue, as I see it, is the asserted duality of their vision of the Greek cultural order as constituted and orchestrated in two different social contexts and as lived by the immigrating people. Greek-Albanians oscillate between two systems of values -- both being Greek to their minds -- with which they are faced and within which they make choices. They seem fairly comfortable with their own sense of ethnicity which takes on a double sense, that does not lessen the specificity of each of its component regional parts.

> Right after the fall of communism in 1989 we became again Greeks. Already by the end of 1990, in May, there was a general outcry, especially in our villages (in the South). People rose up against the lousy economic situation. What the Greeks believe that it was the Greek political leaders that invited us to come by saying that we are your brothers and we should come to Greece for protection, it is not the truth. We came here because we lived in a cage for 45 years and then we realized that there is life also elsewhere and it can be nice. Not only we were poor but we were also isolated. The easiest way out for us was Greece. Our village is right across the island of Corfu. It is so close that one can actually see it. And we thought that our parents had been born there (in Epirus) and we were born in Albania, but this did not mean that we should also die there. The world is a big place, we knew that by then, we could hear it on the radio, the TV.

To the extent that the families feel alienated from both societies, how are they supposed to see themselves when they are asked to give a single answer to their ethnic identity questions, Who are they? Are they Greeks? Are they Albanians? In our conversations, they tend to ascribe to themselves an identity on the basis of who they are and the way they live now, in the present context. This allows them to present a more fitting image of themselves having more than one belonging, “we are Greeks from Albania.”

The “Greek-Albanian” identity in spite of its constructed character, is an embodied, internalized feeling. The immigrants have constructed a symbolic bridge between the past and the present. How can this happen? It is the bond created between people and place in the construction of culture. Locality is there to create a physical and social place for cultural performance.

Of course, these people neither demonstrate nor experience self-identity conflicts or suspension between two cultures. Instead, the families continue to illustrate actively what their ethnic identity means for them, rather than being stereotypically stamped by it. I do not mean to say that the past is not a crucial factor for identity, as it is a mark of habitat; indeed, reference to the past is necessary in order to delineate a group's unit. However, identity between spaces can also be “natural.” It is J. Clifford's well know argument that people identify themselves in a continual process of ordering their experiences.[10] “Greeks from Albania,” the identity which they have chosen for themselves, does not suggest any disruption or abrupt alteration of identity; on the contrary, their identification expresses the dilemmas that the families face and the dialectical process through which they experience and act out these dilemmas. The name they have chosen symbolizes the selection of Albanian and Greek cultural elements: it is an active process whereby people attempt to control their lives through a multiple identification and within negotiation. It also symbolizes their desire not to be considered the “poor, uncivilized Albanians.” The very name "Albanian" sounds like an insult for the contemporary Greek public. They are taking on a social image which is accepted by the Greeks and which will grant them the rights that they think they are entitled to, as hardworking residents and as "returnees" to the Greek community.

The statements -- "I am Greek from Albania. We are both Greeks. I do not understand why you are considered to be more Greek than I am just because I was born in Albania and you, here" -- do not specify whether, or not, they conceptualize their ethnic culture alternatively as a heritage, as a mentality and/or as a locality. Yet, in each of the three possibilities, ethnic identity has the effect of “same origin, different life opportunities,” and this is what attributes different characteristics to the two groups, the Greeks and the Greek-Albanians. Cultural differences and variations are distinguishable among them, but they are evaluated as a result of the different life-styles that the two groups had experienced.

The assertions on their identity are context-specific, rendering meaningful factors which correspond to their aspirations and suppressing those markers which define them as a population of a degraded status. This is quite clear from the activities and social relationships to which immigrants attribute meaning and importance. I take an incident to give a specific indication for such a practice. Since they are very concerned about their public image, they seek to associate socially with their Greek neighbors, co-workers or sometimes even employers, rather than with other immigrant families in the neighborhood (although this selection practice would not include the members of their kin who happen to live in the same area). They even, to a certain extent, copy the life-style of their Greek neighbors. They feel it is essential to provide their children with private schooling in addition to regular school attendance, to take them to the gym or other sorts of social activities, frequently taken up by Greek children, even if the money they make, working very hard, is not always enough. Working does not mean solely security; it also means additional money to make their life more comfortable and, hence, “presentable” which is of equal importance to the families.

It seems to me that their special position rests on the two-dimensional view of their identity. They perform and negotiate their identity in two different ways in a process of making sense of themselves and of others. They feel as members of the "wider Greek culture" which, for them, has two places of reference, one in the country of origin and one in the country of residence. So they are shifting between the two in an attempt to make meaning of their lives, negotiating the two as one. Whether they are called -- "Albanians" or "Greeks" or "Greeks from Albania" -- all these terms designate categories of association that the families might use or not in one context or the other. In this way, they demonstrate their identification process as negotiating agents but not as passive recipients of the circumstance.

Much has been written about ethnic identity and is largely centered around the issue of culture as a portable heritage, determining life-styles, as if culture was a baggage that people carry around. The empirical suggestion in this case is that culture is not a baggage, neither can it be seen as a "tool kit"[11] out of which one may use whatever markers are suitable in the current condition. One of the principal attempts of this work is to expunge the single concept of ethnicity as an exclusive category. Rather, the term ethnicity is based on diverse forms of spatial identification, each of which have different implications about the process of articulating identity by locality.

The nature of the ethnic identification of the immigrant families, is crystallized under conditions of the ecological and social structure of the specific neighborhoods in the city and, to a lesser degree, on conditions defined by frequent patterns of association and identification with common origins. As S. Wallman eloquently phrased it, ethnic-identity formation and immigrant behavior are basically manifestations of the way people are organized in terms of interaction patterns, personal aspirations, life-styles and a presumed consciousness of belonging.[12]

"Ethnic identification has a lot to do with the exigencies of survival and the structure of opportunity in the country of residence. The cultural heritage of the immigrant groups is taking shape in this country." This idea refers to the current state of debate which acknowledges the formative power of "place" in the process by which identities are constructed.[13] Ethnicity works to differentiate and identify groups and to mobilize their symbolic resources to particular ends. Cultural change is recognized, and the need to find some sort of modus vivendi is acknowledged. Perhaps we would like to consider ethnic identity as something positive and unshakable, but to the immigrant families the context-specific identity negotiations mean confirmation of the success of adaptation. Their form of identification applies to the contemporary concerns on the theory of identity. This theory proposes that instead of searching for lost "authenticities" based on nostalgia and false memories, places should be looked at as the distinctive factor of social relation to cultural production.[14]

Is it then simply a matter of positioning and strategy? That is, all potential identity markers are mobilized only where it suits the purposes of the particular encounter. Although it seems as if people are using identity markers in a strategical way for a purpose, in my opinion, identities combined and recombined in the course of real life are not changing specifically and deliberately. I would argue instead that ethnic identification, as an emergent phenomenon, continues to develop with the changing positions of the individuals within society. Old forms of ethnic identification may die out, and new forms may be generated.

Nikos describes that, when he first arrived in Athens, looking for a job, without a place to stay and no money, people frequently asked him where he was from in Albania and what was his religion.

> I soon realized that who you are in Athens is matter of attitude. The policeman does not stop you if you look at him in the eyes, mind your own business and dress in the appropriate way. Now I drive my own car, I behave like Greeks do and other Albanians are often mistaking me for Greek boss, and they treat me with respect.

(Re)-constructing the past is an act of self-identification and must be interpreted in its authenticity, that is, in terms of the existential relation between subjects and the constitution of a meaningful world. What about the authenticity of past identity? This is rather a question of the existential authenticity of the individual's engagement in a self-defining situation since the past is envisaged as a constantly changing product of current circumstances.

> Greeks and Albanians, were all the same, they were all people, we were living under the same conditions. Only the language and the religion was different. And another thing, for us Greece was the homeland (patria) of our parents and grandparents.

Sahlins in his *Islands of History* argues precisely this: "Identity" is the organization of the current situation in the terms of a past.[15] Clearly, not only the present situation, he says, but also the past builds our identity. He is referring, however, to a past which is practiced in the present, not because it imposes itself on it, but because the individuals understand the past in the practice of their present identification.

Inevitably in the families' claims about identity, images of "roots," language and religion are central to their imagination. These are basic categories people refer to when they talk about social relatedness; but, their interest in belonging is much more circumstanced and focused on the variable of place.

Ethnic bonding is an emotional attachment which is based on the conviction of group members who are ancestrally related. An appeal to arguments -- which link this bonding with a set of apt criteria that would explain how a community of people claims definite standing in the past -- can be rather easily discharged as misleading. Should we then agree that the boundary process is reactive and not independent? Yet still, if culture is not definite but negotiable, what is it that commands people's loyalty, and how do we defend the cultural content of the past? An answer was given by Gerd Baumann in his book, *Contesting Culture*. Ethnicity is not about differences and social boundaries, but it refers to the sense of differentness which can occur when members of particular cultures interact. The key phrase which explains this admixture of reason and emotional attachment is how people feel about their history. It is not "what is," but what people perceive as "is" that influences their attitudes and behaviour.[16] According to Friedman, in like manner, the past signifies the project constructed by selectively organizing the events in the lives of individuals in a relation of continuity and, thereby, creating an appropriate representation of a life leading up to the present.[17]

Therefore, what could the "Greek-from-Albania" identity be indicating? Even if it seems that the immigrant families refuse to identify themselves according to the two faces of the dominant discourse and accordingly to be either Greeks or Albanians, it is empirically visible that they are marked by the fault lines of the dominant discourse which are affecting their way of thinking and acting. A very characteristic example of this two-dimensional identification are the words of an immigrant man defending his "Greek" origin to me. “Why should you have every right in this state, and I am not entitled to any? Just because when they were settling the borders they cut us out, did this make you more Greek than I am?" Taking an example from the other point of view, an immigrant father defending his background in Albania, told me: "I do not want my children to play in the street, not because I am afraid that something should happen to them, but because, with whom should they play, with the "Greeks"? This means that the Greek children would not want to play with the children of an Albanian immigrant family!

It is clear then that in pursuing their various commitments the immigrants themselves question who they are and what this may signify in this particular place, depending upon their judgments of context and purpose. Unfortunately, the dominant discourse represents the language of authority through which the families must explain themselves and legitimate their claims. Hence, the name that they use for themselves, "Greeks from Albania,” is their way of resisting such views that assert people's distinct natures conditioned irreversibly by the past.

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Notes

1. Gerd Baumann, *Contesing Culture: Discourses of Identity in Multi-ethnic London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 11.
2. E. Carter, J. Donald and J. Squires, eds. *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993), p. vii.

3. According to Doreen Massey, "place" should be understood as porous networks of social relations, constructed through the specificity of social interaction; D. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge Polity Press, 1994), p. 153.

4. The term prevailed after the final border definition following the Balkan wars which cut across long-lasting communities of people. A large number of Greek-speaking people found themselves in the southern part of the Albanian state where they occupied some villages and a few towns.

5. At the time, Greece appeared as a "Promised Land" in comparison to Albania where people were suffering material deprivation, the crisis of the political system, social and religious oppressions, and so on. The dream for an eventual return to the "homeland," the occasional Greek political promises for reception, together with the picture that these people retained of Greece as an ideal consumer society, all contributed to the visualization of a potential mass exodus from Albania to Greece after the collapse of the Communist regime, as a good fortune for the population of the Greek minority villages. A. E. Gotovos, *Research on the Economic, Social and Cultural Integration of Albanian Immigrants to Greece, 1990-91,* (published by the University of Ioannina, Greece, 1994), pp. 2-6.

6. As Gerd Baumann subtly phrased it to describe somewhat similar ambiguities in the cultural identification of people in Southall, a multi-ethnic ghetto of London. In this community study, Baumann argues that by stereotyping people as "belonging to" a predefined community, one runs the risk of tribilizing people and falsely fixing boundaries between groups in an absolute and artificial way. G. Baumann, *Contesting Culture, Discourses of Identity in Multi-ethnic London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1-8.

7. He goes on to make the point that this game of signs, that is the representation of oneself based on the prevailing cultural model, arises from the need of people to construct social subjects that organize themselves to claim visibility and social action. In this process, the differences within each of the groups in the society are apparently "effaced," thus permitting the construction of this "collective us" as a macrosocial structure. R. D. Laing, *Self and Others* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, London, 1990), pp. 33-43.

8. By "social structure," following the definition of Sahlins, I mean the symbolic relations of cultural order in a specific historical context which indicate the, at times, different scope of the political rhetoric of a nation. For further reference, see M. Sahlins, *Islands of History,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. vii-xix.

9. Sahlins having in mind the Hawaiian case very convincingly asserts that social morphology can be produced by performing acts: "In Hawaii one may become a native by right action; an act of a given kind can signify a given status as much as the two have the same final sense"; M. Sahlins, *op.cit.*, in note 2, pp. vii-xix.

10. In Clifford's own words: "Interpreting the direction or meaning of the historical record always depends on present possibilities"; J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture, Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 341-345.

11. As A. Swidler describes it in "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 273-286.

12. S. Wallman, ed., *Ethnicity at Work* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979), pp. 1-14.

13. J. Friedman, "The Past in the Future: History and the Politics of Identity," *American Anthropologist* 94 (1992): 854-856.

14. Daniel Miller, *Shopping, Place and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 19.

15. Sahlins, *op.cit.*, in note 2, p. 155.

16. Baumann, *op.cit.*, in note 3, pp. 188-204.

17. The argument in Friedman's analysis is that “cultural realities are always produced in specific sociohistorical contexts and that it is necessary to account for the processes that generate those contexts in order to account for the nature of both the practice of identity and the production of historical schemes”; Friedman, *op.cit.*, in note 8, p. 837.

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Chapter XII

Religious Values, Social Conflict and Economic Development: Toward Civility, Peace and Democracy

S.K. Kuthiala

Introduction

Three major religions of the world—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—arose in the Middle East. These religions have similarities and differences based upon their traditions over the millennium. Each religion was based upon a messenger of God or prophet. Each religion arrived at its beliefs in a different period of human history, and each religion has resolved its similarities or differences in different ways. Each religion has a unique cultural history of its followers. At the same time, these religions have been highly competitive. Though all the religions are supposed to be void of any political roots, each religion saw its expansion through political means.

The chosen Hebrew people were exiled from Egypt to form a community in a promised land. The message of Messiah Jesus served to create a concept of Holiness and kingdom of priests. Islam, in the language of Muslim theologians, is a completed and complete religion, dealing with all aspects of the believer's life and superseding all previous revealed religions including Christianity and Judaism. There are several passages in the Koran, which exhort the faithful to kill the non-believer or non-Muslim. Islam did affirm Jesus' birth by a virgin. Jesus has been considered to be a righteous man who was sent by God to remind the children of Israel of the importance of worshipping one God. By God's blessing, Jesus performed miracles. However, Muslims do reject Jesus' Divinity and Sonship associated with God in every respect, except metaphorically. Muslims, also, believe that Jesus did not die on the Cross and did not survive the ordeal. Instead, after recovering, he travelled to Persia and Kashmir. Quranic verse also states that Jews crucified Jesus because he was preaching monotheism. It is known that Islam subsequently conquered by sword and in the process destroyed Eastern Christianity and ancient Persian cultures. Responding to the challenge of Islam and heresy, Christianity launched Inquisitions in which probably millions were tried, tortured and burned at the stake for their beliefs. According to some estimates, as many as 60 million people may have died for their personal or animistic beliefs through Christian and Muslim crusades and missionary zeal, which has persisted up to the present.

