Islam, Postmodernism and Other Futures

A Ziauddin Sardar Reader

Edited by Sohail Inayatullah and Gail Boxwell

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Introduction: The *Other* Futurist

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I. The Project

In late 1980, Ziauddin Sardar was invited to Ottawa by a group of Canadian Muslim scientists and professionals. The Canadian group was eager to meet the author of *The Future of Muslim Civilisation*; a writer who had put Islam on the covers of two of the most prestigious science journals in the world – *New Scientist* and *Nature*. So Sardar duly arrived at Ottawa airport:

> To my surprise there was no one to meet me. I waited for about half an hour and then rang the contact number. I was told that the whole group was there in force to greet me; and the members of the group were described in some detail. I spotted them relatively easily and introduced myself. But I was brushed aside with the remark: 'Please excuse us, we are looking for someone.' So I presented myself again. This time the gathering became a little irritated. 'You don't appear to understand,' they said. 'We are waiting for an important writer from London. We seem to have lost him; we will talk to you later.' Standing in front of them, I announced: 'But I am *here*. You are waiting for *me*.' 'Are *you* Ziauddin Sardar?' one of them asked. 'Yes.' 'Are *you* the author of *The Future of Muslim Civilisation*?' 'Yes.' There was a weighty silence. 'You are clearly disappointed,' I said. 'No! No!' they said in unison. 'We expected someone much older. Someone with a beard,' one of them said. 'Perhaps, even with an arching back,' added another.[1]

More than any other scholar of our time, Sardar has shaped and led the renaissance in Islamic intellectual thought, the project of rescuing Islamic epistemology from tyrants and traditionalists, modernists and secularists, postmodernists and political opportunists. The urgency of this rescue is especially felt both in the west and in the Islamic world since the events of 11 September 2001. Through Sardar's writings, we can gain a deeper understanding of the causes that created the context for 11 September as well as the solutions for global transformation.[2] From the Muslim perspective, Sardar has argued, the real costs of closing the doors of *ijtihad*, the

reasoned struggle and rethinking that are central to the worldview of Islam, have now put Islamic civilisation in a foundational crisis. To meet the challenge of this crisis, there must be critique within Islam, not just the standard critique of the west. As Sardar writes:

> What the fateful events of that day reveal, more than anything else, is the distance we have travelled away from the spirit and import of Islam. Far from being a liberating force, a kinetic social, cultural and intellectual dynamic for equality, justice and humane values, Islam seems to have acquired a pathological strain. Indeed, it seems to me that we have internalised all those historic and contemporary western representations of Islam and Muslims that have been demonising us for centuries. We now actually wear the garb, I have to confess, of the very demons that the west has been projecting on our collective personality.[3]

To weed out this strain, three steps must be taken: 1. Islam must be seen as an ethical framework, as a way of knowing, doing and believing and not as a state; 2. the Shari'ah, or 'Islamic law', must be seen in its historical context and not elevated to the Divine (it is only the Qur'an that has a divine status in Islam) – the Shari'ah must be seen as interpretive methodology for solving contemporary problems; and 3. Muslims must become active seekers of truth and not passive recipients. If these steps are taken, Islam can rise from the ashes of 9/11, and play a role in creating a global ummah – 'a community of justice-seeking and oppressed people everywhere' not just of Muslims.[4] Thus, a new future can be created.

Creating an alternative future for Islam is part of the unique contribution of Sardar. But he is also the first to explore the role and impact of modern science and technology in the Muslim world; the first to discuss the importance of information and communication technologies for Muslim societies; the first – and so far the only one – to produce a modern classification for Islam; amongst the first to argue that postmodernism – so eagerly embraced by multiculturalists and intellectuals in the non-west – was not so much a new force of liberation but a new form of imperialism; and amongst the first to warn that the future is rapidly being colonised. He is credited with starting a number of new discourses in Islamic thought: he is considered a champion of the discourses of Islamic futures and Islamic science and a spirited critic of the discourse of 'Islamisation of knowledge'. All of these are different strands of the same project:

to rescue Muslim civilisation from its long decline as well as its sub-jugation by, and assimilation into, the west. Sardar's project thus has two main components. Parvez Manzoor hints at both:

> The main contribution of his thought has been the contempor-isation of the Muslim predicament in terms of intellectual approach. Islam is not merely a *religious* culture, Sardar's reasoning implies, it is also a *scientific* one. Modern Muslims need not, as has been their wont, discuss their plight in medieval, scholastic ter-minology concentrating only on the moral and metaphysical malaise of modern civilisation. No, Sardar shows, Muslim concerns for more immediate and concrete issues that stem from the encroachment of their culture by the two most potent instru-ments of change, contemporary science and technology, require … Muslim intellectuals to produce an Islamically motivated critique of contemporary thought. Since Islam, for a Muslim is the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong – in terms of thought as well as action – modernism is amenable to Islamic thought as an indigenous intellectual and moral problem. Rather than harmon-ising Islamic thought with Western norms and values, Sardar reverses the normal perspective and scrutinises all modern scientific culture through the discriminatory eye of a Muslim. The result is not only a powerful criticism of the epistemology of modern science, but an almost total absence of apology – the bane of westernised Muslim intellectual. There is no trace of naïve and even pathetic acceptance of alien norms and institutions by justifying them as 'Islamic', but the ultimate Islamic imperative of *Amr bi'l-Ma'ruf wa al-Nahl al-Munkar*, constructed here as the acceptance of everything good and rejection of everything evil, comes to the fore.[5]

Thus, Sardar's project aims both to contemporarise Islam as a living, dynamic, thriving civilisation and to critique the west 'through the discriminatory eye of a Muslim'. He sees these enterprises as two sides of the same coin, essential to the survival of Muslims. However, the contemporisation of Islam, in the civilisational sense, is something that happens not in the present but in the future. Sardar argues for a constructive approach: Muslim civilisation, he insists, has to be rebuilt, brick by brick, with the basic notions, categories and concepts of Islam, as the civilisation of the future. But, of course, there has to be a viable future, as an open, pluralistic space, in the

first place. Thus, first we must save the future from the colonisation of the west – not just for Islam but for all other civilisations and cultures of the non-west. The west here, and this is crucial, should be seen both as a historical worldview and as a practice. The worldview is based on the codes that construct the west's relationship with the Other, and the practice is the specific national and institutional associations that implement these relationships. The west is not considered in racial or ethnic terms, indeed, an Asian nation can be western in many ways, as Sardar hints in his book, *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur*.[6]

Given the scope and complexity of his scholarship, Sardar is not easy to locate either in disciplinary terms, or in the spectrum of contemporary scholarship. Sardar consciously models himself on al-Baruni, the eleventh-century Muslim scholar and polymath, who wrote a classical text on India, measured the specific gravity of many metals and precious stones, determined the co-ordinates of several important cities, and wrote a mammoth history of the world, the *Chronology of Ancient Nations*. 'Like al-Baruni,' Sardar writes, 'I do not believe in disciplinary boundaries. Indeed, disciplines – all disciplines – are artificial social constructions.'[7]

Sardar writes that he has numerous identities. While a committed Muslim, he is totally pluralistic. While orthodox himself, he is out of orthodoxy. While living in the west, he is not of the west. While recognised as an academic, he has not become trapped by the feudal hierarchy of academia. While he uses the postmodern techniques of deconstruction, he is not a postmodernist. But despite all this, Sardar does place himself into a particular location: his is the argumentative and demanding voice from the margins, always deliberately on the periphery, that plays havoc with the centre. In this sense, Sardar has placed himself as the *Other* – the dialectical opposite of the dominant mode of thought and action, whether in the west or internally within Islam. He is always on the side of the marginalised and the oppressed, always arguing for distributive justice, always trying to decentre the centre, always a card-carrying radical. Moreover, Sardar argues for a certain variety of tradition, so he can be described, along with the Indian intellectual and futurist, Ashis Nandy, as a critical traditionalist. Like Nandy, he does not accept tradition blindly but argues that traditions are constantly reinvented and renovated.[8] While acknowledging that traditional structures did manage to maintain decent lifestyles, he rejects the notion that they should be accepted simply because they are historical. The future of the non-

west in general, and of Islam in particular, lies in going forward with history, by changing yet remaining the same, by transforming history into life-enhancing tradition.

We cannot see Sardar's work as merely intellectual, appropriate only for the few in universities, or as internal criticism of Islam relevant only to Muslims. Rather, the words and visions, the arguments and critical edge, he brings to his writings, are a necessary part of his project to transform Islam and the west both from within and without.

II. Islam as Difference

In late 1987, Ziauddin Sardar was in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, running a major conference entitled 'Dawa and Development: The Future Perspective'. Makkah is, of course, the holiest city of Islam: it is the home of the Sacred Mosque which houses the Kaaba. The Kaaba is a cuboid structure, draped in black cloth, which is the prime focus for Muslims everywhere. When Muslims perform their daily prayers, they face the Kaaba. When they perform the hajj, or the Umra, the lesser pilgrimage, the worshippers walk seven times round the Kaaba. As a special privilege and concession to the thousand or so scholars and intellectuals attending the Conference, the authorities in Makkah opened the doors of the Kaaba to allow the participants to go inside the sacred structure. Sardar was puzzled: the Kaaba was a site, a sign of direction so as to create unity among Muslims everywhere. Why go inside the Kaaba? This was taking the call for unity and direction literally, without understanding the deeper meaning of the representational drama taking place. In any case, would not the sense of direction be lost *within* the Kaaba? While Sardar arranged for the participants to go inside the Kaaba, he refused to go inside himself. For him, what was important was the paradigm of Islam, the contouring reality, the larger frame of reference that provided a sense of direction and commitment, rather than any particular spatial significance.

And this is the significance of Islam for Sardar. Islam provides direction, the way ahead. It is a worldview, a vision of a just and equitable society and civilisation, a holistic culture, an invitation to thought for discovering the way out of the current crisis of modernity and postmodernism. To reduce it to a simplistic cookbook, a recipe for dos and don'ts, is a category mistake. Islam has gone through a process of reduction which has removed its

'insulating layers' one by one, he has argued. This process started early in Islamic history when Muslim lawyers codified Islamic law and reduced Islam to a 'cult of *fiqh*', or jurisprudence. The legalistic rulings of the classical Imams were space and time bound; they were concerned with solving the problems of their own time and, despite their best attempt to state the Qur'anic truth as they saw it, incorporated the prejudices and preoccupations of their own time. As a result some of the key concepts of Islam were stripped of their wider significance: *ijma* (consensus), which means consensus of the people, came to imply the consensus of the learned scholars; *ilm*, which signifies all variety of knowledge, came to signify only religious knowledge; and *ijtihad*, the reasoned struggle that all Muslims are required to engaged in to interpret and understand the text of the Qur'an, first became the responsibility of the select few and then the privilege of only the classical scholars.[9]

For Sardar, as he argues in *The Future of Muslim Civilisation*,[10] Islam has to be reinterpreted for every epoch. And, unlike most Muslim revivalists, Sardar does not believe that the 'Medina State', established by the Prophet Muhammad, has to be imitated in every detail; only its spirit, and the underlying values have enduring significance. It is Sardar's contention that 'the norms which the Companions of the Prophets set themselves were the best possible in their own conditions', but that 'at least in theory it is possible, now or in the future, to create a society that achieves a realisation of Islamic values greater than that achieved by the Companions of the Prophet'. As a review in *Futures* noted, 'there are Muslims to whom this will seem little short of blasphemy, but Sardar contends that, subject to certain divine injunctions, the community should be guided by the spirit of Islam and not by uncritical observance of precedents which changing conditions have made irrelevant'.[11]

The reinterpretation of Islam from epoch to epoch presents contemporary Muslims with a stark challenge: to reconstruct the Muslim civilisation anew, ever more urgent with the rise of Wahhabism.[12] But this reconstruction cannot be based on a simplistic reductionist model; it has to be based on a futures vision of Islam, the future has to be seen through the message of the Prophet Muhammad, and Islam has to be realised holistically. So, what is the basis for the reconstruction of the Muslim civilisation? Sardar suggests that a set of ten fundamental Islamic concepts should be used to guide this reconstruction; collectively, these concepts also furnish us with a futures vision of an Islamic society. Islam, he writes, is

a religion, culture, tradition and civilisation all at once; but to see it as any one of these single components is to miss the whole picture. Islam is best appreciated as a worldview: as a way of looking at and shaping the world; as a system of knowing, being and doing. The literal meaning of Islam is submission and peace. To be a Muslim is to submit voluntarily to the will of One, All Knowing, All Powerful, Merciful and Beneficent God and to seek peace on the basis of this submission. This peace is sought within a parameter of objective and eternal concepts and values that are furnished by the Qur'an and the Sunnah (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) and that shape the worldview of Islam. The fundamental concept of the Islamic worldview is *tawheed*, which is normally translated as 'the Unity of God', but which by extension also signifies the unity of humankind and the unity of people and nature. Within this all-embracing framework of unity the creation is a trust from God, and men and women – who are equal in the sight of God whatever their colour or creed – are *khalifa* or trustees of God. Humankind is responsible for this trust, and each individual will be held accountable for his or her action in the *akhira* (the Hereafter). The responsibilities of the trustee-ship are fulfilled on the basis of two other fundamental Islamic concepts: *ilm* (distributive knowledge) and *adl* (social justice). The thought and actions of the *khalifa* are based not on blind faith but on knowledge; and the sole function of all the ideas and activities of the trustee are to promote all-round justice. Both *ilm* and *adl* are sought on the basis of *ijma* (consensus), *shura* (consultation and participation) and *istislah* (public interest). Within this framework, all ways of knowing, being and doing are *halal* (praise-worthy); outside this ethical circumference, where there is danger, lies the *haram* (blameworthy) territory. The challenge for any Muslim people is to map out the *halal* territory most suitable for their historic epoch. The individuals who voluntarily accept the challenge and undertake to work for this goal, on the basis of the above conceptual and value matrix, are bound together in a community, the *ummah*.[13]

Sardar's position is as far from the ahistorical Sufi or mystical version of Islam as it is from the reductive and simplistic interpre-tation of the legalist school; yet it incorporates them both. The Sufis might argue that the experience of Allah is much more crucial; that is, civilisational revitalisation cannot begin without internal

transformation. Still, there is nothing in Sardar's theoretical position that either could take issue with – yet it is located in a totally different universe. Sardar desires Islam to move forward as a civilisation based on participatory governance and social justice, and as a knowledge-based society committed to the worship of God and the creation of technical, scientific, and philosophical knowledge that can improve the human condition not just of individuals and the ummah, the community of believers, but of humanity as a whole. While his vision is distinctively Islamic, it is also intrinsically humanistic. Moreover, it opens up everything to question – state, nation, capitalism, science, the whole gamut of modernity has to be re-examined in the light of this conceptual vision and rejected or renovated within the more humane, Islamic framework. This is why, Sardar has suggested, the process of reconstruction will be painful and piecemeal. As it incorporates philosophical, cultural, scientific and economic aspects, it will require intellectual courage and boldness. It is a multigenerational process which will continue well into the next century; and it will have, as it already has, its setbacks and its successes.

Sardar has not been content simply to argue for and articulate a positive vision of Islam and shape a conceptual methodology for its realisation. He has actively and systematically used this methodology to delineate Islamic alternatives, as in *Islamic Futures*: *The Shape of Ideas to Come*.[14] And in *Explorations in Islamic Science*,[15] Sardar uses the framework to ask questions that we do not normally ask of science: What is its relationship with civilisation and worldview, with poverty and powerlessness, public interest and social sense of direction, lack of education in Muslim nations, and so on? The goal is to shape a science that does not make distinctions between values and objective reality and between self and nature. In Sardar's words: 'What we are concerned with are the universal values of Islam that emphasise justice, unity of thought and ideas, a holistic approach to the study of nature and social relevance of intellectual and scientific endeavour. In this framework, fragmentation, meaningless and endless reduction and appropriation of god-like powers or monopoly of truth and marginalisation and suppression of other forms of knowledge are shunned.'[16] A science that takes the Qur'an's call to gain *ilm* seriously, that pursues knowledge to reduce human suffering, to elevate men and women to the sublime – that is both a spiritual quest and an objective enterprise. While Islamic science retains such criteria as testability and repeatability, both its contents

and its methods would be different. It would, for example, seek alternatives to vivisection, emphasise synthesis rather than perpetual reduction, respect and upgrade traditional techniques and ways of knowing, and would be at the centre of national or societal development and not merely an excuse for military adventurism. Sardar is at pains to point out that the function of the exercise is not simply to be different from or better than western science, but the project must be deeper, touching the roots of our evolutionary history and creating a more humane, participatory, just future.

The difference between Sardar's notion of Islamic science and the dominant mode of doing science is well illustrated with the case of medicine. In his essay 'Science and Health: Medicine and Metaphysics', which appeared in his edited book, *The Revenge of Athena: Science, Exploitation and the Third World*,[17] Sardar points out that Islamic medicine was a highly sophisticated enterprise that was kept alive, for over 800 years, by continuous research. It is the basis of medicine in the west where its basic texts, such as ibn Sina's *Canons of Medicine*, and tools and techniques were adopted and used. However, it was deliberately and brutally suppressed by colonial powers. As a result, it now appears as an antiquated system that cannot cope with the demands of the modern world. But its emphasis on the total personality of the patient, its emphasis on the psychological root of some physical problems, its integration of lifestyle with health, as well as many of its remedies and techniques, are just as valid today as they ever were.

Sardar locates health and medicine in lifestyle. Lifestyles lead to numerous diseases such as cancer and heart attacks. At the same time, lifestyle can also reactivate old diseases; sexual behaviour, for example, can change the epidemiology of a disease. AIDS was possibly endemic to Africa but only as a mild childhood disease. However, when it was linked to a homosexual lifestyle and imported back it became a deadly disease. Lifestyle then has a major impact both on health and disease, making them issues of worldview. Modern medicine springs out of western civilisation, where technique is more important than an ecology of self and environment. Instead of changing one's eating patterns or not using harmful chemicals, what we have are newer and newer methods that simply export the problem elsewhere; a problem located in worldview and lifestyle is solved by technology. Instead of changing oneself, one changes one's physical nature (as with plastic surgery) and now even one's genetic structure: 'Reductive methodology epistemologically

removes society from medicine.' Central to the modern medical worldview is control over the metaphors, modes and means of medicine. Instead of focusing on health, the current system focuses on disease; instead of promoting other ways to health, traditional and indigenous forms of medicine are ridiculed, and finally non-western techniques of health, as well systems of healthcare, are often declared illegal. Pregnancy, for example, is seen as an illness needing medical care instead of a natural phenomenon; death is seen as a pathology instead of a natural product of life. At issue is control and power. Islamic medicine transferred power to the patient and itself functioned as a catalyst. This is why, even today, it is the non-western medical systems that cope with the health issues in rural and remote parts of the non-western countries. The solution to the current crisis in health and medicine, Sardar argues, is to relegitimise traditional medical systems, to standardise them and to upgrade them with further research: 'With appropriate resources and research base, Islamic medicine would not only be more than a match for western medicine, it may actually rescue humankind from a system of medicine and metaphysics determined to pursue a suicidal path.'[18] Medicine is a clear example, then, of Islamic science. Sophisticated medical systems, developed over centuries, were forced by colonialism and modernity into a cul-de-sac and replaced by foreign and new professionalised local elites. Asking about the future of medicine then must begin with asking what is the framework for medicine, what are the values that inform it, what is the political history of that discourse, who benefits from it and who loses in each particular discourse? These questions become vehicles for inquiry, for undoing reductive epistemological structures.

III. Postmodernism as Imperialism

In late 1989, Ziauddin Sardar climbed aboard a flight from Kuala Lumpur to London and buried himself in a fat literary novel.

> As I read *The Satanic Verses*, I remember, I began to quiver; then, as I turned page after page, I began to shake; by the time I finished the novel, I had been frozen rigid. For the first time in my life, I realised what it must feel like to be raped. I felt as though Salman Rushdie had plundered everything that I hold dear and despoiled the inner sanctum of my identity.[19]

There was, of course, more to come. On 14 February 1989, St Valentine's Day, Ayatollah Khomeini issued his notorious fatwa against Rushdie.

> I will always remember the date not because of its association with love but its connection with death. The fatwa compounded my agony. It not only brought a death sentence for Rushdie but it also made me redundant as an intellectual for implicit in the fatwa was the declaration that Muslim thinkers are too feeble to defend their own beliefs. The mayhem that followed echoed the Malay proverb which says that when two elephants fight it is the grass in-between which gets trampled. All those who felt violated by Rushdie and rejected the Ayatollah's stance must have felt like the grass in-between.

For Sardar, both Rushdie and the Ayatollah are products of post-modernism where the distinction between image and reality, the authentic and the aberration, life and death have evaporated – all is desperate, panic is the norm, and everything can be justified by reference to secular and religious absolutes. Sardar's response to Rushdie came from deep within Islamic traditions: though post-modernism is credited with the notion of books talking to books, throughout the history of Muslim civilisation books have been talking to each other loudly and distinctively. The most celebrated case of books talking to books involves the *Incoherence of Philosophers* in which al-Ghazzali (d.1111) deconstructs philosophy and shows it to be just so much hot air. In *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, ibn Rushd (d.1198) deconstructs al-Ghazzali and mounts a truly monumental defence of philosophy – the debate continued for centuries. Thus, Sardar responded with *Distorted Imagination: Lessons from the Rushdie Affair* (written with his colleague and friend Merryl Wyn Davies).[20] In a fair and just world, just as many people would have read and bought *Distorted Imagination* as *The Satanic Verses* – but as Sardar shows, freedom of expression has meaning only in a civilisational context: western civilisation has relegated all freedoms to itself; for Others freedom of expression is only a chimera. However, the counter-challenge of *Distorted Imagination* did not go unnoticed. Malise Ruthven, who agressively defended Rushdie in his book *A Satanic Affair*, was forced to concede:

> After a year's reflection … I believe that the most effective Muslim response to the book has been, not the struggle in the street, but the reply to Rushdie from Muslim intellectuals like Ziauddin Sardar … As Muslims educated in Britain, they have responded to Rushdie's challenge in a sophisticated language that cannot be idly dismissed; western, secular-minded intellectuals must respond in turn to their challenge.[21]

The Rushdie affair also marks a turning point in Sardar's preoccupations. His concern with postmodernism and the west increases: the struggle now, he asserts, is 'over a territory which is the last refuge of my humanity'. Each civilisation must draw a line in the sand clearly marking the point beyond which the battle for survival loses all meaning. For when postmodernism relativises history it does so at the expense of the non-west in a conscious or unconscious attempt to write the non-west out of history. Why should the fatigue of the west, of calls for the end of the real, for replacing the real with simulcra, for dislodging all truth claims, be the fuel to burn Islam? While Sardar uses poststructural discourses that have created a discourse within which the objective has become problematic, he does not allow postmodernity to vanquish Islam. In Sardar's words, 'the challenge of being a Muslim today is the responsibility to harness a controlled explosion, one that will clear the premises of all the detritus without damaging the foundations that would bring down the House of Islam'. While others relinquish all grand narratives, all claims to generalised truth, all claims to divine moments in history, all claims to meaning systems which clarify the purpose of self, nature, and future, Sardar believes that the basis of Islam should not be deconstructed. This would be lunacy, it would be civilisational suicide. This was exactly Rushdie's mistake, the irreverent deconstruction of what is of fundamental value to at least a billion people on the planet.

Much of Sardar's work is highly critical of postmodernism, arguing that it merely continues the western trajectory that started with colonialism and expanded to occupy the minds of non-western individuals and societies. In *Postmodernism and the Other*,[22] Sardar demonstrates the imperialistic nature of postmodern culture. Sardar dissects a host of cultural products, from art, films, videos, music, philosophy to architecture, shopping malls and consumer lifestyles, to show that postmodernism produces not plurality but a deeper and more frightening hegemony of a single culture. It operates a subtle

revisionism to create an illusion of inclusion while further margin-
alising the reality of the non-west and confounding its aspirations.
Lusty polemics of the changing nature of knowledge and a whole
variety of appropriated artefacts and ethnic goods and styles may
dazzle the minds of western intellectuals, but they have severe con-
sequences for the non-west. Along with postmodernism, secularism,
individualism and absolute moral relativism stand tall and proud,
offering to include the Other, but the price of admission is history,
truth, and the authentic, struggled-for self; the price of admission is
the context, the individual sacrifices of Muslim women and men,
since the vision of Islam is now trivialised, ahistoricised, and
consigned to the dustbin of history. The task for Muslims in
particular (and the non-west in general), is to stand firm, rescue the
basis of Islam (or their own civilisational framework) and use it as a
guiding principle to discern how one should act in a frighteningly
changing world, in a world of simulcra, clones, cyborgs, Hollywood
and Madison Avenue.

   However, this world is as much a product of postmodernism as it
is of modernity and traditionalism. Both modernity and tradition-
alism have had a single impact on Muslim society: imitation. In
traditionalism, it is *taqlid*, the technical Islamic legal term for
imitation, of the classical jurists. Under modernity, it is the imitation
of the west and all things western. Both ideologies stifle imagination
and the search for original and authentic solutions. Sardar considers
Islamic fundamentalism to be a product of the 'triple alliance'
between traditionalism, modernity and postmodernism. It is worth
noting that in Sardar's thought, traditionalism works in a similar way
to colonialism: it is the creation and occupation of an imaginary
space that provides control. Colonialism created 'the great lie, the
greatest lie, about the nature of the West and about the nature of
Others'.[23] This imaginary, Orientalist construction was then used to
subjugate the people of the non-west. Nationalism, for example,
creates an imaginary identity that then becomes an instrument of
power. So, South Asian nations, for example, are 'imaginary states
sustained by an illusionary national identity'. This constructed
identity 'has replaced the sense of community' and engendered a
'permanent sense of crisis' that is fuelled by 'turning religion,
tradition, and nationalism into ideologies which promote inversions
of reality and fabricate conflict'.[24] Islamic fundamentalism is a
similar imaginary construction which has no historical precedent;
it is based on certain essentialist readings of history and inappropri-

ately imported modernist ideas that are then projected back onto that history. For example, the idea of a nation-state, particularly a religious state circumscribed by geographical boundaries, is a total anathema to Islam: Islam is unequivocally universal and rejects all notions of nationalism. It recognises 'nations and tribes' as an identity category but strongly rejects the idea that ethnic or geographic identity should be bound up with a geographical 'nation-state'. But this is precisely what Islamic fundamentalism has done. What is fundamental about Islamic fundamentalism is that the nation-state is fundamental to its vision. So, in this way, tradition-alism incorporates and assimilates the categories of modernity, even though they may be contrary to its own worldview; hence, trad-itionalism becomes a by-product of modernity. And since the utopian quest of an Islamic state has proved so illusive, and its real-isation so authoritarian and despotic, the whole exercise has generated a state of panic. Panic politics is fundamental to Islamic fundamentalism, where distinction between the real and the imaginary, fabricated history and true tradition, has been lost. In this sense, Islamic fundamentalism is a by-product of postmodernism. Collectively, the 'triple alliance' can only do violence to the tradition, history and pluralistic outlook of Islam. A positive future requires 'killing the two-headed serpent of ideologies and imitation; and unleashing the creative imagination that is anchored to the Self' of the Muslim and South Asian communities.

Sardar does not consider postmodernism to have much staying power. In the history of ideas, it would probably be nothing more than a glitch. Postmodernism, he writes,

> is the desert where people are prospecting for a new form of existence, as the remaining vestiges of modernity crumble to dust all around them. This prospecting, the shaping of a future book of our modes of social and cultural existence, will, necessarily, lead to considerable strife and conflict. But beyond this conflict, one can envision and work for the emergence of a saner, safer, society.[25]

Beyond postmodernism is a multicivilisational world, a world of pluralistic spaces where the civilisation of Islam, India and China, as well as numerous other cultures, rediscover their traditions and their own modes of knowing, being and doing.

IV. Futures as Pluralistic Spaces

To create pluralistic places, we must begin with critique. And while Sardar's critique is often brutal – for example, he called Pakistani scientists 'Suzuki taxi drivers' (meaning they do not create knowledge but merely blindly implement large industrial science projects) at a 1995 Conference on Science in the Islamic Polity in the 21st Century – his goal is always to undermine privilege and hence open up the future to other possibilities. Long before Huntington suggested that we are heading towards a 'clash of civilisations', Sardar, and many futurists before him, including Johan Galtung, Madhi Elmandjra, Ashis Nandy, had argued that the future belongs to a number of different civilisations. 'Civilization as we know it', Sardar wrote,

> has always meant Western civilization. Civilized behaviour and products of civilization have been measured by the yardsticks of the West. Europe, and now North America, has always contemplated itself as the focus of the world, the axis of civilization, the goal of history, the end product of human destiny. But other people can accept Europe as 'the civilization' or manifest destiny only at the expense of their historical and cultural lives.[26]

There are different ways to live and different ways to realise the great human values that are the common heritage of humanity: justice, freedom, equity, fair dealing and cultural authenticity. 'The Western way, the secularist way, is not the only way – those who think so still live in the nineteenth century.' Different civilisations will insist on finding their own way according to their own worldviews and visions. Thus, the future will be multicivilisational.

But this future will not be a future of conflict even if trends since September 11 veer us in that direction. It will be a future of difference, of multipilicity or plurality of space. Of course, the great hurdle towards this future is the west whose primal fear is the fear of real difference. For Sardar, the west is not simply a geographical or cultural or civilisational category; it is also a worldview and a conceptual and epistemological category and as such a collective mode of domination. As culture and civilisation, the west makes its presence felt everywhere, no geographical space is without its impact, its consumer and cultural products create desire everywhere and seduce everyone. As a concept, Sardar has argued, the west is a tool of analysis that gives us certain representations of history, good

and virtuous life and Other people and societies. In other words, the concept of the west is a yardstick by which we measure all societies, including European and American ones, and judge Other people and their cultures. Western history, in this conceptual representation, is Universal History in which histories of all Other cultures and civilisations merge, like so many tributaries: thus the function of all Other cultures and civilisations was actually to produce the west, the apex of civilisation.[27] In epistemological terms, the west is projected as a particular way of knowing and as a specific truth. Even postmodernism, which relativises truth, actually claims liberal bourgeois truth to be the grand arbitrator of all truths! So the west works as a defining category. Sardar's goal is simultaneously to resist and disengage from the defining power of the west and to create intellectual and cultural space for the non-west by encouraging non-western cultures and societies to describe themselves with their own categories and concepts and hence actualise their own vision of the future. His own work on Islam and reconstruction of Muslim civilisation is a part of this endeavour. But he believes that Islam itself, indeed any non-western civilisation or culture on its own, cannot stand the onslaught of the west. The non-west must join hands in a collective effort to dethrone the naked emperor.

In his attempts to resist, undermine and dethrone the west, Sardar often frames his answers and solutions with non-western categories and metaphors. This can be illustrated with a discussion of cyberspace. While the information-age hype is broadcast throughout the world as the inevitable future, Sardar has proposed that cyberspace is in fact a new imaginary space that the west is colonising in the traditional fashion – by projecting its darker side onto it.[28] Sardar compares the 'colonisation' of cyberspace with the myth of the American frontier and with the practices of colonial companies such as the East India Company, and finds frightening parallels. However, Sardar's aim here is not to frighten but to galvanise the non-west into action. The question arises: Are there other ways of looking at cyberspace? How can the non-west engage constructively with cyberspace and free the network from the cultural categorisations of the west? Sardar suggests that we should see cyberspace not as a frontier but as a projection of our Inner Self. So, cyberspace becomes Us; and the question now becomes: What do we want ourselves to be? The question of cyberspace becomes the question of which future – an atomistic Western future or an alternative future based on a transformed relationship with self, gender and community.

In his contribution to the Unesco project on the futures of cultures, Sardar differentiates between various futures.[29] He argues that Asia stands between programmed futures, prepackaged futures, and authentically creative futures; and outlines the tension between the future as a priori given and the futures we might desire. The future we are given is the extension of the present – of ossified traditionalism and fundamentalism, of modernist nation states and instrumentalist rationality, of postmodern culture, of style, of simulcra, of the commodification of self and spirit, of the consumption of the soul, and the cannibalisation of the Other. More important than the suffocating past and the fragmented present (fossilised alternatives and the 'Singaporisation' of Asia) that the non-west lives under, are desired futures. For Sardar these must be systematically planned and created. In his preferred future, Sardar stresses cultural autonomy, the creation of non-western sciences, and seeing the self not through the eyes of the Other but through Asian paradigms, through more authentic historical cultural categories. To survive, Asian cultures must embrace and transform their histories, otherwise their future will become even more diminished than it is now.

V. The Prognosis

To be a Muslim nowadays is to live perpetually on the edge, to be constantly bruised and bloodied from the harsh existence at the margins, to be exhausted by the screams of pain and agony that no one seems to hear. We, the Muslims, live in a world that is not of our own making, that has systematically marginalised our physical, intellectual and psychological space, that has occupied our minds and our bodies by brute force – even though sometimes this force comes in the guise of scholarship and literary fiction. We walk around with a 400-year historical baggage of decline and colonisation; we think with terms, and talk about institutions, that have been fossilised in history; we walk around with split personalities hiding our real Self from the world outside and pretending to be scientists, technologists or social scientists, wearing the symbols of modernity on our chest; we speak a philosophical and ethical language that the dominant ideology does not understand. We have been developed to death, modernised to extinction, Leninised into oblivion, and now we are being written out of history by postmodernism. Criticism and self-

criticism is the only tool we have to fight back; and excellence in thought and action our only guarantee of success.[30]

This is particularly so when we consider that for Sardar *ilm*, distributive knowledge, is the main driving force of Islamic culture. In 'Paper, Printing and Compact Discs: The Making and Unmaking of Islamic Culture',[31] Sardar defines *ilm* as knowledge as well as the communication of knowledge; it is the accumulation of knowledge as well as access to knowledge; it is data, information, knowledge and wisdom all rolled into one. Excellence is central to such an all embracing notion of knowledge. And it was the desire for knowledge in this multidimensional form that led to the growth of Islam; this desire to know transformed Islam from its desert origins to a world civilisation. Thus the history of Islam, Sardar asserts, can be understood best as a history of the Muslim understandings of *ilm* and the actualisation of this understanding in society and culture. The Islamic focus on the words and text, for example on the *hadith*, or sayings of the Muhammad, led to revolutionary developments in the transmission and management of spiritual information: 'The methodology of *hadith* collection, criticism and transmission involved not only textual analysis but biographical analysis of narrators, chronological accuracy, linguistic and geographic parameters as well as authentication of oral and written records.'[32] With the manufacture of paper in the eighth century, *ilm* became a truly distributive process – the Muslims developed a formidable publishing industry and knowledge became cheap and accessible. However, with the emergence of printing technology in the fourteenth century the situation reversed. The *ulema*, the religious scholars, feared that the proliferation of written texts would undermine their authority and control and prevented the emergence of printing in the Muslim world for over three hundred years. This stopped creative thought, and centralised authority in a few hands. From being an open-ended culture, Muslim culture became closed and narrow, concerned only with jurisprudence – legal judgements of a few scholars – and not with the communication and distribution of knowledge. A barrier between the texts of Islam, the Qur'an and Muslims had been created.