One of the fundamental bases for religion to exist in any country, in any shape and any form is a blind faith in a "Divine" being. However, man's curiosity and desire to have knowledge is the antithesis of blind faith. The universe in which we live is mysterious to begin with the life starts with Free Will, which eventually raises an animal to the lofty status of man. Man can only be a man if he exercises his free will for his moral being, happiness, social development and his future life. Hinduism here overtakes all the religions by saying that man is God and God is man and by exercising his free will, man has the potential of becoming divine. It is because of such a belief (perhaps a faith, as well), that Hinduism does not believe in conversion of anyone to another faith. All human beings, if they have a faith, have that faith in Only One God. Of course, in Hinduism, a strict caste system was created where men were not born the same; they differed in character, in station and in obligation. This does create conflict, but not to the extent one sees in other religions.

Each religion has provided a different way of worshipping the same God. Hindus regard Moses, Christ and Mohammed as messengers or prophets of That One God but neither God by themselves nor the Son of God. The ability of these extraordinary men, according to Hindus, endowed these men with the urge of dominance which goaded them to be acknowledged as superior to others and in the extreme form of this power play instigated them to be treated and worshiped as God by their fellow men. This is how the aspirant deprives other people of their chance to become divine, by imposing their own divinity on them through the stratagem of revelation or by being a messenger or a prophet.

Religions, as practiced over the centuries and as preached throughout human history, do not in reality reflect true scriptures of divine revelation. Imaginative individuals, determined to consolidate their power and control over others, corrupted religions that evangelized the oneness of God, the unity of humankind, brotherly love and cooperation. The One and Only One Almighty God was replaced with helpless gods, unity with division, love with hatred, and cooperation with rivalry. Religions were corrupted over time, Christianity and Muslim deviations from true religions were far greater than those in Judaism and Hinduism. The efforts of Abraham and Mohammed, which were so successful in uniting humankind, subsequently divided these people among themselves and against each other. This divisiveness, distrust and violence against each other in the name of religion have continued throughout history. The problems between Christianity and Muslims in Bosnia, between Jews and Muslims in Israel, between Hindus and Muslims in India, and between Muslims and Muslims in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and the Balkans are examples of religious rivalry and intolerance for other's values and beliefs.

The contemporary Middle East emerged from the Ottoman Empire after the First World War. The Ottoman Empire extended across the Middle East to the Persian Empire and Ethiopia in the east, across North Africa to Sudan in East Africa, and then into the Balkans. The Empire was founded upon regular tributes paid to the Sultan, rather than fixed territorial unity with tribal leaders, provincial governors and military commanders. Istanbul was the center of the Empire, and tributes were sent to the Ottoman Sultans. In the 19th century, the Balkans decided to cut off the main sources of Ottoman military strength: the levy of salves from the Caucasus who were converted to Islam and trained to serve the Ottoman dynasty as soldiers. Almost at the same time, the process of colonization by European powers and the rise of Western trading companies eroded the grip of Middle Eastern merchants across this trading crossroads. In Egypt, Muhammad Ali asserted his autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. Other similar changes marked the territorial shrinking of the Empire, which further eroded the financial base. The colonial rule in the Middle East and North Africa was of two types: direct rule by Italy in Libya and by France in Tunisia and Algeria, and the indirect rule imposed by England on Egypt and the states of the fertile crescent. Colonists divided the Ottoman Empire between Iran, Iraq and Turkey. When Lebanon was formed, Arab Sunni Muslims were attached to Mount Lebanon with its multiplicity of Christian and Muslim sects. Pastoral nomads, accustomed to travelling across the deserts of the Middle East, were increasingly trapped within a new state boundary. At this time, the monarchies of Jordan and Iraq were created.

At the center of the emergence of the three world religions, a framework was set for the contemporary political pattern, which has had various effects on religious and ethnic politics. On the one hand, Western economic and cultural penetration from the European nations were the main agents of change in these areas. On the other hand, the Islamic and nationalist response to the spread of imperialism and foreign influence was to increase the appeal of Islam. Even when nationalism was developing in Turkey, Iran and the Arab nations, nationalists frequently drew on Islam as a source of cultural authenticity to oppose an encroachment by the West. The West had inflicted military defeat and debt and had imposed direct political control on these states. It was a massive reversal of history for people with their proud past based on achievements of successive

Islamic empires. The Arabs had carried Islam from the Arabian Peninsula through the Middle East and across Africa into Spain. The Ottomans had pressed into the Balkans and Eastern Europe. The arch of Islam established great civilizations with the palaces and the mosques in Cairo, Damascus, Siraz, Istanbul and Samarkand. Their achievements in conquest and conversion equaled their great achievements in science, medicine, mathematics, arts and architecture. Although the Muslim empires had long been in decline, the developments of the 19th and 20th centuries were shattering for the Islamic countries. A wide range of solutions was sought, but the most important of them were those which drew on the solidary of the past to confront this shift from victor to vanquished. Muslim fundamentalism and Islamic notion-states responded by combining Islam with nationalism thereby mobilizing the populations. However, the moderate factions in Islam, believing in secular Pan-Arab nationalism, found themselves on the fence. The popular intertwining of religion and nation-state mobilized the masses who responded to the priestly class more than they responded to secular forces. Such consciousness of the past, both religious and national, has been a critical factor in limiting the level of cultural penetration by the West. The evidence of this was clear in the combination of Islam and nationalism in which overthrew the Shah of Iran. From that point onward Islam found its calling; and the calling was to increase the role of Islamic fundamentalism from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan and from Palestine to Libya.

The Sacred and Secularism

The place of religion and religious ideals in the context of socioeconomic development is becoming more unsettled than ever before. For humanity's future, the essential role of religion in promoting social change has produced more discussion and debate than specific outcomes. First, there are an increased number of religious and factional movements around the world based upon the fundamental aspects of religion. Second, social scientists of the past 200 years were convinced that the future world would be entirely secular, and that social change would be ushered in with logical outcomes. However, intellectuals and scholars were surprised by these movements.

If one examines the industrialized nations of the West, one does find enough evidence that the processes of industrialization, urbanization, demographic transition, democracy and human rights have contributed to a substantial decline in the power of organized religion in political, economic and other fields (Lidz-Weinstein, p. 83, 1979). In a majority of these countries, there is almost an absence of spiritual and moral ideals in government (the latest examples if the Clinton/Lewinski affair in the U.S.—where 66 percent of the U.S. population does not think any sexual relation is relevant and will diminish Clinton's administration) as well as in business or everyday life. It was strongly believed and inferred that most of the world's economies would merge or converge to the Western model, and that secularization would be a natural process and would spread along with Westernization of at least the elite, if not the entire population.

However, religion always was and does remain a cultural universal. Its role and scope has changed over the past two millennia. Inquisitions and the Jihad persecuted millions. Catholicism branched into Protestantism. Yet, there is no society today where there is an absence of religious values or beliefs. Even when it is rejected in its traditional form, as happened in some societies, it appears in new institutional guises, as in the rise of nation-state based upon religious fervor. Islamic fundamentalism in Muslim countries, Hindutva in India, Christian conservative candidates for the U.S. Senate and Congress and the rise of Islamic theocracy are good examples of such outcomes. There are an increasing number of religious revival movements around the world. There are increasing numbers of missionary activities based upon Judaism, Islam and Christianity in several established denominations. Religion is asserting itself more in local and world politics. Several Latin American liberation movements involved religion as part of their platform. Several theocratic governments now reign in Central and Southeast Asia. Ancient theocracy in Tibet is engaged in a political standoff with China (the most antireligious Communist state in the world) and the rest of the world. Secularization, it appears, may have stimulated religion, at least in non-Western nations as a response to the cultural onslaught of Western things. Our future understanding of the process of secularization will be affected by the experience of the Third World countries and how their religion adapts to the new demands of development.

When Emile Durkheim (1912) conducted his pioneer research on the religion of the aboriginal population of Australia, scientific study of religion became a respectable undertaking. Since then, social scientists have researched artifacts, beliefs and practices of many religions that crate a divide between the sacred and holy and the secular and profane worlds. Durkheim's study was based on fieldwork conducted by anthropologists during a period when aborigines were acquiring literacy and additional contacts with the civilized world. They were considered especially primitive, and it was field that by studying their religious beliefs and practices, one could understand all forms of elementary social life in an evolutionary process. Durkheim felt that he was observing traditional religion in its infancy, and he recorded it before the secularizing influence of the European cultures. In his research, he discovered that among the aborigines, the two domains of religion and ordinary world were separated, yet related. Religion was a special aspect of life for this world, but the other equally important aspect of life was how it had pervaded everyday life. In the Vedas, in the Old Testament, in the Quran and in the New Testament, there is always a difference between the holy and the common, between the clean and unclean. This also applies to objects, certain symbols, words and even norms, which are either religious or nonreligious, but not both.

Process of Secularization

For thousands of years, people in all cultures viewed the sacred realm as dominant and religious authorities as absolute. Prophets, priests and religious authorities were idealized and occupied a special and elevated status. For civil authority to emerge or to authenticate the divine rights of kings required religious sanctions without which it could not function. All social and even civil ceremonies were required to have religious blessings. The Middle Ages were especially religious. Between the fall of Rome (A.D. 476) and the 15th century, Judaism, Christianity and Islam supported sacred societies. The Torah, Bible and Quran were accepted as the highest authority for one's conduct. Even secular affairs were to be guided by spiritual norms and ideals. Even in China under the influence of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, strong relationships were forced between the sacred and secular. The start of the Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe, the fall of hereditary monarchies, the success of capitalism and the mercantile economy challenged the authority of established religions. The alternative means for producing wealth were more effective than the tribute and collections on which organized religion depended. A secular economic system in which you collected interest or finance, which was considered usury and, thus, was a sin in orthodox Roman Catholic and Muslim cultures, became more acceptable. The rise of individualism and the separation of Church, state and family emerged quickly and rapidly. Protestantism promoted individual self-interest with a possibility of a direct connection between believer and God, which did not require mediation by the medieval Church Representative political systems made the citizen sovereign without the higher authority of religion. Capitalism encouraged material success. The sacred began to move forward and to become secular in European culture.

Over a period of time, the secular principles promoted individualism, economic prosperity and practicality. Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, though coming from different disciplines, cultural backgrounds and political orientations, concluded that religion would have to yield to modernization. Marxism promoted the value of secularization most actively and argued about the dominance of civil order as the only path to evolutionary development. Max Weber argued that secularization is a necessary condition for capitalist economy and industrial growth. Representative government and operation of markets cannot be interfered with by religious ideals and beliefs.

Rise of Neo-Fundamentalism and Civil Order

The events of the past 50 years around the world and most recently in Eastern Europe have raised doubts about the inevitability of secularization. Scholars have even argued about the wisdom of such a policy in the process of modernization. Two movements are of great interest on this issue. The first one is of civil religion, and the second is the rise of religious fundamentalism around the world. Earlier scholars anticipated neither except as Alexis de Tocqueville (1835) observed civil religion in the United States in his famous work, *Democracy in America*.

Civil religion is a conscious and collective valuation of beliefs, practices and political organization, which acquire the realm of "sacred." For example, the national flag and national anthem reveal, in an ironic but intricate way, how religious symbols have been replaced by "secular" symbols having almost "sacred" attributes. Traditional institutions do not reflect it, but the United States is a religious society specially blessed by God. Worship of the state has become a fairly modern phenomenon from Algeria to Egypt and from the United States to Sri Lanka. The public ceremonies, the state holidays, the symbolism of Labor Day and Veterans Day can produced a religious fervor similar to the Crusades. One event, which provided legitimacy to this, was Hitler's use of state-power and the symbol of the swastika. The reich was raised to the status of sacred institution, and the Führer was its guardian. Hitler was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church, but he subordinated Germany's Catholics and Protestants by nazifying them. Religious institutions did not provide any resistance to the regime. Since then, the world has retreated from the destructive manifestation of civil religion. But we do hold mass rallies to worship political leaders, ideology or political party. They may be the natural result of the process of secularization (Bellah, 1987). The need for a universal sacred realm was expressed in nontraditional forms, including the extreme form of nationalism being witnessed currently in Yugoslavia, Israel or Palestine.

Religious Fundamentalism

As there have been pressures over the past 50 plus years to create some form of civil religion, religious fundamentalism has been an alternate response to similar pressures. After the end of World War II, a belief to emerge that most societal problems around the world are the result of secularization. It was argued by thinkers and philosophers that secularization has made people lose their moral fiber because people are no longer guided either by traditional God-given values or by their own personal consciousness, which has failed to crystalize because of secularization. Societies, therefore, are experiencing not only a moral decay, but there is a rapid increase in vice and misery. Fundamentalism from Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam alike believe that they need to restore the place of religion in their culture and society and make it the central institution, instead of the centrality of economic and political institutions.

The rise of fundamentalism is a recent phenomenon. However, the ideas are not new. They have existed in the past. There have been reform movements in Hinduism, the Hasidic movement in Judaism, the Counter-Reformation in the Roman Catholic Church. Tibet and Bhutan have remained theocratic states and endured through colonialism. Recently, fundamentalist movements have made accommodation with civil religions in several nations such as Iran, Pakistan, Iraq and Syria. Religion has not died in any nation-state, including the Communist nations. It simply lay dormant in many places during the march of Westernization into the poor countries. When the Third World countries gained independence from colonial rule, they questioned not only colonialism, but its secularization credentials. In some instances, secularization was associated with cultural imperialism as a way of dividing people against each other for self-interest. Within broader national movements in many nation-states, fundamentalist factions arose within the nationalistic movements. The first landmark victory came when Muslims in India created a theocratic state in the name of Muslims and Islam, by carving two territories of East and West Pakistan out of India. Even though an equal number of Muslims opted to stay in secular India, an equal number felt that they could create a representative theocratic state (Ishtiag, 1991, p. 89). In this system of Quran is the uppermost book of law, and all civil and criminal laws obtain their edict from its religious writings. Religious law is supreme. Civil authorities in Pakistan, therefore, deal with practical, day-to-day, law-and=order situations, and the constitution provides for a parliamentary democracy. However, Pakistan did not have a great success with parliamentary democracy in its history of the past 50 years. East Pakistan, which was similar only in religion, broke away in 1971 and became Bangladesh. Since then, Pakistan has vacillated between parliamentary democracy and dictatorship, but in all circumstances sanctions of the Religious Council are supreme (Dawood, 1994).

The Pakistani model has been pursued in many others parts of the world since the 1950s. Traditional countries, seeing the excesses of secularization and Westernization, have felt it to be their moral duty to attack the cultural imperialism of the Europeans and, increasingly, of the Americans. The best example of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism was the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which overthrew the secular Pahlavi dynasty and replaced it with an Islamic republic (Moaddel, 1993). Since that time, Egypt, Algeria, Israel and the Balkan states have been affected by religious fundamentalism. The idea has been promoted for establishing theocratic states. It is unlikely, if one looks at Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania and the erstwhile states of the Soviet Union, that the movements of religious fundamentalism will decline as a counterpoint to secularization.