The future of Islam – and Sardar's own project, which he has constantly emphasised is a multigenerational enterprise – depends greatly on how tradition and authenticity work themselves out in the context of postmodern times. As Sardar suggests himself, Muslim

civilisation is now in the midst of a third revolution. New information technologies, with their distributive and decentralised networks, have the greatest potential to transform Islam. By creating new data banks, by placing the classical learning on a CD-ROM, by providing access to the Qur'an and all the literature that surrounds it, the new storage and retrieval technologies take the power to interpret the Qur'an from the sole hands of the clergy. The learning necessary for the interpretation of the Qur'an thus becomes available to each individual, thus allowing non-experts to understand Islamic texts and jurisprudence. Through compact discs and expert systems, the Qur'an can again return to the individual. Thus Sardar believes that these new technologies will result in the decentralisation of the power of the religious clergy and the creation or return of the initial knowledge and communication-based culture of Islam. The role then of the clergy as knowledge banks is being increasingly challenged, thereby potentially ushering an explosion of creativity. Unlike previous eras where paper and printing had limited circulation and could be controlled, the *ulema* are now no longer in a position to challenge new paths of communication and dissemination; instead, to survive they need to find a new role for themselves in the emerging order of *ilm*. The response from the *ulema* has been 'Talibanisation' – not a critical recasting of technology through desired Islamic futures, but the fear of the future itself.

Traditions are different from traditionalism, an ideology that seeks power and territory. Traditions, on the other hand,

> are dynamic; they are constantly reinventing themselves and adjusting to change. Indeed, a tradition that does not change ceases to be a tradition. But traditions change in a specific way. They change within their own parameters, at their own speed, and towards their chosen direction.[33]

Traditions change within their own parameters because if they were to vacate their position a meaningless vacuum would be created. Traditions thus seek meaningful change within an integrated, enveloped and continuing sense of identity. Change within tradition is thus an 'evaluated process, a sifting of good, better, best as well as under no circumstances, an adaptation that operates according to the values the veneration of tradition has maintained intact'.

The notion of tradition as a dynamic process leads us to Sardar's understanding of authenticity. He sees authenticity not as a return

to something that is fixed in history but as a set of dynamic axioms. Authenticity is that conceptual and ethical matrix that gives a society, a culture, its distinctive worldview and temper. Thus, authenticity is not a question of 're-instituting puritanism in all its stark determinism' but more a form of becoming – it is not an end process but a goal-orientated direction that provides unabashed confidence in one's history and tradition: 'the pride that dares to walk its talk'. Nothing terrifies the west more, Sardar has written, than 'the unapologetic Other with the competence and the confidence to accommodate the contemporary world and amend it in ways undreamed of and unconsidered by the hosts of modernity and postmodernism'.[34] In sharp contrast to many modernists and secularists who believe that there is something culturally lacking in Muslim, Chinese, Indian and Africans cultures that keeps them in chains and underdeveloped, Sardar believes that cultural authenticity actually contains the seeds for the regeneration of these societies. But for this regeneration to occur, both tradition and culture must be seen in their dynamic forms.

Sardar's vision of the future may not be to the taste of many thinkers. In particular, his interpretation of Islam has been widely contested. He has been criticised by traditionalists, mystics and modernists alike. There is the criticism that he is overtly rationalist; that beyond words is the experience of God. Systems of thought must try to map out these divine experiences. For others, Sardar is too liberal in that he does not take a literalist view of the Qur'an and human history, seeing Islam not as a fixed structure but as a guideline, a vision, a calling – 'a matrix of permissible structures'. Finally, for many, his work is far too critical, in the negative sense of the word; instead of building bridges with nascent research institutes, Sardar is quick to attack them, as, for example, he does in his essay on the nature of an Islamic university.[35] All these positions have been invoked, for example, in the discourse of Islamic science: the mystical tendency has argued for an Islamic science concerned only with the sacred (also meaning secret) knowledge; the traditionalists see Islamic science as an ontological category and are concerned largely with the 'scientific facts' in the Qur'an; and the fundamental modernists reject the whole notion, arguing that science is pure, objective and universally valid. But it is in the nature of discourse to be contested; and even though Sardar has complained that the discourse he has initiated has been hijacked by mystics and fundamentalists of every variety,[36] he would readily concede that discourse is refined, and enlightened progress made, only through contention.

Visions too are, and have to be, contested. In Islam, the perfect vision is traditionally associated with heaven. As Sardar tells us in his lovely essay 'The Paradise I seek',[37] 'the paradise of the Qur'an is not so much an abode of pleasure but an abode of eternal bliss and sublime innocence'. At the centre of the Qur'anic metaphor of heaven is the garden. While so many have become transfixed by the details of the description, for Sardar, the image of heaven is about the limitation of the senses. 'What appears at first to be straight literalism is in fact used to illustrate the limitation of language and demonstrate the ineffability of the world to come.' Sardar suggests that the Qur'anic vision of heaven does not reside only in paradise; it can be used to envision the future of Muslim civilisation here and now. This has been his effort and along the way, as with other Muslims, one realises that the garden metaphor is also about environmentalism (long before environmentalism was fashionable), about stewardship, about the symbiotic relationships between one's own culture and Other cultures. Images of hell give warnings and force one to struggle against technologies of mass destruction, of eugenics, vivisection and other such horrors. Ultimately, the vision of paradise is there to help us build better worlds and to give warnings of what can happen if we fail. The reward is innocence and peace.

By now, the argument that Sardar's work is unique in modern Muslim and world scholarship should be obvious; and, thus, the purpose of this book. We have tried to bring some of his insightful writings into one volume. As well, there is a reasonably full working bibliography of Sardar's work for those who would like to pursue his thought at greater length.

In Sardar's work a paradigm of alternative futures stands before us. It not only articulates a positive future but also shows that one is possible. Just as Islam is a summons to critical reflection, Sardar's books and essays can be seen as an invitation to reasoned thought and action, as an incentive to question the will to power, and as a manifesto to embrace traditional pluralism. Traditional pluralism, as Sardar notes,

> is the frightening premise that there is more than one, sustainable, sensible, humane and decent way to resolve any problem; and that most of these problems can be solved within traditions. Traditional pluralism is a mark of common respect we are called on to pay to each tradition in a world full of diverse traditions; it is the basic idea that we might just know what is best for ourselves.

It is the notion that inventiveness, ingenuity, enterprise and common sense are integral to all traditions; and that every tradition, if given the opportunity, resources, tolerance and freedom, can adapt to change and solve its own problems. In other words, all have the ability to solve their own problems themselves within their own traditions in ways that they find satisfactory. So employing the traditional society option is a new way of arriving at participatory democracy in a most liberal fashion.[38]

We are thus summoned to unpack what we – all of us – have been force-fed for centuries and to begin the long trek forward to sanity and peace.

Notes

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4. Ziauddin Sardar, 'Islam: Resistance and Reform', *New Internationalist*, May 2002, pp. 9–15.
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8. For the views of Ashis Nandy see *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983; *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987; *The Savage Freud, and other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995; and other books. See also Vinay Lal (editor), *Dissenting Knowledges, Open Futures: The Multiple Selves and Strange Destinations of Ashis Nandy*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2000; Sardar's own paper, 'The A B C D (and E) of Ashis Nandy', *Futures*, 29 (7), pp. 649–60 (September 1997); and 'Introduction' to Ashis Nandy's *Return from Exile*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 1–25.
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17. *The Revenge of Athena: Science, Exploitation and the Third World*, Mansell, London, 1988.

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20. *Distorted Imagination: Lessons from the Rushdie Affair*, Grey Seal, London, 1990.

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24. Ziauddin Sardar, 'On Serpents, Inevitability and the South Asian Imagination', *Futures*, 24 (9), pp. 942–9 (November 1992).

25. 'When the Pendulum Comes to Rest', in Sheila M. Moorcroft (editor), *Visions for the 21st Century*, Adamantine Press, London, 1992, p. 101.

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27. See Ziauddin Sardar, 'Development and the Location of Eurocentism', in Ronaldo Munck and Denis O'Hearn (editors) *Critical Development Theory: Contributions to a New Paradigm*, Zed Books, London, 1999.

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32. Ibid., p. 46.

33. 'Currying Favour With Tradition', *Herald* (Glasgow), 29 April 1998, p. 27.

34. *Postmodernism and the Other*, p. 281.

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Islam

1 Rethinking Islam

Serious rethinking within Islam is long overdue. Muslims have been comfortably relying, or rather falling back, on age-old interpretations for much too long. This is why we feel so painful in the contemporary world, so uncomfortable with modernity. Scholars and thinkers have been suggesting for well over a century that we need to make a serious attempt at *ijtihad*, at reasoned struggle and rethinking, to reform Islam. At the beginning of the last century, Jamaluddin Afghani and Muhammad Abduh led the call for a new *ijtihad*; and along the way many notable intellectuals, academics and sages have added to this plea – not least Muhammad Iqbal, Malik bin Nabbi and Abdul Qadir Audah. Yet, *ijtihad* is one thing Muslim societies have singularly failed to undertake. Why?

The 'why' has acquired an added urgency after 11 September. What the fateful events of that day reveal, more than anything else, is the distance we have travelled away from the spirit and import of Islam. Far from being a liberating force, a kinetic social, cultural and intellectual dynamic for equality, justice and humane values, Islam seems to have acquired a pathological strain. Indeed, it seems to me that we have internalised all those historic and contemporary western representations of Islam and Muslims that have been demonising us for centuries. We now actually wear the garb, I have to confess, of the very demons that the west has been projecting on our collective personality.

But to blame the west, or a notion of instrumental modernity that is all but alien to us, would be a lazy option. True, the west, and particularly America, has a great deal to answer for. And Muslims are quick to point a finger at the injustices committed by American and European foreign policies and hegemonic tendencies. However, that is only a part, and in my opinion not an insurmountable part, of the malaise. Hegemony is not always imposed; sometimes, it is invited. The internal situation within Islam is an open invitation.

We have failed to respond to the summons to *ijtihad* for some very profound reasons. Prime amongst these is the fact that the context of our sacred texts – the Qur'an and the examples of the Prophet Muhammad, our absolute frame of reference – has been frozen in history. One can only have an interpretative relationship with a text

– even more so if the text is perceived to be eternal. But if the interpretative context of the text is never our context, not our own time, then its interpretation can hardly have any real meaning or significance for us as we are now. Historic interpretations constantly drag us back to history, to frozen and ossified contexts of long ago; worse, to perceived and romanticised contexts that have not even existed in history. This is why, while Muslims have a strong emotional attachment to Islam, Islam per se, as a worldview and system of ethics, has little or no direct relevance to their daily lives apart from the obvious concerns of rituals and worship. *Ijtihad* and fresh thinking have not been possible because there is no context within which they can actually take place.

The freezing of interpretation, the closure of 'the gates of *ijtihad*', has had a devastating effect on Muslim thought and action. In particular, it has produced what I can only describe as three metaphysical catastrophes: the elevation of the Shari'ah to the level of the Divine, with the consequent removal of agency from the believers, and the equation of Islam with the state. Let me elaborate. Most Muslims consider the Shari'ah, commonly translated as 'Islamic law', to be divine. Yet, there is nothing divine about the Shari'ah. The only thing that can legitimately be described as divine in Islam is the Qur'an. The Shari'ah is a human construction; an attempt to understand the divine will in a particular context. This is why the bulk of the Shari'ah actually consists of *fiqh* or jurisprudence, which is nothing more than legal opinion of classical jurists. The very term *fiqh* was not in vogue before the Abbasid period when it was actually formulated and codified. But when *fiqh* assumed its systematic legal form, it incorporated three vital aspects of Muslim society of the Abbasid period. At that juncture, Muslim history was in its expansionist phase, and *fiqh* incorporated the logic of Muslim imperialism of that time. The *fiqh* rulings on apostasy, for example, derive not from the Qur'an but from this logic. Moreover, the world was simple and could easily be divided into black and white: hence, the division of the world into *dar al-Islam and dar al-harb*. Furthermore, as the framers of law were not by this stage managers of society, the law became merely theory which could not be modified – the framers of the law were unable to see where the faults lay and what aspect of the law needed fresh thinking and reformulation. Thus *fiqh*, as we know it today, evolved on the basis of a division between those who were governing and set themselves apart from society and those who were framing the law; the epistemological

assumptions of a 'golden' phase of Muslim history also came into play. When we describe the Shari'ah as divine, we actually provide divine sanctions for the rulings of bygone *fiqh*.

What this means in reality is that when Muslim countries apply or impose the Shari'ah – which is what Muslims from Indonesia to Nigeria demand – the contradictions that were inherent in the formulation and evolution of *fiqh* come to the fore. That is why wherever the Shari'ah is imposed – that is, *fiqhi* legislation is applied, out of context from the time when it was formulated and out of step with ours – Muslim societies acquire a medieval feel. We can see that in Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and the Taliban Afghanistan. When narrow adherence to *fiqh*, to the dictates of this or that school of thought, whether it has any relevance to real world or not, becomes the norm, ossification sets in. 'The Shari'ah will solve all our problems' becomes the common sentiment; and it becomes necessary for a group with vested interests in this notion of the Shari'ah to preserve its territory, the source of its power and prestige, at all costs. An outmoded body of law is thus equated with the Shari'ah, and criticism is shunned and outlawed by appealing to its divine nature.

The elevation of the Shari'ah to the divine level also means the believers themselves have no agency: since the law is a priori given, people themselves have nothing to do except to follow it. Believers thus become passive receivers rather than active seekers of truth. In reality, the Shari'ah is nothing more than a set of principles, a framework of values, that provide Muslim societies with guidance. But these sets of principles and values are not a static given but are dynamically derived within changing contexts. As such, the Shari'ah is a problem-solving methodology rather than law.[1] It requires the believers to exert themselves and constantly reinterpret the Qur'an and look at the life of the Prophet Muhammad with ever changing fresh eyes. Indeed, the Qur'an has to be reinterpreted from epoch to epoch – which means that the Shari'ah, and by extension Islam itself, has to be reformulated with changing contexts.[2] The only thing that remains constant in Islam is the text of the Qur'an itself – its concepts providing the anchor for ever changing interpretations.

Islam is not so much a religion as an integrative worldview: that is to say, it integrates all aspects of reality by providing a moral perspective on every aspect of human endeavour. Islam does not provide ready-made answers to all human problems; it provides a moral and just perspective within which Muslims must endeavour to

find answers to all human problems. But if everything is a priori given, in the shape of a divine Shari'ah, then Islam is reduced to a totalistic ideology. Indeed, this is exactly what the Islamic movements – in particularly Jamaat-e-Islami (both Pakistani and Indian varieties) and the Muslim Brotherhood – have reduced Islam to. Which brings me to the third metaphysical catastrophe. Place this ideology within a nation-state, with divinely attributed Shari'ah at its centre, and you have an 'Islamic state'. All contemporary 'Islamic states', from Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan to aspiring Pakistan, are based on this ridiculous assumption. But once Islam, as an ideology, becomes a programme of action of a vested group, it looses its humanity and becomes a battlefield where morality, reason and justice are readily sacrificed at the altar of emotions. Moreover, the step from a totalistic ideology to a totalitarian order where every human situation is open to state arbitration is a small one. The transformation of Islam into a state-based political ideology not only deprives it of all its moral and ethical content, it also debunks most of Muslim history as un-Islamic. Invariably, when Islamists rediscover a 'golden' past, they do so only in order to disdain the present and mock the future. All we are left with is messianic chaos, as we saw so vividly in the Taliban regime, where all politics as the domain of action is paralysed and meaningless pieties become the foundational truth of the state. The totalitarian vision of Islam as a state thus transforms Muslim politics into a metaphysics: in such an enterprise, every action can be justified as 'Islamic' by the dictates of political expediency as we witnessed in revolutionary Iran.

The three metaphysical catastrophes are accentuated by an overall process of reduction that has become the norm in Muslim societies. The reductive process itself is also not new; but now it has reached such an absurd state that the very ideas that are supposed to take Muslim societies towards humane values now actually take them in the opposite direction. From the subtle beauty of a perennial challenge to construct justice through mercy and compassion, we get mechanistic formulae fixated with the extremes repeated by people convinced they have no duty to think for themselves because all questions have been answered for them by the classical *ulema*, far better men long dead. And because everything carries the brand name of Islam, to question it, or argue against it, is tantamount to voting for sin.

The process of reduction started with the very notion of *alim* (scholar) itself. Just who is an *alim*? what makes him an authority?

In early Islam, an *alim* was anyone who acquired *ilm*, or knowledge, which was itself described in a broad sense. We can see that in the early classifications of knowledge by such scholars as al-Kindi, al-Farabi, ibn Sina, al-Ghazzali and ibn Khauldun. Indeed, both the definition of knowledge and its classification was a major intellectual activity in classical Islam.[3] So all learned men, scientists as well as philosophers, scholars as well as theologians, constituted the *ulema*. But after the 'gates of *ijtihad*' were closed during the Abbasid era, *ilm* was increasing reduced to religious knowledge and the *ulema* came to constitute only religious scholars.

Similarly, the idea of *ijma*, the central notion of communal life in Islam, has been reduced to the consensus of a select few. *Ijma* literally means consensus of the people. The concept dates back to the practice of Prophet Muhammad himself as leader of the original polity of Muslims. When the Prophet Muhammad wanted to reach a decision, he would call the whole Muslim community – then, admittedly not very large – to the mosque. A discussion would ensue; arguments for and against would be presented. Finally, the entire gathering would reach a consensus. Thus, a democratic spirit was central to communal and political life in early Islam. But over time the clerics and religious scholars have removed the people from the equation – and reduced *ijma* to 'the consensus of the religious scholars'. Not surprisingly, authoritarianism, theocracy and despotism reign supreme in the Muslim world. The political domain finds its model in what has become the accepted practice and *métier* of the authoritatively 'religious' adepts, those who claim the monopoly of the exposition of Islam. Obscurantist mullahs, in the guise of the *ulema*, dominate Muslim societies and circumscribe them with fanaticism and absurdly reductive logic.

Numerous other concepts have gone through a similar process of reduction. The concept of *ummah*, the global spiritual community of Muslims, has been reduced to the ideals of a nation state: 'my country right or wrong' has been transposed to read 'my *ummah* right or wrong'. So even despots like Saddam Hussein are now defended on the basis of '*ummah* consciousness' and 'unity of the *ummah*'. *Jihad* has now been reduced to the single meaning of 'Holy War'. This translation is perverse not only because the concept's spiritual, intellectual and social components have been stripped away, but because it has been reduced to war by any means, including terrorism. So anyone can now declare *jihad* on anyone, without any ethical or moral rhyme or reason. Nothing could be

more perverted, or pathologically more distant from the initial meaning of *jihad*. Its other connotations, including personal struggle, intellectual endeavour, and social construction have all but evaporated. *Istislah*, normally rendered as 'public interest' and a major source of Islamic law, has all but disappeared from Muslim consciousness. And *ijtihad*, as I have suggested, has now been reduced to little more than a pious desire.

But the violence performed to sacred Muslim concepts is insignificant compared to the reductive way the Qur'an and the sayings and examples of the Prophet Muhammad are bandied about. What the late Muslim scholar Fazlur Rahman called the 'atomistic' treatment of the Qur'an is now the norm: almost anything and everything is justified by quoting individual bits of verses out of context.[4] After the September 11 event, for example, a number of Taliban supporters, including a few in Britain, justified their actions by quoting the following verse: 'We will put terror into the hearts of the unbelievers. They serve other gods for whom no sanction has been revealed. Hell shall be their home' (3:149). Yet, the apparent meaning attributed to this verse could not be further from the true spirit of the Qur'an. In this particular verse, the Qur'an is addressing the Prophet Muhammad himself. It was revealed during the battle of Uhad, when the small and ill-equipped army of the Prophet faced a much larger and better-equipped enemy. He was concerned about the outcome of the battle. The Qur'an reassures him and promises that the enemy will be terrified by the Prophet's unprofessional army. Seen in its context, it is not a general instruction to all Muslims; it is a commentary on what was happening at that time. Similarly *hadith* are quoted to justify the most extreme behaviours. And the Prophet's own appearance, his beard and clothes, have been turned into a fetish: so now it is not just obligatory for a 'good Muslim' to have a beard, but its length and shape must also conform to dictates! The Prophet has been reduced to signs and symbols – the spirit of his behaviour, the moral and ethical dimensions of his actions, his humility and compassion, the general principles he advocated, have all been subsumed by the logic of absurd reduction.

The accumulative effect of the metaphysical catastrophes and endless reduction has transformed the cherished tenets of Islam into instruments of militant expediency and moral bankruptcy. For over two decades, I have been arguing that Muslim civilisation is now so fragmented and shattered that we have to rebuild it, 'brick by brick'.[5] It is now obvious that Islam itself has to be rethought, idea by idea.

We need to begin with the simple fact that Muslims have no monopoly on truth, on what is right, on what is good, on justice, nor on the intellectual and moral reflexes that promote these necessities. Like the rest of humanity, we have to struggle to achieve them using our own sacred notions and concepts as tools for understanding and reshaping contemporary reality.

The way to a fresh, contemporary appreciation of Islam requires confronting the metaphysical catastrophes and moving away from reduction to synthesis. Primarily, this requires Muslims, as individuals and communities, to reclaim agency: to insist on their right and duty, as believers and knowledgeable people, to interpret and reinterpret the basic sources of Islam: to question what now goes under the general rubric of Shari'ah, to declare that much of *fiqh* is now dangerously obsolete, to stand up to the absurd notion of an Islam confined by a geographically bound state. We cannot, if we really value our faith, leave its exposition in the hands of undereducated elites, religious scholars whose lack of comprehension of the contemporary world is usually matched only by their disdain and contempt for all its ideas and cultural products. Islam has been permitted to languish as the professional domain of people more familiar with the world of the eleventh century than that of the twenty-first century we now inhabit. And we cannot allow this class to bury the noble idea of *ijtihad* in frozen and distant history.

Ordinary Muslims around the world who have concerns, questions and considerable moral dilemmas about the current state of affairs of Islam must reclaim the basic concepts of Islam and reframe them in a broader context. *Ijma* must mean consensus of all citizens leading to participatory and accountable governance. *Jihad* must be understood in its complete spiritual meaning as the struggle for peace and justice as a lived reality for all people everywhere. And the notion of the ummah must be refined so it becomes something more than a mere reductive abstraction. As Anwar Ibrahim has argued, the ummah is not 'merely the community of all those who profess to be Muslims'; rather, it is a 'moral conception of how Muslims should become a community in relation to each other, other communities and the natural world'. Which means ummah incorporates not just the Muslims, but justice-seeking and oppressed people everywhere.[6] In a sense, the movement towards synthesis is an advance towards the primary meaning and message of Islam – as a moral and ethical way of looking at and shaping the world, as a

domain of peaceful civic culture, a participatory endeavour, and a holistic mode of knowing, being and doing.

If the events of 11 September unleash the best intentions, the essential values of Islam, the phoenix will truly have arisen from the ashes of the twin towers.

Notes

1. For a more elaborate exposition, see 'The Shari'ah as Problem-Solving Methodology', Chapter 5 of Ziauddin Sardar, *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come*, Mansell, London, 1985.
2. I first argued this thesis in *The Future of Muslim Civilisation*, Croom Helm, London, 1979; second edition, Mansell, London, 1987.
3. See Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, Brill, Leiden, 1970.
4. Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, Biblioteca Islamica, Chicago, 1980.
5. Ziuaddin Sardar, *The Future of Muslim Civilisation*.
6. Anwar Ibrahim, 'The Ummah and Tomorrow's World', *Futures*, 23 (3), pp. 302–10 (April 1991).

2 Reconstructing Muslim Civilisation

When thinking and writing about Islam, most Muslim intellectuals, both modernists and traditionalists, work within a very narrow and confining canvas. Islam is often presented as a religious outlook: the modernists are happy to confine Islam to the boundaries of personal piety, belief and rituals: while the traditionalists always describe Islam as 'a complete way of life'. What is meant by the phrase is that Islam touches all aspects of human living – particularly the social, economic, educational and political behaviour of man.

However, while these approaches to the study of Islam are extremely useful, they are restrictive. Each approach itself determines the boundary of exposition: note that in their monumental output, both Maulana Maududi and Syed Qutb find no space for discussing epistemology and science, technology and environment, urbanisation and development – all burning, indeed pressing, issues for contemporary Muslim societies as well as for the dominant west. Moreover, the picture of the 'Islamic way of life' that emerges from these authors is a very atomised and segregated one. While Islam is presented as a complete way of life, the various aspects of human living, economic activity, political behaviour, educational development, are treated in isolation from each other as though each had no real bearing on the others. There is no integrated, interdisciplinary methodology in action in Maulana Maududi's or Syed Qutb's work. The result is that while it is repeatedly emphasised that Islam is a 'complete way of life', nowhere is it really represented as an integrated, holistic worldview.

More recently, Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and Sheikh Murtada Mutahhari showed much promise in developing an interdisciplinary methodology from within the realms of traditional scholars. Sayyid Baqir al-Sadr did much work on an integrated Islamic political economy. Sheikh Mutahhari, with his strong background in philosophy and *irfan* (gnosis) tried to apply these to contemporary sociopolitical realities. Both these scholars were martyred in their forties, cutting short their promising initiatives. In a different vein, this time from the ranks of modern scholars, Ali

Shariati devoted much effort to developing a multidisciplinary base for an Islamic worldview. His hectic schedule and early death did not allow him to systematise his thoughts into a theory and his ideas remain scattered in numerous articles and lectures.

The more avant-garde Muslim intellectuals have sought to project Islam as an ethical system. For example, in his essay 'Islam, the concept of religion and the foundation of ethics and morality', Naqib al-Attas argues that *din* of Islam can be reduced to four primary significations: indebtedness, submissiveness, judicial power and natural inclination.[1] He then proceeds to present Islam as a 'natural' social and ethical system. Parvez Manzoor equates the Shari'ah to an ethical system and has used his analysis to develop a contemporary Islamic theory of the environment.[2]

The exposition of Islam as an ethical system takes us a step further. An underlying ethical system can permeate all human endeavours and questions of ethics can be raised in all contemporary situations whether they involve the impact of science on Muslim societies or of technology on the natural environment or of planning on the built environment. And, because everything is examined from the perspective of a total ethical system, a more integrated and coherent exposition of Islam comes to the fore. However, reducing Islam to one denominator, namely ethics, is still very confining. The excessive concern with ethics generates an illusion of moral superiority and ignorance of power realities. In Islam, ethics is a pragmatic concern: it *must* shape individual and social behaviour. But methodologically, discussion and analysis of ethical criteria – what is right and wrong, what are our duties and obligations – produces a strange mirage. It leads to the erroneous belief that by doing right, by being righteous, by fulfilling our duty, Muslim societies, and hence Islam, will triumph and become dominant. Ethical analysis substitutes piety for pragmatic policy, morality for power, and righteousness for bold and imaginative planning. Piety, morality, righteousness are the beginning of Islam: they are not an end in themselves. Ethics is our navigational equipment: it is not the end of our journey. Ethics ensures that we tread the right path, avoiding pitfalls and quicksand, and reach our intended destination. But within the ethical geography, there are no limitations to where we take ourselves and our societies.

We can only give our imagination and intellect full reign, something that is demanded of us by God, if we think, conceive and study Islam as a living, dynamic civilisation of the future. Only by

approaching Islam as a civilisation can we really do full justice to the *din* of Islam. It is worth noting that when Naquib al-Attas discusses the many manifestations of *din*, he stops short of noting that one connotation of *din* is *medina*, the city state which marked the beginning of Islamic civilisation. From Medina onwards, Islam ceased to be just a religion or an ethical system or even a political institution – it became a civilisation. And it has continued to be a civilisation since: Islam was a civilisation as much in its 'Golden Age' as during its nadir under colonialism; and, it continues to be a civilisation now that the Muslim world has been divided into 50 or so Muslim 'nation-states'. However, whenever Muslim writers and intellectuals have discussed Islam as a civilisation, it has always been as a *historic* civilisation; never as a contemporary or a future civilisation. By limiting the civilisational aspects of Islam to history, they have neglected its future. Moreover, they have concentrated discussion on either the self-evident aspects of Islam such as ethics and belief or further increased the fossilisation of the already stagnant body of jurisprudence, legal thought and scholastic philosophy. Unless we break this suffocating mould, Muslim societies are doomed to a marginalised existence.

Furthermore, only by presenting Islam as a living, dynamic civilisation, with all that that entails, can we really meet the challenge that comes to us from the west. Encounters in the arena of religion and theology, philosophy and ethics, may generate good intellectual writings, but, essentially, they are marginal. But an encounter of two civilisations, seeking rapprochement as well as asserting their own identities, is a completely different phenomenon. Only such an engagement can produce a beneficial dialogue and mutual respect between two equals.

At this juncture of our history, however, we are not in a position to present Islam as a *total* civilisation. Having failed to do our homework in this area, we find ourselves as a rather truncated and limping civilisation. Many of our essential civilisational features, having been neglected for over four centuries, are dormant and in urgent need of serious surgery. Islam and Muslim societies are like a magnificent but old building on which time, and years of neglect, have taken their toll. The foundations are very solid, but the brickwork needs urgent attention. We need to reconstruct the Muslim civilisation; almost brick by brick, rebuilding the House of Islam from the foundations upwards.

The reconstruction of Muslim civilisation is essentially a process of elaborating the worldview of Islam. The 'complete way of life' group of scholars are content with restating the classical and traditional positions as if the old jurists and scholars had solved all the problems of humanity for all time! The avant-garde seems to believe that casting contemporary concerns in ethical moulds is enough. We need to go beyond all this and produce distinctively Islamic alternatives and solutions to the vast array of problems faced by our societies. We need to do this by producing a whole array of theoretical alternatives and by demonstrating these alternatives practically. I am talking not of abstract, metaphysical theories: we have enough of these. I am talking about a pragmatic theoretical edifice that gives contemporary meaning to the eternal guidelines laid down in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. I am talking about a body of theory that can be translated into policy statements and produce practical models that can guide us towards a complete state of Islam. The reconstruction of Muslim civilisation is both a theoretical and a practical process, each feeding on the other; theory shaping practice and behaviour and practice polishing the theory.

But even before we take the initial steps towards reconstruction of our civilisation, we must begin to *think*, individually and collectively, like a civilisation. Our commitment and aspirations should be directed not towards some parochial objectives, but towards a civilisational plane. We, the Muslim ummah, are a holistic aggregate – despite the fact that we at present live in different polities, come from a kaleidoscope of ethnic backgrounds, hold and express a complex array of opinions and ideas, are united by a single worldview, the hallmark of our civilisation. That means that our political differences are only temporary; and we should behave as though they *are* temporary. It also means that the old differences of opinion and expression between us should be placed on the lowest rung of history. While history should always be with us, we should not live in it.

In general, civilisations have been studied in terms of large historic units. For example, in his *A Study of History*, A. J. Toynbee[3] points to 21 civilisations in the known history of the world, each with distinctive characteristics, but all sharing certain features or qualities which enable them to be distinguished as members of the same category. Sociologists speak of 'modern civilisation', by which is meant contemporary urban and industrialised societies. These approaches to the study of civilisation 'fix' them to a particular

historic epoch. Thus, by definition, civilisation becomes a historic entity with a finite lifetime. Ibn Khaldun spoke of the rise and fall of civilisations thus presenting a cyclic view of history.[4]

But Muslim civilisation is no more fixed to a particular historic epoch or geographical space than the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Muslim civilisation is a historic continuum; it has existed in the past, it exists today and it will exist in the future. Each step towards the future requires a further elaboration of the worldview of Islam, an invocation of the dynamic principle of *ijtihad* which enables the Muslim civilisation to tune in to the changing circumstances. Whether it is rising or declining, or indeed purely static, depends on the effort exerted by the Muslim ummah to understand and elaborate the teachings of Islam to meet the new challenges.

There are essentially seven major challenges before us. However, none of these can be tackled in isolation. If we were to describe the Muslim civilisation as a flower-shaped schema, then we can identify the seven areas which need contemporary elaboration. The centre of the flower, the core, represents the Islamic worldview: it produces seeds for future growth and development. The core is surrounded by two concentric circles representing the major manifestations of the Islamic worldview: epistemology and the Shari'ah or law. The four primary petals represent the major external expressions of the *Weltanschauung*: political and social structures; economic enterprise; science and technology; and environment. The flower also has a number of secondary petals representing such areas as architecture, art, education, community development, social behaviour and so on, but here we will limit our discussion to the primary petals.

A detailed elaboration of the 'flower' and hence the development of a theoretical edifice, practical models and distinctive methodologies is an essential prerequisite for the reconstruction of Muslim civilisation. For example, the worldview of Islam needs to be continuously elaborated so that we can understand new developments vis-à-vis Islam. Essentially, the worldview of Islam consists of a few principles and a matrix of concepts to be found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The principles outline the general rules of behaviour and development and chalk out the general boundaries within which the Muslim civilisation has to grow and flourish. The conceptual matrix performs two basic functions: it acts as a standard of measure, a barometer if you like, of the 'Islamicness' of a particular situation, and it serves as a basis for the elaboration of the worldview of Islam.
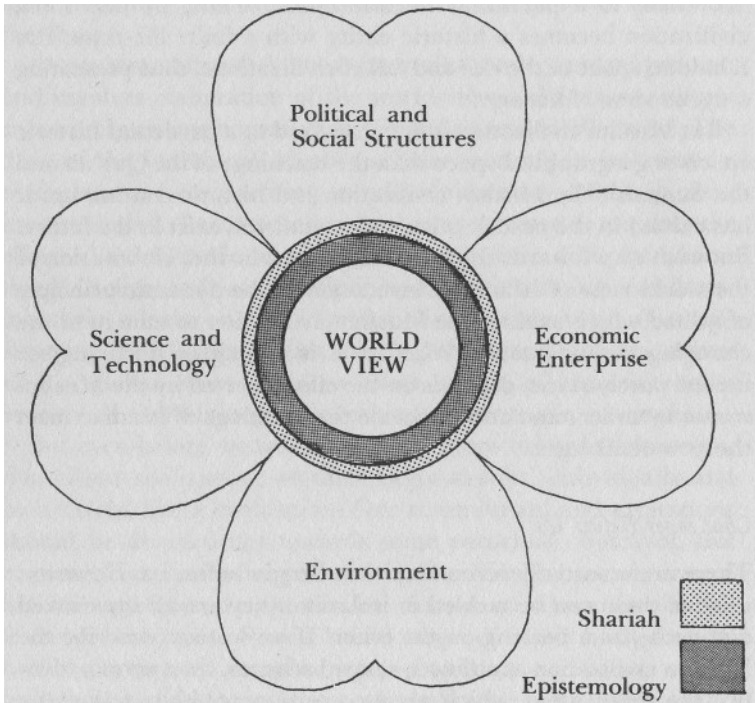
Figure 2.1   The challenges before us

The principles of the Islamic worldview, largely related to social, economic and political behaviour, have been well discussed in Islamic literature. For example, the principle forbidding *riba* (all forms of usury) has been written about extensively. However, to turn it into a fully-fledged theory, and develop working models from it, we need to operationalise and develop a contemporary understanding of the relevant concepts from the conceptual matrix. For example, we need to have a detailed and analytical understanding of such concepts as *shura* (co-operating for the good), *zakah* (alms), and *zulm* (tyranny). Each one of these and many other concepts needs to be elaborated so that it becomes a fully developed body of knowledge from which further theoretical understanding can be derived and practical models developed.