The postrevolutionary state, formed against secular institutions, is projected as a spiritual struggle against Western imperialism. Both in Pakistan and Iran, the struggle has been labelled as a way to counter the hedonistic aspects of the Western cultures, influencing and proselytizing young minds. The revival of traditional and orthodox religion in Poland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania and many Central and Eastern European states has a parallel with other fundamentalist movements. Eastern Europe challenged the domination of the Soviet Union on their lives; and religious leaders, Christians and Muslims, used this opportunity to promote desecularization as a doctrine of spiritual, political and economic liberation. In Poland, not only did the Church play an important role, but also Solidarity (organized labor) received support from the Polish Catholic Church against Soviet Communism. Religion is now permitted, practiced and protected in Central and Eastern Europe, but it has not been able to replace the secular authority, except in Iran. The postcommunist regimes are definitely not theocracies.

Eastern and Central European revolutions and revolutions in Iran and Pakistan do share a common theme: the reassertion of traditional religious beliefs as a form of social protest. In each nation, we find that secularization has gone far enough and that religious, sacred and in some cases holy dimensions need to be restored to their rightful place in human affairs. One of the latecomers to raise the banner of fundamentalism has been the BJP Party in India which believes in supporting the cause of national integration on the basis of Hindutva, which derives its moral principles from Hinduism. Of course, like other fundamentalist movement in Eastern and Central Europe, BJP is willing to accept civil authority in order to maintain the most important values of the nation-state because they have failed to acquire absolute majority or a mandate in general elections.

It is now common to hear about religious leaders throughout the world who have become spokespersons for antiestablishment activities (Candelana, 1990). Muslim clerics preach against Western immorality; Polish priests preach against the communist aristocracy; Shiv Sena, a highly religious as well as nationalistic organization in India, against Muslims; the religious right in the U.S. preaches against abortion; and leaders of the U.S. civil rights movement preaches against racial inequality. Very often and for contradictory reasons, many of these protesters, return to the faith of their founders, forefathers, or someone who was known to be a religious fanatic (Wirthrow, 1995).

Fundamentalism, today around the world, can be understood as a product of the decline of traditional religion, the resiliency of the sacred impulse, and the extremely rapid social change for which many societies are not economically, socially or culturally prepared. Religious fundamentalism offer (1) a pride in one’s own tradition and religion, (2) a failure of the secular forces to deliver appropriate economic and political circumstances based upon unity of the nation-state, and (3) an ever-growing difference between the rich and the poor—no matter whether you are in the U.S., Algeria or India. The argument has been that the greatest beneficiaries of secularization forces are those who are educated, secular and Western. They have derived these benefits at the expenses of those who are uneducated, nonsecular and non-Western.

Westernization versus Modernization

On a worldwide basis, most societies—unless they are isolated, but very few are today—have begun to lose their distinct beliefs, values and institutions. Western ways have been adopted through coercion or imitation over decades or centuries, now they are being followed voluntarily. Radio, satellite TV, music, fashions and the Internet are making people more familiar with more Western cultures, but not necessarily with Western religious traditions. Tradition is passed on through an ongoing process. A rapid change in any society precipitates a return to the nostalgic past. In the past, the process of change was extremely slow. Past practices were handed down to new generations as worthwhile traditions. No one questioned them to any degree and, if someone did, the alternative answers were few and far between. Social changes over the last 200 years were brought about by the discovery of natural laws and rational laws and by charismatic leaders. Rational law is not based upon religion, kings or kin but is determined on the basis of formal public procedures, legislation and judicial review.

Wherever the European influence penetrated, whether it was economic, political or religious, substantial cultural diffusion also took place. The flow was mostly from the industrialized countries to the nonindustrialized states, and it was essentially European, Increasingly, without any colonialism of the past, the cultural diffusion is European-American in clothing, manners, cuisine and art and is primarily the urban, global-village type. Many of the Western values, cultural trends and pleasure-oriented pursuits have entered into the cultures of the world because they are presumed to be “modern”. Modern people in these countries often speak English, dress in Western clothing and subscribe to Western values in politics, economy and secularization. But this only happens to a small proportion of the population, most of whom are elitist. The rest of the population live in rural or farming areas, believe in religious values and lack education; they are considered to be traditionalists or backward. Even though colonialism has disappeared, noncolonialism has taken root. Western cultural, political, economic and even religious values find expression in these countries, not only among the elite, but Western values have percolated to the other strata’s of society—like Reagan’s trickle-down economics. Even though people will no longer tolerate foreign domination, they are comfortable with multinational corporations, like those selling Coke and McDonald hamburgers around the world from China to India to Brazil. Modernization viz-a-viz Westernization is assumed to be not only linear, but also superior to any homegrown tradition. If people revert to traditionalism, they would be regressing toward the Dark Ages with downward cultural mobility.

Revival of Traditionalism

Many of the societies today experience duality of tradition and modernism (Weinstein and McNulty, 1981). On the one hand, you may see a bullock/horse cart being used to haul a color TV in a well-to-do neighborhood for delivery in New Delhi or Sofia. On the other hand, just a few blocks away are the slums where a satellite TV dish is beaming MTV programs from the U.S., Singapore, London or Australia. An enormous influence of the Western culture is apparent in most of the Third World countries, yet the acculturation is far from complete. Purely traditional ways continue to exist side by side with modern ways. Popular movements have arisen in many parts of the world in an effort to preserve and revive local customs. From India to Pakistan to Zimbabwe, native dress is replacing Western attire, at least among a few well-known personalities. Gaining political freedom from the colonialists was a comparatively easier task. To gain freedom from cultural colonialism is proving not only difficult, but also impossible. Modern culture today is associated with America and is far more widespread than anything comparable during the colonial and postcolonial periods. The primary reasons for such a shift are: (1) the rise of the U.S. as the strongest international power, and (2) the diffusion of mass communications through print, media, TV and electronic communications, largely products of U.S. culture. The diffusion process is no longer based upon a colonial relationship, space or time but has acquired momentum of its own. According to Daniel Lerner, traditional society is passing through its final phase (Lerner, 1958). The tradition of the past is being replaced by cultural diversity where people with different religions, ethnic groups, languages, customs and traditions interact with each other. There has been a rapid increase in ethnic subpopulations on the basis of which people define their identity and loyalty. Many elements of traditional culture are being revived both because people share them and because many others find them exotic. In spite of a variety of social change throughout the world, some traditions simply persist and many get revived. This has also given rise to conflict between religions, ethnicity, political ideologies and economic systems. Charismatic individuals have the power to challenge both the tradition and the law, as Mahatma Gandhi did in India. Militant changes were brought into this world by Lenin, Hitler, Ayatollah Khomeni in Iran, Pinochet in Chile and Pol Pot in Cambodia; thousands of people were murdered through their personal authority based mostly on either religion or their own personal law.

The irony of fundamentalist movements is that they are basically designated to produce pride in religion and social heritage. On the contrary, religions, as defined in the beginning of this paper, have sometimes been responsible for untold violence throughout the history of humankind. It appears that the ugly head of religious intolerance is rising again from the U.S. to Germany, from the Balkans to India, and from Japan to Ethiopia.

New World Order. Philosophers, religious leaders and politicians have always faced a fundamental human predicament of creating an "order" that would enable humankind to realize this freedom. The claims of the new world order are eluding us despite our claim to have subdued the forces of nature of science, and to have conquered space travel. Throughout history, in various lands, people have sought to create institutions that would increase their freedom1 and have continued to make new and repetitious efforts toward that goal.

Never was this predicament more real than it is today. With science and technology, we have been making continuous efforts to deal with the ignorance, disease and poverty, which have afflicted us for centuries. At the same time, these very advances have admitted forces that threaten the world with the most basic problems, i.e., the survival of humankind. Precisely at a time when the value of justice and social participation are acquiring a pervasive appeal for modern man, the institutional structures through which people operate are becoming disparate in their concentration of power. Modern man is facing a fundamental duality. Physical survival for poor people, whose numbers are rapidly increasing in the world, is becoming more difficult and burdensome. As values and civilizations progress, people are facing increasing ambivalence not only from others, but also within oneself. What are the major threats to a "new world order," and what can be done to promote these?

Violence. Violence is fast becoming a major factor of human interaction—be it an arms race between major nations, or a terrorist movement by Bin Laden, or a religious war between Sunnis and Shia's in Afghanistan. If one looks at the resources spent by richer nations on preparation for war, it is quite evident that they intend to maintain their superiority over the rest of the world. With the decline of U.S.S.R. as a military power, China, India, Egypt, Pakistan, Brazil, and Japan are stepping up their expenditure on armaments, fearing an imbalance in the world, in their own region, or a predominant desire to create a balance in one's favor. These various indicators of threat and violence have led to an increasing allocation of world resources to means of defense and aggression because of external threats to internal security. They are also directed against the internal dissent and subversion that threatens both the solidarity and continued existence of nation-states formed during the 19th and 20th centuries. There is an accentuated sense of insecurity among the smallest and intermediate powers, leading them to increase their military expenditures. One of the clearest examples of this was India detonating five nuclear devices in two days because of their fear of China. Within ten days Pakistan exploded three nuclear devices out of fear of India. Does preparation for violence or violence itself perpetuate peace? In fact there is mounting pressure on a number of smaller countries, facing external threats and internal violence, to increase their arms build up and, thereby, create regional tensions.

Poverty. The disparity among socioeconomic strata throughout the world is: the rich are getting richer and the poor are becoming poorer from the U.S. to China and from India to Brazil. There has been a phenomenal population increase of almost three billion people since 1950. The human population doubling from the present 6 billion to 12 billion are likely to happen in the next 15 years. Unless the world's population is reduced by a massive starvation or destruction, the carrying capacity of the earth may fall short of people's needs. There are already critical shortages of drinking water in many urban areas in poor countries. The availability of clean air is endangered by industrial and exhaust pollution. Changes in the biosphere, including absolute heat, will cause the radiation to increase dramatically and rapidly. So far, we have been able to cope with problems related to the world's resources caused by ravaging space, ecology and critical naturel elements for unlimited use to meet our escalating needs. The population growth is concentrated in poor countries so that poor people in poor countries are increasing both in number and in their relative lack of resources to live even on a subsistence level.

Widespread poverty, the persistence of traditional values, illiteracy of the masses, self-employment or underemployment in the agricultural or industrial sectors, overpopulation and other factors act as negative, modern forces. Nonetheless, most Third World countries want to progress toward modernity, but their circumstances differ from those which prevailed in Europe and the U.S. during their march to modernization. Modernization in Europe was dependent on the flow of labor and raw material from rural areas to cities and from the colonial countries to European nations going through modernization. While modernization was taking place, the European population was declining and industrial occupations were constantly in need of additional labor. A growing middle class was increasing in almost all industrialized countries. the economic affluence quickly brought strong commitments to secularization with concomitant decline in traditional values. Materialism replaced spiritualism. This is not happening to a great proportion of people in Third World countries, who with rapidly exploding population cannot find jobs. The partial modernization of the Third World countries is like a half-a-loaf. Free of outside control, reconstruction movements meet resistance from the domestic right, left center and often religious leadership. Representative government does not have the capabilities to accommodate all of the conflicting interests. They are unable to establish single-party rule, as in China under Mao; they no longer have charismatic leaders, such as Gandhi, Nasser and Tito. Therefore, all types of radical elements are appearing in most Third World countries, and some of them have achieved considerable success in mobilizing the masses. Even where conscious efforts have been made to purge Western influence, such as in Iran and Cambodia, leaders could not erase their own bias toward more modernization, modeled after Western experience. The leaders of these movements, themselves, are from either the middle classes or elitist families. Expansion of telecommunications and satellite TV is bringing the world culture. Mostly American/European, into the far corners of the world. Europe, when experiencing unemployment and poverty, had options to send its excess population to the Americas, and they had an external source of wealth from their colonies. The Third World has neither opportunities to send their populations abroad nor ample resources, other than loans and subsidies from rich nations, which must be paid back with interest. The vast majority of the population in the Third World countries lives close to subsistence and almost half of them below poverty level. Modernization, as perceived and experienced in the West, is no longer considered a "necessity" or even a "good thing." Materialism and consumerism are becoming obstacles to true human development, and that is where religions begin to pay a critical role.

Ethnicity

In 1990 communism collapsed in the Soviet Union. It did not take long to observe that the bureaucratic apparatus of the Communist Party had worked in a way similar to the colonists in the Third World countries. Bureaucrats from Moscow and Leningrad proclaimed political directives and also had a significant say in the economic planning and political direction of satellite notion-states. The satellite countries were culturally dominated by the U.S.S.R., including those which were non-Russian Republics of Eastern and Central Europe but were dependent on financial help and guidance from Moscow. Most of this domination was by ethnic Russians. If a comparison is justifiable here, Stalin can be compared to a Russian czar, On the dissolution of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union in 1990, not only did the Soviet Union cease to exist, but also the Baltic republics and several other sub-republics within republics declared their independence. The consequences of freedom were civil wars that broke out not only in the Soviet Republic, but also in the Central and Eastern European states. Muslims and Christians became modern-day butchers, or more, moderately crusaders for their cause against the others' cause. These "others" had lived together for decades, if not centuries, but now their hate for each other was evident and their desire to take revenge was overwhelming. The organizational vehicle for this movement was a desire to create new nation-states as had occurred previously in Third World countries with the departure of the colonialists. The breakup of the Soviet Republic left ethnic conflict throughout Central and Eastern Europe (McIntosh et al., 1995; Weinstein, 1997, p. 267). Yugoslavia represents a particular instance of ethnic nationalism (McMohan, 1992; Weinstein, 1997, p. 267). When Communism was alive and well, party loyalty had the utmost value, and the importance of ethnic and national identities had no room for expression, much less for glorification. Since the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War II, Marshal Tito had been able to manage effectively the relations among various religious and ethnic groups that had been in conflict over national sovereignty. Tito not only maintained the power of the Communist Party, but also, by decentralizing, provide considerable autonomy to ethnically-based sentiments. However, this did not encourage Yugoslav Nationalism. With the end of party rule some 10 years after Tito's death, the country split into at least six separate, ethnic-based, nation-states and sub-nations. A desire for ethnic-based states is not confined only to East and Central Europe. In Canada there has been a movement for decades to create a "francophone" nation based upon the French language. Here is a First World country, with one of the highest per-capita incomes and with strong secular credentials, ready to tear itself apart merely on a "symbolic issue." In India there are several ethnic movements to create new nation-states even though the democratic republic has shown a resiliency in accommodating various factions and interest groups.