The most interesting feature of the worldview of Islam is that it presents an interactive and integrated outlook. Therefore, a contemporary understanding of one concept, say *istislah* (public

interest), may lead to a theoretical understanding of economics, science, technology, environment and politics. Similarly, lack of understanding of a key concept may thwart developments in all these fields.

A primary task, without which all future work will be hampered, is the development of a contemporary theory of Islamic epistemology. Epistemology, or theory of knowledge, is in fact nothing more than an expression of a worldview. All great Muslim scholars of the 'Golden Age' devoted their talents and time to this task: for epistemology permeates all aspects of individual, societal and civilisational behaviour.[5] Without a distinct epistemology, a unique civilisation is impossible. Without a way of knowing that is identifiably Islamic we can neither elaborate the worldview of Islam nor put an Islamic stamp on contemporary issues. For the Muslim scholars of the past, an Islamic civilisation was inconceivable without a fully-fledged epistemology; hence their preoccupation with the classification of knowledge. Without the same concern amongst contemporary Muslim scholars and intellectuals, there is little hope of a Muslim civilisation of the future.

Why is epistemology so important? Epistemology is vital because it is the major operator which transforms the vision of a worldview into a reality. When we think about the nature of knowledge, what we are doing is indirectly reflecting on the principles according to which society is organised. Epistemology and societal structures feed on each other: when we manipulate images of society, when we develop and erect social, economic, political, scientific and technological structures, we are taking a cue from our conception of knowledge. This is why the Islamic concept of knowledge, *ilm*, is so central to the Muslim civilisation.

However, for some reason, thinking about the nature of knowledge in western societies has been an abstract and obscure endeavour; it has led the western philosophers to a paralysis of mind. But as the history of Islam demonstrates so clearly, issues of Islamic epistemology are pragmatic issues; and we need to develop a highly pragmatic, contemporary epistemology of Islam. Classical scholars like al-Ghazzali, al-Baruni, al-Farabi, al-Khawarizmi, and others, have laid a solid foundation for a practical epistemology of Islam. Their work has to be dragged from history and given a dynamic, modern form. It is one of the most urgent tasks awaiting the attention of Muslim scholars.

The Shari'ah, or Islamic law, too is a pragmatic concern. Shari'ah, rather than theology, has been the primary contribution of Muslim civilisation to human development. Like epistemology, the Shari'ah touches every aspect of Muslim society. It is law and ethics rolled into one. As Parvez Manzoor says,

> all contradictions of *internalised* ethics and *externalised* law, of concealed intentions and revealed actions are resolved in the all-embracing actionalism of the Shari'ah because it is both a *doctrine* and a *path*. It is simultaneously a manifestation of divine will and that of human resolve to be an agent of that will. It is *eternal* (anchored in God's revelation) and *temporal* (enacted in human history); stable (Qur'an and *Sunnah*) and dynamic (*ijma* and *ijtihad*); *din* (religion) and *muamalah* (social interaction); divine gift and human prayer all at once. It is the vary basis of the religion itself: to be Muslim is to accept the injunction of the Shari'ah.[6]

Yet, we have allowed such a paramount and all-pervasive manifestation of the Islamic worldview to become nothing more than an ossified body of dos and don'ts. Without a deep and detailed contemporary and futuristic understanding of the Shari'ah, Muslim societies cannot hope to solve their local, national and international problems. The belief that the classical Schools of Islamic Thought have solved all societal problems is dangerously naive. We need to go *beyond* the classical schools and build a contemporary structure on the foundations laid down by earlier jurists. What is needed is not a reworking of the classical works in the realm of prayer and ritual, personal and social relations, marriage and divorce, dietary laws and rules of fasting: these have been taken care of admirably. What is needed is the *extension* of the Shari'ah into contemporary domains such as environment and urban planning, science policy and technology assessment, community participation and rural development. In many instances this amounts to reactivating hitherto dormant Shari'ah concepts and institutions and giving them a contemporary life. For example, the Shari'ah injunctions about water laws need to be studied from the perspective of modern environmental problems, and such Shari'ah institutions as *harem* (inviolate zones of easement), *hima* (public reserves), and *hisbah* (office of public inspection) have to be given a living form.

Moreover, the Shari'ah needs to be extended beyond law and turned into a dynamic problem-solving methodology. Most jurists

would agree that the chief sources of the Shari'ah are the Qur'an; the Sunnah, or the authentic traditions of the Prophet Muhammad; *ijma*, or the consensus of opinion; *qiyas*, or judgement upon juristic analogy and *ijtihad*, or independent reasoning by jurists. The supplementary sources of the Shari'ah are said to be *istihsan*, that is prohibiting or permitting a thing because it serves or does not serve a 'useful purpose'; *istislah*, or public interest; and *urf* or custom and practice of a society. Classical jurists used *ijma*, *qiyas*, *ijtihad*, *istihsan*, *istislah* and *urf* as methods of solving practical problems. It is indeed tragic that their followers have abandoned the methods and stuck to the actual juristic rulings despite that fact their benefits were obviously limited to a particular historic situation. The blind following of these rulings has not only turned the body of the Shari'ah into a fossilised canon but now threatens to suffocate the very civilisation of Islam. Relegating the pronouncements of classical jurists into eternal principles and rules is not only belittling the Shari'ah, it is detrimental to Muslim societies as well. The reconstruction of Muslim civilisation begins by setting the Shari'ah free from this suffocating hold and giving it the status it truly deserves in the Muslim civilisation; a dynamic problem-solving *methodology* which touches every aspect of human endeavour.

We now come to the four external expressions of the Islamic *Weltanschauung*. All four areas have received attention in modern Islamic literature: political theory and economics have received extensive attention for almost 30 years now; science, technology and the environment have only recently begun to be studied from the Islamic perspective. Thus, there is plenty of original scholarship here to build upon and to streamline within a civilisational framework.

Islamic economics, in particular, has developed considerably in the last decade. However, much of modern work in Islamic economics has been descriptive; and most of it has been trapped in western epistemological concerns and economic frameworks. Indeed, with the sole exception of Nawab Haider Naqvi's *Ethics and Economics: An Islamic Synthesis*,[7] works on Islamic economics have used description (excessive in the work of Nejatullah Siddiqui) and reduction (overdone in the writing of Monzar Kahf). Moreover, Islamic economics has been developed as a 'discipline' (a shadow of western economics perhaps?) and not as an integrated field destined to become a pillar of the Muslim civilisation. Note that Nejatullah Siddiqui's *Muslim Economic Thinking: A Survey of Contemporary*

Literature[8] does not contain a single citation linking economics to political theory, science and technology or the environment. Considering that technology is the backbone of modern economics, information a prime commodity, environmental degradation a major outcome, it is indeed surprising that the advocates of Islamic economics are silent on these issues. The atomised development of Islamic economics as a unitary discipline, and an obsessive concern with western epistemology, have relegated it to a marginalised existence. Perhaps this is an unfair criticism. But the fact remains that any major advances in Islamic economics can only be made if it becomes a truly interdisciplinary field of endeavour pursued within a civilisational framework.

Much the same criticism can be made of the recent works on Islamic political structures and social organisations. Most of the writings here are trapped in the mould cast by the nation-state and such concepts of western political theory as nationalism, democracy, socialism, bureaucracy and the like. Such works as *The Nature of the Islamic State* by M. Hadi Hussain and A. H. Kamali[9] beg the obvious question: Is Islam a state? Is the nation-state the only expression of an Islamic polity? When it comes to the issue of governance, Muslim political scientists reveal themselves to be true victims of history; only monarchy or Caliphate, best exemplified by Maulana Maududi's (as yet not translated into English) controversial Urdu treatise, *Caliphate or Mulukiat* (Caliphate or Kingship?)[10] appear to be the viable options to most authors! In the vast universe of ideas that is Islam, is there no other method of governance? Apart from political theory, social structures have also received little interdisciplinary attention. Syed Qutb and Ali Shariati are among the very few who seem to have realised that social exploitation is a dominant theme in Muslim society (an excellent treatment of which is to be found in Syed Qutb's *Social Justice in Islam*).[11] The related issues of population and urban decay, the blatant exploitation of women, community development and cultural awareness are conspicuously absent from the social analysis of modern Muslim writers.

Both in the fields of political and social structures and of economics, we need interdisciplinary theories, models and methodologies which synthesise these fields with Islamic epistemology and the Shari'ah as well as with the other main external expressions of the worldview of Islam: science and technology and the environment.

Very little has been written about the environmental perspective of Islam. However, the few works on the subject are of exceptionally

good quality and concentrate on conceptual analysis. For example, various papers of Othman Llewellyn on 'Desert Reclamation and Islamic Law'[12] and Parvez Manzoor's 'Environment and Values: The Islamic Perspective'[13] provide good indications that a totally contemporary, conceptual as well as pragmatic Islamic theory of the environment can be developed relatively easily and translated into pragmatic policy statements. Similarly, Waqar Ahmad Husaini's attempt to develop a modern theory of *Islamic Environmental Systems Engineering*,[14] although requiring much elaboration, demonstrates that the conceptual matrix of the worldview of Islam can be fruitfully used for analytical purposes.

Science and technology, on the other hand, have not fared so well. In this field, the hold of western epistemology and social models on the minds of Muslim scientists and technologists is almost total. The link between what purports to be a scientific 'fact' and epistemology is not easy to grasp. The point that 'scientific facts' are not something we can take for granted or think of as solid rocks upon which knowledge is built is, to a modern scientist working in western paradigms, slightly mind-boggling. The epistemological and methodological point is that facts, like cows, have been domesticated to deal with run-of-the-mill events. Hence, the connection between facts and values is not always obvious; and the notion that knowledge is manufactured and not discovered is not appreciated by many Muslim scientists. Thus, the bulk of the literature of 'Islam and science' is pretty naive; and some works like Maurice Bucailles's *The Bible, the* Qur'an *and Science*[15] are highly dangerous (what can be proved by science can also be disproved by the same science; where does that leave the Qur'an?)

The process of reconstruction of the Muslim civilisation amounts to meeting the seven challenges outlined above. Muslim societies have to think about and study their future not in terms of a resurgence, but as a planned and a continuous process of reconstruction of their civilisation. This process involves, not 'Islamising' this or that discipline, but casting the external expressions of Muslim civilisation in the epistemological mode of Islam and the methodology of the Shari'ah. It involves elaborating the worldview of Islam and using the conceptual matrix that is at the heart of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The mental outlook of this process is based on synthesis and interdisciplinarity. What is the relevance Islamic economics without a viable, contemporary Islamic polity? Or of an Islamic science which does not shape the environment according to

the dictates of the Shari'ah? Thus, the worldview of Islam has to be extended within a framework that emphasises that relationships exist between all theoretical and physical manifestations of Muslim civilisation. It is an outlook that does not confine Islamic epistemology or the Shari'ah to particular areas, but combines future consciousness with open-mindedness and a spirit of adventure and discovery.

With the emergence of 'Islamic Iran' and calls for Islamisation from Malaysia to Pakistan to Sudan to Morocco, events are clearly overtaking Muslim intellectuals. Indeed most of them have been reduced to making post facto rationalisations of the emerging reality around them. Unless they respond to the challenges of the time and develop an adequate epistemology to accommodate these, they will continue to be bypassed. The chance to institutionalise the Islamic revival would then have been missed, and with it the prospect of enriching the dynamic Islamic civilisation of the future.

The process of reconstructing the Muslim civilisation is something that is not learnt, it is discovered and practised as the fruits of continual transformation, while systematically working towards finer and finer synthesis. This process is rather like giving form to the act of living itself: breathing epistemological consciousness into every act of life which is itself part of a larger effort of converting facts into values, actions into purposes, hopes and plans into consummation and realisations, so that eventually the ummah becomes a living, dynamic, thriving civilisation. It is therefore not only a question of research and study: it is a process of making and shaping, with the Muslim himself as the work of art the process ultimately seeks to transform.

Notes

1. *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future*, Mansell, London, 1985.
2. In Ziauddin Sardar (editor), *The Touch of Midas: Knowledge and Environment in Islam and the West*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984.
3. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1960.
4. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.
5. For a general introduction to Muslim classification schemes see Ziauddin Sardar, *Islam: Outline of a Classification Scheme*, Clive Bingley, London, 1979; F. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, Brill, Leiden, 1970.
6. S. Parvez Manzoor, in Sardar, *The Touch of Midas*, p. 157.
7. Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1981.
8. Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1981.
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11. Octagon Books, New York, 1971.
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3 Permanence and Change in Islam

A civilisation must, of necessity, pass through various phases of change and a process of assimilation and diversification. Its strength and weakness will be judged by its ability or inability to adjust to a changing environment, yet preserve its original identity and parameters.

In its early phases, Islamic civilisation came into contact with Greek, Roman, Persian, Indian and Chinese civilisations.[1] At each contact Islamic civilisation was able to filter the concepts and values of these civilisations, accepting and assimilating that which agreed with its fundamental characteristics and principles and rejecting that which was contradictory to its values and norms. It was thus able to derive benefits from these contacts and to prosper.

In contrast, the striking feature of contemporary Muslim society is that it has failed to keep up with the contemporary world. By this we do not mean that Muslims are 'backward' or 'underdeveloped' or 'developing', but rather that the Muslims are behind in their understanding of Islam with reference to the contemporary world. Hence, Islam and all that the term implies socially and politically no longer function efficaciously. This is largely due to the failure of Muslim society to adjust to change and to understand Islam with reference to the changed conditions of life.

What do we mean by adjusting to change? After all, Islam *is* eternal. But the passage of time per se increases the knowledge of mankind. The new knowledge may bring scientific and technological changes in society; some have far-reaching effects on the very structure of society. Islam has to be reunderstood in the light of new conditions of life; failure to adjust to this change results in progressive decline. This retrogression of Muslim society has resulted directly from the failure to transform the theoretical civilisational framework of Islam into an operational form. Yet, Islam not only recognises change as real but also urges Muslims to adjust to it.

Islam appeals to its followers to study the history of nations. This appeal has a dual purpose. First, it reinforces the belief in God, in His greatness and sovereignty, and thus locates man's place in the

universe. Secondly, by the study of the rise and fall of nations, historical and social growth and decay, we can derive lessons for our own survival as Muslims. The Qur'an says: 'And how many communities have we destroyed that were thankless for their means of livelihood, and yonder their dwellings which have not been inhabited after them save a little.'[2]

When the mode of production changes so does the 'means of livelihood'. In fact, the mode of production can change so much that it can lead us to a state of thanklessness for our means of livelihood. It could usher in the age mentioned by the Prophet when he said: 'You are in an age in which, if you abandon one-tenth of what is ordained, you will be ruined. After this, time will come when he who shall observe one-tenth of what is now will be saved.' Yet we have to be righteous. 'The best of provisions is the right conduct.' And what is right conduct? It is not merely to turn your face towards the east or the west, it is to operationalise Islam in spheres of human activity.

The problem then is how to separate the permanent from the temporary, the transient from the abiding.[3] For righteousness cannot just be practised by individuals in isolation. It has to be practised in a growing and expanding society, so that the message of Islam is spread to humanity at large and does not remain the preserve of a few nations and groups.

We see Islam as a holistic system with a cardinal framework – articles of faith, basic injunctions, patterns of norms and values – which do not admit any modification with time, and an underlying dynamic which requires understanding with the passage of time.

The cardinal framework is eternal. Truth remains unchanged; but the human condition does not. It is the principles of Islam that are eternal; but not their space-time operationalisation. The Beloved Prophet himself, as well as the Rightly Guided Caliphs, varied the application of the principles of Islam as the circumstances changed, but always within the parameters of Islam. They had fully understood the spirit of Islam.[4] Technological progress, for example, changes the material involvement of man's life. The progress of man's thoughts directs his attention to new planes of understanding the nature of the cosmos and poses new questions. Increased material involvement, heightened social intercourse, an accelerated pace of living and new development of thought subject the individual's personality to new strains and call for renewed adjustments. These changes call for readjustment in organisation and in the administrative, social and economic, national and international

patterns of human activity. The underlying dynamics of Islam must be reunderstood with these changed physical conditions of life.[5]

When Muslim society understood the underlying dynamics of Islam, we had progressive advance; when society's creativity and imagination gave way to rigid formalism and rituals, internal conflict and power struggle, we had progressive decline. If we consider the history of civilisation to be continuous and coherent, it could be said that historically the problems of contemporary Muslim society are a product of its retrograde history. As Allama Muhammad Iqbal has said:

> The ultimate spiritual basis of life, as conceived by Islam, is eternal and reveals itself in variety and change. A society based on such a conception of reality must reconcile in its life, the categories of permanence and change. It must possess eternal principles to regulate its collective life, for the eternal gives us a foothold in the world of perpetual change. When eternal principles are understood to exclude all possibilities of change which, according to the Qur'an, is one of the greatest signs of God, they tend to immobilize what is essentially mobile in its nature. The failure of Europe in political and social science illustrates the former principle; the immobility of Islam during the last 500 years illustrates the latter.[6]

The transformations that have occurred in recent decades are probably the biggest fundamental material changes human life has ever experienced.[7] To what extent, if any, has the Muslim ummah readjusted to this change? This question has a practical as well as an intellectual aspect. Leaving aside the practical aspect, let us ask how far Muslims are intellectually capable of conceiving such a reorganisation of political, economic and social life which fully incorporates the spirit of Islam and ensures a socially healthy, politically coherent, vigorous and economically efficient and developing life in the world of the 1980s? Have we, intellectually speaking, been able to evolve the truly Muslim personality in the changed, and ever-changing, conditions of today? Finally, have we been able to understand and restate the truths revealed in the Qur'an, in terms more familiar to the modern intellect and more fully comprehensible to contemporary man? The answer to these questions is quite simple: we have not even realised that these challenges exist, let alone met them.

Let us illustrate by means of examples what would have been achieved had we appreciated these challenges. Consider, for

example, the general Shari'ah instructions on warfare; these forbid killing women and children, the old and the religious functionaries, destroying property, burning crops, and so on. Author after author has reiterated these injunctions, often repeating the writings of old jurists word for word, revealing a complete lack of comprehension of the changes which have taken place. These kinds of instructions are of no help to the administrators of modern warfare and make no sense to them. Modern mass-murder weapons have value systems alien to Islam: the values of those who have developed these weapons do not forbid the killing of the innocent. So now that we are forced to use some of these weapons, how do we comply with the dictates of the Shari'ah? Only in hand-to-hand combat do these instructions appear to have any meaning, or maybe in the case of guerrilla warfare. But when it comes to the use of modern armoury, it becomes difficult to single out civilians. The general injunction on warfare must now be given a more specific operational form: which weapons should be used and which should not be used; and if the choice of kinds of weapon does not exist, we will have to specify exactly what would constitute 'overkilling', and therefore would not be allowed by the Shari'ah.

Consider, now, the concepts of *shura* (co-operation for the good) and *ijma* (decision by mutual consultations) as applied to economics and politics respectively.[8] These values are laid down by the Qur'an, and the Sunnah tells us how the Prophet formulated them, and how early Muslim society institutionalised them. The question is, how can we realise them in our life in the closing decades of the twentieth century? What is the pattern of human relationships which would best realise the values of co-operation and would lead to the most efficient system of economy? What institutional arrangements would secure a distribution of wealth and income consistent with the value of co-operation for the good? Obviously it is not enough to ask Muslims to co-operate. This request has repeatedly been made; and the end product confronts us. This injunction must be given practical content, and its implication explained in concrete terms before it can become operational in the economic organisation of Muslim countries. The large numbers of those involved in the process of production, the complex technicalities involved in production, relevant knowledge of the actual needs of consumers, the priorities of the state, the intention as well as the circumstances of the other producers, and the circumstances of the labourers – all these factors have turned the simple question of how to co-operate

into a highly complex one. Its solution now requires, if anything, a gigantic intellectual and imaginative effort involving deep insight into the objectives and scope of this injunction. It is only by solving the problems mentioned above that we can know what co-operation is and how it can be adopted as a way of economic life in the contemporary situation.

We reach a similar conclusion when we examine the principle of *ijma.* Here the various levels of decision-making, the corresponding area of mutual consultation, the appropriate techniques for its effective practice and the harmonisation of the demands of these principles with those of efficiency, speed, security and a multitude of other objectives would have to be considered.

Examination of the injunctions of Islam forces the same conclusions on us. One may ask, what significance does all this have? If we are unable to understand these injunctions of Islam with reference to contemporary reality, we have failed to understand Islam itself; we fail to understand the social conduct desired of us by Allah if we fail to operationalise the injunctions of Islam with reference to contemporary reality.[9]

This is a painful realisation. And this is the root cause of the present predicament of Muslims. Not only have Muslims failed to live up to Islam, but they have also, to a large extent, failed to understand it. It follows, therefore, that to understand the underlying dynamic relevance of the injunctions of Islam in contemporary society and to work out the process of their implications in practice is an acute spiritual need of the Muslim ummah.

Futures Discussions in the Past

In the history of Islam, futures discussion took the form of a dialogue between the two most powerful philosophical schools: the Asharites and the Mutazilah.[10] The aspect of the dialogue that concerns us here relates to free will and determinism. In its simplified form, the argument ran something like this: *either* a man's actions are the necessary result of the original nature of his constitution, after modification by a whole series of physical and social influences from the moment of his birth up to the moment of action; and, given an adequate knowledge of all this, his future actions can be predicted; *or* voluntary acts are not determined by these conditions and consequently cannot be predicted. Those who supported the first option

were the determinists; those who supported the second were the indeterminists.

Of course the argument was not stated in quite these terms; instead it was carefully gauged with metaphysics. The rationalists, or the Mutazilah, were well established before the Asharite philosophy came into being. They debated primarily the nature of God, free will and determinism. At times, their discourses stepped outside the philosophic arena into open futuristic speculation: the future of the Caliphate or the attributes of the patronymic (*Imamat*). Our aim is not to give an exposition of rationalist thought in Islam, but only to state that the Mutazilah brought the futuristic aspects of the Muslim community to the fore.

If God commanded his creatures to be good and moral, they argued, He cannot at the same time predetermine their actions to be adverse to what He requested from them. Consequently good and evil, faith and unfaith, are committed by men and men alone. They are the ones who bear full responsibility for their actions. There were some rationalists who argued that man committed dispositive acts, that is, acts that they were in a position to commit at a given time. Others argued that man carries out his actions under the influence of various forces and circumstances. Underlying these arguments was an important assumption: man is free to choose and create his own future.

The Asharites argued against this stand. They related everything to the Prime Course and argued from the basic sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the *hadith*, striving to explain the one by the other. Seyyed Hossein Nasr states the Asharite position thus:

> For them, everything is caused directly by God; every course is the Transcendent Course. A fire is hot, not because it is 'in its nature' to be so, but because God willed it so. The coherence of the world is due, not to the 'horizontal' relations between things, or between various causes and effects, but to the 'vertical' bond which connects each concrete entity or 'atom' with its ontological cause. Unlike some of the philosophers, and the schools of theology (including that of the Shia), the Asharites lay primary stress upon the discontinuity between the World and God, and the nothingness of everything in the universe before the Creator.[11]

The essence of the position is that man acts because it is the will of God. This argument gave less weight to freedom and encouraged a

tendency towards fatalism amongst the Muslims. If everything is predetermined, why should one bother to act?

The controversy over free will and determinism consumed Muslim intellectuals. The more acute needs of the ummah were sacrificed in the debate. Slowly the controversy moved from religious ground to the arena of politics. The rationalists' views were displaced by the Asharites, with a little help from the Sufis. The spirit of enquiry gave way to the straitjacket of scholastic theology and the decay of Muslim civilisation; the passive dependence on authority (*taqlid*) found its parallels in literature, which suffered a loss of vitality and independence; in art, which placed a suffocating stress on form; and in scholarship, which lost almost all of its originality.

But despite the dominance of *taqlid* and decay, there were still some great scholars around. The most original scholar of this age is al-Ghazali[12] (1059–1111), who asserted that the first duty of man is not to know God, but to doubt. He who has not doubted, argued al-Ghazali, has never obtained any certitude. He followed his own convictions to the letter: first he liberated himself from all the current opinions, then he meditated, evaluated, ordered his thoughts, compared, approached and retreated until he was able to put forward polished and analytical arguments. After this quest, he arrived at a firm belief in the truth of Islam. He did all this to avoid *taqlid*, and in order that his faith would rest on a solid foundation.[13] Al-Ghazali tried to synthesise the extreme views of the Mutazilah and the Asharites and to accomplish 'the destruction of the philosophers'; and succeeded to a remarkable degree. He argued that the connection between what is usually believed to be a cause and what is believed to be an effect is not a necessary connection; each has its own individuality. Furthermore, neither the existence nor the nonexistence of one is implied in the affirmation, negation, existence or the nonexistence of the other.[14] By so arguing al-Ghazali found a third alternative between free will and determination: he attributed real freedom to the determined self, thus opting for self-determination. He made man responsible for his actions as well as for his future. We, after al-Ghazali, believe that basically Islam requires its followers to be self-determinists. We recognise the self as a unity capable of choice, capable of striving towards a goal – a unity always determining its own activity. The determinists do not recognise their unit or their choice. They believe, as Sharif has argued,[15] only in ideas, emotions, feelings, images, desires *of one man*. The proof of the existence of this unity is in our direct con-

sciousness of it, in our awareness of our individuality. I do not describe myself as a 'complex of atoms, molecules or cells', or as a 'conscious process'. I use the word 'I'.

It is the recognition of this unity of the self and its capacity to choose between two alternatives which makes me a self-determinist; and makes the most powerful impact on my morality. In contrast to traditional determinists, then, self-determinists believe that though the self is determined, it is goal-orientated and determines its future actions.

Against the indeterminists, self-determinism asserts that no undetermined factor influences the choice of the self. The self-determinist knows that the choice he has made is good or bad; and if he has chosen to do bad, and knows that his acts are due to the influence of his heredity, environment and past circumstances, he regrets that he is the man his acts have shown him to be. Thus he regrets his actions and this very realisation determines his future actions for the better. On the grounds of indeterminism he cannot be made responsible for his actions, nor be punished for them. However, reformative punishment is in accordance with self-determinism.

One may argue that self-determinism is the same as fatalism. This is not so. There is a world of difference between the Muslim belief in predestination (*qada-wal-qadar*) and fatalism (*al-jabr*). *Qada-wal-qadar* is a belief which strengthens the faculty of resolution in man, raises his moral energy, and incites him to courage and endurance. *Al-jabr* is little more than an undesirable innovation: it encourages man to seal his fate, to believe that he is preordained to do certain acts, and certain events are preordained to happen, no matter how much he struggles against them. As such, *al-jabr* destroys the self. The self-determinist works out his course under particular circumstances, though he does not hide the belief that his present self is determined by his past life. His actions harmonise the will of God with the will of the individual. For the fatalist his fate works independently of his self. For the self-determinist it works through his own conscious purpose. For the fatalist the purpose itself is a non-entity; for the self-determinist it is a vital link in the chain of causality.

> The self has a power to distinguish good from bad and it can choose one or the other and strive towards it. The self projects itself into the future, it puts itself under conditions which are not yet present, makes a purpose and tries to realise it. This is the nature of the self determined by various conditions. Herein it is

different from a man of molecules. These have no reference to the future. The self is always teleological, always purposeful and consciously so. To say with the determinist that actions are not chosen by a self but they are the results of a mechanical fight between two motives, is to talk nonsense; to assert with the Libertarian, that the whole of the self is not determined, is extravagant.[16]

Muslim philosophers, as we stated earlier, spent a great deal of their intellectual energy debating free will and determinism, to such an extent that they neglected other equally vital arenas of thought and activity. As such, they failed to provide the intellectual leadership and direction that the ummah required. Left without intellectual leadership, the ummah slowly became lethargic and apparently stagnant. But a civilisation, of course, cannot remain static: it must be either in a process of development or growth or of degeneration and decay. A cycle of decline was then set in motion.

A Graphical Model of Muslim Decline

By what standards or criteria can we evaluate the progressive decline of Muslims? A certain period in the history of a civilisation, because of its achievements or failures, or a combination of both, can be made into a standard or criterion for judging and evaluating other periods. In the history of Islam, this period comes in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs. The internal unification and moral and social cohesiveness of early Islamic society lasted almost to the end of the eleventh century, when internal conflict, power struggles, rigid formalism in rituals and lack of creativity and imagination in the further cultural developments in philosophy, pure science and technology and social sciences brought the expansion of Muslim civilisation to a halt. From now on the Muslim caravan marched largely downhill.

There is unanimity among scholars that the Medina State founded by the Beloved Prophet after the migration from Makkah is the ideal society as far as Muslims are concerned. This was the closest one could get to a perfect society; and this is the goal we strive for. It is our model and our paradigm. Deviation from perfection, from the models, can only be a decline. The present state of Muslim civilisation is a result of this deviation.[17]

This progressive decline and the alternative future directions can be represented as a simplified, space-time type of graph (see

Figure 3.1). On this graph, the Medina State, the ideal path, is represented by a straight line. There can be no improvement on perfection. However, to maintain a state of perfection is no easy task! The point *A* is where the decline of Muslim civilisation started. It is not important when the decay started; perhaps more important is the assertion than it was largely an exponential decay. All natural decays are exponential, and we do not see why civilisations should be different from the norm.
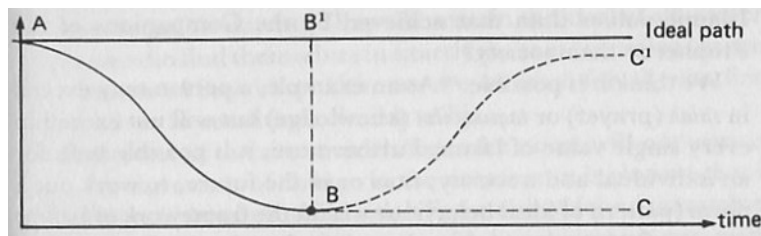

Figure 3.1   Progress towards perfection

Point *B* shows the present state of the Muslim ummah in relation to the Medina State. *B1* is where Muslim civilisation would have been had it continued on the line of the Medina State. *C* and *C1* represent two alternative futures.

The destiny of Muslim civilisation lies on the ideal path. But we cannot 'go back' to *A*; time reversal exists only in the realm of science fiction. A return to *B1* involves instantaneous change which, too, is not possible. Besides the alternative of continuing along the present path towards almost certain oblivion, Muslim civilisation can go forward to Islam – the Islam of the Medina State.

There is no a priori reason for the present progressive decline of Muslim society to stop automatically. The Qur'an promises eternal survival of Islam; this promise does not extend to Muslims. And 'Allah does not change a people unless they change themselves'. History offers no support for the view that simply through the passage of time Muslims will undergo a revival, as it were, of their pervasive religious base. The Muslim ummah has to make a conscious decision whether it wishes to preserve itself in a constant state of tension between living in the past, in a sense, and only superficially coming to terms with contemporary society by outwardly adopting occidental values and practices, or whether it

will opt for a future Medina State, thereby redirecting itself to its original path.

Of course, while one can never attain perfection, it is a goal one is always pursuing. As such, we may never reach the Medina State; we will always be striving towards it; and that is a perfectly acceptable goal.

The Future of Muslim Values

Going forward to the Medina State would require Muslim society to raise its levels of Islamic consciousness to a level that was achieved by the Companions of the Prophet. It is legitimate to ask: How is it possible for an individual or a society, now or in the future, to rise to higher levels in understanding and realisation of Islamic values than that achieved by the Companions of the Prophet or their society?

We think it is possible.[18] As an example, a person may exceed in *salah* (prayer) or *taqwa* (piety) or *ilm* (knowledge) but will not exceed in every single value of Islam. Furthermore, it is possible both for an individual and a society, now or in the future, to work out a norm (pattern of ideal behaviour within the framework of Islam) or a set of norms, better than that worked out by the Companions of the Prophet in their society. It is also possible for us to realise them in practice. Progress towards the Medina State is only possible if we can achieve this level of realisation of Islamic ideals.

The history of Islam contains detailed accounts of the life of the Companions of the Prophet and of the society they lived in. Details are also available of the norms which they set before themselves and how they achieved them within the context of their Arab life, their social and political set-ups, and their material and economic conditions. Islamic history also contains information on their actual attainment, their successes and their failures. In examining their lives, we often overlook their distinctively different styles and approaches to Islam, and consider observation of the Companions in their own norms as elucidation of Islamic values. We also commit an even more serious error: we take their actual pattern of life as the ideal norms as well as the only *possible* exposition of Islamic values in all its details.

Consider, for example, how Sayyidina Uthman, the third Caliph of Islam, worked out his norms in a business-oriented society. He was a rich and successful businessman, and his norms in that society were the best possible. But suppose he had found himself in a

changed environment, say in a rural rather than urban setting. How would his pattern of behaviour have changed?

Consider further the situation of Sayyidah Fatimah in the house of Sayyidina Ali, the nephew of the Prophet and the fourth Caliph of Islam. She worked out the norms of her life in the actual conditions she found herself and her husband in, and in the context of their financial means and the society in which they lived. Her norm represents an effort to live up to the values of Islam in her own situation; and in her own situation they were the best possible norms. They will remain the ideal of all women to come who find themselves in exactly the same situation; just as the norms of Sayyidina Uthman are an ideal for all who find themselves in conditions similar to his.

However, if the situation changes the norm will not remain ideal to the extent of change in the situation: it is obvious that if Sayyidina Uthman and Sayyidah Fatimah had found themselves in a different situation they would have worked out quite different norms for themselves. And it is possible that their latter norms could have been a better approximation of Islamic values than the former.

Let us generalise. The norms which the Companions of the Prophet set themselves were the best possible norms in their own conditions. Anyone finding himself in exactly the same conditions cannot conceive of better norms. In this sense, their norms cannot be improved upon. But change is a reality. It is conceivable that some conditions may be more conducive to the realisation of Islamic values than others. As such, the possibility of working out better norms than those worked out by the Companions of the Prophet is real.

We stated earlier that many of the injunctions laid down in the Qur'an and the Sunnah provide only the general framework of Islamic concepts. The details have to be mapped by the believers themselves, according to their particular situation. Thus any society, in the light of these injunctions, can work out its own ideal norms in its own space-time setting. It follows that certain norms worked out by a particular society about a particular concept, value or injunction may be different from that of another Islamic society in a different space-time setting. And one could be a better approximation of Islamic values than the other.

Failures and Setbacks

To think of, let alone produce, a future society that can achieve a state of Islam on a par with that of the Companions of the Prophet

is quite bewildering. Yet this is the only road that leads to the Medina State. We have allowed the ummah to decline too far; the ascent will undoubtedly be a painful process.

An enterprise such as this risks setbacks. The use of the word 'setback' is deliberate; it is not a substitute for 'failure'. Allah has promised that if we take one step towards Him, He will take two steps towards us.