All these movements appear to have a common thread. First, the existing nation-state is considered to be too pluralistic and inclusive of too many dissimilar groups to serve the true interest of a single group. Secondly, self-rule, or democratic rule, does not take into consideration the different levels of socio-economic development, the religious values of the people it intends to serve, and the ethnic or cultural differences among the population. Democracies seek representation, but representation cannot be extended to all groups equally. It is now fashionable, including in the U.S., to talk about representative democracy based upon gender, race, ethnicity, and underrepresentation in the electoral process. Therefore, it is quite justifiable and even desirable that people who have been excluded have entitlements, or else the leaders must be ready to face either rejection or revolution. There is no chance in San Francisco for a person against gays to be elected to any position. Ethnic nationalism is on the rise from Bosnia to Kosovo and from San Francisco to Kuala Lumpur. In other words, government has to provide means whereby "ideological" groups, whether based on race, religion, ethnicity, sexual preference, pro-choice-pro-life, etc., can act as a group for themselves pursuing their own personal interests. The pluralistic nation-state is under attack from those who seek either religious or ethnic sovereignty. The ethnic turmoil in Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and South America is the result of complex feelings about modernization and change, a lesser trust in the plurality of the nation-state, declining interest in the process of secularization, and the rise of religious fundamentalism. Political opportunism is also creating strange bedfellows from the United States to Pakistan and from Kosovo to Afghanistan. Ethnic, national, religious, economic, class, caste differences are often used as excuses for political gamesmanship. When people are poor and uneducated, rewards for development are differentiated according to ethnicity or region. Democracy remains weak, and those who seek power and influence are able to manipulate the situation for their personal gains. Incidences of conflict and violence become the standard means to control the situation to one's advantage. Like cowards, the world is increasingly using terrorism as the method of choice for subduing those in power or intimidating them. Political and religious leaders speak against each other, and their power impinges on the collective lives of ordinary people. Suicide bombs used by Palestinians against Jews create terror in Israel's psyche. Lack of swift, retributive responses by the Israeli Prime Minister cost him his life. In India three Gandhis—Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi—all feel to assassins' bullets because they failed to give an ethnic- and religious-based response to the aspiration of all small segment of the Indian population, all of whom wanted separate nation-states.

If the leaders are moral and hold a guiding spirit to all the people, they become charismatic, as did Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. If they have military capabilities and seize power, they become heroes, just like Idi Amin (Uganda), Zia-Ul-Haq (Pakistan) and Genral Mladic (Bosnia). When they monopolize power, they can be kings such as King Faud of Saudi Arabia or Amir of Kuwait. They can become Presidents for life even as Marcos in the Philippines and the Shah of Iran were until they were forcibly removed. These types of ethnic nationalism now pose the greatest threat to representative government in the Third World countries. Type of representative governments have worked well for the growth and development of the Western states and nations, but they have not succeeded in the Third World countries, so far.

Role of Religion

It is paradoxical that Jews trace their ancestry from Abraham and his wife Sarah, but at the same time, they argue that Abraham's second wife, Hagar, a bondwoman, (some have argued that Hagar was an Egyptian Princess and not a bondwoman) was the mother of all the Arabs. Nevertheless, these Arabs are considered inferior because of their emphasis on the superiority of Islam and warlike actions. Scholars of Islam have claimed that Islam is not only the religion of the Arabs, but it is also the last and complete religion given by God to Muhammad. Muslims accept the Holiness of Mary and the birth of Jesus, but Islam repudiates the belief that Jesus either can be equated with God or was the Son of God. According to Islam, Christ cannot be a Divinity. These type of arguments and counter-arguments have continued unabated between Jews, Christians and Muslims for centuries, without any religious group achieving a total understanding of the other. Given the prevailing circumstances, something akin to interfaith appreciation of other people's religion is unlikely to happen. Europe, which has made the greatest progress in secularization of its nation-state began a backward march. Anti-Christian and anti-Muslim bigotry is becoming commonplace in Europe where there are efforts to restrict the activities of many religious minorities. There is a rising tide of irrationality with increasing religious intolerance from one end of the globe to the other.

Looking toward a new millennium, one must begin to wonder if a mutually benefiting and peaceful outcome is possible between the Islamic and Christian movements in regard to their social and economic development. Islam and Christian history has been intertwined for over 1500 years, and, yet, both religions have perpetrated wars on nonbelievers in the name of God. It has been estimated that as many as 60 to 100 million people may have been killed in the Holy Crusades or through the Inquisition. Followers of Islam, even today, do not hesitate to create violent and dramatic events, such as the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran, bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993 and frequent suicide missions against Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory. Additional violent and dramatic events have taken place in Beirut, Dahran, Karachi, Bosnia and Albania. The reputation of fundamentalism in Islam has been tarnished. Within 24 hours after the Oklahoma City bombing, the U.S. media asserted that the leading suspects were “radical” Muslim groups. Grasping for an explanation in a secular society where citizens do have religious freedom, the act was seemingly inexplicable; trying to find a reason for it, the explanation gravitated toward an Islamic “other.” These Islamic “others” are widely viewed as willing to kill and be killed in ways that defy ordinary standards of justice. Many Christians have believed for centuries that warfare flows from the roots of Islam. Muslims do have questions to answer for themselves and others about the relationship of bellicose practices by certain contemporary groups to the Islamic tradition. Islam—wherever it is preached, to whomsoever it is preached—needs to foster a greater religious and moral tradition that the one it now has. Islam, if it continues to emphasize older traditions of justice and war, is going to find that its Muslim brethren, no matter where they happen to live, are going to be deprived of the greater opportunities available in the Third Millennium. It has been known for centuries that when the standard of living increases, poverty declines and there is a lower level of violence and conflict. For example, the kind of violence one is seeing now in the poor areas of Eastern Europe or the Caucasus is unlikely to erupt between linguistic groups in Canada, Belgium or Switzerland. When there is a pie and each group has a just share in it, one is less interested in destroying the pie. Both religious leaders and political leaders have a moral and an ethical duty to reduce ethnic conflict and refrain from passionate speeches in favor of or against another minority or even a majority, based on religion, ethnicity or nationalism. The real crux to reducing the conflict is to engage in a holistic economic development in which people not only share the fruits of development, but they are also not forced to give up their tradition altogether.

As pointed out earlier in this paper, the Western model is neither a desirable nor a totally feasible solution. Then why imitate it? The immediate global priority should be to reduce poverty even though it may never be eliminated. It requires modifying the pursuit of materialism through a more harmonious model where all nation-states and subgroups within a population are able to meet their minimum basic needs. It requires a fundamental revision of human behavior as well as new forms of social thinking. Political leaders have such an obligation if they want to be reelected in democratic societies or continue to live in totalitarian societies. However, more important than the political leaders are the religious leaders, who have a higher level of moral values and greater ethical concern for humanity (supposedly). They need to tell their flocks to live in harmony and peace and have tolerance for other religions—as all of them point to the same God but through different paths. Fundamentalism, whether in Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, needs to be deemphasized. Such soul-searching ideas and efforts are critical to our better future. How to bring about such a challenging change is a task for politicians and religious leaders alike. Such new ideas encompass religion, culture, ideologies and norms. The patter of needed development should be a balanced one. Appropriate solutions have to come from all sources.

Globalization

The Cold War ended in 1990, and the decline of Communism has created significant conflicts in Central and East European countries. Conflicts in Ireland among Catholics and Protestants and between Israelis and Muslims in the Middle East have been simmering for decades. Conflict between religious minorities in Eastern Europe has created bloodshed, homelessness and despair among many newly freed minorities. In 1994 Russian and American astronauts were exploring space and looking at the earth as the only planet known to us with any type of life. Former enemies from the U.S. and the Soviet Union were cooperating as astronauts. Decades-old conflicts were turning to cooperation. Old rivalries in making and exploding bombs were giving way to an awareness that neither the U.S. nor the U.S.S.R. could play God. The Cold War brought the world to the brink of destruction as well as cooperation, and, by default, saved the human race.

People around the world today have an ability to direct global change rather than to depend upon some invisible hand directing change for all human beings and humanity. We have an elaborate telecommunications network where I can communicate with people in Sofia by email in seconds or even milli-seconds. Human systems have become superorganic. One can undertake programmed development and diffusion of ideas through new technologies unknown to us just a few years ago. I know of a woman in India who is 100 years old. She lived through two World Wars, the holocaust, the Vietnam War and a famine—without electricity, plumbing or paved roads through 1990. She heard about man landing on the moon and never believed it. Today she sits in a 10x12-foot room (more like a hut) with satellite TV and is part of the global village. I have often seen the Serbian children blown away by bombs while sitting in my living room watching TV in the U.S. The globalization of the world will continue and accelerate as we enter the third millennium. Philosophers and dreamers have spoken of one world for centuries. We do now live on the "Spaceship Earth"—a term coined by Buckminster Fuller. Yet, a single world society or a culture is far from being achieved. All over the world, we see conflict over religion, race, gender and other human attributes, some ascribed, some achieved. If globalization had already occurred, then we would speak of it in the past tense. Holocaust and wars, whether World War II, the Vietnam War or the Afghan War, taught us some lessons. We promise ourselves that another war will not happen; yet it does happen. Even though colonial rule has ended, wars continue to take a toll. Religious-ethnic conflicts break out somewhere in the world every day. The global society divides itself along religious and ethnic lines and often shatters the hopes and aspirations of many who dream of getting out of poverty into plenty. In fact, as far as moral and rational progress is concerned, the human population has regressed, rather than progressed.

In many countries neocolonialism has taken new forms in multinational corporations. Holy wars and crusades are not being launched to convert the unfaithful to become faithful to "my" God, instead we are ready to butcher each other in the name of Allah, Abraham or Jesus. One group constantly organizes social movements against the other. People participate in democratic processes but their "votes" can be bought with a bottle of whisky (as in India) or a promise of a tax cut (as in the U.S.). With 20 to 60 percent to incite Muslims against Christians, Christians against Jews, and Hindus against Muslims. In spite of democracy in major nations, it I the elite, with money and beholden to others, who rule. In all other places people are trying to reconcile localism with cosmopolitan interests. Religious leaders feel the threat from secularization and humanism and therefore, encourage their followers to act out the worst aspects of their religious system. Government, with its bureaucracy and information-gathering mechanisms, has intruded into people's lives. Nobody can any longer have a secret; look at the Clinton-Lewinski affair.

In the Hindu Brahmin tale of Pan Spermia, God originally created millions of planets. Human beings populated all these. However, they were placed at vast distances from each other—millions of light years away. Each planet is supposed to take an evolutionary, independent path so that no one can pollute the other. When all inhabitants of a single planet resolve their differences—moral, religious, cultural and social—they can all live as one, truly as one, and can unite with the Supreme Soul Atman. Then and only then would human beings have the capacity to meet with their other fellow human beings elsewhere in the universe. You and I know that we are far from being there.

Note

Religious and political writing are full of such examples. In Hinduism, the Brahminic conception of an ordered hierarchy, managed by a learned elite, was espoused. Confucius had a notion of a responsible aristocracy. Greeks had the idea of a direct democracy based in city-states. Roman conception of enlightenment and the idea of representative government is characteristic of modern European thought. The Christian concept of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth resulted in Inquisitions. The Islamic concept of Allah, the Merciful, led to Holy Wars and chaos. The Communist concept of dictatorship by the proletariat brought repression. There are more extreme forms of tyranny and anarchy, found both in the Orient and the Occident.

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Chapter XIII

Human Rights and Islam

J. Stefan Lupp

Introduction

Throughout much of their early mutual histories, Islamic civilization represented a relatively tolerant society when compared with the Christian West. It provided refuge to the Jews expelled from Catholic Spain; it sheltered the Classical and Byzantine cultural heritage; and it generally contributed to the development of Western thought.[1] Nevertheless, Islamic fundamentalism in its various modern forms poses a challenge to international human rights norms. Many voices have been raised in recent years asserting that human rights concepts are Western and, therefore, do not apply to Islamic countries. The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister stated, after the 1993 Human Rights conference in Vienna, that "human rights has come to mean Western culture and that human rights is a tool [for Western powers] to whitewash their intervention and aggression against the weaker countries."[2] Similar comments were made by the Saudi Arabian Minister of the Interior just before the Conference. He stated:

> The democratic system that is predominant in the world is not a suitable system for the peoples of our region. Our people's make-up and unique qualities are different from those of the rest of the world. We cannot import the methods used by people in other countries and apply them to our people. We have our Islamic beliefs that constitute a complete and fully-integrated system. . . . In my view, Western democracies may be suitable in their own countries but they do not suit other countries.[3]

In fact, the debate has often been cast in terms of a major confrontation between Islam and the Western world. After receiving criticism from Amnesty International concerning the Saudi Arabian government's human rights record, a news report from Jeddah included the following:

> Amnesty officials are secularists and atheists. They could not infiltrate into the Kingdom to spread their venomous ideas. Now they wanted to tarnish the image of Shariah. The enemies of Islam are using Amnesty in their worldwide anti-Islam campaign . . . They say at international forums that they respect Islam and Muslims but hide their hatred and vengeance against Islam and Muslims. We have to take precautions against these enemies. And all Muslim countries should implement Shariah. Let the enemies of Islam die of rage.[4]

While discussing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Josiah A.M. Cobbah stated in 1987, "[t]here is no doubt that the Declaration was a product of Western liberal ideology."[5] Cobbah raises the following question, "Can we really expect non-Western peoples to embrace the international human rights instruments which are by and large Western in character?"[6] This is essentially the argument which is now often made in reference to Islam. This paper will attempt to address Cobbah's question by, first of all, challenging its core assumption, that the instruments are "Western in character" and, secondly, by examining the compatibility of Islam with the norms embodied in these instruments.

The focus of this paper is exclusively on civil and political rights, and, therefore, it does not address economic, social or cultural rights.[7] This paper begins by accepting Cobbah's assertion that civil and political rights, as embodied in the instruments, embrace liberalism and democracy. While accepting the fact that liberalism and democracy developed first in the West, this paper considers the possibility that the conditions leading to this development may be largely independent of cultural considerations and may have more to do with economic changes and human nature. It will go on to assert that the ideas of liberalism and democracy are finding fertile soil in the Islamic world since they seem to be required by modern conditions.[8]

It is important to note that liberalism and democracy are two separate concepts.[9] This paper adopts a very narrow definition of liberalism which is similar to, though not necessarily identical with, Francis Fukuyama's. He defines liberalism as "a rule of law that recognizes certain individual rights or freedoms from government control."[10] These are the rights which fall within the classical view of liberalism. In the Anglo-American world they would most commonly be referred to as “civil liberties.” This paper assumes that civil liberties can be divided into two basic categories. The first category is that of liberty of conscience and expression. It includes such liberties as the freedoms of speech, religion, press, assembly, association, etc. The second category contains due process protections in the event that the state threatens an individual's life, liberty or property. It includes the right to a fair trial, protections against unreasonable searches or seizures, just compensation for the taking of property, etc. This paper will generally use Fukuyama's definition of “democracy.” He views a country as democratic "if it grants its people the right to choose their own government through periodic, secret-ballot, multi-party elections, on the basis of universal and equal adult suffrage."[11]

Furthermore, since the human rights instruments almost exclusively list individual rights, one cannot accept them without embracing some form of individualism. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this does not presuppose a radical or egoistic form of individualism. Similar to the minimalist version of liberalism embraced by this paper, only a minimalist version of individualism is required to accept the necessity for maintaining certain basic protections for the individual against the state. For example, Charles Taylor, in his *The Ethics of Authenticity*, attempts to describe a form of individualism where the individual is not expected to find the fundamental meaning of his existence within himself, but rather in something greater than himself.[12]

The assertion that the ideas of liberalism and democracy are Western in character is premised, first of all, on the assumption that all human beings belong to a culture, and, therefore, ideas are always the product of a particular culture. Since no ideas can stand outside of a cultural context, we must find the cultural context in which the ideas of liberalism and democracy make sense. This leads one to the connection between these ideas and Western culture. Therefore, to challenge this view, one has to take the position that there is something like a human nature at work, which causes all of us to act similarly under similar conditions, regardless of the culture in which we find ourselves. This paper will entertain the view that human nature seems to be particularly well suited to liberalism and democracy. Therefore, it will explore the compatibility of the latter with Islam.

Among universalists there are a variety of different philosophies. The most famous expression of this idea is found in the “UNESCO Statement by Experts on Race Problems.” It was written by a group of social scientists in 1950 and starts with the science of biology and, therefore, claims to look at man outside of any cultural context. This leads the authors to conclude with an endorsement of a type of political universalism:

> All normal human beings are capable of learning to share in a common life, to understand the nature of mutual service and reciprocity, and to respect social obligations and contracts. . . . Lastly, biological studies lend support to the ethic of universal brotherhood; for man is born with drives toward cooperation, and unless those drives are satisfied, men and nations alike fall ill.[13]

One can identify at least two main currents of universalist thought. One current views political science as largely independent of other fields of knowledge and analyzes political events in this context. This view was expressed by The Federalist and has most recently been eloquently restated by James W. Ceaser in his Reconstructing America. While in principle this view allows for liberal democracy to be applied in any culture, it sees no historical inevitability.[14] In this regard Ceaser states:

> The Federalist's position: in rejecting the category of biological varieties as the starting point in the study of human differentiation, The Federalist makes free use of the concepts of mankind, the human race, human nature, human reason, and the constitution of man. Its universalism also supports the argument, rejected by proponents of the idea of human varieties, that the peoples of any race on any continent possess the potential to develop free governments."[15]

The second current is the Hegelian view which assumes that one can find progress in human history and that this progress culminates in a particular political system, such as liberal democracy. Francis Fukuyama has recently breathed new life into this idea.[16] A recent alternative Hegelian view might be that of Charles Taylor, concerning a series of hyper-goods which supersede prior, less adequate views.[17]

The cultural relativists obviously come in various shades, but they can be roughly divided into two groups. First of all, there are those who talk of the “right” cultures having to choose their own values. Ceaser notes that for this group "a recognition of different cultures in their particularity constitutes the highest value or standard — a kind of philosophical and ethical absolute — leading to the commandment that all cultural differences should be respected."[18] However, this position has an obvious weakness since it embraces the value of tolerance, a liberal idea. Therefore, the viewpoint represented by other cultural relativists declines to make any value judgments outside of cultural contexts, so it, also, does not prescribe any ethics of tolerance of different cultures and, therefore, is not in any position to arbitrate cultural disputes. Samuel Huntington is a representative of this view.[19] This paper will attempt to examine Islam in light of both alternatives.

The Problem as Seen from within Islam

To truly evaluate whether liberalism and democracy are incompatible with Islamic culture as a whole will require a more careful analysis. First of all, we need to appreciate the perspective of a devout Muslim. According to Joseph Schacht, "Islamic law is the epitome of Islamic thought, the most typical manifestation of the Islamic way of life, the core and kernel of Islam itself."[20] If this is true, then it presents a difficulty in setting aside the dictates of Islamic law in favor of secular law. The early Christians separated the realm of God from the realm of the Emperor. While Islam began largely as a legal code. Furthermore, the Islamic world lacks the experience of the Protestant Reformation and the resulting religious wars, which forced Western civilization to make the distinction between religious and secular law. David Westbrook presents the dilemma in the following manner: "Islamic scholars, who locate legal authority with God, cannot so easily separate law and belief. The public international law solution of order without shared belief is not available to Islamic scholars, insofar as their work is informed by Islam."[21] As a result, for the Islamic scholar, Westbrook continues, "international law is a continual attempt to reconcile Islamic authority and Western category. . . . The arguments they make within Western categories are not authoritative to a Muslim. The arguments they make from Islamic authority do not confront the political organization of the contemporary world."[22]

However, as Westbrook points out, "[T]he Qur'an does not constitute a legal code."[23] Therefore, we need to look beyond the Qur'an in our search for authentic Islamic law. Again, Westbrook writes: "The text of the Qur'an is supplemented by reports (*ahadith*) of the speech and actions of the Prophet and his companions. Collectively these reports form the second body of revelation and the second source of Islamic law, the *sunna*."[24] However, this is exactly where the confusion begins. As Westbrook writes: "Unfortunately, the opinions of scholars vary regarding both the authenticity and the meaning of individual *hadith*. Moreover, subtleties of meaning abound, as do questions of application."[25] As a result there is a tremendous opportunity to find in Islamic law what one is looking for, often motivated by reasons totally unrelated to Islamic culture.

An Analysis Based on Political Science

Therefore, one may begin from the perspective of political science and look for political motivations behind certain assertions of incompatibility. Ann Mayer begins with such a standpoint. She argues that the formulation of so-called Islamic human rights schemes, such as the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam in 1990, "are products of the political context in which they emerged. Their Islamic pedigrees are dubious."[26] Mayer further indicts the authors of the Islamization policies by arguing that these policies may be "no more than a strategy adopted by beleaguered elites in an attempt to trump growing Muslim demands for democratization and human rights."[27] For instance, Mayer notes that "[t]he most extensive conflicts between past interpretations of Islamic requirements and international human rights norms lie in the area of women's rights." Muslim feminists support her position when they argue "that it is actually patriarchal attitudes and misreadings of Islamic sources, not Islamic tenets, that inspire the patterns of discrimination against women."[28] Clearly, it is difficult to accept the proposition that the women who participated in the demonstrations for the right to vote in Kuwait believed that for them to vote would violate God's law.[29]

Mayer raises the issue that the two regimes -- Iran and Saudi Arabia, that have been the loudest proponents of the view that Islamic values are inconsistent with international human rights norms -- refuse to recognize each other as legitimate voices of Islamic government. She writes: "Neither Iran's clerics nor the Saudi royal family recognize each other's claims to constitute an Islamic government, even though each regime is by self-proclamation Islamic; indeed, Iran's and Saudi Arabia's rulers routinely anathematize each other in the name of their respective Islams."[30]

Due to the growing influence of international human rights norms, those states in the Islamic world who were opposed to such norms felt a need to respond to them since it was impossible to ignore them. Therefore, there were several attempts to develop alternative human rights schemes which were not objectionable to those concerned. The most prominent is the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam in 1990, described by Mayer as follows:

The central feature of the Cairo Declaration is its implicit conception of international human rights in the civil and political arena as excessive -- with the concomitant need for Islamic criteria to restrict and reduce them. After asserting that "fundamental rights and universal freedoms in Islam are an integral part of the Islamic religion," the authors proceed to enumerate rights and freedoms on which "Islamic" qualifications have been imposed, indicating that in reality the authors saw in Islam justifications for restricting or denying rights and freedoms. Article 24 provides that: "All the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the Islamic Shari'ah" -- without any attempt at defining what limits the Shari'ah would entail. No added clarity is provided by Article 25, which states: "The Islamic Shari'ah is the only source of reference for the explanation or clarification of any of the articles of this Declaration," because there is, as previously noted, no settled jurisprudence on the question of how reference to overriding Islamic criteria should affect modern rights norms.[31]

Mayer then proceeds to critique these schemes as follows:

> Such Islamic versions of human rights have tended in most respects to fall far below the standard of protections for civil and political rights guaranteed under the International Bill of Human Rights. Protections of religious freedoms and guarantees of full equality and equal protection of the law for women and religious minorities have been notably absent.[32]

While Mayer acknowledges that, concerning religious freedom and equal rights for non-Muslims and women, these schemes are consistent with "principles found in traditional interpretations of Islamic requirements,"[33] she notes that some of the provisions have highly questionable Islamic roots. She states that these provisions "have either a tenuous or nonexistent connection to the Islamic sources or Islamic tradition." She points out that in areas where modern human rights provisions address issues "not prefigured in the Islamic legal legacy, these schemes may resort to outright borrowing from selected international human rights provisions -- but with a distinctive twist. They subordinate the borrowed international human rights provisions to newly fashioned Islamic derogation clauses, circumscribing them by subjecting them to `Islamic' conditions."[34] In probably the most devastating critique of the so-called Islamic human rights schemes, Mayer notes that:

> because the permissible scope of the Islamic qualifications was left undefined by the authors of the new Islamic human rights schemes and because there were no settled historical guidelines for how to integrate Islamic conditions with modern human rights norms, the Islamic qualifications in practice left governments free to determine the scope of the rights provided and potentially to nullify the rights involved.[35]

She then questions "why granting the government of a modern nation state, an institution borrowed from the West and unknown in Islamic tradition, such great latitude in defining the grounds for denying and restricting rights should be deemed appropriate in a system based on Islam."[36]

At the second World Conference on Human Rights, in Vienna in June 1993, there were various challenges to the universality of human rights by Asian and Middle Eastern states. Samuel Huntington argued in a subsequent article that his paradigm of a “clash of civilizations” was substantiated by the confrontation at the conference between “the West” and “a coalition of Islamic and Confucian States rejecting Western universalism.”[37] U.S. Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, asserted that "we cannot let cultural relativism become the last refuge of repression."[38] Another major advocate at the Conference for the Universality of Human Rights was U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, an Egyptian Copt.[39] The countries allied in opposition to the universality of human rights all had problematic human rights records. The countries included Iran, China, Cuba, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Syria, Indonesia, Pakistan and Yemen.[40] One could, of course, argue, as Mayer does,[41] that all of these governments had political reasons to take the positions they took, independent of their native cultures.

At this stage we should return to Mayer, who argues that both Iran and Saudi Arabia represented particular forms of Islam and could not be said to speak for all of Islam. Furthermore, China, in Mayer's view, was not well-qualified to speak on behalf of traditional Asian culture or religion due to its extensive record of suppressing the same. Therefore, Mayer argues that it is more appropriate to see the confrontation as representing oppressive states, attempting to find cover for their human rights abuses rather than as a clash of civilizations.[42] Mayer also points out that "the Dalai Lama, one of the most eminent Asian Buddhist leaders, emerged as one of the most forceful spokespersons for universality."[43]

Mayer's point that these regimes seem to be using cultural relativism as a cover to preserve their autocratic forms of government obviously casts considerable suspicion on the sincerity of these regimes. Therefore, considering the probable motivations of the advocates of cultural relativism in this instance, the Islamic-Confucian connection looks much less like a confirmation of Huntington's thesis.

Nevertheless, we cannot stop with the assumption that Islamic opposition to the international human rights norms is exclusively originated by state leaders who wish to preserve their political position. There is clearly an Islamic popular movement well outside the confines of established Islamic regimes. The assertion of an Islamic identity seems to continue to challenge the notions of a secular democratic state in much of the Islamic world. The Civil War in Algeria, which began with the cancellation of the 1992 elections when the Islamic Salvation Front appeared likely to win, seems likely to continue.[44] Islamic fundamentalists led a democratically elected coalition government in Turkey for a time, beginning what may be a fierce struggle for the soul of the Turkish state between the fundamentalists and the followers of the secular vision of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk with periodic interference by the military.[45] Islamic fundamentalists continue attacks on Westerners in their attempt to destabilize the Egyptian regime. Therefore, it would be difficult to argue that the only advocates of Islamic fundamentalism are the rulers of autocratic states.

Who Speaks for Islam?

We need to further explore Mayer's point that "there is no real consensus on the part of Muslims that their religion mandates a culturally distinctive approach to rights or that it precludes the adoption of international human rights norms."[46] Without such a consensus it is difficult to make the argument that the conflict over human rights is between the West and Islam, it appears more reasonable to assume that the conflict is within Islam itself.

There is considerable evidence that pressures for liberal democracy have been appearing in much of the Islamic world alongside of the Islamic movements. While the elections that have taken place throughout this geographic region, with various degrees of fairness, are examples of the continuing influence of democratic ideas, the elections in Kuwait (October 1992) and Yemen (April 1993) represent something of a turning point.[47] These elections seem to have, at least, been partially responsible for the forming of a human rights committee in Saudi Arabia, called the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights, by conservative elements of society on May 3, 1993.[48] While the Committee indicated that it intended to realize "the difference between human rights as decreed in Islam and human rights in other countries," indicating a relativist position on human rights, nevertheless, it called for human rights, democracy, the right of both men and women to vote and change in the judicial system and labor laws.[49] The Committee claimed that its actions were inspired by Islamic law, which indicates further dissent in Islamic ranks. Despite the fact (probably because of the fact) that more than 10,000 Saudis had signed a petition supporting the Committee, it was banned after 13 days, and about 400 supporters were arrested.[50] It is interesting to note, that while the Saudi government secured a ruling from the Council of Senior Religious Scholars to support the banning, these scholars offered no evidence to support their finding in favor of the ban.[51]

The Kuwaiti elections of 1996 have helped to cement the foundations of democratic values in that country. However, the stipulation that only Kuwaiti men born to Kuwaiti fathers are eligible to vote clearly shows that we are not dealing with universal adult suffrage. Also, the limited power of the parliament indicates that this is something short of popular rule. John Lancaster of *The Washington Post* sums up the limitations of Kuwaiti democracy as follows:

> By Western standards, democracy still has a long way to go in a country where women cannot vote, political parties are banned, broadcast media are run by the government, and criticism of the emir, who appoints the cabinet and under the constitution shares legislative authority with the parliament, is forbidden. And the parliament, which is heavily influenced by Islamic fundamentalists, has little to show for its efforts, with its internal disunity keeping it from mounting a united challenge to the ruling family.[52]

Nevertheless, Lancaster argues that freedom of expression in Kuwait is in marked contrast to other states of the region. He cites an example of how a National Assembly candidate in the 1996 elections "delivered a scorching attack on government officials, including members of the royal family, charging corruption and other misdeeds."[53] He then describes the even more surprising response from the audience.

> Afterward, a man stood up and proposed, "We should get them and beat them with sticks." Applause rippled through the audience.
>
> Almost anywhere else in the Arab world, such open disdain for the government would be an invitation to arrest, or worse. But it hardly raises an eyebrow in Kuwait, where freedom of expression is among the most striking aspects of a fledgling democracy that is sowing envy and, some say alarm among its autocratic neighbors.[54]

Lancaster then cites the case of Lubna Abbas, who, in an effort to protest the lack of voting rights for women, organized a day-long work stoppage. Abbas works as an advertising executive for the state television network and is a graduate of American University in Washington, DC. According to Abbas: "If we had been in any other country in the Middle East, we would have lost our jobs like that."[55] Clearly, given time, these democratic developments will have a dynamic of their own and will multiply just as they have in countless other places.