In our endeavour to create alternative futures for Muslim civilisations, our frame of reference – the Qur'an and the Sunnah – will act like a colour filter which screens out many wavelengths, and admits a selected few. If we use this filter carefully and to its full effect, cutting off all un-Islamic assumptions and concepts, the probability of our failure will be minimised.

However, in the early stages, the asumptions, the sets of norms, the conceptual framework, and hence the operational models we will produce, will be primitive. The conceptual framework, however, will generate more theories and hypotheses which will be fed back into the models, thus knocking some of the rough edges off them. When a scientist wrestles long and earnestly with a problem, he learns by experience that some aspects of it are more important than others, and that some can be ignored altogether. If, for example, he studies the action of gravity on a freely falling body, he learns that the colour of the body is irrelevant. In subsequent experiments, he does not even bother to record its colour. In such a case, we say that the concepts of time and velocity are parts of the theoretical system, but the concept of colour is not. Similarly, the embryonic models we will produce will evolve in such a manner that the concepts themselves will mark out the parts of the system which need to be analysed, and will guide the analysis.

The construction of an alternative future for the Muslim ummah and locking its bearing to the absolute frame of reference require much more than just an operational model of a perfect Islamic society. It requires goals and visions, dreamers and idealists, and practical human effort, including concerted political action. To sustain Islamic consciousness in the individual demands resource and strength or will that puts the price of Islam very high. To sustain Islamic consciousness in a collectivity demands an effort that puts the price of the future Medina State even higher. Those who think that Islamic consciousness exacts no price, that social salvation will come in a metaphorical 'revival of Islam', are dupes of somnambulant wishfulness. One aspect of Islamic consciousness is order; it

therefore seems legitimate to emphasise the need for a shared Islamic social orientation. Individuals aware of their social responsibility may be necessary for the progress of Islam; but in today's world social conscience on the level of a society is indispensable for the maintenance of order.

What is more, we can argue that creativity and order are interdependent. A philosopher, a scientist, a poet, an architect, an artist, all need social roots if they are to develop. Their genius rarely bears any fruit unless they have opportunities for orderly growth. The Muslim people therefore have a great part to play in the reshaping and restructuring of existing social, economic and political orders in Muslim lands. The fate of the operational model of an Islamic society, if one is produced, and of the journey towards the Medina State, thus rests entirely with the common Muslim.

Notes

1. For an excellent introduction to the spread of Islam, see T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, 2nd edition, Constable, London, 1913, reprinted by Ashraf, Lahore, n.d. Note the differences between the first and second editions.
2. The Qur'an, 28:58.
3. The hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam, and Makkah, the holiest city of Islam, provide a graphic illustration of this point. Thus Sami Angawi admits that time 'has affected the environment of Hajj' and

> has brought many changes to the city of Mecca, the surrounding holy areas and the Kaba itself. Yet the functions and rituals of Hajj are unchanged for their character is immutable. The main challenge of the Hajj today is how to ... adapt the facilities and dynamic of changing quantities, qualities and space-time relations of the pilgrims into the physical place and ritual functions of sequences and timings of the Hajj ... in a manner consistent with the fundamental principles and laws of Islam and in keeping with the best traditions of Islamic design and culture.

> It 'becomes the key to a Muslim solution to a Muslim problem'. Indeed, one can say this not only of the hajj, which 'represents a microcosm of the whole body of believers', but of the entire cosmos of contemporary Muslim problems. See Sardar and Zaki (eds), *Hajj Studies*, vol. 1, Croom Helm, London, 1978.

4. See further Khalifa Abdul Hakim, *The Ideology of Islam*, Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1965, who makes the same point, p. 213.
5. I. A. Khan, 'The Meaning of Islamic Research', *Islamic Thought*, 6 (1), pp. 13–48 (1954).

6. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Ashraf, Lahore, 1971, pp. 147–8.

7. Change is considered nowadays to be *the* constant. The present phenomena of change differ from those of the recent past, not only in their quantitative aspects but also in their quality and the degree of their interrelationship. In the past, change has occurred slowly, in isolated sequences of events, limited and local in context. Today, change is exponential, global in nature, and it is no longer isolated sequences of social and physical processes that are perturbed. See John McHale, *World Facts and Trends*, Collier Macmillan, London, 1973; Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, Random House, New York, 1970; Peter Drucker, *The Age of Discontinuity*, Heinemann, London, 1969.

8. For an enlightening introduction to the concepts of *shura* and *ijma*, see A. Ahmad, 'Shura, Ijiha and Ijma in the Early Islamic State', *University Studies* (Karachi), 1, pp. 46–61 (April 1964).

9. Khan, 'The Meaning of Islamic Research'.

10. For an excellent exposition of the philosophy of Islam, see M. M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Harassowitz, vol. 1 (1963), vol. 2 (1966).

11. H. Nasr, *Science and Civilisation in Islam*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, p. 306.

12. W. M. Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazali*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1963, provides a good introduction to al-Ghazali. M. Umaruddi, *The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazali*, Ashraf, Lahore, 1962, is a good background work on the ideas and philosophy of the Nazamiyyah Academy professor.

13. A detailed account of this process is described by al-Ghazali in his spiritual autobiography 'Deliverance from Error', translated by W. W. Watt as *Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali*, Ashraf, Lahore, 1970.

14. These arguments are developed by al-Ghazali in his *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1963), which had a profound impact on all philosophical movements in Islam. The rationalist champion ibn Rushd answers al-Ghazali in his *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, translated by Van Den Bergh, London, 1954.

15. M. M. Sharif, *Philosophical Essays*, Institute of Islamic Culture, Karachi, 1966.

16. Ibid., p. 78.

17. S.M.N. al-Attas, 'Islam: The Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality', *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future*, Mansell, London, 1985, has somewhat similar ideas, but he does not give them a graphical form.

18. This is a huge thesis and not easy to support. The emphasis on the realisation of *one* or *some* but *not all* values is important. If, of course, it was possible for Muslims of the future to exceed the Companions of the Beloved Prophet in all their values, then there would be a contradiction with our description of the Medina State as perfect. The following verse of Surah *Waqiah* might serve as an indication of this thesis:

    Lo! We have created them a [new] creation
    And made them virgins

Lovers, friends,
For those on the right hand
A multitude of those of the old
And a multitude of those of the later time (The Qur'an, 56:35–40).

There is a feeling in these verses that the virtuous Muslims of the later time will be as numerous as of the old. But in the same Surah a few verses back we read:

A multitude of those of old
And a few of those of later time (56:13–14).

Which raises a contradiction we cannot explain. See the chapter on 'The Qur'anic Generation' in S. Kuth's *Milestones*, IIFSO, Beirut, 1973, and his *This Religion of Islam*, IIFSO, Beirut, 1971. See also Abdul Haq Ansari, 'Can there be Progress in Islamic Values?' *Islamic Thought*, 9 (3–4), pp. 44–55 (July 1967).

Source: Originally published as Chapter 2 of *The Future of Muslim Civilisation*, Croom Helm, London, 1979.

4 The Shari'ah as a Problem-Solving Methodology

The Shari'ah is the core of the worldview of Islam. It is that body of knowledge which provides the Muslim civilisation with its unchanging bearings as well as its major means of adjusting to change. Theoretically, the Shari'ah covers all aspects of human life: personal, social, political and intellectual. Practically, it gives meaning and content to the behaviour of Muslims in their earthly endeavours.

Normally, the Shari'ah is described as 'Islamic law'. But the boundaries of Shari'ah extended beyond the limited horizons of law. The Shari'ah is also a system of ethics and values, a pragmatic methodology geared to solving today's and tomorrow's problems. Literally, the Shari'ah means 'way to water' – the source of all life. For a Muslim civilisation, the Shari'ah represents that infinite spiritual and worldly thirst that is never satisfied: a Muslim people always seeks better and better implementation of the Shari'ah on its present and future affairs. The Islamic nature of the Muslim civilisation is measured by its success in its quest for the Shari'ah: how close it has got to the 'well of water' in its adherence to the legal, ethical and methodological principles of the Shari'ah. The outward form of a Muslim civilisation depends on the actual scientific, technological and economic conditions prevailing in a particular epoch. These forms are obviously different from epoch to epoch and illustrate the dynamic nature of the worldview of Islam. But internally, the fixed principles of the Shari'ah ensure that Muslim civilisations of different epochs always seek the same ethical goals. As such, the 'Islamic civilisation' would be that civilisation in which the values of the Shari'ah have reached their higher expression.

In the entire history of Islam, the Shari'ah has not been more abused, misunderstood and misrepresented than in our own epoch. It has been used to justify oppression and despotism, injustice and criminal abuse of power. It has been projected as an ossified body of law that bears little or no relationship to modern times. It has been presented as an intellectually sterile body of knowledge that belongs to distant history rather than the present and the future. All this has been to the detriment of the Muslim people; and has suffocated the

true revival of Islam and a genuine emergence of a contemporary Muslim intellectual tradition.

Many of the problems of the contemporary Muslim societies arise from the fact that the Shari'ah has been limited to the domains of 'law'. Thus it has been the exclusive concern either of traditional scholars who have been too preoccupied with legal rulings passed hundreds of years ago by classical *ulema* and Imams or of modern lawyers who have tried to understand the Shari'ah using the tools of western legal systems. Either way the values that the Shari'ah seeks to promote and the real issues to which it should be addressed are virtually ignored. Moreover, the Shari'ah is not just forced into the narrow constraints of law, but limited even further to only one or two segments of its legal precepts. Thus, those aspects of the Shari'ah which deal with crime and punishment and social behaviour figure a great deal in the work and thoughts of contemporary traditional and modern scholars. By fragmenting the Shari'ah in this way, and by ignoring its overall ethical goals, Muslim scholars and lawyers destroy its essential holistic nature and present it in a grotesque manner. While the Shari'ah emphasises mercy, balance and equilibrium, today's exponents of the Shari'ah emphasise extreme punishments without due regard to social or political environment. While the Shari'ah is inherently against all forms of depotism, contemporary saviours of the Shari'ah impose it by despotic means. While the Shari'ah promotes political and social justice, and equality of all before the law, modern practitioners seek to impose its ruling on the downtrodden, the underprivileged or the minorities and foreign expatriates for whom the Shari'ah has no meaning. While one aspect of the Shari'ah is suppressed because it does not go down well with the ruling oligarchy or with western mores, another is overemphasised to dupe the populace that 'Shari'ah law' is in operation.

If the Shari'ah is to become the dominant guiding principle of behaviour of contemporary Muslim societies, then it must be rescued from the clutches of fossilised traditional scholars and overzealous westernised lawyers. The legalistic rulings of the classical Imams, and their associated schools of thought – five of which are now predominant: the Hanafi school in the Indian subcontinent, West Asia and Egypt; the Maliki in North and West Africa; the Shafi'i in Malaysia and Indonesia; the Hanbali in Arabia; and the Ja'feri in Iran and Iraq – were space and time bound. They were concerned with solving the problems of their societies and examined these problems

in the light of available knowledge. They gave their judgements without bias or fear and were concerned only with the truth as they saw it. This is why most of their legal judgements went against the rulers of their time, for which they were persecuted by these rulers. However, these rulings were never meant to be the final word, or the ultimate understanding of a particular precept of the Shari'ah. The great Imams never intended that their judgements should become eternal law: that would amount to claiming divine authority; this is why they all, without exception, emphasised that their rulings were their own opinions, derived from the sources of the Shari'ah, and should not be accepted uncritically. And that is why they loathed the idea that a 'school of thought' should be formed around their juristic judgements. The fact that Muslims today give the rulings of the classical Imams eternal validity, and seek answers to modern problems in their judgements and thought, rather than looking to the sources of the Shari'ah, is a sign of Muslim intellectual lethargy. Even though it is conceived as a compliment to the work of the great Imams, it is in fact an insult to their achievements. Of course, contemporary Muslim societies have a great deal to learn from their experience and work of which we should make full use. In particular, the judgements of classical Imams on theological matters, beliefs and prayers, cannot be surpassed. And there is certainly no need for us to attempt that. But Shari'ah is not theology: it is an amalgam of law, ethics and methodology. We could draw lessons from how the Imams applied this amalgam to the particular situation of their time; but there is no other substitute for us than working out our own problems. Indeed, this exercise of going back to the sources of the Shari'ah to find solutions to new, different and emerging problems must be applied in every epoch; for every century produces radically different and new problems which cannot be foreseen and which are not amenable to traditional solutions.

While the Shari'ah has to be rescued from the weight of fossilised traditional scholarship, it must also be protected from the onslaught of modern apologia. In trying to impose a 'modern', westernised framework on the Shari'ah, Muslim lawyers have undermined its integrity. The Shari'ah does not need to be 'modernised' but to be understood on its own terms. Even the use of westernised terminology becomes a hurdle in gaining a contemporary understanding of the Shari'ah. For example, the Shari'ah deals with the entire span of human life and interactions, and as such in traditional Muslim sources there is no term to denote what in the western legal

framework is called 'personal law'. Labelling a segment of the Shari'ah in such a way divorces it from the social and economic aspects of human behaviour – thus the interconnections that the Shari'ah is trying to emphasise are undermined. Similarly, one cannot ignore or underplay certain aspects of the Shari'ah, while giving undue importance to certain others. For example, in societies where the dowry is used to acquire wealth, and thus makes it difficult, indeed impossible, for the vast majority of young men to get married, it makes little sense to hand out extreme punishments for sexually frustrated behaviour. Neither does it make much sense to apologise for, and sweep under the carpet, those aspects of the Shari'ah which are designed to cater for the special circumstances and diversity of human needs. Polygamy is a good example: most westernised Muslim lawyers find the Shari'ah injunction on polygamy embarrassing and try to underplay it at every opportunity. Hossein Nasr makes an apt comment in this regard:

> Many modernised Muslims feel embarrassed by this feature of the Shari'ah for no other reason than that Christianity eventually banned it and in the West today it is forbidden. The arguments against it are not so much logical as sentimental and carry the weight and prestige of the modern West with it. All the arguments given based on the fact that polygamy is the only way of preventing many social ills of today, have no effect on those for whom the fashion of the day has replaced the Sunnah of the Prophet. One wonders if modernism had originated in the Himalayan states rather than in Europe, whether the modern Muslim apologists would have tried to interpret the teachings of the Shari'ah as permitting polyandry, as today they interpret its teaching only in the monogamous sense which is current Western practice.[1]

The point is that western custom and practice should not dictate our approach to the Shari'ah. We cannot take the world as it exists today as the sole reality and judge the relevance or irrelevance of various aspects of the Shari'ah according to its degree of conformity to this world. Similarly, we cannot take the historical experience of classical authors as the sole arbiter and expositor of the Shari'ah. Muslim scholars and intellectuals must gain contemporary understanding of the Shari'ah on its own terms, treating it as an integrated whole and using its own methodology. That means not moulding the Shari'ah

into alien frameworks or giving undue importance to the opinions and judgements of classical jurists. And that requires going back to the original sources of the Shari'ah.

The Sources of the Shari'ah

Traditionally, the sources of the Shari'ah have been divided into two basic categories: the chief and supplementary sources. The chief sources of the Shari'ah are universally recognised to be the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. During the lifetime of the Prophet, the Qur'an was given a practical shape by his words and deeds. The Muslim community needed nothing else to understand the legal boundaries and ethical precepts of Muslim behaviour. The Prophet himself tackled problems faced by the community and provided the necessary answers. However, direct explanation of the legal injunctions of the Qur'an was not available after his death; thus general consensus or the *ijma* of the Companions of the Prophet took its place next to the Qur'an and the Sunnah as a major source of the Shari'ah. The reason for the emergence of *ijma* as a major source of the Shari'ah is simple: it was natural for the Muslims to assume that after the Prophet himself, the understanding of the Qur'an of those who were with him during his lifetime must be the most thorough and deep. It was therefore natural that in legal matters which needed clarification the *ijma* of the then Muslim community was followed. A tradition of the Prophet legitimised *ijma* as a chief source of Islamic law: 'My people will never agree on a lie.'

As the Muslim community grew, newer and newer problems surfaced, many of which were quite unique in their character. Muslim scholars and jurists solved these problems by making deductive analogical parallels from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Analogy, or *qiyas*, assured them that two different cases could be solved by the same divine injunction. Moreover, judgements reached by the use of *qiyas* obtained the general approval of the entire Muslim community; it thus had the *ijma* of the believers. *Qiyas*, or analogical reasoning, therefore became the fourth chief source of the Shari'ah. To these four main sources, some Muslim scholars also add *ijtihad*, or 'individual reasoning', which has its basis both in the Qur'an and in the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad as a major source of the Shari'ah.

Ijtihad is defined as 'the putting forth of every effort in order to determine with a degree of probability a question of the Shari'ah'.

'Every effort', of course, includes reasoning by analogy, and this is why many scholars regard *qiyas* as a special form of *ijtihad.* While the Qur'an and the Sunnah provide the Shari'ah with its immutable laws, *ijtihad* together with *ijma* provides the Shari'ah with its dynamic base. The use of *ijtihad* involves focusing the legal and ethical precepts of the Qur'an, together with its pragmatic formulation given in the Sunnah, on the practical and ethical problems of today. But before the results of *ijtihad* can have validity in the Shari'ah, they must have the *ijma* of Muslim scholars and intellectuals. In this way the Shari'ah is added to and develops, and adjusts to continuous change.

To these chief sources of the Shari'ah – the Qur'an, the Sunnah, *qiyas*, *ijma* and *ijtihad* – three further supplementary sources are added. In the words of Said Ramadan, these are:

(a) *Al-Istihsan*, or the deviation, on a certain issue, from the rule of a precedent to another rule for a more relevant legal reason that requires such deviation.

(b) *Al-Istislah,* or the unprecedented judgement motivated by public interest to which neither the Qur'an nor the Sunnah explicitly refer.

(c) *Al-Urf*, or the custom and the usage of a particular society, both in speech and action. These secondary sources of the Shari'ah make 'rigid laws' more flexible and further illustrate the adaptable and amenable character of the Shari'ah. Muslim jurists have given particular attention to the institution of *istislah* or public interest, arguing that it is a valuable source of legislation and a viable means by which the Shari'ah meets the challenge of change.[2]

Traditionally, Muslim scholars focused not on *istislah*, but its more general form, *maslaha*, which means a cause, a means, an occasion, or a goal which is good. It is also used for an affair or a transaction which is good or has the potential of promoting good. In its Arabic usage, it is often encountered in the form *nazara fi masalih al-nas*: 'He considered the things that were for the good of the people'. Its use as a principal tool of promoting the Shari'ah is based on the argument that 'good' is 'lawful' and that 'lawful' must be 'good'. On the basis of such reasoning, traditional Muslim scholars developed a whole array of *maslaha* categories, some of which required direct evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah while others could lead

to binding legal sanctions on the basis that they clearly promote a noted ethical criterion – such as preservation of life and property, promotion of Islamic morals or sound reasoning – of the Shari'ah.

Maslaha has been used as guiding principle of law-making in recent Muslim history. In 1857, *maslaha* was used as the basis for reforms in Tunisian law. The preamble to the 1860 constitution stated 'God ... has given justice as a guarantee of the preservation of order in this world, and has given the revelation of law in accordance with human interests (*masalih*).' It listed three basic components of *maslaha*: 'liberty, security and equality'.[3] The noted Muslim scholar Muhammad Abduh stressed the use of *maslaha* in the reforms of the court system in Egypt and Sudan. More recently, the use of *maslaha* in gaining a contemporary understanding of the Shari'ah has been urged by a number of scholars including Abdul al-Razzaq Sanhuri,[4] Maruf Dawalibi[5] and Muhammad Khalid Masud.[6]

When taken in totality, the primary and secondary sources of the Shari'ah provide a body of law and ethics, and a methodology for solving contemporary problems, that is at once deeply grounded in eternal values and completely open to change and adjustment. At the apex of the Shari'ah are the Qur'an and the Sunnah – these are eternal and provide the absolute reference frame for Muslim behaviour. All other sources of the Shari'ah are subordinate to the Qur'an and the Sunnah: they do not and cannot challenge the authority of the absolute reference frame, but enhance its under-standing and appreciation. While the Qur'an is the very basis of legality and legal injunctions in Islam, it does not issue a command on every legal possibility or on every foreseen and unforeseen cir-cumstance of the human situation. It is essentially a book of guidance, not a classification of legal prescriptions. And as a book of guidance, it lays down in general terms the minimum and maximum parameters within which a Muslim society must pursue its legal and ethical activities. The legal parameters which the Qur'an actually lays down are remarkably few: only 70 injunctions regarding family affairs, 70 on civil matters, 30 on penal law, 13 on jurisdiction and procedure, 10 on constitutional law, 25 on international relations, and 10 on economic and financial matters.[7] (An enumeration such as this, as Said Ramadan points out, can only be approximate. The legal bearing of some injunctions can be disputed, while others clearly apply to more than one sphere of human endeavour.) Thus, the legal and ethical parameters, together with the best example of how they can be turned into living reality, form the unchangeable

core of the Shari'ah. Beyond these limited parameters, the Shari'ah is completely open: it can be developed and shaped according to the needs of society and time by any number of its other sources: *ijma, qiyas, ijtihad,* and *istislah.* The sources of the Shari'ah that supplement the Qur'an and the Sunnah are problem-solving tools; they provide a methodology for adjusting to change. It is indeed tragic that Muslim societies have chosen to ignore them. The path towards the Shari'ah adopted by some Muslim countries in recent decades negates one of the basic ethical principles that the Shari'ah seeks to promote: the end does not justify the means. In the pursuit of the Shari'ah, both the ends and the means must themselves be derived from the Shari'ah.

The Shari'ah in Contemporary Muslim Societies

While the Shari'ah provides guidance on every aspect of human behaviour, its practical use in the Muslim world, as I argued above, has been limited to conventional law. But even in this area, the implementation of the Shari'ah has been fragmented and presented as an absurd caricature. The responsibility for this lies not only with zealous dictators and monarchs who have used the Shari'ah to legitimise their own power base, but also with Muslim scholars and intellectuals who have failed to carry out the *ijtihad* so badly needed to gain a contemporary understanding of the Shari'ah, and with Islamic activists who, in their eagerness to see the Shari'ah imple-mented, have co-operated with all types of demented politicians and power-hungry demagogues. The way to the Shari'ah in the future has to be through the drawing board.

One of the fundamental features of the Shari'ah is that it is an integrated and interconnected whole: every aspect, every law, every injunction of the Shari'ah is connected, in a hierarchical and horizontal relationship, to every other. The Shari'ah cannot be understood, let alone implemented, without appreciating its holistic nature.

The intrinsic holistic character of the Shari'ah means that one or two aspects of 'Islamic law' cannot be imposed on a society at the expense of others or at the expense of the basic ethical principles which the Shari'ah aims to promote. Thus, it makes no real sense for a military regime which has itself acquired power by illegal means to introduce the 'criminal law' element of the Shari'ah. Neither does it make much sense in a society where poverty is prevalent and wealth

and power is accumulated in few hands to dish out the *hudud* (boundary, outer limit) punishments on petty thiefs, while the real criminals sleep soundly in their bungalows and palaces. As the Shari'ah itself declares that 'there is no compulsion in religion', it cannot be imposed on an unwilling people; it has to be desired and admired and adopted by a people of their own free will.

But the adoption of the Shari'ah by contemporary Muslim societies cannot be a sudden, overnight affair. Neither can the 'minor' themes of the Shari'ah be introduced before its dominant concerns.

The Qur'anic approach to change is gradual: it allows the believer ample time to adjust to oncoming change. The best example of this is provided by the Qur'anic injunctions prohibiting the use of alcohol. The first revelation warned that the evils of alcohol outweigh its good effects; the second asked the believers not to pray while under the influence of alcohol. The complete ban on drinking was finally made in the third revelation:

> First stage: 'They question thee about strong drink and games of chance. Say: in both is great sin, and (some) utility for men; but the sin of them is greater than their usefulness.' (2:219)
> Second stage: 'O ye who believe! Draw not near unto prayer when ye are drunken, till ye know that which ye utter ...' (4:43)
> Third stage: 'O ye who believe! Strong drink and games of chance and idols and divining arrows are only infamy of Satan's handiwork. Leave it aside in order that ye may succeed.' (5:90)

History records that by the time the third stage was reached, despite the fact that the Arabs were great drinkers and wine played a major part in their social customs and literature, the Muslim community was well prepared: wine flowed in the streets of Medina as every member of the community threw out his/her reserves.

The principle of gradual change is fundamental to the Shari'ah. The gradual introduction of the Shari'ah in a Muslim society not only provides the society with an opportunity to adjust to changes introduced by it, it also enables it to get the emphasis and priorities of the Shari'ah correct. The prime aim of the Shari'ah is to promote the interests and benefits of the people. Muslim jurists have classified people's interests and benefits into three main categories:

1. Those benefits which meet an absolute necessity – for example, the preservation of life, protection of property, and the protection of physical and mental health.
2. Those benefits which meet no absolute necessity but are generally useful, promote social welfare and make life easy for members of society, such as the provision of public amenities such as a roads and parks.
3. Those benefits which serve a particular end like the promotion of Islamic morals and culture.[8]

It is obvious that a society has to focus on absolute benefits before it promotes benefits which are generally useful. The development of parks in a city where the life of man and his family is not safe makes little sense under the Shari'ah. Similarly, under a dictatorship, where the entire population is at the mercy of a despot and the life and property of anyone who opposes him are not safe, projects which promote 'Islamic culture' appear positively perverse. The first goal of the exponents of the Shari'ah must be to ensure a system of government based on popular consensus, the *ijma* of the people. Only under a system of government that comes into being on the basis of the principles of the Shari'ah can the implementation of the injunctions of the Shari'ah have a true meaning.

All this does not mean that under a non-Islamic government certain general goals of the Shari'ah cannot be pursued. However, this has to be done in a manner which does not link the Shari'ah in any way with the dominant unjust system. Under an un-Islamic government, fighting for the Shari'ah means fighting against *all* injustice: political, economic, social, educational and technological. But under such systems, which are prevalent all over the Muslim world, the scholars and intellectuals have another, equally important, duty: to illustrate the contemporary relevance of the Shari'ah and demonstrate how it can actually solve the problems of Muslim societies and hence usher in a superior, just order.

Seeking the Contemporary Relevance of the Shari'ah

A fresh, contemporary understanding of the Shari'ah is crucial for the emergence of a Muslim civilisation of the future. To a very large extent the exercise demands the use of those tools of the Shari'ah which have hitherto remained unexplored by Muslim scholars and intellectuals. *Ijtihad*, *ijma* and *istislah* have to be used to invoke the

Shari'ah as a problem-solving methodology. The scope of the Shari'ah beyond the confines of 'Islamic law' must be realised by Muslim scholars and intellectuals, and its techniques must be used to develop viable alternatives for Muslim societies and individuals to pursue.

That the Shari'ah is *the* Islamic problem-solving methodology has not been recognised by many contemporary Muslim scholars. Parvez Manzoor is a notable exception:

> Sharia is ... the *methodology of history* in Islam. By its application temporal contingencies are judged by eternal imperatives, moral choices are transformed into options for concrete action and ethical sentiment is objectified in law. It is in fact the *problem-solving* methodology of Islam *per excellence*. Any practical Muslim thinking, as for example our search for an environmental ethics, must pass through the objective framework of Sharia in order to become positive and be part of Muslim history. Sharia thus provides both the ethical norms and the legal structure within which Muslim state(s) may make actual decisions pertaining to concrete ... issues.[9]

Thus many contemporary problems can be studied using the Shari'ah and policy alternatives developed that could become an integrated part of Islamic law if they obtained the *ijma* of Muslim scholars and intellectuals. In fact, this is exactly how the Shari'ah developed in the early part of Islamic history. The ultimate aim of classical jurists when they developed *usul al-fiqh*, the science of approaching and appreciating the Shari'ah, was the establishment of a methodology through which the learned and the lawyers could make practical decisions about emerging problems. Similarly, the painstaking classifications that the classical jurists developed were designed to guide action, to separate the essential from the merely necessary, to enable the society to set its priorities and consciously pursue them.

Contemporary Muslim scholars and intellectuals have to perform similar tasks today. However, the development of the Shari'ah as a problem-solving methodology requires focusing not on the specifics but on the general principles of the Shari'ah. Going back to the example of alcohol quoted above, it is evident that this is a specific category derived from a more general and universal rule. That the Shari'ah bans not only alcohol but all types of intoxicants, including

narcotics, would be readily admitted by most Muslim scholars. But even the prohibition of all intoxicants is only a specific case of the general rule that all those things in which the bad is greater than the good ought to be prohibited from society. Now if we applied this general rule of the Shari'ah to nuclear energy, we can draw certain conclusions that could become, if they had the consensus of Muslim scholars and intellectuals, the basis of a nuclear policy for a Muslim state. It is indeed possible for us to prove that the bad elements of nuclear power, its potential dangers to present and future life forms, far outweigh its good factors, its ability to provide cheap energy. It is at this level of practical policy-making that the Shari'ah must be used to shape the destiny of Muslim societies.

Apart from focusing on the general principles of the Shari'ah, Muslim intellectuals must also rediscover its *norms*. The fragmented and abnormal imposition of the Shari'ah in various Muslim countries has led many to believe that the Shari'ah, almost always, takes the extreme position on every issue. This image is projected by *hudud* punishments – so beloved of dictators and others seeking expedient 'Islamic' legimacy for their rules. The Shari'ah is like a spiral, confined by its limits but moving with time, with its norm requiring a fresh effort by Muslims of every epoch to understand its contemporary relevance (see Fig. 4.1). It limits the maxima and minima of human behaviour by erecting a clear-cut boundary, the *hudud*, outside which all actions are categorically un-Islamic.

These *hudud* represent the outer limits of human actions and not the norm. Within these limits all actions are permissible but the best actions are those which meet the dictate of time and preserve the equilibrium and balance of the Shari'ah. Thus while acknowledging
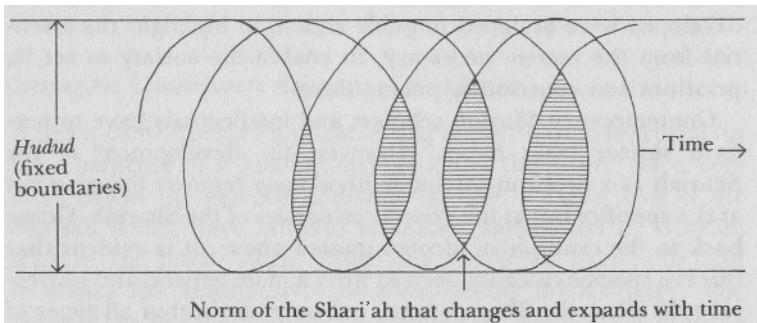
Figure 4.1   Continuity and change in the Shari'ah

the fact that human beings have a tendency to seek retribution (*qiasa*) for their ills, the Shari'ah puts a limit beyond which retribution cannot be sought. Thus the priniciple of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' implies the maximum retribution that anyone can exact. It is not the norm of the Shari'ah but the outer limit allowed by it. The norm of the Shari'ah is mercy and forgiveness as examplified in the Sunnah. Throughout his life, the Prophet Muhammad always forgave his adversaries, to the extent that after the final capture of Makkah, when the Prophet became the undisputed political leader of Arabia, he issued a general amnesty for all his adversaries and declared that not only his arch-enemy Abu Sufyan, who had persecuted and led armies against him for decades, was perfectly safe but anyone taking refuge in his house was also safe from the advancing Muslim army. This, according to the Shari'ah, is the pattern of behaviour that Muslims seeking retribution have to follow; while the Shari'ah allows just and exact retribution, it makes mercy and forgiveness and not revenge the dominant norm. In trying to make the *hudud* elements of the Shari'ah into the norm, Muslim scholars and lawyers risk sacrificing the spirit of the Shari'ah at the altar of expediency.

The undue emphasis on the outer limits of what the Shari'ah does and does not permit has led Muslim scholars and intellectuals to see things only in terms of black and white. The fact that a large number of contemporary moral and ethical problems occur in the hazy overlap that is a shade of grey has meant that many pressing problems of Muslim societies have not been solved. Consider, for example, the problem of population policy: what ever one may say about the causes and nature of underdevelopment, the fact that galloping population is undermining the economic prosperity and efforts for self-reliance in such countries as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt and Morocco cannot be denied. However, the vast majority of Muslim scholars take the extreme position and reject birth control, the basis of any population policy, outright. The case against birth control is based on the argument that the Shari'ah regards human life as sacred and that God has promised to sustain those on whom He bestows the gift of life. Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, for example, argues that birth control 'violates the laws of nature and the guidance God has given for individual and social life'. What laws of nature? Maulana Maududi quotes the following verses from the Qur'an to substantiate his case:

And who goeth farther astray than he who followeth his lust against guidance from Allah. (28:50)

He said: Our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its nature, then guided its right. (20:50)

And whoso transgresseth Allah's limits, he verily wrongeth his soul. (65:1)[10]

Maulana Maududi's conclusion that birth control is against Islam is based only on the above verses. Thus birth control is envisaged by him to be a 'lustful desire' which transgresses the limits of human actions set by God. Hence a couple overburdened by numerous children and engaged in family planning is acting out of 'lust'. Or a state faced by a runaway population and promoting family planning is transgressing the established boundaries of God. Such arguments are not just based on dubious logic, but also insult the vast majority of Muslim people who face a real need; and they promote an attitude of fatalism.

In contrast, the people who argue that birth control is not against the principles of Islam point out that the Prophet permitted *azal* (withdrawal) and *ghayl* (coitus with a lactating woman). An authentic tradition of the Prophet, attributed to a close companion, states: 'We used to have recourse to *azal* in the Prophet's age. He came to know of it but did not prevent us from doing so. If it were something to be prevented, the Qur'an would have prohibited it.' This tradition, together with sundry arguments, is used by many scholars. However, just because the Prophet allowed the practice of particular methods of birth control does not mean that the Shari'ah sanctions birth control per se and permits the use of *all* types of contraception.

Somewhere between these two extreme positions lies the true Shari'ah norm: the Shari'ah neither completely bans birth control, as Maulana Maududi argues, nor does it promote it as a general principle. The Shari'ah allows individuals and societies to practise family planning if they have a clearly defined need to do so but it does not permit the use of *all* kinds of contraception.

Up to the twentieth century there was no real need for birth control in Muslim societies, hence its complete absence from Muslim societies of other epochs. Now that it clearly fulfils a need, both for individual families and for certain overpopulated Muslim states, it becomes a necessity under the Shari'ah. However, the Shari'ah would not permit the use of those contraceptives which violate certain ethical principles of Islam. Considering the stand of the Shari'ah on

abortion, intrauterine devices (IUDs), which are abortive, would be *haram* (not permitted), but other devices which simply prevent gametic union by mechanical means would be *halal* (permitted). While a Muslim state can make birth control a basis for its population policy, it cannot impose it on individuals: the Shari'ah does not permit interference in individuals' personal lives.

This type of analysis, which seeks the norms of the Shari'ah, rather than simply making declarations based on its outer limits, actually provides practical answers to contemporary problems. But it also demands serious work from Muslim scholars and intellectuals. For example, in the case of birth control, Muslim scholars would be required to study each type of contraceptive in minute detail to discover whether it violates any of the ethical principles of the Shari'ah. Similarly, population policies would have to be carefully confined within parameters acceptable to the Shari'ah.

Apart from seeking the norms of the Shari'ah and focusing on its general principles, it is also necessary to develop certain secondary sources of the Shari'ah as fully-fledged methodologies. Method-ologically, the question of how to apply and extend the Shari'ah to contemporary needs and new situations has been hampered by overreliance on narrow specifics, legal formalism, literalism and outdated legal texts. To break away from this straitjacket, Muslim scholars and intellectuals have to concentrate on the *conceptual basis* of the Shari'ah.

As I have argued in *The Future of Muslim Civilisation*, adjusting to change requires that we gain a fresh understanding of and oper-ationalise such Shari'ah concepts as *ijma, shura, ijtihad* and *istislah.* This has also been the position of those classical scholars who focused on the question of continuity and change in Islam. For example, the fourteenth-century Muslim jurist, Abu Ishaq al-Shatabi, believed that social change and legal change were interrelated. He differentiated between two types of change: *bida* and *ada*. *Bida* is change in religious practices, a type of change that the Shari'ah does not permit. For example, no new forms of worship can be introduced nor can any changes be made in the basic beliefs and tenets of Islam. *Ada* is change in habits, behaviour and custom, introduced by new factors of production or the emergence of a new type of technology. Al-Shatabi argued that the Shari'ah not only acknowledges such types of change but 'the Shari'ah can change *ada* in certain cases, and vice versa, but more important is the fact that when change

takes place within an *ada*, it also affects the rule of Shari'ah'. A thing which was relatively good becomes evil and vice versa; the Shari'ah has to adjust itself accordingly. Al-Shatabi recognises both 'horizontal' and 'vertical' changes in *ada* and argues that the Shari'ah, so far as it is related to *ada*, must also admit change.

Al-Shatabi focused on *maslaha*, the general variant of *istislah*, as the major concept and methodology by which the Shari'ah could be adjusted to change and used to solve new and emerging problems. He defied *maslaha* as follows: 'I mean by *maslaha* that which concerns the subsistence of human life, the completion of man's livelihood, and the acquisitions of what his emotional and intellectual qualities require of him, in an absolute sense.'[11] He divides *maslaha* into *daruri* (necessary), *haji* (needed) and *tahsini* (commendable). He uses these categories to show how the methodology of *maslaha* can be used to derive new legislations from the Shari'ah to meet the changing needs of a society. It is interesting to note that al-Shatabi does not consider *maslaha* to be an individual or fanciful criterion, but justifies its use on the basis of the preservation of life and property of individuals, and the values and mental health of a society.

In our own time, such examination of concepts like *istislah* could lead to Shari'ah legislations on the preservation of the environment, the conservation of cultural property, health regulation in industry and the power and the role of the media. Similarly, the analytical study of other Shari'ah concepts could lead to useful legislation on the abuse of natural resources, the destructive use of technology, the social and cultural parameters of urban planning, research on genetic engineering, and Islamic stands on such international issues as the law of the sea, peace and disarmament, and the new international economic order.

To some extent this is already happening. Muslim scholars are moving away from the confining limitations of the classical texts and are beginning to focus on the general principles of the Shari'ah, as is evident from the 'Model Islamic Constitution' produced by the Islamic Council of Europe. Shari'ah is being extended, at least theoretically, into areas where it has hitherto been dormant for several centuries, as our discussion on Islamic science, Islamic economics and Islamic theory of environment will demonstrate. But all this is only the beginning: the full realisation of what the Shari'ah offers Muslims, as well as non-Muslims, is still some way into the future.

Notes

 1. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Studies*, Librairie du Liban, Beirut, 1967, p. 31.
 2. Said Ramadan, *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity*, Geneva, 1970, p. 33.
 3. Quoted by Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy: A Study of Abu Ishaq al-Shaibi's Life and Thought*, Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad, 1977, p. 173.
 4. Abdul al-Razzaq Sanhuri, 'Wujub tanqih al-qanum al-madani al-Misri', *Majallat al-Qanun wa'l Iqtis*, 6, 3–144 (1963).
 5. Maruf Dawalibi, *al-Madkhal ila ilm usal al-fiqh*, Dar al-ilm I'il-malain, Beirut, 1965.
 6. Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy*.
 7. Said Ramadan, *Islamic Law*.
 8. Anwar Ahmad Qadri, *Islamic Jurisprudence in the Modern World,* Ashraf, Lahore, 1973 (2nd edition), p. 224.
 9. S. Parvez Manzoor, 'Environment and Values: The Islamic Perspective', in Ziauddin Sardar (ed.) *The Touch of Midas*, Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 158.
10. Abul Ala Maududi, *Birth Control*, Islamic Publications, Lahore, 1978 (13th edition), p. 74. Much of Maulana Maudadi's book is devoted to the western approach and attitudes to birth control; the discussion of Islam's stand on birth control occurs only on pp. 72–92, but even here Maulana Maududi depends more on western sources to make his case.
11. Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy*, p. 225.

5 Islam and Nationalism

Islam and nationalism are contradictory terms. While Islam is intrinsically a universal creed and worldview, which recognises no geographical boundaries, nationalism is based on territory and is parochial in its outlook. While Islam insists on the total equality of humanity, recognises no linguistic, cultural or racial barriers, nationalism glorifies assumed cultural, linguistic and racial superiority. Nationalism demands the total loyalty of a people to the nation ('my country, right or wrong'), Islam demands loyalty and submission only to God. Nationalism has given rise to the structure of the modern, sovereign nation-state which demands the promotion of its own interests in preference to, and at the cost of, all others; Islam, on the other hand, is uncompromising on the fact that sovereignty belongs only to God and it is His will, and not some perceived national interest, which should reign supreme in the world.

However, while Islam rejects the ideology of nationalism, it accepts both the existence of nations and the practice of nationhood. As the Qur'an declares: 'O Humanity! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you may recognize one another (not that you may despise one another)' (49:13). 'Nations and tribes' function as the providers of identity and thus lay the foundations of plurality in Islam. The basic social unit in Islam is the community, which functions both at a local and an international level. The local community is the neighbourhood, gathered around a neighbourhood mosque; the next level is the city community gathered around the Juma (or Friday) mosque; and the final level is the international network of communities of believers, the ummah, which is focused around the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. Thus while nations and tribes are recognised in Islam as part of the community, nationalism and tribalism are not; and the basic unit of an Islamic polity is not the nation, or the nation-state, but the community.

But community in Islam is not some sort of romantic ideal that descends ready-made from heaven. Islam is not a passive religion: it asks its followers to be actively involved in shaping a Muslim community. To witness the *shahadah*, that is the fundamental declaration of Islam that 'There is no god but God and Muhammad is

the Messenger of God', is actually to live by the moral and ethical principles of Islam. Moreover, Islam does not separate life into different compartments, each unrelated to the others, but presents an integrated and holistic worldview where everything – politics, science, social affairs, public life – is subject to its ethical and moral precepts. Thus, Islam and politics go hand in hand; and all Muslims, by the very nature of their faith, are political activists. What this means is that Muslims have consciously to work at establishing a just and equitable community and to be perpetually on guard against oppression and unjust rule.

Given that nationalism is anathema to Islam, and that the Prophet Muhammad spent his entire life eradicating tribalism from the Arabian society of his time, how do we account for the emergence of nationalism in the Muslim world? Can the virulent strain of Muslim nationalism so evident in the Middle East and South Asia be justified in Islamic terms? Is there a relationship between nationalism and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism? And, what does the future hold both for fundamentalism and Muslim nationalism?

One of the paradoxes of recent Muslim history is that the emergence of nationalism in the Muslim world is connected to the rise of modern Islamic reform movements. In the late nineteenth century, Jamaluddin Afghani (d.1897), together with Muhammed Abduh (d.1905), the Grand Mufti of Egypt, founded the Salafi movement. Afghani and Abduh wanted to modernise Islam and campaigned to establish a pan-Islamic movement, cutting tribal and national lines, across the Muslim world. A series of writers, loyal to Afghani and Abduh, and inspired by their vision of a modernised Islam, put forward new ideas about the way in which society and state should be organised. They saw modernity largely in terms of western modes of thought and social organisation. It was in the generation following Afghani and Abduh, in the early part of the twentieth century, that nationalism became explicit amongst Arabs, particularly the Egyptians and Tunisians, and the Turks. In adopting the idea of nationalism *à la Europe*, it was inevitable that they should give it some local colouring. Thus 'religious nationalism', 'regional nationalism', 'cultural nationalism' and 'ethnic nationalism' were all proclaimed.[1] Initially, there was no clear-cut division between these brands and Islam was always there in implicit if not in explicit form. But by the beginning of the nineteen-twenties a more linguistic and racially based nationalism came to the fore.

The various national movements arose in response to different challenges. In Egypt, nationalism emerged as a reaction to both European colonialism and traditional Islam, which was seen as backward and obscurantist, as well as the rediscovery of pre-Islamic Egyptian history. When, in 1922, the tomb of Tutankhamun was discovered and opened it generated considerable interest in Pharaonic history and the pre-Islamic identity of Egypt. Ahmad Shawqi, who was a court poet during the era of Muhammad Ali, became the spokesperson of Egyptian nationalism which drew inspiration from the Pharaonic past of Egypt. Thus Egyptian nationalism emerged as an attempt to end British occupation, and had a specific Egyptian (Pharaonic) rather an Islamic or Arab content. In Lebanon, nationalism was introduced by Arab Christians who sought a greater measure of autonomy under the protection of European powers.[2] In Syria and Palestine, Muslims and Christians lived together and the emphasis was put on their common 'national bond'. Turkish nationalism grew out of the continuing decline, and eventual collapse of the Caliphate and the Ottoman Empire, as well as the persistent and growing pressure from Europe. Kemal Atatürk and the Young Turks were aggressively anti-Islamic and saw Islam as a hindrance to the modernisation of Turkey. Turkish nationalism was based on pride in being a Turk and on total and complete imitation of Europe. In contrast, Muslim nationalism in the Indian subcontinent had strong Islamic roots. Indian Muslims leaders, like the poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal, felt that the Islamic identity of the Muslims of India would be submerged in an India dominated by Hindus. The whole *raison d'être* of the Pakistan movement was to have a separate homeland for Muslims where their identity and religion could be protected. However, one thing all national movements agreed upon, and all varieties of nationalism shared: the idea that European political theory, with the nation-state as its base, was the model to follow.

Initially, the Islamic movements took an antinationalist stand. The Jamaat-e-Islami, for example, was originally against Muslim nationalism and the idea of Pakistan but after the creation of Pakistan, nationalism became an unconscious part of the agenda of Jamaat-e-Islami. Also the idea of Islam and state became intrinsically linked. Pakistan was created as the 'first Islamic state'; it followed that Islam was both the religion of the state as well as the state. The 'Islamic state' was to be ruled by the *Shari'ah*, or Islamic law, and the best rulers of the 'Islamic state' could only be those who had

knowledge and expertise in Islamic law and who were recognised by the populace as the true guardians of Islam: the *ulema* or the religious scholars. During the nineteen-fifties, sixties and seventies, Islamic movements throughout the Muslim world were engaged in an intense struggle for the establishment of 'Islamic states', dominated, if not totally ruled, by the *ulema*. On the whole, this endeavour was based on democratic means with the emphasis on organising cells of devoted and loyal activists. But the arrival of fundamentalism changed all that.

Fundamentalism is a direct result of the failure of secular nationalism in the Muslim world and of the imported European modernity on which it was based. Dictatorial nation-states stripped Muslim societies of their plurality by marginalising all except the westernised elites from power and ruthlessly suppressing all minorities. Modernity stripped Muslim communities of their protective, insulating layer of tradition and civic society. Neither nationalism nor modernity recognised or addressed the basic sources of the suffering of Muslim people. Ill-fitting modernisation and development schemes destroyed the very foundation of traditional lifestyles. Displaced from their land and unable to sustain themselves, millions of farmers and rural folk were, and still are, forced to migrate to overcrowded cities, without infrastructure, adequate housing, sanitation or employment.[3] Deprivation and bitterness breeds extremism; when it is combined with a strong sense of religious identity fundamentalism is the lethal product.

Where nationalism and modernity have failed spectacularly, fundamentalism has inspired many Muslims with its successes. The Iranian revolution demonstrated to Islamists everywhere that armed struggle pays when the Islamic movement is faced by an oppressive secular state. The success of the mujahideen in Afghanistan showed that pure religious will can overpower a superpower. The religiously based intifada in Palestine, as well as the Muslim militants in Lebanon, in sharp contrast to nationalists, provide evidence that the tables can be turned on those who refuse to listen to just Muslim demands. And where secularists would not allow democratic representation of Islam, as in Algeria, Islam can be brought in through the back door – with the help of the military as in the Sudan and the Pakistan of General Zia.

However, despite its apparent successes fundamentalism has turned out to be just as oppressive and authoritarian as naked secular nationalism: Iran and the Sudan provide good demonstrations of

the oppressive capability of fundamentalism. This *has* to be so, as fundamentalism is the product of exactly the same dynamic as secular nationalism. Islamic fundamentalism is not based on a classical religious narrative or Muslim tradition: it has no historical precedence. It is a modern, concocted dogma. It uses both religious chauvinism and nationalism for the formulation of an ahistoric social identity. It combines the retrieval of a constructed romantic and puritan past with the modernist ideal of a nation confined in a territorial nation-state to generate a wholly new religious and political outlook.

Islam is pre-eminently a doctrine of truth. In the fundamentalist purview, believing in the truth of Islam is equated with *possessing* the truth. Thus fundamentalists, claiming that only their version of Islam is the absolute truth, not only deny the manifest diversity and plurality of Islam, but also arrogate divine powers to themselves. What distinguishes fundamentalism from traditional Islam, as Parvez Manzoor has argued so convincingly, is that 'the cognitive theory of "state" is "fundamental" to its vision of Islam and represents a paramount fact of its consciousness'. Thus, from a 'totalistic theocentric worldview, a God-centered way of life and thought, of knowledge and action', Islam is transformed into a 'total-itarian theocratic world order that submits every human situation to the arbitration of the state'.[4] When society and state become one, politics disappears, cultural and social spaces are totally homogenised, and the end product mirrors fascism. When Islam is transformed into an exclusivist ideology, the sacred is politicised and politics becomes sacred; everything is bulldozed into a quasi-fascist uniformity. The fundamentalist interpretation of Islam not only does violence to its tradition, history and pluralistic outlook, but has no solution to offer the modern world. Fundamentalism is, in the words of Manzoor, 'all cause and no programme' and thus superfluous and irrelevant to contemporary times.

This fabricated dogma of Islam-as-fundamentalism is very much a minority phenomenon in the Muslim world. Most fundamental-ist organisations, as their very names suggest, encircle a minority to the exclusion of the majority: 'The Muslim Brotherhood', 'Hizbullah' ('The Party of God'), Gamaa-el-Islam (the Egyptian 'The Party of Islam'). The very nature of these insular movements, based as they are on the retrieval of an imagined 'pristine' beginning, leads them to engage with the world in terms of dichotomies: fundamentalism

versus modernism, normativism versus accculturationism, revivalism versus re-entrenchment, Islam versus the west. Thus everything must be rejected; and the rejection begins by cutting off ties with the west and all its ills and ends with intolerance of all interpretations of Islam which differ from those of the clan. Similar ideas lead to a total rejection of democracy. But democracy, or indeed any notion, western or non-western, clashes with Islam only when it conceives itself as a doctrine of truth or violates one of the fundamental notions of Islam. Only when democracy becomes wedded to atheistic humanism and lays claims to being a dogma of truth, or when secularism interprets itself as an epistemology, does it clash with the faith of Islam. As a mechanism for representative government, devoid of its ideological pretensions and trappings, democracy has no quarrel with Islam. But fundamentalism is too one-dimensional to make such distinctions.

It is because of its exclusivist and one-dimensional outlook, as well as its intrinsic connection with an idealised nation-state of Islam, that fundamentalism has no long-term future. An Islamic party or government that comes to power by force and rules by terror, violence and intrigue is a contradiction in terms. It is anti-Islamic and its anti-Islamic nature will eventually become evident to all Muslims. Witness how all those who initially welcomed and supported the Iranian revolution now reject the theocratic and totalitarian state it has created. It is also worth pointing out that in Islam there is no difference between ends and means: an Islamic goal can only be achieved by Islamic means. Thus only through *ijma* (consensus) and *shura* (consultation), the two fundamental concepts of Islamic political theory, can a true Islamic polity be established. The global decline of the sovereignty of nation-states will also make fundamentalism superfluous. 'Our world is beginning to resemble', as John Keane notes,

> the *form* of the mediaeval world, in which monarchs were forced to share power and authority with a variety of subordinate and higher powers. The trend has profound implications for the struggle for an Islamic state. It renders implausible the revolutionary strategy of seizing state power, if need be through the use of force, precisely because the centers of state power are tending to become more dispersed and, hence, immune from 'capture' by a single party or government. Not only that, but insofar as 'the

state' ceases to be in one place to be 'seized' the struggle by Islamists to monopolize state is rendered unnecessary.[5]

Nationalism itself however will continue to play an important part in the Muslim world for the next few decades not least because the end of the Cold War has unleashed nationalist sentiments in the Muslim communities of Central Asia. The war was cold because it froze history in Europe and abandoned the fate of some 150 million Muslims to communism. The emergence of the six new Islamic republics in central Asia – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyztan, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – as well as Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina, has provided impetus for Muslims in Russia and China to follow suit. Despite all the efforts, it would not be possible to curb the tide of nationalism and the desire of Muslim regions in Russia for old-fashioned liberation. The war in Chechenia is an indication of what is to follow: there will be nationalist struggles for independence in Dagestan, Abkhazia, Adzhar, Kabardino-Balkar and Tatraristan within the next decade. Nationalist movements will also emerge in southern China, particularly in the province of Xinjiang.

However, contrary to conventional belief, the emergence of Muslim nationalism in Central Asia will hasten the demise of mindless fundamentalism. It will also increase the pressure on older Muslim states to produce real Islamic alternatives to oppressive forms of modernity and come up with more participatory forms of governance. The more established parties of the Islamic movement, like the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan, have already foreseen this future. These organisations have now started to concentrate their efforts on social and intellectual reform and developing alternative models and policies for solving the pressing problems of poverty, unemployment and social dislocation. Traditional communities are being empowered in areas of life underneath and outside the state thus laying the foundation for a future transition to more consensus-oriented, consultative and democratic forms of Islamic polity.[6]

Imported and imposed European nationalism and modernity disenfranchised a large segment of the global Muslim community – the ummah – and took it to extremes of poverty and social and cultural dislocation. Fundamentalism emerged as a gut reaction against modernity and pushed more militant elements in Muslim communities to the other extreme. The Muslims now know from experience

that neither offer positive solutions to their problems. The emerging, new discourse in Muslim societies is about 'the middle path' as emphasised by the Qur'an: 'And thus we have willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that with your lives you might bear witness with truth before humanity' (2:143).

Notes

1. A. L. Tibawi, *Arabic and Islamic Themes*, Luzac, London, 1976; chapter 5, 'From Islam to Arab Nationalism', pp. 99–153.
2. A. Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Faber & Faber, London, 1991, pp. 308–11.
3. For a fascinating account of how this process has worked, see D. Hillel, *Rivers of Eden*, Oxford University Press, London, 1994.
4. S. Parvez Manzoor, 'The future of Muslim politics: critique of the "fundamentalist" theory of the Islamic state', *Futures*, 23 (3), pp. 289–301 (1991).
5. John Keane, 'Power sharing Islam?' in Azzam Tamimi (editor), *Power Sharing Islam*, Liberty for Muslim World Publications, London, 1993, p. 22.
6. For a detailed exploration of this new discourse, see Ziauddin Sardar, *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come*, Mansell, London, 1985; and the special issue on 'Islam and the Future' of *Futures*, 23 (3) 1991.

6 Paper, Printing and Compact Discs: The Making and Unmaking of Islamic Culture

Communication in Islam is intrinsically related to the fundamental Qur'anic concept of *ilm*. Often translated as 'knowledge', *ilm* is one of the most frequently occurring terms in the Qur'an; indeed, only two other words appear more frequently: Allah (God) and *Rabb* (the Creator, the Sustainer). As a defining concept of the worldview of Islam, its influence permeates – or in the contemporary situation, should permeate, – all aspects of Muslim individual and societal behaviour. This is why the pursuit of *ilm* is a religious obligation for all Muslims. For the Muslims of the classical period, Islam was synonymous with *ilm*; without it, an Islamic civilisation was unimaginable. For a Muslim civilisation of the future, it is even more so.

Ilm means much more than knowledge. Contained within it is the idea of communication: *ilm*, by definition, cannot be a monopoly of a certain class, group or sex; it has to be freely available to all members of society. Thus communication of knowledge, ideas and information – in all areas of human endeavour – is an integral part of the notion of *ilm*. *Ilm* is thus knowledge as well as all communication of knowledge; it is the pursuit of knowledge as well as the distribution and transmission of knowledge; it is data, information, knowledge and wisdom all rolled in to one. In other words, *ilm* is the basic driving force of Islamic culture.

The history of communication in Islam, as well as the history of Islamic culture itself, is a history of Muslim understanding of the notion of *ilm* and its actualisation in society. When examined solely from this perspective, Muslim history reveals three major transformations in Islamic culture: the two historic transformations are products of diametrically opposing views of *ilm*; the third, where a new synthesis is being sought, is the domain of contemporary and future times. The changing relationship between Islamic culture and the concept of *ilm* reveals as much about Muslim history as it tells us about the possible future path of Muslim civilisation.

The Formative Phase

That Muslim culture is a culture of knowledge and communication is made clear in the first verses of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet Muhammad – while he was meditating in a cave on Mount Hira near Makkah – on the fateful night of 27 Ramadan 611:

> Read in the name of the Sustainer, who has created
> Created man out of a germ-cell!
> Read – for the Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One
> Who has taught [man] the use of the pen
> taught man what he knew not. (96:1–5)

Muslim scholars have shown the word *iqra*, translated here as 'read', implies the idea of conscious taking-in, with or without an audible utterance but with a view to understanding the words and ideas being received from an outside source: in this case, the message of the Qur'an. 'The pen' also conveys the idea of communication; it is a symbol not just for the art of writing, but communication of all knowledge by means of any technology. The pen – as a symbol of communication, is the instrument for fulfilling the Qur'anic summons to the Muslim community: 'Read'. But, apart from the message of the Qur'an, what are Muslims to communicate? The Qur'an tells us that both the act of reading and the use of the pen are associated with 'what he [man] knew not'. That phrase contains the idea of knowledge yet to be discovered as well as all that the single individual cannot know himself; thus, the verses conveys both the notion of research and the idea of accumulative knowledge. Research and discovery are essential for reading, in the words of the Qur'an, 'the signs of God'; and the ability to communicate and transmit, by means of written records, thoughts, experiences and insights from individual to individual, from generation to generation, and from one cultural environment to another, is vital if every human being is to partake of the benefits of mankind's continuous accumulation of knowledge. The first verses of the Qur'an thus lay the foundations of a culture and society based on reading and writing, research and penmanship, communication and transmission of knowledge and information. Any society that does not demonstrate these traits cannot be said to be upholding the ideals of Islam.

The Qur'an uses the word *ilm* more than 800 times; devoting around one third of its contents to praising such notions as reason,

reflection, research, study, scholarship, travel – all of which ultimately hinge on some kind of communication. In some cases its exhortations are general: 'And say: Oh my Lord increase me in knowledge' (20:114); 'Surely in the heavens and the earth there are signs for believers' (43:3); and 'travel on the earth and see how He makes the first creation, then God creates the latter creation, surely God has power over all things' (29:20). In other cases it gives specific instructions. It tells the writers that they 'should not refuse to write' (9:282) as this would be a denial of the gift that God has bestowed upon them. It asks Muslims to write down all contracts involving business transactions; record all matters relating to inheritance, wills and last testaments; document the histories of previous and current generations. In other words, communicate your historic and current thoughts, intentions and activities.

The first Muslim community, living in Medina, recorded the Qur'an on almost anything they could find. On papyrus, palm fibres, bone tablets, hides, white stones and parchment. The Prophet Muhammad himself had his important decisions documented. Nearly 300 of his documents have come down to us, including political treatises, military enlistments, assignments of officials and state correspondence written on tanned leather. Because he could not read and write himself, the Prophet was constantly served by a group of 45 scribes who wrote down his sayings, instructions and activities.

The exclusive centre of communication during the second half of the seventh century was the Prophet's mosque in Medina. Members of the small Muslim community gathered in the mosque not just for daily prayer, but also to receive and transmit news as well as to take part in political decisions. Whenever it was necessary, the Prophet would address the whole Muslim community in the mosque, leading an uproarious discussion, before making a final decision. At very large gatherings, certain members of the community, with powerful voices, acted as 'transmitters'. For example, at the last sermon of the Prophet's 'Farewell Pilgrimage', which was attended by tens of thousands of people, hundreds of transmitters were positioned at key spots in the valley of Arafat near Makkah. As the Prophet spoke, the transmitters repeated his words sentence by sentence so that the whole valley resounded with the words of the Prophet and everyone present was able to hear what he was saying.

Before his death, the Prophet ensured that the Qur'an was written down in its totality in a number of available media, including the

'breast of men'. After the death of the Prophet, Uthman, the third Caliph of Islam, combined the various media and preserved the Qur'an in a single volume written on leather. Given its size and character, the preservation of the Qur'an was not a problem. The young Muslim community, however, faced the more serious problem of communicating the vast number of sayings, deeds and tacit approvals of the Prophet Muhammad, available in written form in numerous media as well as orally in the memories of his companions, to the future generations of Muslims. The problem generated a unique solution in critical communication: the science of transmitting, validating and authenticating *hadith* – sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. The methodology developed for the transmission and communication of *hadith*, and the vast corpus of literature it generated, became the intellectual basis for the management of information in Muslim civilisation.

The methodology of *hadith* collection, criticism and transmission involved not only textual analysis but biographical analysis of narrators, chronological accuracy, linguistic and geographic parameters as well as authentication of oral and written records. Each saying of the Prophet was traced through a chain of authoritative transmitters right to the lips of the Prophet Muhammad himself. The system of tracing narrators to the source was called *isnad* or 'backing'; the method of checking the quality of the transmitter came to be known as *ilm ar-Rijal* (Science of Biography). Thus a tradition of the Prophet always contains an *isnad* which takes the form; 'so-and-so said that so-and-so said that so-and-so said that the Prophet said …'. A special group of scholars emerged who devoted their whole lives to checking each link in the chain: Are the individuals concerned reliable reporters? Is it chronologically and geographically feasible that the individuals in the chain actually met? Are they individuals of sound morals, not motivated by political or sectarian concerns? Is the reported tradition logically and rationally consistent? Does it linguistically reflect the words of the Prophet? Does the reported tradition agree with the teachings of the Qur'an? And, is it the kind of thing that it is reasonable for us to believe that the Prophet would have said? Each tradition was analysed on the basis of these and other questions and classified into three categories according to its reliability: *sahih* (authentic), *hasan* (agreeable) and *daeef* (weak). A *sahih hadith* has unbroken *isnad* resting on solid authority. *Hasan* is a *hadith* whose *isnad*, though, complete, has one weak link, but which is confirmed by another

person. A *daeef hadith* is one where either the chain is incomplete or the authority is weak. The *hadith* which suffer from a missing link or a weak narrator are classified as *mursal* or *mudal*. The *mursal* has a missing link of a number of transmitters in the chain of *isnad*; a *mudal hadith* has an *isnad* with a missing transmitter. There are many other varieties, for example: *munkar* which is related by a weak transmitter and contradicted by a weaker one; *mudraj* which is interpolated; *mudhtaria* which is deranged by verbal inconsistancies; and *maudu* which is mere supposition or fabrication. Using this elaborate system of categorisation, the scholars of *hadith* sifted through literally millions of *hadith*. Imam Bukhari, the famous compiler of *hadith*, collected a reported six million *hadith;* but after criticism, accepted only 7,275 traditions as authentic, and therefore religiously binding, which are collected in his famous *Sahih Bukhari*. Imam Muslim collected over three million; but rejected all except 9,200 which we find in his *Sahih Muslim*.[1]

The methodology of *hadith* collection and criticism, with all its precision and accuracy, combined with the Qur'anic emphasis on *ilm,* became the basis for a host of new scholarly and literary genres. Generation and communication of knowledge within Muslim society, absorption and synthesis of learning from other civilisations including Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, India, China and Persia, became the hallmark of the Islamic culture. The translation of books of ancient civilisations from such languages as Greek, Syriac, Sanskrit, Chinese and Persian into Arabic is one of the most remarkable instances of cultural transmission in human history. The ancient learning was sifted, analysed and accepted or rejected with a critical eye that was fashioned on the grindstone of *hadith* criticism. Within a hundred years of its inception, Islamic culture was already passing through a major transformation.

The First Transformation

It was the inner urge 'to know', acquire *ilm*, that transformed Islam from its desert origins into a world civilisation. The definition, elaboration and exposition of the concept of *ilm* became a major preoccupation of Muslim civilisation. The term itself was defined in countless different ways: the Spanish writer ibn Sabin (d.1270) lists hundreds of definitions of *ilm* in his *Budd al-Arif* and, in *Knowledge Triumphant*, Franz Rosenthal has collected over 500 different definitions of knowledge from the classical period of Islam.[2] Related to

the exposition of the concept of *ilm* was the question of classification of knowledge. Numerous elaborate classification schemes were produced, all aiming at providing a mechanism for the storage and retrieval of information as well as systematic acquisition of knowledge. One of the first attempts to classify knowledge was made by the philosopher al-Kindi (d.807); but it was al-Farabi, the author of *The Perfect State*, who produced the most influential and widely used classification scheme. He was followed by a host of other celebrated writers including ar-Razi (d.925), ibn Sina (d.1037), al-Ghazzali (d.1111) and ibn Khaldun (d.1406). The classifications themselves engendered numerous genres of bibliographical tools such as biographical dictionaries, genealogical tables and biographical treatises as well as narrative and interpretative works of reference.

The proliferation of written communication in the Muslim world, including the emergence of an elaborate educational system by the middle of the ninth century, and the entrenchment of *ilm* as the operative concept of Islamic culture, was made possible by one of the most revolutionary events in Islamic history and 'a milestone in the history of mankind':[3] the manufacture of paper. Parchment and papyrus were difficult to handle and not easy to procure. The wide availability of paper, on the other hand, was not just a tremendous stimulus to learning, it also made books accessible and relatively cheap. The end result was a cultural revolution based on the production of books on an unprecedented scale: the concept of *ilm* was transformed into a truly distributive practice.

Paper was first introduced in the Muslim world in the mid-eighth century in Samarkand. In 751, after the Battle of Talas, Muslims captured some Chinese who were professional paper makers. The prisoners were immediately provided facilities to practise their craft. The Chinese first acquired the art of paper-making, using mulberry bark, around 150. However, the Chinese craft of paper-making introduced in Samarkand could not be transformed into a manufacturing process, not least because mulberry bark was not widely available in Muslim lands. The Muslims therefore introduced new inventions, and certain major innovations, to transform the craft of paper-making into an industry: the substitution of flax, cotton and linen rags for the mulberry bark and the introduction of a bamboo mould which could be used to drain wet sheets of paper and from which paper could be removed while still moist; a number of fermentation processes, to speed up the disintegration of flax or linen rags by adding quicklime and other chemicals; and the use of the

trip-hammer, which involved artisans treading on the end of a horizontal tilt-bar and causing a huge hammer to fall on the substance to be pulped. Later, waterwheels – invented in 1151 in Jativa, a renowned centre for the manufacture of paper in Islamic Spain – were used to drive trip-hammers. Finally, the Muslims introduced the process of sizing paper with wheat starch, a process that provided a suitable surface for writing with ink.

The paper industry spread quickly from Samarkand. The first paper mill in Baghdad was established in 793 during the reign of the celebrated Abbassid Caliph, Harun al-Rashid (d.809). Soon paper mills appeared in Damascus, Tiberias, Tripoli, Cairo, Fez, and Muslim Sicily, in Jativa and Valencia in Moorish Spain and in other parts of the Islamic World. Within a few decades, Abbassid vazir Jafar ibn Yahya was able to replace parchment with paper in government offices. By the end of the tenth century, there were even floating paper mills on the Tigris and paper had become so common that a Persian traveller, writing in 1040, observed that in Cairo 'the vendors of vegetables and spices are furnished with paper in which everything they sell is wrapped'. It took several hundred years before paper finally arrived in Europe: the first European paper mill was established in 1276 in Fabriano, Italy, and the next appeared in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1390 – justifying the boast of the ninth-century scholar, al-Jahiz, who declared that 'the papyrus of Egypt is for the West what the paper of Samarkand is for the East'.

The manufacture of paper led to the creation of the new profession of the *warraq*. The *warraqeen* (plural of *warraq* which is itself drived from *waraq*, the Arabic word for paper; the Arabic word for a bundle of paper, *rismah*, has survived as ream in English, *resma* in Spanish and *risma* in Italian) were a key element in the communication of knowledge and performed a number of functions. They sold paper and served as stationers; they worked as scribes copying manuscripts on behalf of their clients; they sold books and managed bookshops; they manufactured and published books; and they were writers, thinkers and intellectuals in their own right. As stationers, the *warraqeen* often made their own paper exclusively for book production. While their efforts at paper-making were much more labour-intensive, compared with those of the large manufacturing plants, it had the virtue of making the *warraqueen* totally self-sufficient.

As booksellers, the *warraqeen* managed anything from a stall on the street to huge bookshops in pleasant upper chambers removed

from the dust of the bazaar. While *warraq* stalls were to be found all over such cities as Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Granada and Fez, the bookshops themselves were usually concentrated in a specific quarter of the city. Al-Yaqubi, the famous Muslim scholar of the late ninth century, counted more than a hundred bookshops in the Waddah suburb of Baghdad alone. The large and reputable bookshops attracted scholars from considerable distances and acted as informal clubs for academic discussions and as meeting grounds for writers and thinkers with mutual interests. Undoubtedly the most famous bookshop in Muslim history belonged to the tenth-century bibliophile al-Nadim (d.990). Al-Nadim's bookshop in Baghdad was crammed with thousands of manuscripts and became well know as a meeting place for notable writers, thinkers and men of letters of his time. The annotated catalogue of the contents of his bookshop, *al-Fihrist al-Nadim,* is renowned as an encyclopaedia of medieval Islamic culture.[4]

As copyists, the *warraqeen* served as human photocopying machines: a manuscript of over a hundred pages would be copied in a day or so! But being intellectuals in their own right, the *warraqeen* could not resist noting their own comments and criticisms on the margins. The manuscripts themselves were not in the form of scrolls, but of books with paper leaves bound together by leather covers. The handwritten volumes were the size of the modern book, with writing on both sides of the paper and roughly twice as bulky as their con-temporary printed counterpart. For example, the famous *kitab al-Aghani*, a compendium of poetic and prose passages, with many stories about the caliphs, poets, singing girls and popular heroes – filled 5,000 leaves of handwritten manuscript; the modern edition, on the other hand, fills five volumes, each of about 400 pages, and one shorter volume with 280 pages.