In fact, Kuwait is already spreading democratic ideas beyond its borders. Lancaster writes: "To the irritation of its neighbors, Kuwait likes to trumpet its relatively democratic system: Earlier this year, for example, a group of Kuwaiti legislators infuriated Bahrain by calling on its leadership to refrain from human rights abuses."[56] Another indication that democracy may be having an impact in the Gulf states is that Qatar may be moving toward elections.[57]

Yemen is another good example of democratic evolution on the Arabian Peninsula. Its civil war a few years ago appeared to have spoiled this promise. However, its elections in 1997 seemed to have brought it back on track. Its broad franchise clearly is a contrast to the more limited electoral process in Kuwait.[58] Further evidence of dissent within the conservative Gulf states is the existence of the Gulf National Forum, a movement set up in 1992 to promote democracy and freedom of expression in the Gulf region. Members representing states from all over the Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, have met in Kuwait.[59]

A significant dissenting voice has come from within the Iranian Islamic revolutionary movement. Mehdi Bazargan, was the first Prime Minister of Iran after the 1979 revolution. Bazargan was one of the founders of the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI), which advocated human rights and democracy using Islamic references. However, Iran's clerical regime refused to grant the organization legal recognition and persecuted its members. Bazargan then complained of the silencing of dissenting voices, the elimination of all opposition, the lack of freedom of assembly and association, asserting that the Islamic revolution had been betrayed by Iran's clerics.[60]

The Iranian presidential election of 1997 again reinforced the notion of a seemingly organic process which pushes societies in a more democratic direction in all parts of the globe, including within the Islamic world. The council of guardians did approve of the candidacy of Mohammad Khatami, but it may not have realized that he would be able to overcome the lead of the heir-apparent, the speaker of the parliament, Nateq-Noori. Nevertheless, by campaigning for more personal freedom, Khatami managed to galvanize women and teenaged voters and win the election.[61] While Khatami's hands are still largely tied by Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, his election clearly represented a popular endorsement of greater personal freedom.

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous state and its largest Islamic state -- after a period of sustained economic growth -- is now experiencing the effects of a popular democratic revolution.[62] Forces which have nothing to do with Islam are still attempting to subvert the popular will.[63] Furthermore, it seems that these democratic forces have a resonance in the Islamic world alongside the Islamic resurgence.

Turkey clearly represents a society where democratic forces, Islamic forces and a military committed to upholding the secular state through draconian suppression of Islamic elements have all been competing to determine the destiny of the country. Significant elements of society, notably women, have showed consistently that they do not approve of any radical curtailment of individual rights justified by reference to Islam.[64] While religious forces have campaigned largely for greater freedom to express their Islamic beliefs, the military has curtailed democracy largely to prevent Islamic fundamentalists from gaining the upper hand.[65] However, democratic forces in Turkey, including business groups, have argued for full democracy.[66] This turmoil in this predominantly Moslem country shows that there is still significant debate within Islam about its proper role in government.

A similar battle is playing itself out in Pakistan, where there is tremendous resistance to the move to amend the Constitution by giving blanket powers to the government to institute its interpretation of Islam. The provision would override "anything contained in the constitution, any law or judgment of any court."[67] While there is clearly public support for embracing the moral teachings of Islam, it is not clear that this should take a form inconsistent with liberal democracy.

Which Culture Has a Right to Its Own Values?

The Taliban takeover of Kabul in September 1996 is another graphic example of a fundamental problem for those advocates of cultural relativism who claim that all cultures have a "right" to determine their own value system. The Taliban, an Afghan rebel group formed in Pakistan, imposed a strict form of Islamic law in the areas which they controlled. Their seizure of the Afghan capital was to prove no exception in this regard.

The Taliban have forbidden all women and girls to go to work or to school. This included nearly all of the 30,000 widows of Kabul, who often were the sole support for their families.[68] Women have been required to wear traditional clothing concealing their entire bodies, with even their eyes covered by mesh cloth. Men have been forced to wear turbans and to grow beards. The Taliban have also carried out criminal punishments such as amputations and executions.[69] In one instance, Taliban fighters threatened to hang any Afghan women whom they found working at a Red Cross compound.[70] The Taliban have also forced people to attend mosque at gunpoint.[71] Music,[72] photography, video recorders, white socks, soccer and kite-flying have all been banned.[73] Women have been banned from public baths,[74] and windows of the bath buildings have to be painted black to a height of six feet.[75]

However, they were imposing their own values on people who had been living a quite different life. According to Kenneth Cooper, of *The Washington Post*, prior to the Taliban takeover of Kabul, women made up "70 percent of the teachers, half of all civilian government workers and 40 percent of physicians."[76] Furthermore, in most relief agencies, such as the U.N. refugee agency, about half of the work force was female.[77] The economic and basic humanitarian consequences of the ban on allowing women to work are problematic; moreover it is not an instance of "Western Values" being imposed on a native culture. In this case the urban society of Kabul, with its recognition of some basic rights for women, represents an established culture, while the introduction of the cultural values of the Taliban represents the imposition of a foreign, or external, set of values. This view is reinforced by the rejection of the changes by the population, evidenced by the mass exodus following the Taliban takeover.[78] The Taliban will, of course, counter by arguing that traditional Islamic culture in the capital had been corrupted by "Western Values," and all they were doing was reintroducing what had been lost. However, this view ignores the reality that cultures are continually changing, even as urbanization changed parts of Afghanistan.

Islam's Compatibility with Human Rights

Arguments can clearly be made that some of the reasons for opposing liberal democracy can be traced to motivations by autocratic political forces which desire to cling to power. Furthermore, if one casts the argument in terms of the rights of cultures to have their own values, one finds a difficulty in determining exactly which culture has this right. However, we still have not addressed the issue of the compatibility of liberal democracy with Islam. In the beginning, we noted that an Islamic scholar would have difficulty accepting a legal system, international or otherwise, unless it is consistent with Islam itself. Therefore, an appeal to a secular legal system which would provide room for different religions is not an option. As a consequence, we still need to examine Islam itself to determine its compatibility with liberal democracy.

Mayer states that "[t]he principles of freedom of religion -- notably the right to convert from Islam to another faith -- and equality for all, regardless of religion or sex, seemed to pose particular problems for many Muslims, and in these areas they could point to Islamic authority, albeit contested authority, for their resistance to international standards."[79] Mayer then notes that "[i]n the past, Islamic sources have been construed as barring conversions from Islam, requiring apostates to repent and return to the fold or face the death penalty, for males, or imprisonment, for females." However, she counters this, stating that "[c]ontemporary Muslims have questioned such interpretations, pointing out that there are principles in the sources that also ban compulsion in religion."[80]

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im is a figure worthy of inclusion in any review of Islamic culture. He cannot be described as either an Islamic modernist or an Islamic fundamentalist. Unlike the modernists, he is not trying to integrate Western and traditional Islamic thought, and, unlike the fundamentalists, he is not trying to return to pristine principles. An-Na'im appears to be attempting to change our understanding of the foundations of Islamic law.[81] An-Na'im notes that Shari'ah does not represent the whole of Islam, but rather an interpretation of its fundamental sources, which must be understood in their historical context. He allows for the possibility of an Islamic Reformation since, in his view, Shari'ah was simply constructed by its founding jurists, which would permit certain aspects of Shari'ah to be restructured. He recharacterizes Shari'ah in terms of a social system similar to Western positivist ideas of law as a juristic structure.[82] He further asserts that the power politics of the Medinan tradition of Islam should be abandoned in favor of the Meccan tradition of Islam, as a model for a humane international polity.[83]

Another figure, who is attempting to work from within Islam within the same general framework, is Abdol Karim Soroush, a lecturer at Tehran University. Soroush argues that there is "no authoritative" interpretation of Islam and claims that "all believers are entitled to their understanding of Islam."[84] This comes reminiscent of the ideas of the Protestant Reformation. However, this comes from a scholar who is working within the Iranian academic world and "was an ideologue of the Islamic regime in the 1980s."[85] Soroush makes the significant point that "[s]uch issues as democracy and human rights did not exist in early Islamic society."[86] He goes on to argue that "today, they are popular ideas that are compatible with Islam, . . ."[87] Saroush notes that "the language of religion is the language of obligation, . . ."[88] He attempts to make the transition by asserting that "we need a paradigm shift . . . a shift that makes a synthesis from obligations to rights."[89]

There is even considerable evidence that individualism is not as alien to Islam as is sometimes asserted. According to Kamal Abu al-Magd, an Egyptian law professor:

> [I]n Islam there is of course the general principle of individual responsibility before God and before the community. . . . And there are injunctions in the same direction by some of the best known Islamic reformers. For example, Muhammad Iqbal argues that Islam doesn't ask people to deny themselves, but to strengthen their egos by being strong, working hard, undertaking difficult tasks. In one of his books he particularly focused on strengthening the individual ego and the collective ego.[90]

He attributes the submissiveness of the people in some Arab Muslim countries, not to Islam, but to a history of colonialism and autocratic rulers.[91] He also finds support in the Qur'an for freedom of speech, as he quotes a passage from the chapter called "The Cow": "No witness or writer should be made to suffer because of his testimony."[92] Clearly it would be difficult to find such a clear endorsement of freedom of speech and press in Christianity as this.

Conclusions

We have seen that liberal democracy and human rights are not necessarily inconsistent with Islam. In fact, interpretations of Islam compatible with liberal democracy are increasingly being advanced. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that, as industrialization takes hold in Islamic countries, they will be immune to the effects on culture that this development has had and is having elsewhere. How long this movement will have to struggle to bring democratic changes is uncertain, but it appears that democratic values have taken hold of the imagination of much of the Islamic world.

In any case, the strong centralized state, which is a reality in most Islamic countries, must be addressed. Traditional Islamic culture did not have to deal with such an entity. The so-called Islamic human rights schemes fail to provide any realistic check on its power. Therefore, a reexamination of Islam, to reassess its compatibility with liberal democracy, may be the only realistic answer.

Notes

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5. Josiah A.M. Cobbah, "African Values and the Human Rights Debate: An African Perspective," 9 *Human Rights Quarterly*, pp. 309, 316 (1987).

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7. Liberalism and democracy are, of course, represented by the instruments concerned with civil and political rights, rather than by those instruments which are concerned with the so-called second and third generation rights [economic, social and cultural rights].

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17. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, pp. 62-75 (1989).

18. James W. Ceaser, op cit., note 14, p. 34.

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20. Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* 1 (1964).

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24. *Ibid.*

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31. *Ibid.,* pp. 328-329.

32. *Ibid.,* p. 324.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

34. *Ibid.*

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44. Jonathan C. Randal, "Algeria's War Refuses to Die," *The Washington Post*, July 2, 1996, p. A10; however, voters in Algeria overwhelmingly approved the countries fourth constitution in November 1996, thereby approving the banning of Islam-based political parties, see Charles Trueheart, "Referendum Results Strengthen Algeria's Army-Backed Regime," *The Washington Post,* November 29, 1996, p. A41.

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48. *Ibid.,* p. 365.

49. *Ibid.,* p. 367.

50. *Ibid.,* p. 365.

51. *Ibid.,* p. 366.

52. Lancaster, op. cit. p. A25.

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82. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation* xiv (1990); see also Westbrook, op. cit., p. 849.

83. An-Na'im, op. cit., note 315, pp. 143-144; see also Westbrook, op. cit., note 19, p. 854. It should be noted that Abdulaziz Sachedina disputes this distinction between the Meccan and Medinan traditions, by pointing out that one of the progressive strands of Islamic thought (e.g., "there is no compulsion in religion") is actually of Medinan origin, see Westbrook, op. cit., p. 855, footnote 97, see also Abdulaziz Sachedina, "Review of Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law," 25 *International Journal Middle East Studies,* pp. 155-156 (1993).

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Chapter XIV

True and False Pluralism in Relation to the West and Islam

Richard K. Khuri

Part 1

Why has "pluralism" become such an important word? Some assert that people have lost the sense of who they are and, thus, have become insecure among neighbors affiliated with other groups. The Romans knew who they were and so could draw a bewildering variety of peoples into their empire. The greatest Roman philosopher came from Upper Egypt and wrote in Greek and an Arab enjoyed a brief reign as emperor. The United States itself has yet to attain such depth of integration or assimilation. It is quite difficult for a Catholic of Western European ancestry to become president, let alone someone of non-European origins whose family has lived here for generations. It is at present inconceivable that this country's leading intellectuals have anything other than a European background. But is the need to assert ones identity the main reason why discussions about pluralism have come to the fore?

People have been exposed to world views other than their own for thousands of years. In ancient Greece, Xenophanes wondered about the implications of each culture having its own image of the divine. He contributed in no small measure towards the expression of a purer form of transcendence. The Phoenicians were well aware of civilizational diversity through trade and travel. It left them unperturbed. The same kind of exposure, far from forcing retrenchment, impelled the ancient Greeks towards the development of a cultural framework that in Hellenized form would spread throughout the Mediterranean basin and t, thence, eastwards to Mesopotamia, Persia and India. That framework, contrary to the wishes of nineteenth-century European philologists and historians eager to reinforce their belief in the West's superiority, is now known to have gathered extensive Eastern and Egyptian sources into itself. The Hellenism that would eventually be adopted by a *confident* Islam was no stranger to the lands then ruled by Muslims.

It is also true, however, that it was far easier before our time to live *as though* there were no other world views. There were many more pockets of homogeneity[1] all over the world, many more people who could lead their daily lives in the bliss of stable creeds, without dozens of intrusions that politely or rudely exposed them to other ways. Beliefs cannot sink deeply enough if they are constantly questioned. Life would become unbearably tenuous were one to treat its guidelines and inner thread as subject to change at a moment's notice. Ours is an oasis of *intensity of juxtaposition:* too many people, too many world views on top of each other, physically and mentally, propelled towards the absurd theoretical limit where every person is potentially exposed to every possible world view (or pseudo-world view) at all times. If one must take a world view seriously in order to live, then it is life itself, life lived fully, that is at stake. The identity crisis of which many speak is but a symptom of the threat to life itself.

Pluralism is nothing new. One can even argue that it is necessary at a fundamental level, given that humanity is faced with the need to interpret something infinite in finite terms and so must live with the incompleteness *and, thence, multiplicity* of whatever interpretations take hold. The novelty lies rather in the intensity with which pluralism must be lived -- an intensity more and more obvious in our physical environment and mental landscape. The large question here ought to be how one copes with and overcomes such pluralistic intensity. Alas, this would lead us too far from the thematic concerns of the discussions of which this paper should form an integral part. Nevertheless, as we become acquainted with the distinction between true and false pluralism, some refracted light may illuminate some of that large question's nearer reaches.

Part 2

Pluralistic intensity is corrosive. When too many world views are hurled at too many people for too long, they soon seem to have the same value, be they wrought with toil or born half in jest, divinely inspired or the nightmares of madmen, timeless traditions or today's fashions. This corrosive process is accentuated by the demands made by pluralistic intensity on cultural and political life, especially the creation of a framework for the management of that intensity. This framework alone gains consensus, so it exceeds any particular world view in apparent importance. The meaning of "democracy," "free-market economics," "free choice," empowerment," and the nexus of terms built around them are now deeply interwoven with such developments. The framework for the management of pluralistic intensity becomes the sole absolute in which every world view is relativized. Thus pluralism collapses into relativism.

The difference between relativism and pluralism is worth remembering, given what has just been said. Relativists deny that there is any reality that transcends personal whims, tastes and preferences. If some people believe that no harm should come to children, others might not. The first belief may be better than the second, but this does not rest on universal grounds. A close examination of relativist methodology will show that the problem is set up in a manner so as to preclude the very possibility of transcendence, in part by confusing it with objectivity, as though moral beliefs with universal import could only gain their status through a process more suitable for highly litigious societies. There is the further problem that relativism becomes incoherent when its own logic is pushed to its limits. But these neither seem to extinguish the appeal that relativism continues to hold for certain people nor alter the fact that its moral subversiveness is perfectly suitable for further expansions of the marketplace.