The publication industry pioneered by the *warraqeen* worked on a system of mutual co-operation between writers and their publishers. A writer wishing to publish a book would announce his intentions publicly and would also contact one or two *warraqeen*. The book would be 'published' in a mosque or a noted bookshop where the author would dictate his book every day during an appointed time. Anyone could attend these public dictations and it was not uncommon for a large number of students and other scholars to be present. But usually the authors would insist that only the appointed *warraqeen* could actually write the book down. The dictation of the book would take considerable time; sometimes several months

during which the appointed *warraqeen* would always be present. When the book was finished, a handwritten manuscript would be presented to the author for checking and correction. When the author had given his final approval that the book could enter into the public domain and other copies be freely made from the master copy, then, by agreement with the *warraqeen*, the author would receive a royalty. A manuscript transcribed by the *warraqeen* during a public dictation had little value unless it carried the *ijaza* (permission) which indicated that it was the authorised copy of the work by the author. Countless books were published throughout the Muslim lands using this method of publication; the oldest extant manuscript published in Arabic in this manner is dated 874.

The publication industry that dominated the length and breadth of the Muslim empire, from the eighth to the fifteenth century, was an industry of mind-boggling complexity.[5] But it was not just an industry; it was an institution central to the expression of Islamic culture – an institution with its own customs and practices, its own checks against fraud and misrepresentation and, above all, an institution that ensured that learning and books were not the prerogative of a select few but were available to all those who desired them. It also ensured that scholars and authors themselves benefited, both economically and in terms of recognition, from their work. And it was an institution that engendered other institutions.

Books which were painstakingly copied from dictation and published, beautifully illuminated and bound, were worthy of preservation. Initially, book-lovers and owners began to bequeath them to mosques, shrines or schools where they could be properly cared for and made accessible to local and passing scholars. Mosque libraries began to mushroom, and most Friday (*jami*) mosques in both big and small cities began to acquire major collections. The demand for books was so great that both private and public libraries proliferated at an unprecedented rate. Public libraries varied in size from small rooms to giant complexes specially built for the purpose. According to George Makdisi,[6] six terms were used in combination to designate libraries. Three of these denoted locales: *bait* (room), *khizana* (closet), and *dar* (house); and three related to content: *hikma* (wisdom), *ilm* (knowledge), and *kutub* (books). These words and concepts were combined to form seven terms describing libraries: *bait al-hikma, khizana al-hikma, dar al-hikma, dar al-kutub, khizana al-kutub* and *bait al-kutub*. Two others may be added: *bait al-ilm,* and *al-khizana*

al-ilmiya. At the time of the Mongol devastation of Baghdad, in 1258, there were 36 libraries in the city bearing such titles.

Undoubtedly, the biggest and most famous library in the Muslim world was the *Bait al-Hikma* (House of Wisdom), a combination of research institute, library and translation bureau, founded by the Abbassid Caliph Harun al-Rashid in 830. For centuries it played host to such celebrated scholars as al-Kindi (d.866), the translator and commentator of Aristotle, al-Khwarizmi (d.850?), who wrote his famous work *Kitab al-jabr wa al-Muqabilah* that laid the foundations of modern algebra (the word itself is derived from the title) at the *Bait al-Hikma*, and the famous physician Ishaq ibn Hunain (d.910), who wrote his medical treatise there and also collected manuscripts on behalf of the library. Other famous libraries of the city included the library at the Nazamiyyah University which was founded in 1065 and the library at Mustanriyah University which was established in 1227. But Baghdad was by no means unique in boasting magnificent libraries. Similar libraries were to be found in Damascus, Cairo, Shiraz, Fez, Samarkand, Bukhara and Cordoba. All big libraries had separate rooms for copiers, binders and librarians. All Muslim libraries, big and small, were designed in such a way that the whole library was visible from one central point and followed an open-shelf approach to storage and display. Nothing could come between books and their users.

For over 800 years, Muslim civilisation was genuinely a civilisation of the book: founded by a book (the Qur'an), propelled by the notion of *ilm* to acquire and communicate all branches of knowledge, its main preoccupation – while not defending or extending its borders – was the production and distributions of books. It was hardly surprising that science, philosophy, medicine, architecture, art, literature and criticism flourished. But the unparalleled production and consumption of books became a source of concern for a particular class in Muslim society; the religious scholars. They were to ensure that the Muslim reaction to the introduction of printing was radically different from their earlier reaction to the discovery of paper.

The Second Transformation

From the inception of Islam, the notion of *ilm* served as a general mandate for acquiring all form of knowledge as well as discovering and utilising all means for its dissemination and communication.

The written word, in the form of books, was seen as the basic vehicle for the communication of *ilm* to all segments of society. There was no division between the written word, the text and the 'real world'. But around the end of the fourteenth century, at the time when ibn Khaldun, the father of sociology, was writing his *Muqaddima* or 'Introduction to History', the notion of *ilm* went through a revolutionary transformation.[7] The *ulema* ('religious scholars', that is those who possess *ilm)* began to conceive of the written word as something apart from life itself, an independent realm of representation and truth. The proliferation of books had placed a distance between authors and the words that carry their ideas across space and time. The text was open to a variety of interpretations, irrespective of real facts and truth. Ibn Khaldun was himself aware of the problem. To write, he had argued, is to risk being misread or misunderstood. The reader must extract the ideas, what the author intends to communicate, from the words, or rather sounds, that express them.

So what if a given text is open to a number of interpretations? The *ulema* had two concerns. First, the sacred text of Islam, the Qur'an, was open to all kinds of wild interpretations, not just by untutored readers, but also by unqualified and improperly trained writers. To some extent, this was a genuine concern given the variety of irrational and exploitative behaviour that was being justified on the basis of the Qur'an and *hadith*. But this was intimately linked to the second and more important worry: the proliferation of written texts had begun to undermine the authority and control that the *ulema* enjoyed over both the Muslim rulers and the masses.

The initial response of the *ulema*, which appeared over a period of a hundred years, was to undermine the concept of *ilm* itself. This was an exercise in reduction: *ilm* was now transformed from meaning 'all knowledge', to mean only 'religious knowledge'. So when the Qur'an asked 'Are those who have knowledge and those who have no knowledge alike?', it was interpreted to mean that those with religious knowledge are intellectually and morally superior to all those who do not have religious knowledge. When the Prophet exhorted the believers to 'go in search of knowledge even unto China', the quest for knowledge became a search for dogma. The *ulema* followed the reduction of *ilm* by establishing a set of very stringent criteria for the communication of *ilm*. The almost superhuman criteria involved: first, knowledge of the Qur'an and all that is related to it, including a complete knowledge of Arabic literature, a profound acquaintance with the orders of the Qur'an

and all their subdivisions, their relationships to each other and their connections with the order of the Sunnah – the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Second, knowing the Qur'an by heart as well as knowing the interpretation of each verse given by the classical jurists. Third, a perfect knowledge of the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, including perfect recall from memory of at least 3,000 traditions complete with their *isnad* – chain of transmitters. Fourth, a profound knowledge of the science of Islamic law, including knowledge of judgements of early jurists on matters of religious theory and practice. The *ulema* ruled that only those who could meet these criteria were capable of *ijtihad* (independent and reasoned judgement) and hence eligible for the coveted role of being communicators of new knowledge.

All this had a devastating effect on Muslim culture. From a general and distributive concept, *ilm* became an exclusive and accumulative notion: from an idea that empowered all in society, it became a notion that accumulated authority and power in the hands of a select group – usually those whose religious zeal was matched by powerful memories. To all intents and purposes, 'the gates of *ijtihad*' were closed. *Ijtihad* thus gave way to *taqlid* (blind imitation). The interpretation of the text of the Qur'an was frozen in history; and, in the absence of new ideas, reflections and understanding of changing circumstances, Muslim thought ossified and became totally obscurantist. Consequently, Muslim culture lost its dynamism and degenerated, while the Muslim community was transformed from an open to a closed society.

To maintain their hold on Muslim society, the *ulema* created a new body of knowledge: *fiqh*, or Islamic jurisprudence. *Fiqh* is the vast body of religious and legal rulings, often quite incomprehensible, and meaningless in contemporary circumstances, given by the jurists of classical Islam. Between the Muslim populace and their sacred texts – the Qur'an and the *hadith* – came the ocean of *fiqh* which only the *ulema* were qualified for, and capable of, navigating. In time, *fiqh* itself acquired a sacred identity, first by being associated with the Shari'ah or 'Islamic law' and then by *becoming* the Shari'ah. What goes under the rubric of Shari'ah in the contemporary Muslim world is little more than classical jurisprudence; it has little to do with the teaching of the Qur'an or the Prophet Muhammad himself. The role of the *ulema*, the guardians of the territory defined as Shari'ah, was, and is, focused largely on communicating *fiqh*. By the end of the seventeenth century, Muslim culture was totally

translated from a culture based on the generation and communica-
tion of all knowledge, to one grounded only on the communication
of *fiqh*, the legal judgements of a handful of classical scholars.

Not surprisingly, the arrival of printing produced a hostile
response from the *ulema,* who managed to resist the introduction of
printing presses in Muslim countries for nearly three centuries. Their
attack was based on two arguments. The mechanical reproduction of
the word of God or material connected with it, they argued, was
irreverent. Furthermore, they insisted that the only way to
understand a text and retain its uncertain authority was to hear or
read it aloud, phrase by phrase, by or in the presence of someone
who has already mastered it, and to repeat and discuss it with such
a master. The mass printing of books would lead not to understand-
ing and appreciation of sacred and classical texts but to their
misrepresentation and misunderstanding. At the time of the
Ottoman Sultan, Suleyman 'the Magnificent', the Turkish *ulema* were
successful in forbidding the use of printing, particularly for Islamic
books. By banning printing, noted Marshall Hodgson,

> they blocked, of all the by-products of the Occidental ferment of
> the time of the Renaissance, what might potentially have widened
> horizons most. In itself, of course, printing could not have led to
> any fundamental transformation (any more than it did in China),
> but it might have reinforced the wider Ottoman culture precisely
> against *Shari'ah*-minded restrictions.[8]

Indeed, it was the *ulema*'s defence of 'Shari'ah-minded restrictions',
the territory that gave them power and control, that was the basis of
the ban: the *ulema* knew exactly what they were up against.

The *ulema* of other Muslim countries expressed similar animosity
towards printing. Napoleon's first act on arriving at Alexandria was
to issue a printed proclamation, prepared by French Orientalists, to
the Egyptian people. When the Egyptian historian al-Jabarti received
a copy of the printed declaration, his first reaction was to rewrite the
whole text in longhand, and then to list all the grammatical errors
contained in the short communication: 'phrase by phrase he pointed
out the colloquialisms, ellipses, inconsistencies, morphological inac-
curacies and errors of syntax of the French Orientalists, drawing from
the incorrect usages a picture of the corruptions, deceptions, mis-
understandings and ignorance of the French authorities'[9] and the
types of social errors that mass printing of text can produce.

Napoleon established the first printing press in the Middle East; and after the departure of the French, the Egyptian government also set up its own press. But it was strictly for the use of military instruction. Those who tried to set up printing presses for their own purposes were prosecuted and exiled. When Egypt was forced to abandon its military ambitions in the 1850s, the presses fell into disrepair. In 1861, they were formally shut down. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, printed books in Arabic consisted mostly of Bibles and Christian literature emanating from the press of the *Propaganda Fide* in Rome and some lithographic hand-presses in convents on Mount Lebanon. In India, printing met the same fate. The only printing presses in operation till the end of the nineteenth century were those run by missionaries in Bengal, where both the Bible and works on modern science were printed in the vernacular languages. These had a much larger market than the Persian and Sanskrit books which the British Orientalists had also been publishing.

By regulating *ilm* to the domains of religious knowledge and dogma and by 'forbidding' printing, the *ulema* unmade the knowledge-based Islamic culture within a century. The damage inflicted on Islamic culture by this internal haemorrhage was far deeper, and indeed much more lasting, than all the external calamities that befell Muslim societies, including the ransacking of Baghdad by the Mongols, the fall of Granada and the end of Spanish Islam, and even the onslaught of colonialism. The *ulema* managed to achieve what the external forces could not accomplish: the erection of a barrier between the Muslim populace and their fundamental texts.

The Coming Transformation

The contemporary manifestations of Islam, with their emphasis on the theocratic 'Islamic state' – obsession with *fiqh*-based Shari'ah which is seen only in terms of *hudud* (outer limits), punishments, intolerance of dissent, political censorship and suppression of women – all these are products of a system of thought that is quite divorced from the spirit of the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. It represents Islam not as a total system of knowing, being and doing, but as a totalitarian moral order presided over by a group with exclusive access to religious knowledge, the truncated perversion of *ilm*.

But *ilm*, as I have tried to argue, incorporates the idea of communication. As a distributive concept, *ilm* is the birthright of every Muslim, male or female, and should be equally accessible to all. Conventionally, the power of the *ulema* in Muslim societies has been based on their role as the repositories of knowledge, as data banks, as individuals who could instantly quote the Qur'an and *hadith* as well as comments, criticisms and opinions of classical jurists: they could thus pass instant judgement on a given topic, justifying their opinions with liberal quotes, and silence all opposition. In this way, the *ulema* have held Muslim societies and Islamic culture in suspended animation. Ordinary educated and thinking Muslims have neither the ability, nor the necessary time, either to seek new interpretations of the sacred text, or to dig into complex and confusing classical texts – in short, to equip themselves to challenge the domination of the *ulema*.

However, the new information technologies are set to change all that. It is in their use as *distributive* and *decentralised networks* that their greatest potential lies for Muslim societies and culture.[10] The use of personal computers has already become widespread in such Muslim countries as Malaysia, Pakistan and Egypt. The basic sources of Islam – the Qur'an and *Sahih Bukhari* – are readily available on floppy disks and are being used for study and criticism by many intellectuals who otherwise would have left the examination of fundamental texts in the hands of the *ulema*. Instead of ploughing through bulky texts, that require a certain expertise to read, a plethora of databases on the Qur'an and *hadith* now open up these texts and make them accessible to average, non-expert, users.[11] Increasingly, the *ulema* are being confronted by non-professional theologians who can cite chapter and verse from the fundamental sources, undermining not just their arguments but also the very basis of their authority.

The existing databases on the Qur'an and *hadith* make available only the basic sources of Islam: moreover, they do not, as the *ulema* have been quick to argue, furnish the user with the knowledge or expertise required for the interpretation of texts. A database does not equip the non-expert to undertake *ijtihad*, independent reasoning that leads to a new understanding or interpretation of fundamental texts. For that, one would still have to fulfil the stringent criteria laid down in the later classical periods by religious authorities. That is where the compact disc (CD) enters Islamic culture and history.

Given the vast storage capacities of compact discs, it is possible to put all the information needed to perform *ijtihad*, to fulfil the rigorous conditions laid down by the *ulema,* on a single CD. This information would include, along with the original text of the Qur'an and a number of noted translations and books of *Hadith*, the most authoritative classical commentaries on the Qur'an, the major works of various legal (*fiqhi*) schools of thought, classics of Arabic literature, and other traditional texts deemed necessary for the performance of *ijtihad*. When the vast, and fully adequate, database is combined with an 'expert system' that guides the user to make informed judgements, the classical criteria for the performance of *ijtihad* are complete. The 'expert system' incorporates the knowledge dimension of the *ulema* and manipulates the textual data, in all its vast complexity, at the behest of a user who also brings his/her own understanding of Islam to the process of seeking new and fresh appreciation of the text. In some cases, this new appreciation will lead to new interpretations.

What would such an expert system achieve? To begin with, by making classical sources easily accessible, such a system will demystify their nature and enable non-theologians to check the validity of what they are being told by the *ulema* in the name of Islam. It will also reveal the contradictions and banalities that have been given the stamp of authenticity by the *ulema* and enable and equip ordinary educated and concerned Muslims to take part in religious discussions of national importance. It will also reveal how the classical texts – particularly legal texts – have been manipulated by the *ulema* to defend all variety of religious, social and political systems when necessary, to please a caliph or a despot and to serve his purpose. And finally, it will open 'the gates of *ijtihad*', re-establish a continuous, interpretative relationship with their sacred text that the Muslims abandoned over five centuries ago, and make *ilm* the prime focus of Muslim thought and action. In short, Islamic culture could be remade, refreshed and re-established by the imaginative use of a new communication technology.[12]

Notes

1. For a more detailed description of *hadith* criticism, classification and transmission see M. M. Azmi, *Studies in Hadith Methodologies and Literature*, American Trust Publications, Indianapolis, Ind., 1977.
2. Brill, Leidan, 1970. See also: al-Ghazzali, *The Book of Knowledge*, translated by Nabih Amin Faris, Ashraf, Lahore, 1962.

3. Ahmad Y Al-Hassan and Donald R. Hill, *Islamic Technology: An Illustrated History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p. 190.

4. See al-Nadim, *The Fihrist of Al-Nadim*, edited and translated by Bayard Dodge, Columbia University Press, New York, 1971 (2 vols).

5. On the Muslim publishing industry see Johannes Pederson, *The Arabic Book*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1984; Gulnar Bosch et al., *Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking*, Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1981; and Basil Grey (ed.) (1979) *The Art of the Book in Central Asia*, Unesco, Paris, 1979.

6. George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1981.

7. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, translated by F. Rosenthal, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1967.

8. Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1958–59 (3 vols), p. 123.

9. Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 133.

10. For a detailed discussion of the impact and innovative use of computers, satellites and other communication technologies, see Ziauddin Sardar, *Information and the Muslim World*, Mansell, London, 1988.

11. The most popular packages are 'al-Qur'an and al-Hadith Database' produced by the Islamic Computing Centre, London; the multilingual database on the Qur'an, *hadith* and Islamic history produced by Institute Alif, Paris; 'The Alim' produced by ISL Software, San Antonio, Texas; and 'Al-Qari' produced by Sound Vision, Chicago.

12. New communication technologies – radio, television, and videos – are being used in various Muslim countries for teaching the fundamental sources of Islam. But this use is limited to an elementary level; the accent is always on memorising the text, not so much on understanding it. With a CD-based expert system we are taking a quantum leap in mastering, understanding and appreciating classical texts.

7   Reformist Ideas and Muslim Intellectuals: The Demands of the Real World

All reformist work must start with recognition of the world as it is. We must see and understand the world as it exists and not as we would like it to be. Only when we appreciate the true dimensions of contemporary reality can we contemplate reforms that will create the world we want.

Most Muslim scholars and professionals view the world not as it is but as a rosy-hued mirage which is largely a figment of their own minds. They cannot see that their disciplines are an arena of power politics, where objectivity and neutrality are rhetorical rationales for control, and integrity is simply another name for expedient self-interest. The world of intellectual disciplines, including the natural and social sciences, is not a world of dispassionate rationality, Platonic pursuit of truth or moral virtuosity. It is a world where ideational and ideological battles are fought and where thought and tradition are divided and demarcated for domination and control. In this game, Muslim scholars, scientists, economists are very much outsiders: unless they understand and appreciate this, their attempts to 'Islamise' this or that discipline will not only fail to usher in any reforms, but can, indeed will, surrender even more intellectual territory to the ideational universe of western civilisation.

There are three aspects of contemporary reality that ought to be appreciated by anybody engaged in Islamisation efforts or working on legal, social and economic reforms in Muslim society. The first aspect is the most obvious, and perhaps the most painful. Muslim thought is completely marginalised in the modern world. As it has made no input into the philosophical and intellectual pool of contemporary knowledge, it should harbour no illusions that it will be accepted on equal terms by and allowed to participate in the global knowledge industry. The corollary of this is that Muslim people are also totally marginalised and, despite an illusion of independence, are dependent on the dominant civilisation, an even more painful fact. That Muslim people will be allowed to determine their own

destiny cannot be taken for granted in a world where the ummah has a dependent status.

This aspect of contemporary reality has a direct bearing both on reform movements and on the Islamisation debate. Any country wishing to introduce the Shari'ah will face systematic opposition from the industrialised countries, as was so obviously the case with the Sudan. Any discipline that Muslim scholars may Islamise, if it is of any significance and presents a threat to the dominant discipline, will be simply co-opted.

The second stark feature of our time is interconnection and inter-dependence. In the modern – postmodern world everything is connected to everything else and is dependent upon developments in other spheres. Things do not exist in isolation; problems cannot be removed as it were from this interconnected, interlocking reality and tackled in isolation. In such a world, to establish the Shari'ah without introducing social, economic and educational reforms makes little sense. Or, introducing Islamic banking without doing anything about the unequal distribution of resources, does little to solve the problem of social justice. Economics is intrinsically linked to land reform, which is linked to politics; and politics itself is linked to science, technology, medicine, social formation and so on. Reform or Islamisation, therefore, cannot be undertaken in isolation. The enterprise can succeed only if it is systematically tackled on a number of different fronts, when disciplines are allowed to merge and cross-fertilise, when a new universe of disciplines, geared to the needs of the Muslim people and culture and subordinated to the worldview of Islam, emerges. The present disciplinary structure has evolved in the cultural and intellectual milieu of western civilisation – it is a direct response to its needs and worldview. Its boundaries are artificially maintained by the intellectual power and rigour that this civilisation commands.

The third feature of our world is that diversity is the essence of survival. Contrary to Darwinian myth, it is not the fittest who survive, but those who use plurality of means. Monocultures dominate, isolate, alienate, decimate and finally bore themselves to death with uniformity. The analogy is most clearly demonstrated in agriculture: too heavy a reliance on a single crop ends in famine; monoculture has a limited future. But multiplicity of crops produces abundance. Similarly, pluralistic societies have a higher chance of cultural survival and normally thrive.

What does this mean in terms of reform and Islamisation? It means that monolithic approaches to reform are doomed. The zeal of the righteous and the fanaticism of the revolutionary end in tyranny. All revolutions in history, even the one carried out in the name of Islam, end by replacing one tyranny with another. Iran is a shining example. Reform has to evolve, and be struggled for, consistently and constantly, by a number of different means and methods. A reformist is not a revolutionary; he or she is not foolish enough to believe that the world can be put right by a single act of political violence. Changes can be brought about and reforms introduced only by the methodology of the Prophet: by consistent and planned work, step by step, allowing time for adjusting to change, taking stock of the changing situation, occasionally side-stepping for strategic reasons, with unshaking will and determination. Any other method is pure euphoria, a day dream of a card-carrying imbecile.

For Islamisation, the diversity of modern reality has a special significance. It means that if Islamised disciplines become an appendage of western disciplines, they will be co-opted and swallowed up by the monolith. As such, they, like the dominant disciplines themselves, will have no real future. But if the Islamised disciplines develop independently of western disciplines, they have a real chance of flourishing in themselves and genuinely enriching the western ones. On this basis, Islamic economics, supposedly the most Islamised of contemporary disciplines, has nowhere to go!

Once we have moved into the world as it is, we can begin to shed the fallacies that have enveloped our thought and action. The prime illusion we must abandon is that we can solve our problems by borrowing from others, or tackling them in isolation, or that every Muslim country is an independent, self-sufficient, self-reliant 'sovereign' state. It is the indigenous and the whole that is the key to our intellectual and physical survival in the modern and postmodern world. Only when Muslim countries begin to see themselves as a civilisation and start relying on their indigenous capabilities and intellectual heritage can the ummah solve its pressing problems and present a viable challenge to the dominant civilisations. Contemporary reality demands that the Muslim ummah, made up of many and varied nation-states, acts as a single, holistic civilisation. Only by presenting a civilisation front can the ummah halt the advance of western civilisation at its boundaries and undertake meaningful reforms within it. An individual state

seeking social, economic, political and legal reform would therefore have the protection and support of the entire Muslim world. Isolationism is out – says the stark reality of our time. The same goes for parochialism and sectarianism.

Nothing has forced the Muslim world into subjugation and borrowed solutions more than parochialism and sectarianism. On the physical level, ethnic and sectarian identities have been overblown and turned into civil strife and national conflicts. Those who seek to assert their ethnic identity at the expense of unity are planting the seeds of their own destruction. Those who suppress or persecute ethnic minorities in the name of a national majority are mortgaging their future. Ethnic diversity is a source of cultural strength for Muslim societies. The motto of our time, we can read out there in the real world, is live and let live.

Parochialism is a widespread feature of Muslim thought. Narrow adherence to *fiqh* (classical jurisprudence), to the dictates of this or that school of thought, whether it has any contemporary relevance or not, is one manifestation of this parochialism. The real world takes no account of the glories of bygone ages, the rulings of historic times, outmoded thought and ideas. Its message is simple: adapt or perish. Muslim people have been on the verge of physical, cultural and intellectual extinction simply because they have allowed parochialism and petty traditionalism to rule their minds. We must break free from the ghetto mentality.

This means thinking imaginatively, boldly and universally. Islam is a universal worldview: it transcends all cultural boundaries and is not limited and confined by a single parochial outlook. This is stating the obvious; but the significance of this truism is seldom appreciated. For example, if Islam is a universal worldview, an economic system based on its principle should also be universal. Islamic economics therefore is a universal economics, not Muslim economics. Thus western economics, which is based on a particular culture and parochial (Eurocentric) outlook, should be an appendage to it, and not vice versa. This means, further, that Islamic economics has to be based on its own axiomatic structure, and not be derivative of western economic thought and its institutional apparatus. However, to develop an entire economic structure from first principles is so formidable a task that no Muslim economist has had the courage to undertake the exercise. And what is true of economics is also true of the other social sciences as well as of the natural sciences.

A universalist worldview, by its very nature, must be dynamic and constantly absorbing change. The real world is changing rapidly; indeed, it is changing at a rate unparalleled in history – the rate of change is itself changing! Under such circumstances, we cannot rely on static or premodernist formulations of the Shari'ah. Yet this is the spectacle that we are faced with: obscurantist rulings are dragged out from history as though they were eternal principles and forced into circumstances where they clearly do not belong. We must gain a fresh insight into the Shari'ah based on the factors that confront us.[1]

Why is it that most Muslim scholars fail to understand the dynamics of the real world? Perhaps it has something to do with the traditional nature of their education. Possibly it has something to do with their westernised thought and outlook, which militates against breaking free from the dominant civilisation. It could even be that they do not want to see: 'We found our fathers on a course and by their footsteps we are guided' (The Qur'an 43:22). Whatever the reason for the present sate of Muslim scholars, the real world demands a totally new kind of thinker.

In a given period of history, a civilisation is judged by its dominant thought, by the prevalent trends in its cultural life as expressed in politics and morality, science and technology, economics and business, arts and crafts. Intellectuals are the voice of this thought and the pulse of the prevalent trends; they are also their instigators, their critics and their bodyguards. A civilisation, a country, a community, cannot exist without intellectuals and a constant stream of new ideas. They cannot exist without constant criticism and self-criticism, without those who formulate it and express it. They cannot exist without a body of devoted people whose sole concern in life is ideas and their significance. Indeed, a society without intellectuals is like a body without a head. And that precisely is the position of the contemporary Muslim world.

The Muslim world today is totally devoid of intellectuals. There are plenty of academics and bureaucrats, professionals and researchers, even a few scientists and technologists – but intellectuals are conspicuous only by their total absence. This is partly because traditional societies, drawing their sustenance as they do from classical and historic scholars, tend to be anti-intellectual. Many of the dominant modes of thought in Muslim societies, like Sufism, are aggressively anti-intellectual. A society dominated by *taqlid* (blind imitation), both of its own past and of western civilisation, cannot tolerate intellectuals. The acute absence of intellectuals in Muslim societies is also

explained by the fact that the few who do exist have let their constituency down: they are much more concerned with fashionable ideologies like secularism, postmodernism and globalisation than with the physical, intellectual and spiritual needs of the community.

But who are the intellectuals, anyway? And why are they important? A simple definition would be that an intellectual is someone who gets excited by ideas. In his classic study, *Intellectuals in Developing Societies*, Syed Hussein Alatas defines 'an "intellectual" as a person who is engaged in thinking about ideas and non-material problems using the faculty of reason'.[2] This is a somewhat misleading definition: for while an intellectual may or may not think directly about material problems, all his thought has a bearing on the material world. In defining the Muslim intellectual, we must first point out that we are not discussing a creature who inhabits western sociology where, over the last hundred years, his or her social meaning has shifted and changed a number of times. Neither are we talking in the French sense of the term where intellectuals are that section of the educated class which aspires to political power, either directly or by seeking the influence and companionship of the country's political rulers. Perhaps our closest parallel would be Gramsci's idea of an 'organic individual' devoted to fighting hegemony wherever it is found.

Muslim intellectuals must be interested in abstract ideas as well as specifics; the real world demands both. Unlike Socrates, they are not interested in ideas for ideas' sake, they search for ideas that lead to reform; but like Socrates, they seek propagation of thought, criticism and a questioning attitude, a goal for which they would eagerly lay down their lives. They move in a world not of total doubt and confusion, but within a worldview well defined by conceptual and ethical parameters. They seek not power but reforms. They do not have acquisitive and analytical minds only but also critical, imaginative and creative minds. They engage and transform.

Intellectuals are important because they do the work that other segments of society either do not know exist or are not equipped to handle, they tackle the problems which cannot be managed by specialists, academics and professionals. As Alatas points out,

> to lack intellectuals is to lack leadership in the following areas of thinking: (1) the posing of problems; (2) the definition of problems; (3) the analysis of problems; (4) the solutions of problems. Even the posing of problems is in itself an intellectual

problem. A society without effective intellectuals will not be in a position to raise problems.[3]

Intellectuals are therefore the only group of people in a society who are capable of moving away from the narrow confines of specialism or professionalism to see problems in their holistic and real perspective. Alatas also points out that 'the area of intellectual activity cannot follow any demarcation laid down by any particular discipline' and is therefore transdisciplinary. Moreover, 'the intellectual attitude cannot be created by formal and discipline-orientated training in terms of syllabus and fixed number of years of study'; 'the object of the intellectual activity is always related to the wider context of life and thought, penetrating into fundamental values and commitments'; 'the intellectual pursuit is not a profession and therefore not subject to the sort of factors which determine the emergence and development of professions'; and 'the intellectual interest involves the past, the present and the future'.[4]

Intellectuals are the only group in any society which systematically and continuously, in sharp contrast to the specialist and the professional, try to see things in wider perspectives, in terms of their interrelations, interactions and totality. This is why intellectuals have always been at the forefront of new synthesis and thought. Most of the major changes and reforms in western civilisation, for example, have been brought about by intellectuals. The Enlightenment, which laid the foundation of modern science and thought, was a purely intellectual movement. The intellectuals who conceived and perfected the Enlightenment, Montesquieu, Fontenelle, Diderot and Voltaire, are still widely read today and have a profound influence. The European Reformation too was the work of intellectuals. Without the thinking and writing of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, around whom people rallied in breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church, it is difficult to believe that the Reformation could have taken place. And what better evidence of the importance of intellectuals and their powerful influence can one give than by simply pointing out the impact on contemporary thought of Karl Marx, who spent most of his life in libraries and whose works over the past century have been studied by countless other intellectuals. In turn, *Das Kapital* did not spring spontaneously from Marx's head; what he was doing in libraries across Europe was absorbing the thinking of many other intellectuals of previous generations. There is perhaps no more poignant example of how an intellectual who

was influenced by other intellectuals finally reaches down even to the most remote peasant. All this simply by way of example.

In Muslim civilisation the role of the intellectual is even more important, considering that the words 'read', 'ponder' and 'reflect' are some of the most frequently repeated exhortations of the Qur'an, itself 'the Noble Reading'. At its zenith, Muslim civilisation was a civilisation of intellectuals: names like al-Farabi, al-Kindi, al-Khwarizmi, al-Baruni, al-Razi, al-Masudi, Abdul Wafa, Omar Khayyam come so easily to mind because they dominated entire spans of centuries. And when Muslim civilisation faced a crisis, and no one was capable of defining its nature, discovering its cause or assuming the responsibility of formulating a solution, it was left to intellectuals like al-Ghazali and ibn Khaldun to formulate a way out of the crisis. Indeed, without the intellectuals Muslim civilisation in history would have been inconceivable. And, there cannot be a living, dynamic, thriving Muslim civilisation of the future without a body of critical and creative intellectuals. At a time when the Muslim world is engulfed in parochialism and sectarianism, when imitation and blind following is the norm, when kindness and tolerance are under retreat everywhere, when the globe is culturally and intellectually dominated by jingoist and chauvinist western logic and social grammar, the Muslim community needs its intellectuals as it has never needed them before.

Much of the desolation of the contemporary Muslim panorama is the result of the almost total absence of vigorously independent and devoted intellectuals. There are, however, indications that intellectuals who are true to the worldview of Islam are coming to the fore; but their number is below the critical mass for take-off. However, if the Islamic movement ideologues, who dominate the reformist scene and the Islamisation debate, could change a few of their character traits, the number of genuine Muslim intellectuals would swell beyond the critical mass and they could begin to make their presence felt in both Muslim society and contemporary Muslim thought.

Three basic features of these ideologues suppress thought and hinder the emergence of the genuine intellectual. The first is their marked tendency to dominate and control: they feel they have a monopoly on reason and judgement. This stems from their belief in their innate superiority and presumed righteousness, which itself is a result of a narrow-minded and blinkered outlook. Movement ideologues are shunned and avoided by many young thinkers and

intellectuals because of their tendency to argue from authority and to dominate and control the activities of non-movement groups and societies.

A second and related trait is the guru mentality. This attitude reveals itself in the dictum that the mentor, the teacher or the spiritual leader, is always right, even when he is blatantly in error, and experience has shown him to be wrong. Even the Prophet, when it was pointed out to him that cross-pollination brings beneficial results, corrected himself. The guru mentality plays a great part in subverting critical and analytical faculties as well as the use of imagination. Many devotees would rather edit and translate poor works of the master than produce original scholarship of their own. And as the guru is beyond criticism, his mistakes and fallacious arguments are perpetually repeated.

The third, and related trait of the movement ideologues is their inability to take criticism. Most movement scholars regard criticism of their work as a form of personal attack; as a result they either isolate their critics or seek revenge. When faced with arguments, the stock responses are: 'How can I be wrong? I have been working on this problem for ten years'; or 'You are not a jurist, an expert on the Shari'ah, or a specialist in the field; you do not know, I know'; or 'You are trying to discredit me and spread *fitna* (sedition, strife).' Admitting error is a virtue, a strength, not a weakness; this is how knowledge is advanced. Entrenching oneself in an increasingly untenable and irrational position, and defending one's weakness as a matter of honour, is destructive both for the individual concerned and for the contemporary Muslim scholarly tradition. *Masasbah*, criticism, and self-criticism, must become a cornerstone of Muslim intellectual endeavour.

In addition, the body of Muslim scholars have to modify a few of their characteristics, too. Prime among these is the over-the-top trust and reliance on expertise, Islamic or otherwise. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in the contemporary scholarly and academic landscape, that is beyond the comprehension of a good intellectual. It is true that contemporary knowledge is so vast, and, in certain areas, so deep that it is beyond the capabilities of a single individual to master. But one does not have to understand all aspects of every discipline. Moreover, once the jargon, which is designed to mystify the outsiders, is stripped away one finds a methodology and a thought process which can be mastered by anyone who is determined to understand it. In this respect, the true intellectual is a

polymath: his basic tool is a sharp mind and a transdisciplinary methodology which can lay bare any discipline, any subject, any segment of human knowledge. Quite often the best and most devastating criticism of issues within a discipline comes from intellectuals outside the discipline. Expertise is a shroud behind which professionals hide their shortcomings. The more shallow and intellectually shambolic the foundations of a discipline the more it is defended by a priesthood of experts.[5] 'You are not an expert, a scientist, an economist, a sociologist, a heart specialist, and therefore you do not understand' is the last ditch defence of a poor professional.

Muslim scholars and ideologues who aim to become true intellectuals and participate in the genuine introduction of reforms and evolution of strategies for change need to penetrate the shell of disciplinary expertise. As I stated earlier, and as modern ecology teaches and western science is rediscovering, nothing in nature behaves as an isolated system. Everything is connected to everything else: in the real world an all-pervasive principle of interconnectiveness is in operation. There is therefore no such thing as pure physics or economics devoid of social, political, cultural, environmental and spiritual concerns. As a purveyor of ideas, a true intellectual ought to have mastery of more than one discipline. And as Islam also permeates every sphere of life, we cannot allow Islamic studies to become the sole preserve of experts. By definition, a Muslim intellectual must appreciate and understand the major elements of the worldview, culture, history, and thought of Islam. But a self-respecting Muslim intellectual would go much further: he or she would aim to become a truly interdisciplinary scholar.[6]

And this brings me to the second reason why Muslim intellectuals have to break disciplinary boundaries. Contemporary Muslim thought is not about reinventing the wheel; where there is a great deal to be discovered and rediscovered, from the perspective of Islam, there is an equal amount of knowledge that we can draw upon and synthesise *with* the worldview of Islam. But synthesis is not an easy task; it is not a question of mixing this with that.[7] In the Hegelian scheme, synthesis is produced by conciliation of two antitheses. And this is exactly how both the Muslim and western civilisations have perceived each other in history: as two real and irreconcilable antitheses. Any facile amalgamation of two traditions requires knowledge of the real world. A strong dominant intellectual tradition cannot be synthesised with a weak, ineffectual one; it would simply be co-opted. Synthesis therefore is a hazardous

exercise; at the very least it requires knowledge of more than one discipline. Many problems in the whole question of the Islamisation of disciplines arise, as I have pointed out in *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come* and Merryl Wyn Davies has shown in *Knowing One Another: Shaping an Islamic Anthropology*,[8] from the fact that Muslim scholars try to cast disciplines based on western axioms and intellectual heritage in Islamic moulds. These problems arise mainly from their inability to synthesise, for synthesis involves axiomatic analysis and examination and raising of fundamental questions. And only true synthesis can make proper use of existing knowledge and generate new ideas and pragmatic solutions.

All this requires the re-emergence, and in a way this is what I have been arguing for throughout this essay, of the classical polymath. Contemporary Muslim intellectuals must become the counterparts of the polymaths who shaped Muslim civilisation at its zenith. Muslim civilisation of the classical period was remarkable for the number of polymaths it produced.[9] The motives and driving force behind polymathy were not based on just a deep love and respect for knowledge but also on a paradigm which emphasised the interconnection between the sacred and the profane, physics and metaphysics, thought and reality, and pointed out that the material universe was not inferior to the spiritual; that both, as manifestations of Allah's bounty and mercy, were the vast creation of God. The mystic's ecstasy, the mother's love, the flight of an arrow, the circumference of the earth, the plague that destroys an entire nation, the sting of mosquito, the nature of madness, the beauty of justice, the metaphysical yearning of man – all were equally valid and could not be deprived of eternal values and human concern. Methodologies, deeply rooted in the conceptual and ethical parameters of Islam, were the essence of enquiry. And classical polymaths were masters of methodology. It was this paradigm that the polymaths used to synthesise the learning of earlier civilisations, transforming it totally – for synthesis always produces something entirely new, which is like neither one nor the other of the original components – and integrating it completely with the worldview of Islam. Contemporary Muslim intellectuals have to rediscover this paradigm and develop into the kind of polymaths who can perform the great synthesis that is needed.

In a world that is shaped and controlled by another civilisation, the real task facing the Muslim ummah is the creation of an intellectual space which is a genuine embodiment of the worldview and

culture of Islam. Without this intellectual space, reformist ideas and programmes will bear no fruit. Muslim civilisation has a dire need of genuine intellectuals; unless Muslim societies cultivate the barren lands of today's intellectual vacuum, the ummah's marginalised existence will be institutionalised. The real world offers us no choice but to start our homework immediately.

Notes

1. For an insightful analysis of this problem, see Muhammad Asad, *The Law of Ours and Other Essays*, Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1987. Asad wrote these essays just before the creation of Pakistan – it is a pity that no one paid any attention to his warnings.
2. S. H. Alatas, *Intellectuals in Developing Societies*, Frank Cass, London, 1977, p. 8.
3. Ibid. p. 15.
4. Ibid. p. 10.
5. For a really brilliant expose of the myth of enterprise see Paul Feyerabend's *Against Method*, New Left Books, London, 1977; *Science in a Free Society*, Verso, London, 1978; and *Farewell to Reason*, Verso, London, 1987.
6. Recently a number of brilliant interdisciplinary studies, showing the limits of unidisciplinary enquiry, have appeared: for example, William Irwin Thompson's *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light*, St Martin Press, New Jersey, 1981; Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature*, Dutton, New York, 1979; and *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, Basic Books, New York, 1979, Douglas Hofstadter's dazzling synthesis that integrates the principles of music, art, mathematics, biology and metaphysics and illustrates the limits of all logical and other symbolic systems.
7. See S. Parvez Manzoor, 'Islam and the West: Synthesis or Confusion?' in Ziauddin Sardar (ed.) *The Touch of Midas*, Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 234.
8. Mansell, London, 1985; and Mansell, London, 1988.
9. For a more detailed discussion of the role of polymathy in Muslim civilisation see my *Arguments for Islamic Science*, Centre for Studies on Science, Aligarh, 1985.

Source: Originally published in Abdullah Omar Naseef (ed.), *Today's Problems, Tomorrow's Solutions*, Mansell, London, 1988.

Postmodernism

8   When the Pendulum Comes to Rest

I am sitting in Delifrance enjoying a really good cup of cappuccino (Italian coffee covered with nimbus froth sprinkled with chocolate dust). On the floor below, and I can see them clearly from where I sit, a group of Chinese maidens (petite, red silk dresses) move in slow motion, performing a classical dance in celebration of the coming new year: the Year of the Rabbit. Directly opposite, competing for the attention of the crowd, and succeeding in drawing some of the younger spectators away from the dancers, a familiar global clown is performing tricks and handing out leaflets that announces McDonald's new 'Samurai Burgers'. The shop in front of me, saturated with all varieties of electronic goods, is attracting customers with the slogan 'the latest in modern technology'; the one behind, selling colourful fabrics and garments, is appealing to 'good old-fashioned values'.

My attention is momentarily caught by a woman in a green *batik* traditional dress, her head covered with a white purpose-made scarf, leaning backwards over the rails in a relaxed posture (does it belie her inner tension?), watching the world pass her by: elegantly attired Chinese women (flat chests, padded shoulders), smartly dressed Chinese men (coiffured hair, strong aftershaves) rushing to their next appointment, Indian couples (women in colourful 'Punjabi' dress), other women with their head covered accompanied (always?) by short, bearded men (some with turbans on their heads), and groups of European and American men and women (mostly casually dressed) sniffing, admiring, picking display items from tables and shelves and then putting them back. The woman in the green *baju* appears passive, reflective. But the atmosphere is noisy. Somewhere in this Japanese shopping complex – 'Lot 10' – a disc jockey, who speaks with the accent and lingo of Afro-Americans, is playing a rap song that reverberates through the entire building: 'Pump up the jam'. The rap music coming from everywhere fuses with the Chinese melody coming from below, and the two bounce off countless echoes from an array of shops playing their own brands of 'musak', merge with sound waves issuing from products on demonstration and drown the universal echo of continuous chatter.

I am in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. But I could, almost, be anywhere on the planet.

The plurality that one experiences in Kuala Lumpur, or indeed one can experience in any market place where all manner of world commodities are assembled under one roof and juxtaposed with all manner of ethnic cultures for the consumer to experience different worlds, is the plurality of postmodernism. Its familiar features, which anyone can experience in any big city, are the collapse of the old and the new, the values and virtues of instantaneity, the amalgamation of fact and fantasy and the consequent indistinction of the real and the imaginary, and the total absence of meaning and depth. Postmodernism is the dominant wave of the future: it is the arena of the cultural battles to come, the theatre where issues of meaning and purpose will be acted out, and the stage where non-western people will define the 'I' of their Identity.

The end of the twentieth century brings mankind to the closing chapters of modernity – the European imperial adventure that began with Columbus and has its roots in the seventeenth-century philosophical movement dubbed 'the Enlightenment'. The cultural order of modernity that emerged as the consequence of the discoveries of the 'new world' and instrumental reason was monolithic and oppressive. It posited western civilisation as the norm, the sole repository of truth, the yardstick by which all 'Others' are to be measured. It saw history as a linear progress towards western capitalism and liberal secularism, concluding with the transformation of the world into a single, global, western civilisation. Capitalist economics, utilitarian industrialism, rationalised organisation, and the embracement of the new for the sake of the new was its credo. By definition, it considered what was not modern to be inferior and therefore unworthy of respect, dignity or survival.

The last 50 years have seen modernity play havoc with traditional cultures. In the name of 'development', old cities and communities have been diffused, displaced, destroyed. For the sake of 'progress', traditional ways of knowing – science, medicine, technologies – subjugated, suppressed, soldified in cement. To be 'modern', traditional lifestyles and cultures, disturbed, disrupted, dissolved into oblivion. The juggernaut of modernity has been running 'amok' – ironically, the only Malay world in the English language – speeding out of control towards a not-so-distant pile-up on the highway of history.

Today, the malaise associated with the experience of modernity is widely felt and openly acknowledged. Recent developments in such diverse fields of human inquiry as philosophy, sociology of knowledge, linguistics, literary theory, architecture, and literature have knocked the stuffing out of modernity revealing it to be a rather pretentious turkey. Modernity is coming under attack from post-modernism. The champions of modernity wish to preserve its innate superiority (based on the notion that reason is the only criterion of truth) and desire to preserve it from being torn asunder by doubt and uncertainty. Postmodernist thought undermines all grand systems of thought that claim to be the sole arbitrators of truth: reason is placed on a par with magic, and all truth is considered relative in this best of all possible universes. Doubt is all. Relativity is the norm.

Whereas modernity oppressed and marginalised all non-western cultures, postmodernism opens the door for their re-entry into humanity and rejoices in the diversity and plurality of ethnic cultures. Whereas modernity placed western values, western history, western cultures, western visions at the apex of human experience and endeavour, postmodernism levels all values, all histories, all cultures, all visions into a uniform plane, emphasising and celebrating their differences. Whereas modernity suppressed non-western voices, postmodernity seeks to represent Other cultures and give their voices an opportunity to be heard.

But postmodernism is not the first chapter (the 'Introduction' as it were) of a new book of our destiny. It marks the realisation that many rationally constructed predictions of the nineteenth century have turned out to be more wrong than the irrational illusions they were suppose to replace. Postmodernism represents a partial dis-placement from repression to seduction, from the police to the market, from the army to the bank, from the depth reading of epis-temology to a surface reading of hermeneutics. It is the no-man's land where the concluding chapters of modernity disintegrate into meaninglessness, and the outlines of a new book, that will eventually take its place, are being worked out. Postmodernism is the desert where people are prospecting for a new form of existence, as the remaining vestiges of modernity crumble to dust all around them. This prospecting, the shaping of a future book of our modes of social and cultural existence, will necessarily lead to considerable strife and conflict. But beyond this conflict, one can envision and work for the emergence of a saner, safer society.

When the pendulum swings it swings from one extreme to another. Both modernity and postmodernity are extremities: one the flip side of the other. The next 50 years will be dominated with conflicts that result from such violent swings: from modernism to postmodernism, from a totally closed society to a completely open (and exposed) one, from liberal anarchy to fundamentalist rigidity. These swings represent our attempts to define ourselves, to heal our Selfhoods after the devastation of modernity. We learn only through experience; and it is only by working out all extreme positions of our cultural identity from our system that we will come to realise, what traditional thought had always taught us, that our salvation as different cultures and societies lies in following 'the middle path', the path of balance and accommodation – a path that is reached when the pendulum comes to rest.

When the pendulum finally comes to rest – around 50 years hence – we will have discovered that the world cannot be ruled either by a single notion of truth, nor can it be dominated by an ideology where all truths are relative and, ultimately, none really matter. We will have realised that our quest for total freedom from tradition (modernity), or our total indifferent dissolution in a collection of cultures, suspends us in a darkness where all things are regarded with equal disbelief and indifference. We will then be on the first chapter of the book of genuine multiculturalism. We will be in a multicivilisational and multicultural world. It will not be a world of 'civilisation as we know it': both modernism and postmodernism are ultimately about maintaining a world in the single image of western civilisation. It will be a world of civilisations – western, Islamic, Indian, Chinese, and numerous smaller ones. Each civilisation will rediscover and renovate itself according to its own criteria and concepts and have its own dynamic, thriving ways of knowing, doing and being. Each will discover its own forms of participatory governance, democratic autonomy and civilisational identity. And all will enrich each other with mutual respect, co-operation and synthesis: a world of different civilisations *ipso facto* recognises both the interdependent and relational nature of identities, their elements of incommensurablity and their political right of autonomy. In such a world, one can easily acknowledge and appreciate the truths and values of Other civilisations, without renouncing a serious interest in one's own.

Identity is about belonging. A multicivilisational world furnishes one not just with a national or ethnic identity: it places one in the

parameters of a civilisation with all that a civilisation entails and thus simultaneously provides one with a more solid foundation for one's identity as well as liberating one's Selfhood from parochial concerns. One is thus in a position to respect the concerns of others as well as to pursue one's own concerns within one's civilisation. Each individual is the synthesis not only of existing relations but of the history of these relations. She or he is a précis of the past and the present. We must thus seek our own individual identities within the context of our own history, tradition, culture and civilisation. We have to articulate, in the intersection of our everyday lives, the economic, political and gender relations of subordination and domination that exist within our own cultures and civilisations. The individual then has a great deal of work to do, both to define the 'I' of their Identity and to slow down, indeed stop, the violent swing of the pendulum from one extreme to another. The alternative to a multicivilisational world which establishes our sense of selfhood has already been worked out by Nietzsche: madness. Beyond the conflicts that lie ahead in Eastern Europe, the Muslim world, the North–South divide and the traditional–modern dichotomy, is a new book of visions waiting to be written. But it will be a hard book to write, involving each individual and continuous effort. Above all, it requires an appreciation and understanding of Other cultures that goes far beyond simple tolerance based on lack of interest or disbelief. Indifference is the prescription for madness. The first step we can take as individuals towards writing the initial chapters of the new book is to take ourselves and our beliefs and all Others and their beliefs more seriously.

As I sip my cappuccino, and plot my next move to increase the resistance that will eventually bring the pendulum to rest and usher me towards a more balanced existence, I reflect on the numerous ways my identity is compromised, confiscated and condemned. The global capitalism of which this shopping mall is a concrete manifestation does not really care whether I am Muslim, Christian, secularist, Pakistani, male, black or whatever: it simply demands that I buy. Here, in this cultural desert, in this plurality of indifference, both my being and my identity are a function of the very act of buying. I shop, therefore I am. My identity is shaped by the image that I purchase: designer clothes, the right car, the right briefcase, the appropriate watch – I am buying a sign system, the brand gives me my identity, that's why brand names are worth killing for.

I become conscious of approving glances. I am wearing Levis (supported by a Dunhill belt), a YSL T-shirt, Nike sneakers, and a Rolex watch that I constantly fiddle with and adjust on my left wrist. A large group of Japanese tourists size me up, nod appreciatively and walk by. I feel like a million dollars. Only the woman in traditional green *baju*, still leaning on the rails, disapproves: traitor.

Everything I am wearing is fake: made in Thailand, and none the worse for that. I hope that inside, somewhere deep within the body that imprisons my soul, there is a real me. I walk out of Delifrance to search for my real Self.

Source: Originally published in Sheila M. Moorcroft (ed.), *Visions for the 21st Century*, Adamantine Press, London, 1992.

9   Walt Disney and the Double Victimisation of Pocahontas

The 'Virginia born Lady'[1] lived for a time at a London tavern called the Bell Savage just off the traditional home of the British press, Fleet Street. Perhaps it should not come as a surprise that she should end up in the clutches of media hype; one can never be too careful where one chooses to lay one's head. And for laying her head indeed she has become famous, a postmodern icon painted with all the lurid colours in Walt Disney's palette to whisk away the winds of history. The truth is otherwise, though truth has had little to do with the recorded history of the life of Matoaka, or as marquees around the world now proclaim her, *Pocahontas*.

In the Disney reincarnation, we see Pocahontas as a child of nature, talking to trees, running through the virgin forests, a nubile maiden, modelled on 'supermodels' and California waitresses – looking for all the world like the cartoon version of Raquel Welch in her *One Million Years BC* reincarnation. Pocahontas has been transformed into the innocence before time, the knowledge at the dawn of history. Her knowledge is the eco-dream, the longing for natural harmony of a jaded world, her symbolic love story a timeless idyll of a better, more peaceful way: the rapprochement that can be made at the end of history.[2] To paraphrase one of her songs: if you listen with your heart you will understand how easily history can be destroyed to facilitate the ideological message of the day. For Pocahontas, it has all happened before.

The film begins with a jolly song as a motley crew prepare to sail from old London. 'In sixteen hundred and seven we sailed the open sea, for glory, God and gold in the Virginia Company.' The company would be incomplete without our lithe, blond hero: 'You can't fight Indians without John Smith.' And so they set sail, only to meet a violent storm, providing our hero an opportunity to show his mettle by diving into the boiling, heaving ocean to save a young lad. Adventurous, lusty manhood is ready to make landfall on its greatest glory.

Meanwhile, in the virgin forests of America, for the unsuspecting natives life goes on as it ever has. They tend their village and garner the fruits of Mother Earth. The noble chief, Powhatan, returns with

his warriors to his happy village after a successful campaign and looks around for his daughter, Matoaka, whom he calls by her pet name, Pocahontas. But Pocahontas is out in the forest trying to solve the mystery of the dreams that have been troubling her sleep. She has seen strange clouds (which turn out to be the sails of the ship bringing John Smith) – do they portend some new path she must follow? Her father presents her with just such a new proposition, that she should marry Kocoum, a young warrior who has newly proved his worth. Pocahontas finds him too stern and serious – the standard wooden Indian? For counsel she visits Grandmother Willow, the ancient talking tree, cast much after the fashion of Tolkien's Ents in *The Lord of the Rings*.

And so the scene is set for the new ideological meeting in the New World, according to the postmodern handbook. Walt Disney has conspicuously consumed history to provide a subtle, sophisticated reading for the old story, re-propagandising a tale that gained currency precisely as polemic propaganda masquerading as history. In a television documentary made to promote their film, all the participants – the animators, the musicians, those who provided the voice-overs, the producers, the director – stress how they sought to be true to history, in a streamlined, digestible way that allowed them to concentrate on this wonderful love story at the heart of history.[3] What we are presented with is a neatly assembled cast of stereotypes. Pocahontas is the natural idyll of harmony with nature, peace and bounty, but she is also a restless spirit looking for something more in her world, according to the Disney production department. Her father, Powhatan, is the very embodiment of the noble savage – not the first time this character type has appeared on film, or had the voice of the Native American leader Russell Means. John Ratcliffe, the sole representative of the Virginia Company, is both stock villain and the personification of a corrupt English aristocrat bent on ravaging the natural world for gold. John Smith is the spirit of the settlers, the man who sees the promise of this new land that he wishes to tame to bring forth cities while he instructs the natives in the wonders of progress. According to one member of the production team, he is 'basically a good guy who has a little bit of cultural rethinking to do courtesy of Pocahontas'.[4] Walt Disney, assured of its stronghold on the young of the world, is consciously engaged here in authoring a message about history, based, as its publicity department tells the world, on actual history. Five hundred years on, the discovery of the New World is being remade!

   The Europeans cut down trees and overturn the land. The Native Americans watch and worry. Inevitably, the preconceived ideas of both sides spur on a conflict. The heart of the film is a new ideo-logical centrepiece: both sides operate on stereotypes, one as bad as the other. We've heard them all before: 'Savages, savages barely even human', sing the settlers, adding, 'not like you and me, which means they must be evil'. The Native Americans reply in similar vein as they prepare to defend their land: 'The Paleface is a demon. Beneath that milky hide there's emptiness inside' and ending with the neatly matched refrain: 'Savages, savages different from us which means they can't be trusted.' So here we have the definitive postmodern twist on history – we are all Others now and all concepts of Others are pretty much the same.

   But in the midst of all the signs of war there is that laying down of the shapely head of Pocahontas to save the life of John Smith; there is the love which both impels the denouement of the film and seems to imply a new resolution to the conflict. Or as the promo-tional material put it: 'Two different worlds, one true love.' For Pocahontas, as she peeks through the undergrowth to get her first sight of the strange newcomer, it is love at first sight, or at least the fulfilment of all those strange dreams, the new direction, the something more than her world offers which she has been longing for. John Smith, as we are told, is an old campaigner: 'I've seen hundreds of new worlds, Thomas, what could possibly be different about this one?' But this new land is something different. He sets out in a small boat to explore the misty river – looking for all the world like an earlier version of George Washington on his way to Valley Forge. And the young maiden he meets is like no Indian he has encountered. Fascinated, he follows her as she attempts to show him something of her home, the virgin land awaiting his remaking. Not only does Pocahontas show John Smith corn, the only gold she can think of in her land, a notion which fails to convince the rapacious Ratcliffe, but she also introduces him to the spiritual path of her insight, for at least in this version she takes him to talk to the tree, old Grandmother Willow.

   Pocahontas is a clever foil for the assured assumptions John Smith has about the fate of this new world. He waxes lyrical about the city, buildings and bridges of London and how he will rebuild them, the city on the hill, so much better in this new land:

> *Smith*: We will show your people how to use this land properly. How to make the most of it, build roads and decent houses.
> *Pocahontas*: Our houses are fine.
> *Smith*: You think that only because you don't know any better. There's so much we can teach you. We've improved the lives of savages all over the world.

Pocahontas demurs at being called a savage and John Smith quickly explains he means no disrespect: 'Its just a term for people who are uncivilised.' Pocahontas paraphrases: 'What you mean is not like you.' At which point she bursts into her musical peroration about the natural idyll of the native peoples: 'If the savage one is me, how come there's so much you don't know?'

The love story at the heart of the film also seeks to show a balance, and not just in the banter between Pocahontas and John Smith, engagingly voiced by that nice Mel Gibson just to prove he couldn't possibly be bad. Pocahontas lays down her head to save the life of John Smith when he is held captive by the Native Americans and due to be executed in reprisal for the killing of Kocoum. As both sides prepare for war, each singing that the other are savages, Pocahontas rushes in and demands he be spared because violence will not answer the cause: 'This is where the path of hatred has brought us.' Her father Powhatan has to admit that Pocahontas has a wisdom beyond her years, that she speaks with courage and understanding. 'From this day if there is to be war it will not start with me,' he says. But such a resolution impelled by the love of two free spirits does not answer the case for Ratcliffe. The representative of the Virginia Company has already rejected John Smith's new logic that talking to Indians offers the better policy. 'They know the land, they know how to navigate the rivers,' they know how to grow corn and finally, says John Smith, 'this is their land'. Ratcliffe's response is to enunciate the famous policy in his own words: 'Anyone who so much looks at an Indian without killing him is guilty of treason' (the only good Indian is a dead Indian). Yet once Pocahontas has prompted the Indians to drop their weapons and Ratcliffe's crew are prepared to put down theirs, stern action is called for. Ratcliffe himself takes aim at Powhatan, only for John Smith to leap forward and take the bullet himself!

As John Smith lies wounded, in peril of his life unless he is taken to England, Pocahontas faces a choice. She leads a party of Indians to bring food to the settlers who will stay behind. But still there are

two sides, the natives and the settlers; it is Pocahontas who walks between them, respected by both. John Smith asks her to leave with him. 'I am needed here,' she says. Pocahontas belongs to the new world of history Disney has fashioned out of America. But we have already learned the real story, that the two are bound together and will be with each other forever. Though separated, there is a bond between them that makes something new in this new world. And Pocahontas is the heroine in all this newness; standing on a high cliff watching the sailing ship depart, she is the icon of the new age, a postmodern correction of the imperfections of actual history in her new marquee value, healing the rifts and hurts of times past.

Putting Blood Back in History

Walt Disney is the fast food of modern cinema entertainment. It is not surprising that to 'celebrate' the release of *Pocahontas*, McDonald's launched a 'McChief Burger' – making the connection between the two, McDonald's and Walt Disney, that much more clear. Packaged, promoted and always ready off the shelf. More importantly, as the participants in the making of the film assert, they know they are remaking history, that a Walt Disney feature will last forever as a new iconography, a new history. Pocahontas will be an icon for future generations of children who receive most of their information from television and cinema, video games and CD-ROMs. In place of the old imagery of John Wayne and the Hollywood settling of the west comes a new version of how it once was in history. And Pocahontas is, surely, a real heroine who really did save the life of John Smith? Every American school child knows that, and now they have a highly palatable animated musical version to imprint on their minds a new ideological imagery of their history. With the information revolution, there comes a righting of old wrongs, opening new ways to revisit the past and see it in a new light. The Other has arrived in the dominant stronghold and justice is finally being done.

Alas, the reality is otherwise. We have merely been taken to a refashioned, predigested history, to the very terms of the polemic that entered Pocahontas's name in the lexicon. There is nothing innocent about the choice of this particular heroine as a postmodern icon. In fact the animated Pocahontas is the kind of devouring of history that gives innocence a bad name. But if history is mere interpretation, as Malinowski argued, merely the present making a

charter for itself by readjusting the details, is this postmodern, polit-ically correct history not a better thing to stuff young heads with? Is not this reading of the past a better servant on contentious con-temporary points? *Pocahontas*, the cartoon musical version, at least puts the Other on a par with the settlers of the New World. It acknowledges the knowledge of the Other and their relationship to their environment. Through the attitudes of the Native Americans it offers some sideswipes at postmodern consumerism. In context, it makes John Smith's glib use of the word 'savage' and the term 'uncivilised' an irony visited on the west. And as for the animosity between settler and Indian, well, does it not show that that was the mote in the eye of both sides? Does it not reify the process of seeing strangers and those who are different as Other, to be mistrusted or deemed evil, only a function of the human condition, a universal trait? Surely there are positive gains that can author a better present than the old received history? So why should facts matter? If history is merely opinion then are these not better opinions for young people to imbibe so that they become, not nasty, small-minded, prejudiced imperialists, but true postmodern eclectics at home in a multicultural world of multiple points of view?

Powhatan, the noble chief, says it all. Commenting on the arrival of the white settlers he says, 'Nothing is simple anymore.' For 500 years nothing has been simple and simplistic, but fabricated history will not serve to set that legacy straight or author a new direction. It is the complexity of historical relationships that creates the deformed legacy of present interactions. A naive waif as heroine precludes us from knowing and recovering the detail of what was wrong about history and in fact does nothing substantive to redress the present wrongs. All the politically correct relativism of Disney's new history serves, just as surely as did all the former histories written by the dominant culture, to eradicate the experience, history and contemporary reality of the Other. Disney's new history is no passport to a new encounter; it positively precludes coming to know the complexity of the relationships which animated the early settlement of what is now the United States of America. And it offers the most seductive short circuiting of responsibility for actual history. The doctrine that eclectic relativism enables people to appro-priate a Native American heroine separates the youth of today from the faults of their forebears, thus freeing them of responsibility for historic guilt, obviating the need to deal honestly with the agenda of contemporary concerns of Native Americans, such as reparations

for wrongful appropriations of their land; and most of all it frees the successors of the settlers, in the spirit of rapprochement idealised in the person of John Smith, to appropriate the Native American heritage of the New World as their own, on the terms of the description and interpretation of that heritage understood and written by the dominant culture. The logical consequence of all this is that Others as living peoples are totally redundant to postmodern existence, not only still marginalised, objectified, subsumed, colonised; Others in this formulation are acknowledged sympathetically in order to remove them more easily from reality and history as people. Walt Disney makes Pocahontas a possession of the dominant culture the better to commodify her and make her an engine of profitability. The subtlety of Disney's new history is to make the awkward actuality of Other history, the history and experience of the Other, more trouble than it is worth, as well as redundant to the dominating thrust of perspectives which now by definition include the Other. New history, or the view of the past in the time after history, has more fully eradicated the Other than ever the first settlers of the New World could have contemplated.

What *Pocahontas* the movie is doing is still giving us history, history as the dominant culture wishes it might have been, which is exactly how Pocahontas entered history through the books of John Smith. The famous incident of the laying down of Pocahontas' head would, if it ever did, have occurred in 1608, when John Smith was indeed captured by the Powhatan Indians. The legend of his life being saved by the intervention of Pocahontas was not written until 1624 in the *General History*, John Smith's third book about Virginia, and the only one to mention the story. The *General History* was published after Pocahontas herself was safely dead and buried in Gravesend, England – a site that Disney has now turned into a tourist attraction. John Smith has been called 'the ubiquitous adventurer' – he turns up in so many of the English ventures to establish a presence in a world newly opened up for dominance. In close collaboration with Samuel Purchas, arch-scribbler of colonial endeavour, Smith becomes one of the great propagandists of Empire, a term first coined by Dr John Dee to stimulate Elizabeth I to endorse the efforts of her merchant adventurers. In the history books, John Smith is Captain John Smith – the rank was acquired fighting in the armies of the Emperor Rudolph II; but Smith also fought in Hungary, Transylvania, Russia and Morocco before ever setting off for the New World. In Eastern Europe he campaigned against the Turks. Russia

was the province of the Muscovy Company and in Morocco, Elizabeth I, Good Queen Bess, was actively engaged in breaking the western arms embargo by selling English oak to the Moors for ship-building. It has been noted that John Smith 'took the same eyes to the Holy War against the Turks and the invasion of America'.[5] In contrast to Disney's 'good guy with a bit of cultural rethinking to do', his own writings demonstrate that John Smith was a man with a fund of fully fashioned opinions on the subject of the 'innocent savages'. Far from having his mind opened to new possibilities by talking to Grandmother Willow, Smith was resolutely convinced, as were all his contemporaries, that the religion of the indigenous peoples was mere devil worship. As Smith wrote in his second book, *A Map of Virginia*, published in 1612, 'their chief god they worship is the devil'.[6] In the same volume, Smith also records the practice of child sacrifice among the Powhatan.[7] His general summation of the character of these people was: 'They were inconstant in every thing but what fear constraineth them to keep.' They are, further,

> crafty, timorous, quick of apprehension and very ingenious. Some are of disposition fearful, some bold, most cautelous, all savage. Generally covetous of copper, beads and such like trash. They are soon moved to anger and so malicious that they seldom forget an injury.[8]

John Smith was one of those who established the very terms of the dominant convention of understanding the Other.

In 1608 Matoaka, or Pocahontas, would have been a girl of eleven or twelve, which adds a definitely salacious, paedophilic gloss to the explicitly amorous relationship, 'one true love', depicted in the Disney cartoon. According to the writings of William Strachey, until they were twelve Indian girls went naked. Strachey noted that Powhatan had 20 sons and 10 daughters. He had seen Pocahontas, 'the playful one', 'a well favoured but wanton young girl'.[9] At Jamestown, Pocahontas would

> get the boys forth with her into the market place and make them wheel, falling on their hands, turning their heels upwards; whom she would follow, and wheel herself, naked as she was, all the Fort over.[10]

There are no alternative sources for the details of the life of Matoaka; all the events relating to her appear only in the writings of Europeans. What is known is that after John Smith left Virginia, indeed as a consequence of being injured during a conflict with the native inhabitants, Matoaka remained a source of some fascination to the settlers.[11] She was, after all the daughter of Powhatan, though there is considerable doubt whether Powhatan was not in fact the name of the tribe or confederation, settlers even called it an empire, formed by this leader, or the hereditary term for the leader. The real name of Pocahontas's father was Wahunsonacock. The relationship of the early settlers with this powerful leader was of considerable importance, not least in establishing the bona fides of their claim to North America. In 1608, the 27-year-old John Smith reported that during one of his numerous expeditions exploring the Chesapeake region, he was captured by the brother of Wahunsonacock, Opechancanough, to whom he made a present of his compass, and according to this report and others, delivered a lecture on the geography and diversity of the earth, the might of Europeans and related topics. Smith was then taken, the very first European to be so, to an encounter with the leader of the Powhatan. Smith was much impressed by the elaborate state displayed by 'a naked savage'.[12] He was well entertained, until he conceived the notion that he was being fattened up for sacrifice. Eventually, as a hostage for the Indians being held at Jamestown, Wahunsonacock entrusted his daughter Matoaka to John Smith. Matoaka 'not only for feature, countenance and proportion much exceedeth any of his people, but for wit and spirit, the only *nonpareil* of his country'.[13] On this visit, Smith was much taken by the observation of the female. He also reported the large number of women who lounged around Powhatan himself, adding to his dignity and state as a leader. In September 1608, John Smith was elected President of the Council of the Jamestown colony, or as he chose to style himself, Governor, succeeding John Ratcliffe. It was in this month that he received instructions from the Virginia Company to arrange for the coronation of Powhatan. Smith duly set off to require the chief to come and attend his coronation. (According to the account of another settler, on this second visit Smith was entertained by 30 young Indian females who were almost naked.) Wahunsonacock, standing on his dignity, insisted instead that his crown must be brought to him, which was duly arranged. Reports of the coronation seek to establish the pomp of the occasion while showing Powhatan

to have had little idea of the actual dignity and etiquette of the situation. They also comment on the number of young maidens who surrounded the imperial leader.

The effect of the ceremony was to establish that Powhatan, as a subject of King James, held such lands as his people occupied. John Smith left Jamestown in October 1609, never to return. In the same year, the Virginia Company underwent a major reformation to increase its powers and refashion the problems of the administration of its colony. A new governor with absolute powers was appointed, Lord De La Warr, to replace the 'elected president', who at that time was John Smith. Lord De La Warr spent virtually no time in America; the actual implementation of the new policies of colonial administration was undertaken by a number of deputy governors, among whom were Sir Thomas Gates, Sir Thomas Dale and Samuel Argall. The objective of the new policy was the immediate, large-scale settlement and expansion of the Jamestown colony. In facilitating the policy, Gates carried with him to Virginia instructions for the conversion of the Indians 'which the better to effect you must procure from them some convenient number of their children to be brought up in your language and manners'.[14] Procuring would be done by force.