Pluralism entails neither the denial nor the affirmation of transcendence. A pluralist who holds transcendent reality dear merely concedes that it is extremely difficult to embody it in a definitive interpretation. One readily acknowledges the presence of several world religions and the stable equilibrium that they approach in their global spread. But one need not conclude from such multiplicity that Truth is itself multiple -- just that it defies invariant linguistic formulation. A moral pluralist will point out, furthermore, that many situations present us with genuine dilemmas, so that it is hard to imagine moral strictures for which there are no exceptions. For instance, is capital punishment always wrong, even if the guilty person were a serial killer of children? Is honoring abusive parents right? Should Muslims fast by daylight north of the Arctic Circle when Ramadan occurs in the summer (or winter for that matter)? Is one bound to a promise the keeping of which might endanger ones life?

The foregoing allows us to distinguish between true and false pluralism. False pluralism obtains when there are several choices to be made within the same framework, so that the framework reigns supreme and all choices have equal value within it ("status" becomes "value" in no time at all). This is not pluralism at all, but a kind of monolithism. No one dares criticize democracy or capitalism in the United States, whereas the most vulgar blasphemies are permitted. (The reader ought to keep in mind what was mentioned earlier about the shift in the meaning of "democracy" -- democratic practice can either set the tone for true or false pluralism but in itself cannot decide the issue.) Nothing illustrates more poignantly that democracy and capitalism, neither of which is a world view or even pretends to be, are valued far more than the most resonant, far-reaching world views.

True pluralism, in contrast, involves coexistence between profoundly different world views valued and acknowledged for *what they really are*. Its topography is varied, as opposed to the flat terrain of false pluralism. Transcendence is given its due, as is the chronic difficulty of reducing it to a single embodiment, however sacred, inspired and ingenious. A sense of urgency surrounds the personal choices made in the context of true pluralism. Indeed, the inappropriateness of "choice" for how one pursues a certain path is recognized in order to emphasize that personality is not to be regarded as casually as dress. Some urgency also surrounds political choices. For in the context of true pluralism, contesting parties have significantly differing visions of the polity in question.

The distinction between true and false pluralism has some bearing on the large question hovering over this paper, namely, how we deal with and overcome pluralistic intensity. One way would be for us not to lose sight of the variegated topography of our intensely pluralistic world, not to be tempted by the simplicity of the flat terrain of false pluralism and forget the hard work it takes to keep what really matters in view.

Part 3

We shall presently turn to the Arab Muslim world. But it may be fruitful to first briefly examine where pluralism stands in the United States. After all, it is with the United States in mind that we bring the discussion of cultural diversity to bear on the Arab Muslim world.

True pluralism no longer thrives in the usual domains in the United States. Those who have lived here long enough will readily notice that major elections no longer present voters with meaningful choices. The system is set up so as to practically exclude third parties and the nontrivial divide between the two persistently dominant parties grows ever narrower. Voter apathy is a symptom of political uniformity, exacerbated by victory in the Cold War and the pervasive sentiment that no better political alternative is even conceivable.

The uniformity has spilled over into the domain of those for whom meaningful democratic practice had been vouchsafed. The press reports and comments on major political, economic and cultural developments with a chilling sameness. No conspiracy or overt totalitarianism would succeed in attaining the same level of uniformity as that which spontaneously bedevils the media in the United States. That the media have been integrated into larger corporate structures that have similar interests does not explain the whole story. It remains to be determined how a society self-consciously founded to maximize opportunities for individual expression and religious freedom has become hostage to commercial forces. Part of the answer lies in the ascendancy of the framework for the management of pluralistic intensity at the expense of the competing, juxtaposed world views that originally justified its presence. When the framework is all that matters, all news and analysis become the same. When all news and analysis become the same, business becomes the business of most people. The danger is that it may devour everything else.

The universities would ordinarily be islands of true pluralism in such bleak intellectual and spiritual surroundings. But they have not been spared. Students in the natural and applied sciences, as well as at business schools, are taught from the first day to exclude themselves from their work, let alone express their opinions about anything, to a degree that would have exceeded the expectations of Marx and Lenin. The use of the first personal pronoun is strictly forbidden. The social sciences, ill-conceived as sciences in the first place owing to conditions specific to the dominant culture of late nineteenth-century Europe, try as hard as possible to imitate the natural or at least applied sciences. To the extent that they fail, they join the humanities in their predicament.

Students and professors (particularly junior members among the latter) are required either to follow the prevalent orthodoxy, often modeled along pseudoscientific lines, or join a faction of the official “rebel” coalition (some fashionable “-ism,” or other), in either case to the serious detriment of the pursuit of knowledge and truth for their own sake, not to mention the cultivation of creativity and independent thought in their light. The universities have also become victims of the commercial invasion: More and more brand name products are now advertised and sold openly on campus, particularly those of the purveyors of fast foods, whereas none were to be seen a mere generation ago.

A situation has spontaneously arisen wherein the political order, the media and the universities, which drive and are driven by an ever stronger and louder economic engine, systematically combine to expunge true pluralism from the horizons of a generation of young people. Wherever the United States seeks to promote or impose more pluralistic ways, from Mexico to Nigeria to Iran to Russia, China and Indonesia, the door is therefore simultaneously forced wide open for false pluralism. The search for true pluralism in the United States, hence, has global implications.

Part 4

Where in the United States do we find true pluralism? For all the noise generated by the forces of false pluralism, human nature and cultural traditions are such that we remain a long way off from the monstrosity of an entire populace herded into uniformity. Let us begin at the university, where we ended our gloomy provisional portrait. One always finds the odd professor here and there, more often than not from the older generation, who is an inspiration. At a time when the University of California at Berkeley was, in the words of its own chancellor, turning itself into an education factory, Czeslaw Milosz and Paul Feyerabend became professors there. So long as large numbers of students have to read Plato, Aristotle and Shakespeare, there will be enough whose natural intelligence and astuteness will show up much that passes for culture today -- including much that has infiltrated many of the courses they must enroll in -- as rubbish. Many good universities have become a magnet for off-campus activities that sometimes offer better opportunities for cultivation than the universities themselves. Students who take the initiative and find the time thus have other means to overcome uniformity.

The foregoing may seem to have little to do with Islam and cultural diversity. In fact, it has everything to do with it. The internal forces that endeavor to place diversity on a firmer footing in the Arab Muslim world would do well to become acquainted with its fate where it is believed to have its strongest and best expression. And those that pressure the Arab Muslim world in the same direction, from without ought to look at themselves in the mirror and see what they are and what it is precisely that they are after. And so we continue with our perforce quick survey of true pluralism in the United States. It might as well be said at this stage that true pluralism is more genuinely there informally than formally. Other informal signs of true pluralism in the United States are:

(a) In neighborhoods (usually ethnically based), small towns and among various community organizations, one encounters attitudes and rhythms of life that fall well outside of the aforementioned uniformity.

(b) There are growing numbers of small reading groups that quietly sustain the ability of individual members to think for themselves.

(c) Around a million people have removed television sets from their homes.

(d) Movements have formed such as the Promise Keepers, who are not fundamentalists. They simply reject the dominant culture and wish to uphold time-honored moral values. Other movements, such as the Black Muslims, are taking matters into their own hands in certain urban areas in order to rid them from crime and drugs and provide social services. This is not to say that the Black Muslims themselves are pluralists, but that their very existence is confirmation that true pluralism continues to thrive in the United States.

It is a rather surprising result that the United States, conceived as a champion of pluralism, should end by harboring it mainly informally. But the informality in this case is not to be compared with the clever ways in which Hungarians under Kadar or Egyptians under Nasser could express themselves, for it is constitutionally guaranteed. True pluralism lies at the heart of the self-image with which generations of North Americans have grown up: it is deeply resonant. It would take a tremendous exercise of sustained usurpation to bring citizens to the point where they are unable to distinguish between the true and the false. There are enduring legal and moral grounds for rebellion against such usurpation. What is at present informal may become formal in the not too distant future. We just happen to live at a time when the formal expression of pluralism in the United States has become bankrupt. But it also happens that the United States has reached the apogee of its power at precisely this time.

Part 5

How Islam stands in relation to pluralism depends on how Muslims regard morality. Morality informs public life more explicitly in the Arab Muslim world than it does in the secularized West. No doubt, the ruling elites frequently depart from that morality. But this only deepens the resentment among the ruled, for their expectation is that the example set be radically otherwise. It would, therefore, help us to contrast “outer” with “inner” morality. These turn out to relate respectively to monolithism and (true) pluralism.

Self-aware and self-critical persons run into many occasions that afford them the opportunity to discover their limitations. The discovery of moral limitations is usually a powerful and often painful experience. A swell of good fortune comes crashing down if allowed to grow into hubris. The broad interior expanses with which one may be graced contract excruciatingly through indolence or some other inability to sustain them. Confidence crests and falls. Devotion to something valuable leads to the neglect of another. Ideals that seem so sound to our minds demand physical and emotional exertions that turn out to be beyond us. Above all, those who are keenly aware of a divine presence know just how limited humanity is. This is no more apparent than when humans try to act as though they were gods and promptly visit a catalogue of horrors upon their brethren.

In such familiar experiences, we find the basis for our responsiveness to moral commands, particularly those that express strictures. The "Thou shalt not,” even if given through revelation, would meet with contemptuous indifference were it not in harmony with the very fabric of human moral life. There are limits *(huciud)* because humanity is grounded by limits over and over again -- limits that seem to touch on the essence of what it is to be human. It would be silly to think of this as a problem. It is just the way things are with humanity. The problem begins when it is forgotten that morality has a positive source, that morality is also to be propelled by values before it doubles up as a warning that we not exceed our limitations, that it is a transcendence of nature even as nature keeps it earthbound. The problem begins when those who see morality only as *hudud* want to see to it that all are held to the same *hudud,* for only thus can they be satisfied that morality is respected.

The problem is compounded when those unable to see beyond morality-as-hudud, owing to that very limitation, inflate the list of *hudud* to an absurd degree, so that morality, originally a source of freedom, metamorphoses into the worst kind of slavery -- for those in need of strictures for everything are incapable of anything.

Very roughly, then, outer morality has to do with our limitations. It has to do with the "negative" source of our moral observances. Moral strictures matter because we are all too aware of our fallibility. What then is inner morality? Inner morality has to do with the mystery of our affinity for transcendent values. We are deeply moved by goodness, generosity, charity, mercy and justice. These have intrinsic appeal. Were it not for this, we would again be indifferent to what has been brought to us from the heavens. As difficult as the definition of transcendent values may be -- a difficulty at the core of the Socratic and Platonic corpus -- Plato saw quite clearly that we respond to those values, that we walk around as though filled with otherworldly deposits, given that nothing natural (in the traditional and modern sense) suggests them. This has always been the inner force of the best moral philosophy, namely, that it can count on our ability to discover the direct presence of positive values through illumination, inspiration or some other kind of gift -- gifts that revelation itself must count on in order to spread in a spirit of mercy rather than fear.

Without undue oversimplification, it can be stated that whenever and wherever outer morality reigned supreme in the Arab Muslim world, there was no pluralism to speak of; whereas a keen sensitivity to inner morality usually led to the acceptance of otherness in a manner that would at least correspond with our contemporary notion of true pluralism. The Arab Muslim world has not yet reached conditions that would give rise to false pluralism, although, as we have said, it is likely to sweep in with changes that so many anticipate with fully understandable eagerness. Besides, a mentality unable to pass beyond the strictural aspect of morality can easily come to rest in an absolutized framework and vice versa, which is why millions in the United States have become fundamentalists. But the strange equivalence between monolithism and false pluralism is worthy of our attention on another occasion.

Scholars and others familiar with the history of the Arab Muslim world may object that whatever approximates our notion of true pluralism often obtained for purely pragmatic reasons. In this, they would be largely correct. But the problem lay with pragmatism itself. It simply does not form a solid enough foundation for the acceptance of the other. Pragmatic considerations make one a pluralist today, a monolithist tomorrow. Consider the case of the late Anwar Sadat, often regarded as the paradigm for acceptance of otherness in the Arab world. It is now almost forgotten that the same man unleashed the forces of Muslim extremism for several years in order to consolidate his rule, which required that Egyptians be purged from the aftereffects of the Nasserist epic. Nearly twenty years after his assassination, Egyptians continue to bear the burden of Sadat's pragmatism.

Part 6

Whether we are Muslims or not, it must be acknowledged that the prophet of Islam had a sustained encounter with the infinite, with divine presence. The embodiment of that encounter is testimony to the impossibility of interpretational permanence. The Qur'an is a book forever capable of generating new interpretations that differ significantly from the old. It also refers explicitly to other ways towards the infinite, for other monotheistic faiths are recognized. If one seeks it, one may even find implicit acceptance of every striving for the divine, because there is a primordial Islam that refers to humanity's general and natural religious disposition.

In short, the Mohammedan experience, its embodiments and *immediate* consequences, provide a solid foundation for true pluralism, which as was stated at the outset is fundamentally derived from the inadequacy of the finite before the infinite, from the extusiveness of Truth to linguistic expression. •Were the whole world to exclaim “God is great!” there would still be no way to fix the meaning of “God” for every place and time, not even for a single place and time. What is inwardly beheld as the deepest truth can never be made linguistically transparent.

It is, therefore, no accident that (a) there are several schools of jurisprudence for the drafting of laws, (b) Muslims were able to engage in Qu'ranic interpretation in a wide diversity of ways for many centuries, even occasionally departing from the notion that it was never created or that it is literally the word of God, and (c) they have managed to coexist with Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians and pagans (especially in Africa) in many places and over several eras. Above all, many Muslims have awakened to the spiritual reality of the Mohammedan experience and have sought to recapture it in their own lives. Many orders were built around that quest. It is because Sufis have had access to the inner aspect of religion and, hence, morality, that they have frequently been at peace with others in a manner untouched by the vicissitudes to which pragmatists must submit.

And yet, just as the role of imperial politics in the establishment of Christendom distorted its relationship with Christianity, so did the fact of the prophet Mohammed's political leadership permanently justify the pragmatic visage of Islamdom. And since those who have overseen pragmatic politics have rarely enjoyed the founder of Islam's qualities, they were bound to have allowed their pragmatism to be governed by baser ends. A selective review of how pluralism has been undermined within Islamdom should suffice for our purposes.

Part 7

Intra-Islamic pluralism has receded in many ways. It is most visible in the suppression or absorption of Sufism throughout North Africa and in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan and Central Asia outside of Tadzhikistan. In Fatimid times, Isma’ilism extended from the Maghreb to the domain of the Samanids in and around what is now Uzbekistan. Al-Azhar and the city that hosts it were founded by the Fatimids. Today, Isma'ilism is confined to tiny minorities in Syria, Iran, Pakistan and India, and is refracted by the small Druze and `Alawi sects. The suppression of Shi'ism often had pragmatic motives. When the Turks were in the ascendant, for instance, they saw fit to promote Sunnism because they believed it offered them the best chance for establishing a stable polity and gaining the allegiance of non-Turkish Muslims.

Even among Sunni Muslims, mostly outside of the Near East, one school of jurisprudence or another predominates. As a result, it has been possible to form habits that have helped some regard the shari'a in its entirety as divinely inspired. For when generations of Muslims grow up with a single method for the derivation of laws, and those laws themselves remain constant, it is not long before their constancy is confused with the eternity of lslam's divine origins.

Sufism is also suppressed in many areas of the Arab Muslim world and is otherwise often regarded with suspicion. This is primarily because those who confuse morals and religion with their outer aspect have become so distant from the inner aspect that it greatly disturbs them to see that others have access to it. It is a timeless human failing: Whether it be in American education or in the practice of a world religion, there will always be those who cannot rest until everyone else is brought down to their level. In a similar vein, some people can see religious practice endure only through the imposition of its outer forms. For them, emphasis on its inner dimensions is the province of collaborators and other kinds of traitors and weaklings. Such jaundice has done Sufism so much harm that its current revival veers dangerously towards Islamism. It seems that many contemporary Sufis, mindful of the accusations leveled at them, wish to assure skeptics that they too are at the forefront of the militant defense of Islamdom. The projection of Islam abroad as an adversary does not help the cause of authentic spirituality either.

The most delicate issue that is relevant to our discussion of pluralism is the potential controversy surrounding the Qur'an itself. After centuries of exempting the Qur'an as such from any serious discussion, Muslims have brought a crisis upon themselves. If to discuss the Qur'an as such is to deny its divine status, which is what many Muslims believe, and if such discussion is inevitable, as it seems to be, then Muslims will be split between those accused of denying the Qur'an's sacredness and those who defend it ever more vociferously and, perhaps, violently. This dialectic will pressure those who are willing to *resume* such serious discussion into weakening their allegiance to Islam.

It is not for a non-Muslim to suggest to Muslims, let alone tell them, how they might deal with the Qur'an so as to assure the viability of how Muslims regard it in the long run. It certainly does not help to assign too much importance to the Mu’tazilites, who were willing to consider the Qur'an as a created work. In the present circumstances, Western enthusiasm for the Mu'tazilites will only serve to intensify the scorn heaped upon them by many Muslims. One must also recall that, when the Mu'tazilites were officially recognized as the leading school by the `Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun, they promptly quelled all dissent. If the Hanbalis, now influential in the Sudan and Saudi Arabia, have shown themselves to be monolithic, this is in no small measure due to what they had suffered under the supposedly enlightened Mu'tazilites.

The examples of al-Ghazzali and al-Maturidi are perhaps much more promising. Both religious thinkers have been widely revered by Sunnis, especially followers of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence. Both suggested that the Book of God lay permanently in Heaven. The Qur'an happens to be an Arabic translation (or version) of that Book. This is a subtle reference to what happens when the eternal is embodied in a human language. Hanafis today may find it hard to believe that such thoughts were openly expressed and regarded as entirely legitimate. How they find themselves, as such, removed from al-Ghazzali and al-Maturidi (both unquestionably devout Muslims of the first order) may constitute the beginning of a fruitful process of self-criticism.

There is also the practical matter of the circumstances under which the verses of the Qur'an were gathered into a definitive edition. Some Muslims like Muhammad Arkoun point out that those circumstances were controversial. It is said that those who had recited the Qur'an before it was written down walked out of the meetings that would make it lapidary. It is said that other Muslims with great standing in the community were disturbed by the process of selection. If this is true, then it will not be possible to simply wish the controversy away. Muslims may have to face the challenge one day of disengaging the sacredness of the Qur'an from the exact same text that was put together during the caliphate of ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan under conditions highly charged with competing political interests.

Again, the situation is complicated by Western attitudes towards Islam. It is highly unlikely that Muslims will even contemplate serious discussion of the Qur'an while they feel under assault. It is quite easy to accuse any Muslim who wishes to resume that discussion, after a hiatus of more than eight hundred years, of undermining Islam at its core in its hour of need. The dynamics of global politics may be such as to necessitate monolithic Islamic governance that will gradually, with confidence somewhat restored, come to the realization that the sacredness of the Qur'an does not depend on every word gathered into the written ‘Uthmanic text. In this connection, one observes the current transformations in ban's Islamic government with great interest. However, we are anticipating the restoration of pluralism before we have sufficiently considered how it has been undermined.

Part 8

The other kind of relapse into monolithism that concerns us here relates to how Muslims treated other communities under their rule. However, let it be remembered that it took six centuries for the population in the Near East to shift from its Christian majority to one that is Muslim. This shows that Muslims by and large eschewed forced conversions. They had enough confidence in themselves and their faith not to require that it be universally followed. For long periods of time and in many places, their treatment of other communities was unprecedented in its openness and generosity. One need only contrast this with what happened to non-Christians, apart from small numbers of Jews and to dissenting *Christians*, throughout most of Europe after it became Christianized.

Alas, prolonged dominance has its own temptations. Eventually, the social, economic and political pressures created by Muslim rule were such that conditions favored the conversion of all but the staunchest adherents to other faiths (which may account for why their remnants are often hostile towards Islam). By the middle of the ‘Abbasid caliphate, for instance, it was almost impossible for a Christian to reach a decent station in life. Social services, education, professional occupations and bureaucratic positions became exclusively available to Muslims. When the Seljuq Turks came to power, they consolidated that tendency by effectively establishing the first Islamic state (in the quasi-modern sense) and building institutions designed only to promote Islamic interests. It is under these conditions that the majority of the population in the Near East finally became Muslim.

In the Middle Ages, Islamic rule would, hence, lead to the disappearance of Buddhism from Iran and its drastic contraction in Central Asia. Anatolia shifted from being entirely Christian to having a large Muslim majority in a very short time. Christianity has vanished among the native peoples of the Maghreb. The traces of Hinduism that survive in Indonesia are so vague that anthropologists continuously debate their extent, and Indonesian Muslims are able to deny that there is any syncretism at all.

Non-Muslim communities that survived were periodically subjected to humiliating regulations far from the spirit of the Qur'an and what its letter calls for. For example, non-Muslims were required to walk on a different side of the street than Muslims and walk on foot or, when Muslims could use horses, restricted to donkeys and mules. In the Balkans, Christians were forced to build churches so that the roof would be lower than the line of sight of Muslim passersby. They were also disarmed and left at the mercy of local Muslim militias whose excesses were not reported to the Sultan. Such practices continued until well into the nineteenth century and, thus, persisted under the millet system, introduced by the Ottomans, which Western and many scholars in the Arab Muslim world look up to.

The nadir of Muslim relations with other communities under their rule was reached when it became clear that the European colonial expansion could not be stopped. Between the middle of the nineteenth and the end of the twentieth century, the horrific conjunction of nationalism and religious fanaticism has led to the massacre, deliberate starvation and/or mass deportation of non-Muslims in Nigeria, the Sudan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Pakistan and East Timor. Except for the Hindus who lost out through the creation of Pakistan in 1947, all the affected communities were Christian. This is no accident, for amid the madness that gives rise to wanton violence, it is impossible to distinguish between the colonial project conceived by secular and thus only nominally Christian forces in Europe and very different kinds of Christian communities scattered throughout much of the Arab Muslim world. The confusion dissolves the latter into a mere extension of the former.

Part 9

It is customary to ascribe the retreat from pluralism in the Arab Muslim world to the decline of Islamicate civilization and the acceleration of this by European ascendancy, a process continued by contemporary American hegemony. But many of the unfortunate developments mentioned in the foregoing two sections go back much further, as should be already apparent. The suppression of Shi’ism and Sufism have long had a dynamic strictly internal to Islam. They were, respectively, the consequence of political expediency and endemic suspicion or literal-mindedness. For example, before the Ottomans engaged in a long conflict with Safavid Persia, the Shi'a and several heterodox sects enjoyed broad tolerance. The exigencies of the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry combined with pressures from provincial religious leaders in the conquered Arab lands to force the imposition of a more narrow-minded Sunnism. All this had nothing to do with Europe.

The Ottoman turn against Shi'ism, most violently expressed in the systematic attempt to destroy Shi'a culture in South Lebanon late in the eighteenth century, is but one in a long series of actions taken by pragmatically minded Sunni rulers who had no time for the seriousness with which the Shi'a often took the ideal of maintaining a leadership in the image of the purity of the House of the Prophet, if not within members of that House itself. The logic of and motives for the establishment of Islam as a state religion under the Seljuq Turks were independent from the activities of foreign powers. The waves of puritanical movements that sprang forth from the Maghreb had only the collective expression of Islamic zeal in mind. Their leaders were far more interested in banishing music, song and dance from the halls of Andalusia and in brutally imposing the fast and the veil, than in the relentless Castillian-Aragonese drive southward. Puritanical movements came to life in Arabia and elsewhere later on because some Muslims were concerned with the degree to which Islam had become emaciated.

When Western powers intruded upon the Arab Muslim world, the forces that would cause a steady retreat from pluralism had already been set in motion. The fuel for the defense of the realm was simply poured onto the fire of religious reform (and thanks to the example set by pragmatists, religious reformers and revivalists have found ample precedent for the establishment of Islamic states). The FIS, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Taliban and the Jamiat Islami, different as they are in their programs and methods, must be viewed in that light.

For all that, we have yet to uncover the grounds for the retreat from pluralism adequately. Once more, we must turn to a persistent human failing. *Among human beings,* the line between monotheism and monolithism is exceedingly thin. Those who appreciate the implications of monotheism, strict or otherwise, understand that Oneness entails an infinite capacity for generating and holding all things together, *with full regard for the integrity of the individuals thereby unified.* If this were not so, just to produce one among many possible arguments, it would make no sense to exhort people towards some action rather than another. They would have no choice but to do what is right. They would in effect be programmed.

It is sad but true that too many people are unable to understand Oneness except so as to entail conformity and even uniformity. Too many people are unable to grow sufficiently with and into their beliefs and to no longer demand that everyone around them show the identical outward signs that are imagined to attach to those beliefs. Too many people fail to distinguish between the fact that hydrogen can always be represented by the symbol “H” (although this is misleading in many situations, but the story of such a fascinating turn of events belongs to a paper on the philosophy of chemistry) though the truth of which is far deeper than that of a chemical element and the fact that true beliefs are not so easily represented. Indeed, a belief, in the proper sense of something that one holds dear to ones heart and soul, something to which one is devoted and owes allegiance, cannot be represented at all. Beliefs relate to a Presence and not to something represented. Too many people are nevertheless limited by the ridiculous choice between the uniform “representation” of Oneness and its denial. Such people are the prisoners of elementary logic. If they happen to be religious zealots, then they commit the worst offense against themselves, for in holding Oneness to the level of elementary logic, they blaspheme against It.

There never seem to be enough human beings who can live with the paradoxes of monotheism. To accept these paradoxes means to forgo the childish "proofs" that so many seem in need of to assure themselves of the soundness of their beliefs. It means to forgo any proof whatsoever in the usual sense. It means that one must attain, through gift or effort or both, awareness of what monotheism really entails, namely, to say it again, the acknowledgement of an (that is ONE) infinite capacity for the generation and gathering of all things. That this defies all logic should hardly trouble the monotheist, for logic, like all things, must bow before the Root of monotheistic faiths.

Part 10

The retreat from pluralism in its Arab Muslim context and the West's lapse into relativism express similar human failings. Both feed on an endemic intolerance for paradox. From a logical point of view, of course, it is not easy to sustain paradox, particularly when this concerns the center of ones life. One cannot always bear the burden of the elusiveness of life's ultimate meaning to standard forms of representation or objectivization, nor is one always able to withstand an incessant assault on ones conception of that meaning in a milieu of pluralistic intensity. The temptation to deny the Center or reduce it to uniformity is at times overwhelming. Neither pluralistic intensity nor a painful sense of decline and defeat are congenial for the patient attainment of levels of awareness that help one become assured in ones beliefs and transport one beyond the infantile limits to which such assurances are routinely bound. Both demand oversimplification. Each generates a frenzied atmosphere in its own way.

Ours is thus mostly a world that does not favor true pluralism. But while we must, therefore, be satisfied with pragmatic support for acceptable levels of pluralism, it does not hurt to remind ourselves of its deeper foundation, namely, in the problem of the finite in relation to the infinite (and the temporal to the eternal). True pluralism arises when those who care about the infinite (and the eternal) *simultaneously acknowledge* that the finite can never exhaust the infinite (nor the temporal, the eternal). All other pluralisms will inevitably decline into relativism or monolithism, which from a metaphysical point of view are the same thing. To deny transcendence is to cultivate diversity for its own sake, the management of which will eventually require a framework that will itself be treated as an absolute. To affirm transcendence, but to deny the plurality of ways in which it can viably dwell among human beings, is to impose a monolithism that before long will habituate humanity to a fatal confusion between the meaning of life and the standard ways in which one is forced to express it. The song of transcendence, monolithically viewed, will conjure images of the Chinese masses singing the praises of Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward. And just as this misbegotten project led many millions to their starvation, so does religiously motivated monolithism leave in its wake a trail of contorted or desiccated souls.

To maintain the metaphysical grounds for true pluralism in our sights will at least ensure that whatever pluralism we do have is always nudged towards a better level of implementation and is somewhat more protected against the dual dangers of monolithism and relativism. Just as the qualifications for the ideal caliph were spelled out in Islamic political philosophy and were upheld by many scholars and Sufis, so might they have played a part in making bad caliphs and local despots a little less inclined to do evil.

Part 11

The discussions in this collection are centered around the subject of Islam and cultural diversity. This serves as the backdrop for my chosen emphasis on pluralism. In both the Arab Muslim and Western worlds, even though the problem has arisen from opposite historical directions, it is nevertheless the same: the restoration of (true) pluralism. What really matters, however, is not pluralism itself, but its transcendent foundation. Pluralism and cultural diversity are not ends in themselves but, at their best, signs of something more profound. This is the deep sense of the eternal, infinite and sacred, whence flows our awareness that the embodiment of these always has a provisional character. Without such provisionality, we would not be free to grow in our faith. We would routinely follow formulae that lead us away from it.

Bibliographical Note

Given the degree to which my readings over the years have made their way indirectly into this paper, I did not think it necessary to annotate it. With the exception of the reference to Muhammad Arkoun, my text contains no paraphrase or other requirement for footnotes (For that single reference, the reader may consult Arkoun's *Tarikhiyyatul-Fikril-'Arabil-Isiami* [The Historicity of Arabo-Islamic Thought], pp. 288-291). However, I shall list some references for those readers who seek inspiration for the further pursuit of themes that have been introduced here. Today's databases are good enough for the names of the authors and the titles of their works to suffice.

Among works that relate to the Arab Muslim world, the reader may consult all three volumes of *The Venture of Islam* (Marshall Hodgson), *A History of Islamic Societies* (Ira Lapidus), Albert Hourani's collected papers, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey* (Serif Mardin) and William Chittick's books on *Ibn ‘Arabi and Rumi*.

As for works that relate to modern Western thought, Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* is important. So are the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Søren Kierkegaard), *The Sleepwalkers* (Hermann Broch), *The Mystery of Being* (Gabriel Marcel) and*Faith and Belief (Wilfred* Cantwell Smith).

The reader will also benefit tremendously by paying some attention to the pre-Socratic philosophers, especially Anaximander (for instance as presented in Paul Seligman's excellent and justly forgotten book *The Apeiron of Anaximander)* as well as to Plato, Aristotle and, above all, Plotinus, for whose extremely difficult thought Pierre Hadot's splendid *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* offers the best introduction.

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