In 1610, it seems, Matoaka married Kocoum (according to the Disney version, this warrior's death was the reason for Smith's capture which prompted his rescue by Pocahontas). In 1611, Sir Thomas Dale set off 70 miles up the James River to found a new settlement, Henrico, taking with him the Reverend Alexander Whitaker. It seems the new settlement speedily set about implementing the policy of procuring. In 1613, Dale and Argall had a showdown with the Indians demanding that they lay down their weapons: 'If they would do this we would be friends; if not, burn all.' The Indians fired arrows at the English, so Dale 'killed some, hurt others, marched into the land, burnt houses, took their corn' and proposed 'to burn all if they would not do as we demanded'.[15] There followed a truce which included provision for Pocahontas to be taken into the custody of Sir Thomas Dale to be instructed in the Christian religion. In a letter written in 1614, Dale wrote:

> Powahatan's daughter I caused to be carefully instructed in Christian religion; who after she had made some good progress therein, renounced publically her country idolatry, openly confessed her Christian faith; was, as she desired, baptised.[16]

It is this event that ensured Pocahontas's place at the centre of American history, a fact confirmed by a painting of her baptism done in 1840 by John Gadsby Chapman to adorn the Rotunda of the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. In the history of the early settlement of America, Pocahontas was the first and for a very long time the only documented convert then living, written about and depicted as one of the strongest proofs, in the battery of European claims, for the right of dominance over the new found lands, the Christian mission to overthrow the 'iniquity' and 'tyranny' of devil worship and bring the light of Christianity to the native darkness. John Smith's romantic modification of Pocahontas's significance in his book of 1624 merely provided the fodder for reworking of the tale to support an identical polemical purpose in later days, which in fact arrived long before Disney's postmodern reincarnation.

Pocahontas is indeed wedded forever to the colonial endeavour in the New World Europe made of America, appropriated into the dominant culture's history of appropriation. This is a literal statement, one that not even postmodern, multicultural Disney is prepared to venture into. Disney leaves its iconic Pocahontas atop a cliff in 1609 watching the departure of her true love, John Smith, while she remains where she is needed. The real wedding of Pocahontas to American history is omitted. It occurred not merely through her conversion. In 1614 Rebecca, the baptismal name of Pocahontas, married John Rolfe, the man who invented Virginia tobacco. Rolfe was no stranger to romantic adventure. He was one of the passengers of the *Sea Venture*, the ship under the command of Sir Thomas Gates which was cast adrift in a terrific tempest on its way to Jamestown and shipwrecked on the 'infortunate, fortunate island' later named the Summer Islands and known now as Bermuda. The event, which was widely written about is the most likely model for a certain play first performed in 1611: *The Tempest* by one William Shakespeare which, in the character of Caliban, so potently affected the European conception of the 'savage', 'barbarian' indigene, Other.

Rolfe arrived in Jamestown in 1610. With him on the fated *Sea Venture* were his wife and infant daughter, baptised Bermuda, who both died shortly after arriving in the colony. Once on dry land, Rolfe set about his business, producing a marketable strain of tobacco by crossing the local *Nicotina Rustica* with the West Indian *Nicotina Tabacum*. He succeeded in 1612, his first shipment of Virginia tobacco arriving in London in the seminal year 1614. His marriage

to Rebbeca/Pocahontas, the sometime Matoaka, united the two strands of significance and fascination she held for her contemporaries: the wanton, sexually suggestive and the symbolically tractable, converted Indian. The marriage was not an impulsive, romantic decision, as his contemporaries make clear. It was a matter which 'toucheth me so nearly as the tenderness of my salvation',[17] Rolfe wrote in a letter to Sir Thomas Dale.

The settlers of the Virginia colony were as conscious as any later Pilgrim Father of the Biblical warrants of the Old Testament, by which they continually justified their actions and rights to dominance in America. And in the Old Testament there were the words of Ezra (9:11–12) which report that God said the Promised Land had become

> an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth.[18]

Ezra went on to give explicit instructions against miscegenation: 'Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Isreal' (10:10); and such transgressors should 'make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives' (10:11). As Rolfe stated in his letter: 'nor am I ignorant of the heavy displeasure which Almighty God conceived against the sons of Levi and Israel for marriage of strange wives; nor of the inconveniences which may arise thereby'. His trouble was 'a mighty war in my meditations' prompted by passion for Pocahontas. But even while Rolfe declared himself 'in love' he could not ignore that she was 'descrepant in all nutriture from muself', that 'her education hath been rude, her manners barbarous' and that her 'generations' has been 'cursed'. This last is a reference to Genesis 9:25: 'Cursed be Canaan: a servant of servants shall he be unto his bretheren' – a Biblical text which was conventionally used to place the peoples of the New World within the existing framework of European anthropological understanding, their place being that of natural slaves.

To bring himself to the matrimonial altar, Rolfe had to find alternative Biblical warrant if he was to overcome his feeling that his affections were 'wicked instigations hatched by him who seeketh

and delighteth in man's destruction'. To Calvinist Puritans, such as Rolfe, the words of St Paul – 'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord' (II Corinthians 6:17) had a distinct resonance. Yet it was in Pauline pronouncements that he also found his justification for marriage, as well as in the *Institutions* of Calvin, which he also quotes, the book being available in Jamestown. So he was able to deduce that Pocahontas had 'capableness of under-standing' , 'aptness and willingness to receive any good impression', 'desire to be taught and instructed in the knowledge of God' and 'great appearance of love for me'. Therefore he could fulfil the 'duty of a good Christian', by 'converting to the true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ an unbelieving creature'. As Porter so rightly emphasises, in all of Rolfe's tortuous 'mighty war in my meditations' his problem is never one of 'colour', but of the true origins of all European racial consciousness: 'the unclean seed of idolatry'.[19]

So in April 1614 he married Rebecca/Pocahontas at Jamestown. Alexander Whitaker, who baptised Rebecca/Pocahontas, was quick to spread the significant word of this event. In a later of June 1614, he wrote:

> Sir, the colony here is much better. Sir Thomas Dale, our religious and valiant Governor, hath now brought that to pass which never before could be effected. For by war upon our enemies, and kind useage of our friends, he hath brought them to seek peace of us; which is made, and they dare not break. But that which is best, one Pocahontas, or Matoa, daughter of Powhatan, is married to an honest and discreet English gentleman, Master Rolfe, and that after she had openly renounced her country idolatry, confessed the faith of Jesus Christ, and was baptised: which things Sir Thomas Dale had laboured a long time to ground in her.[20]

In 1616 Mr and Mrs Rolfe set sail for England with their baby son, Thomas. On her arrival in London Mrs Rolfe was given an allowance of four pounds a week by the Virginia Company and seems to have been the event of the season: she met Samuel Purchas, was grandly entertained by the Bishop of London; her portrait was drawn by a Dutch engraver; she was presented to James I and well seated at the masque given on 6 January 1617, Ben Jonson's *The Vision of Delight*. The last detail comes from a letter of John Chamberlain, who noted that her return to Virginia had been planned 'sore against her will'.[21] The Rolfes set sail from London in 1617. The ship put in at

Gravesend where, as Samuel Purchas put it, Rebecca/Pocahontas, 'the Virginia born Lady' came 'to her end and grave, having given demonstration of her Christian sincerity, as the first fruits of Virginia conversion'.[22] She was indeed proof of the rightness of the election of the colonisers of America. As John Rolfe wrote shortly before taking her to England: 'What need we than fear' in our 'zealous work' in the land of Virginia 'but to go up to at once as a peculiar people, marked and chosen by the finger of God to posses it'.[23] This is the vision from the city on the hill of the departing Pocahontas, heroine of the earliest annals of America: symbolic confirmation of the right of European expropriation, appropriation and overwriting of all that they had come to claim as their own. In effect it is hardly different from the readjusted iconography offered by Disney.

Like the Disney Corporation, the empire was all about profit. The Virginia Company was the seventeenth English company to be formed, and operated alongside the likes of the East India Company, the Muscovy Company, the Levant Company and those seeking the north-west passage; the Virginia Company itself was a successor to the patents granted to Sir Walter Raleigh, who founded the ill-fated Roanoake colony in Virginia. Bringing in the investors required suitable publicity material to advertise the promise of the new lands, their resources and the possibilities for profit. All the contemporary sources, the travellers tales, company propaganda and learned works had a polemic purpose not just in the pursuit of profit but in staking and legitimising the claim to Empire. In all of these available sources Matoaka and her people have no independent voice. They are the reported objects only of the European gaze and its fervid imagination; their actuality, history and experience are voiceless except as reported by the appropriators and remakers. A Virginia-born lady was indeed buried in St George's Church, Gravesend on 21 March 1617 – a rite unthinkable unless she had been baptised as a Christian. How she might have described and explained how she came to this end is unknowable because of the history of colonialism and its historic meaning, which is to silence the voice and eradicate the perspective of the Other.

The extant contemporary reports of the life of Matoaka are purposeful ideological documents in which her being is a utility made serviceable to the ends of the colonial order. Those who wrote of her were mindful of the need to bolster the fragile bridgehead Britain had made in America, to secure further investment: the need for further investment and settlers to secure Britain's claim was

always present. To establish their right all the elements of the worldview of Europe, the conceptual framework of how that world was understood and operated, were deployed in the available records we have of Matoaka. These documents are conscious artefacts in the authoring of new, polemic, ideological history, not the first such example in European history, but a seminal acceleration in the creation of what can loosely be termed the modern/postmodern use and abuse of history; a process which deliberately, on a number of occasions, employed myth, pleasing legend, to advance its authority. What was fashioned as history was a totalising, absolutist, pan-European convention, now better described as the western convention of description in which the Other is to be permanently described, interpreted, selected from and thus silenced.

In the contemporary reports of Matoaka are to be found all the terms of the discourse that have been defined, redefined and refashioned through time to maintain and remain the colonial worldview – the outward gaze of the west that when turned inward defines by its negative contrasts the nature of western self-definition and understanding. Does it then matter very much that Disney has authored a new paraphrase that employs its own eclectic assemblage of the terms of the dominant convention? *Pocahontas* – the movie – is a representation in a gallery of representations. Most eloquently it tells us that the dominant order still dominates the terms, content and means of description. Now, however, in its incarnation as postmodern relativism it seeks to assert that it includes and gives voice to the Other, that it represents a refashioned statement sensitive to the history and experience of the Other. The fault of the original sources, the absence of the independent presence of the Other, it would seem, has been made good in the new history. What these claims amount to is little more substantive than the whispered advice of Grandmother Willow when Pocahontas and John Smith discover they have no mutual language: 'Listen with your heart and you will understand'; and, hey presto, suddenly there is perfectly comprehensive, and ideologically significant, discussion between two new historic protagonists.

Mining the Other

Disney's new history is a subtle selection, highly significant in how it chooses to paraphrase, collapse and conflate the details from the contemporary sources and repertoire of historic interpretation of the

legend that goes before them and constitutes western civilisation's colonial/colonising history. To compound their new stereotypes Disney is deeply indebted to old familiar stereotypes which root their postmodern refurbishment in a continuing tradition.

The first and the most obvious selection is the character of Pocahontas herself. The earliest iconography of the new continent depicted America as a nubile, available maiden with long, loose tresses. It has been argued that the representation betokens a woman ripe for rape; certainly the languor of the sexually charged figure of America in the earliest European representations was intended to suggest she was at the very least ready to be husbanded by Europe.[24] The drawing of Pocahontas in the cartoon version makes Pocahontas the most sexually endowed of all the female forms that appear. Or as Mel Gibson puts it in the Disney television documentary: 'I mean, Pocahontas is a babe, isn't she? You've got to say it.'[25] Her costume, a clinging, figure-hugging little number hardly suggests a deerskin robe and is obviously informed by the famous series of John White drawings that he made at Roanoake. White's figures owed their inspiration to ancient Greece, not the lithe tradition of vase painting but the solidity and amplitude of statuary. Characteristically, all the females in White's paintings wore short shifts, baring one shoulder, after the model of Hellenic costume, and so does Pocahontas.[26] Within the family-viewing conventions of Disney, there is no doubt that the lusty manhood of John Smith is roused and taken by his first glimpse of this icon of America. How easily supposed political correctness betrays its origins and ends up redeploying the oldest stereotypes of all! In the early representations, America, while sexually charged and available, is always a passive figure, resting in a hammock, lying in a languid pose (not unlike all those famous harem postcards of Arab maidens – a conception of colonial womanhood that was widely diffused, a long-standing tradition, a conventional, stereotypical notion[27]). But Disney's Pocahontas is something new – she is entranced by John Smith before even John Smith is aware of her presence. It is Pocahontas who gets the love-light burning in eyes first – the multicoloured, windblown feathers and leaves which are the representation of the chemistry of physical attraction in the cartoon version. It is a little like Anne Frank falling in love with a German officer. By this twist of the palette Disney confirms its own statement in the television documentary: Pocahontas is looking for heightened experience, something more than her world offers. She is explicitly made to say that Kocoum is

too serious, not exciting enough for a red-blooded, all-American girl. So it is that Native America stalks the animus it desires – all that is embodied and represented by John Smith. In today's postmodern refashioning, instead of passivity, the tractable native awaiting the coloniser, the native is yearning to make herself sexually available to her destiny: the coloniser.

Even in the concept of strange portents that trouble Pocahontas's dreams, Disney is selecting from another well-known trope. Popular history books are full of the legend that the Aztec permitted a bedraggled band of Spaniards to penetrate to the heart of their empire because they believed them to be the white god which mythology foretold would come from the west. Peter Shaffer's famous play, and the movie thereof, *Royal Hunt of the Sun*, uses similar conventional legend, this time concerning the Inca who supposedly took Pizarro and his tiny band for gods, thus enabling them to slaughter thousand of unarmed natives and take Atahuallpa captive. Shaffer had a much more complex reading of first encounters to explore and is certainly right in pointing to the infinite attractiveness to European colonisers of understanding themselves to be taken as gods by simple benighted savages, a feature of so many travellers' tales and representations that it is the hoariest old cliché in the books, cartoons and movies – think of the Rudyard Kipling story made into the John Huston film, *The Man Who Would Be King*; or the adventures of Indiana Jones in the 'Temple of Doom'; or almost any adventure that sets off into Darkest Africa. Disney does not go for that cliché, it authors another: Pocahontas, of her own volition and needs, wants John Smith, is waiting for John Smith, and ogles him as any susceptible teenager would Mel Gibson. The convention of the available maiden, the portents of European coming – these are all artefacts. They are not disinterested reports but consciously deployed ideology to explain the innate superiority of Europe to all parts of the European psyche, including the salacious, titillating libido. The white man as god is first the white man as missionary bringing the Christian message; then he becomes the god of scientific wonder and superior technology. For Disney, he is merely a super handsome hunk, but the film is a true lineal descendant of the genre with a new twist: the active, urgently wanting native woman. The love at first sight is the exact equivalent of the god-from-afar syndrome: yet another restatement of the innate superiority of all that is the west.

Indigenous women have always been libidinous in the western convention, from Amerigo Vespucci's accounts through to Margaret Mead's now discredited reports of the sexual licence granted to Samoan girls, by way of the *Arabian Nights* and its vision of the harems to the 'Mister, you want dirtee postcards?' variant. The Disney animators who made Pocahontas this vision of sexually explicit girlhood – their characterisation is definitely adolescent – also explain that they wanted to express an animality in her movements. There is something decidedly feline in the way she slinks through the undergrowth as she follows John Smith. Once more Disney evokes a much older and redolent tradition linked to some very powerful colonising ideas. Within the conventions of early modern Europe, when the first settlers wrote their travellers' tales – and the process of writing first reports went on for centuries, and is not dead yet – and described the natives as scantily clad with long flowing hair, using bows and clubs and inhabiting the forests, what they meant and were understood to be saying was very explicit: it was a highly stereotyped representation of barbarians, wild men and women, people who lived within nature, who operated on natural law in a sense quite Other from the existence of redeemed European Christian humanity.[28] The sexual availability and abandon of native women was one proof of their nature, chastity and probity being the Christian, one true and only way. The feline movement has another powerful connotation: the wild woman was conceived to have a store of learning about the natural world, just as Pocahontas demonstrates in her musical peroration to John Smith, the wild woman was skilled with herbs and potions, and she was conventionally conceived to have a familiar, a cat, for company. In short, the wild woman of the Middle Ages was the origin of the concept of the witch, exactly the concept Disney deployed in its very first full-length animated cartoon, *Snow White*: 'Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?' The beautiful woman/old crone who tempts Snow White is the conventional representation of libidinous woman on the outside, who in reality is the gnarled old crone, the actuality of her unnatural evil, inside. The bows and clubs of the natives were the implements of the Cyclops, the original Other in Greek mythology. Living in nature, as feral, wild creatures who modelled themselves on animals in whose skins they dressed themselves, the natives were not possessors of *dominium*, actual real property rights in the land they inhabited, or as the early settlers of Virginia explicitly stated, they had no *meum* and *teum* (mine and

yours). They ranged through the natural world living off fruits it offered, said the Virginia settlers. Such is the litany repeated in the words of Columbus and Vespucci, the famous 'They have no ...': no private property, no hierarchy, no hereditary principles, no religion, 'but all is common'. These negative descriptions had very precise meaning within the terms of European law and the self-interested rationalisation it gave to the colonising enterprise: those who had no property except in common could commonly have everything taken from them, justly according to the law.

Disney is not merely trying to be historically accurate by the profuse use of the term 'savage' it puts into the mouth of the European characters it portrays. It has built upon a tradition of representation that ties its supposedly politically correct, improved, postmodern vision of the Native American to some potent, old, familiar ideas that are so widespread within western culture that they can only be refashioned and refurbished, not overturned or dispensed with. Thus postmodernism is a continuation of the colonising mission, another totalising, absolutist frame of reference even in what it claims as its most benign departures from modernism and medievalism. When postmodernism speaks, even in its multicultural mode, what it says relies on all the old conventions; thus, in its own terms and for its own purpose, it fills in the silence that remains the Other. Walt Disney has added to the old mix in that this original American lusts after its icon of the spirit of the settlers: John Smith. Pocahontas wants the newness that European settlement brought. The Other now, naturally, must be depicted as seeking out actively the postmodern dispensation, western domination in its new incarnation. All the earliest reports speak of the 'tractability' of the natives, how they seem a blank page ready to follow the European way, specifically in their willingness to kneel when the European kneels to pray. This was taken as a proof of the rightness of the legitimising mission: to bring souls to Christ; it was also self-evident that only through conversion could the incomprehensible barbarian be made comprehensible within the terms and conventions of western civilisation to permit rational, reliable relations between these cultures. In accounts of the early settlers, however, this tractability was a fragile and ambiguous condition. Once there was a hint of conflict with the desires of the colonisers the natives became 'inconstant savages'. Opposition to colonial dominating authority is the innate hostility and savagery of the savage, which according to the conventions of the European law justifies the expro-

priation of all their property, life, liberty and pursuit of happiness – which one might be justified in recognising as the origins of the Other as demon terrorist, a conception which firmly adheres to some Others today.

The very selection of the tale of Pocahontas for refashioning as a postmodern icon of America is in itself a return to the original. Despite the feisty banter she is given to take the assurance of John Smith down a peg, despite the truncation of the story of Pocahontas herself, the reason she is available for postmodern manufacture and conspicuous consumption is what it always was. Pocahontas was the first documented convert. Her lusting after John Smith evokes the fact, which every American school child will come to know, and through this new history is implicitly led to expect, that she will go over to the new way that has been brought to her land. Of course, Disney is not telling the story of Pocahontas; for all that they make her an icon, they are not telling her history. Only their selection of her character with her recorded history makes her safe, a fit subject for refashioning as new history. The new history they are authoring is the history of the origins of the United States of America into which Pocahontas has been appropriated. Just as *Dances With Wolves* took Lt. Dunbar off among the Indians to find renewed self-realisation and then left the Indians to their unstated fate, to vanish, the details of which departure need not trouble the audience, though they may implicitly invoke a sadness, a tragic sense, so *Pocahontas* leaves out all the actual reality of the experience of the Other under colonialism. It deals only with a two-year span of time, defined by the presence in Jamestown of John Smith. It does not entertain the experience of the Powhatan which included the familiar fate of the Other, the depredations of illness that decimated their population. Incoming Europeans praised the dying, a genuine holocaust, as a providential work of God to clear the country for their domination, a proof of the rightness of their election and mission. It does not deal with the decimation of the unremitting warfare that began during John Smith's sojourn in Jamestown and continued for decades until only a handful of Powhatan were left. New history stops historical narrative at the point convenient to its own ideological needs. *Pocahontas* ends with the Indians bringing offerings of corn to the settlers who will remain when John Smith leaves, the symbolic evocation of the traditions and understanding of Thanksgiving Day (25 November). The tradition of Thanksgiving Day is clear in the repository of the American mind: that at Thanksgiving

the Indian is the dead, trussed, cooked turkey offered up to ensure the survival of American family values. Disney's new history does not need to continue, the rest is history as it has always been written, history whose very familiarity and ubiquity postmodernism depends upon to author its effects of seeming revision while effecting no change.

What Pocahontas is permitted to say of the Native American worldview is a postmodern convention, the shorthand for New Age ideas. She speaks of an animate universe, spiritually alive and inter-connected. Pocahontas has direct relations with spirits embodied in natural objects, especially Grandmother Willow. In Powhatan's village there is an old wise man, not called a medicine man but embodying all the conventions of every representation of the Indian medicine man from every western movie ever made, and sure enough he is the one given the line, 'My old medicine does not work on these new injuries', as he shakes his rattle over a gunshot wound. This repository of spiritual learning and wisdom, the medicine man, conjures information about the newly arrived European in portents that take visible shape in the fire; the Native Americans look on, mesmerised, as the images of Europeans turn into ravening wolves. This is true New Ageism, the spiritual power of native peoples, indigenous Others, is psychic power, an acuity to the irrational rationality that modernity drove out of the western mind through its total dedication to scientific rationality. Of course, in modernist terms, the irrationality of routine recourse to psychic power was not deemed rational, it was the negative antithesis of scientific rational-ity: magic, or in Levy Bruhl's term 'pre-logic'. In the postmodern vision, it is the psychic acuity that is the attraction of the Others, the property common to all that is to be and can be appropriated. It is the psychic spirituality, the being in touch with their inner premodern natural world, that adds nobility to the Other and gives them the last laugh on the modern dispensation, the scientific, tech-nological and polluted world in which western postmodernism has its abode. Furthermore, there is an innate linkage between this psychic/spiritual acuity and peaceableness, the willingness to be the first to lay down arms. Powhatan has a quick admonition from his adolescent daughter and drops aggression, a path he has been cautious and reluctant to follow. Not quite the outlook of superpower nation that conceived first-strike capacity and the Star Wars option, that makes peace by carrying a big stick and is busy, in the new Republican backlash, worrying about the unpreparedness

of its overabundant armed forces.[29] Disney's representation of the psychic spirituality of Native Americans is firmly within the highly developed postmodern convention.

Innumerable films in recent years depict the whole panoply used and evoked in *Pocahontas*: from Chief Dan George in *Little Big Man*, who sees through dreams and visions and therefore knows what happens to Little Big Man when he is living in white society, to Russell Means in *Windwalker* as the reincarnated spirit of Olympic champion Jim Thorpe, who becomes the wise old Indian who mysteriously attaches himself to a young white boy to counsel and teach him through his difficult adolescence and then mystically departs from the world. A good example is Lou Diamond Phillips's unreconstructed character in *Avenging Lance* where the lance in question is a sacred object stolen from a museum exhibition that must be tracked back and retrieved by Phillips and his white sidekick played by Kiefer Sutherland. The tracking takes in much visionary seeing and knowing, plus the 'magical' revenge of the lance itself which eventually engulfs its thief in flames. The sceptical character played by Sutherland incredulously asks: 'You don't believe all that Indian shit do you?' to which Phillips responds, 'I am that shit.' Whereas the postmodern eclectic can make judicious selection of the useful and potent aspect of the insights and psychic spirituality of the Other, the Other has no alternative definition even of Self. American psychic spirituality can have beauty and can inform, can fill in some of the increasingly obvious gaps in postmodern perfection, but it could never have produced a washing machine. The spirituality of Others is freely available for the postmodern consumer to be used as desired, even for opening new directions for the development of the appliance of science and technology. Native peoples are the last repository of the psychic/spirituality that has been forsaken in the progress of western civilisation. New Age lifestyles need a model, they need to appropriate ecological learning that has been lost in the rise of modern science. *Pocahontas* is in the mainstream of the postmodern project of domination of the Other through appropriation of the eco-dream, and like all postmodern expressions of this process, it is the dominant society that interprets, reports, analyses, selects and determines what is the Other psychic/spirituality it is appropriating. So bad has the situation become in the United States that Native Americans are banding together to prevent this new pillage of their culture, a pillage that is aptly represented in the satiric film *New Age*. The alternative settlements and communes that are

being established using Native American design, motif and technique to author a more environmentally and psychically sound lifestyle at the height of western affluence are not inhabited or indeed frequented by Native Americans. The eco-learning that can be taken from the past of the Native American is irrelevant to the contemporary concerns of these native peoples within the Americas for land rights, jobs, health care, education; Native Americans continue to occupy the lowers rungs on all measures of social well-being, lacking the resources to go back to their own nature, as it is conceived by white American society. The only contemporary film that seeks to demonstrate this truism is Michael Apted's *Thunderheart*, which autopsies the pathology of the situation in a drama that gives some representation of a voice to Native American experience.

Even the appropriation of Other psychic/spirituality is not a departure from the norms and conventions of western civilisation. In large part, the selection from the religious perspectives of the Other that dwell upon an animate universe and the interconnectedness of man and nature answer the agenda of western romanticism. It is the familiar notion of the pathetic fallacy of Wordsworth in a rather more exotic setting and set dressing. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in rejection of the totalitarian rationalism and violence of the Terror that began as the French Revolution, romanticism was born. It spawned a whole western convention of sympathy for nature, to be found in the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge. So conventional was this romanticism that it is gently and subtly satirised in the novels of Jane Austen: every fashionable young lady should be painting a view of rocks and trees. Austen accurately incorporates the fashion for visits to sympathetic natural settings in the trip to Box Hill in *Emma*, Elizabeth Bennet's tour of the Pennines in *Pride and Prejudice* and the trip to Lyme Regis in *Persuasion*. Garry Wills's study of the Gettysburg address, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, has pointed out how the romantic movement inspired the very conception, as well as the detailed planning, of the cemetery of the battlefield of Gettyburg that was inaugurated with Lincoln's famous speech.[30] The high culture of nineteenth-century western civilisation was alive with increasing yearning for nature as industrialisation took its inhabitants further from any connection with the natural world. Postmodern appropriation of the eco-dream of the Other is nothing more than the utilisation of Other systems of ideas to enable internal reform of the dominant, colonising convention. This is an old familiar function

the Other has been performing within western philosophy and social critique since Thomas More wrote *Utopia* in 1561, supposedly basing his dialogue, a virulent denunciation of European corruption, on the experiences of a traveller who had sailed with Vespucci.

But what voice does Disney's new history give to white America? More than a sleight of hand is used to get the white side of the equation palatable to contemporary white America's taste than the obvious dissembling Disney uses in its representations of the Native American. The explicit purpose of Disney's new postmodern history is to wrest superpower America, the dominant culture of western civilisation, most particularly because of its dominance of the production of popular culture and information resources as a global phenomenon, from the calumny of European origin. The artefact it uses for this ideological purpose is John Smith, and the elements it deploys, appropriately enough, were originated by none other than the historic John Smith himself.

There is an explicit dichotomy between the representation of John Smith and the representation of John Ratcliffe. Ratcliffe is the villain; he is also the man who wields the Union Jack and plants it on the soil of America where, of course, honest, God-fearing and liberty-loving republican Americans will not, in the not too distant future, permit it to remain. Ratcliffe's character is given all the unremitting expression of naked colonialism as greed and exploitation. He insists that Spain has had its way in the New World for too long and now it is his turn to reap the gold, implying that all the profits of the colony will belong exclusively to himself. Thus Ratcliffe is the personification of the Virginia Company. He diverts the colonists from building homes and planting crops, sending them on a mad, eco-destructive search for gold, a search which produces not a trace of the yellow metal – a sequence that evokes a rationale for the familiar convention of the 'starving times' experienced by each of the early colonies in North America. He is given all the aggression and implacable hostility to the native people, up to and including his dastardly attempt to kill Powhatan when peace has clearly broken out, a disaster averted only by the heroic self-sacrifice of John Smith. It is Ratcliffe who incites the simple soul, young Tom, to violence, filling his head with demon stories and sending him off to follow John Smith, so that by mischance he is in the wrong place at the wrong time and mistakenly kills Kocoum, thinking he is acting to save the life of John Smith. While Ratcliffe is the evil genius sending others forth to despoil this new land, he hardly moves from the fort

he has constructed on the seashore alongside his ship, his lifeline back to England. And the only reason Ratcliffe wants to be in the New World is to make his fortune and thus establish his position back home where he really belongs at the Court of St James, outshining even King James himself. He is the kind of rapacious, overbearing imperialist any colony that hopes to have a future could well do without. On cue, at the end of the film, he is wrestled to the ground by the simple, salt-of-the-earth colonists to be sent off in disgrace, evoking another prefiguring of the American Revolution.

By way of complete contrast stands the representation of John Smith, the light to all of Ratcliffe's darkness, trim and fit in contrast to Ratcliffe's effete obesity (rather a falling off from political correctness these overtones of sizism but no doubt justifiable for the greater ideological good!) Smith is clearly weary of the old world, though he can wax lyrical about its achievements, and has a jaded edge to his character. It is through the eyes and experience of John Smith that the wonder of this new world of America is revealed to the audience. It is John Smith who appreciates the true and enduring significance of the kind of life and society that can be built in America. It is John Smith who fearlessly, unconstrained by fanciful imagination, sets off alone to explore the new land and falls in love with it before he ever meets its embodiment, Pocahontas. John Smith is not bound by ties to England and therefore can appreciate the new learning that must be undertaken to master this new land of America, and is sufficiently open-minded to embrace, not merely the physical form of Pocahontas, but her challenge of relative pluralism – a dispensation of the dominant order.

Far from being the footloose freebooter, John Smith was clearly in the favour of the Virginia Company. Smith may have arrived in Jamestown in disgrace, confined as a prisoner on the order of Wingfield, but he was one of the names in the sealed envelope they brought from London containing nominated members of the Council of Jamestown, as was Ratcliffe. First President of that Council was Edward Maria Wingfield, a London merchant who was one of the original petitioners for the Letters Patent James I issued the Virginia Company. There had been considerable debate in England over the nature of this company because the Virginia project was never intended to be a get-rich venture but a long-term settlement to develop the trading possibilities of North America before any other European nation established itself there. True, no one would object if they found another Potosi, the mountain of silver, or Eldorado,

the city of gold Sir Walter Raleigh had so desperately sought. Yet experience had already taught that there was profit even where there was no gold. The Virginia Company was the seventeenth venturing company formed in England; hard-won experience also taught that would be a long time, and would require considerable investment and support from the home country, before it turned a profit. The Charter of the Virginia Company assured all colonists that their status in the New World would be 'to all intents and purpose as if they had been abiding within this our realm of England'.[31] And their purpose in this new extension of England would obviously be to propagate the Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness and ignorance and to bring 'infidels and savages living in those parts to humane civility, and to a settled and quiet government'.[32] To that end the Instructions of the London Council of the Virginia Company issued in December 1606 ordered the captains and company to 'have great care not to offend the naturals, if you can eschew it; and employ some few of your company to trade with them for corn, and other lasting victuals'.[33] They were also warned to be eternally vigilant of the native inhabitants, never to let them get their hands on the guns, or get to know if any of the Englishmen were killed or sick, lest they should conclude the colonists are but 'common men' – it seems the arriving-god scenario was very much in the thoughts of the Virginia Company.

It is true that for one mad month the new settlers did go searching for gold. None of the mineral samples sent back to London proved to be of any value. As one contemporary put it, 'Our new discovery is more likely to prove the land of Canaan than the land of Ophir.'[34] And the earliest writings in and of Virginia use this motif: the Promised Land of Canaan, covenanted by God to his chosen people, the elect. The first such reference – the hope that Virginia would 'flow with milk and honey' – occurs in a letter written from Jamestown on 22 June 1607, just five weeks after its foundation. If the characterisations in any drama have to be distilled from the many, Disney has made of Ratcliffe a bizarre caricature and John Smith stands for the many, for the openly declared aspirations of a national undertaking. The Virginia Company was charged with a collective project of domination that would appropriate into England a new part of the newly enlarged world. There is little to choose between the minds of any of the settlers as evidenced by the contemporary records. They were all products of the European worldview and of its self-justification of their inherent rightness and

superiority over all Others, their legal right to the land and their Christian duty to convert the natives, even if that meant, in St Augustine's terms, that they had to 'force them to come in'. Only conversion, being indoctrinated and subsumed, could make the natives real people, predictable and reliable, a utility serviceable to the ends of the dominant order. There were debates in England, just as there had been in Spain, about ill treatment of the native peoples. The criticisms did not come from those who opposed either the project of colonialism, or business (no one stood for such impossible options) but from concerns about the practice of dominance. That there was a right to dominate and a need for domination was an uncontested orthodoxy that was Europe-wide. Incidentally, as Porter emphasises, the settlement of Virginia was properly a European, not just an English venture. Within two years, the Virginia Company was despatching Poles, Germans, French and Italian settlers to Jamestown. As Thomas Paine noted at the time of the American Revolution, only about 65 per cent of Americans were of English derivation. But then as any analysis of Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, British, French or Danish (the Danes were a flag of convenience for enterprising independent ventures) colonialism demonstrates, the ideology of domination was common to all, part of a shared literature, law and cultural predilection.

So why does Disney work so hard to manufacture such a stark contrast between Ratcliffe and John Smith? The characterisations evoke and depend upon a specifically American hagiography of its own history, and in particular certain notions introduced into American thinking by John Smith himself. Smith, as we have noted, was a copious writer about the project of colonialism and one of his most consistent themes was the need for humble artisans, fitted for the task of building and servicing a new society, to be sent out to the colonies. When he was the President of the Council of Jamestown, a post he held for a year before an injury forced him to sail to England, he was vitriolic about the unsuitability of gentleman settlers in getting on with the job in hand. These references have spawned a great tradition in America: the notion that Virginia, a southern state, derives from English gentlemen who were unwilling to roll up their sleeves, and hence the ease with which the 'peculiar institution' – slavery to everyone else – came to be adopted in that region. Information on the first slaves, or 'servants' as they were euphemistically referred to at the time, comes, incidentally, in a letter written by John Rolfe. He says some 20-odd were bought 'at

the best and easiest rate' from a Dutch ship that put into Jamestown in August 1619. That August also saw the first meeting of the General Assembly at Jamestown, the transference of the traditions of Westminster to Virginia. It seems that it was not just artisans who would be serviceable to the ends of colonialism, even in the mind of John Smith. In a book published in 1616, he drew a telling distinction between serviceability of the 'poor savages' of Virginia and the 'black, brutish Negers of Africa'. But what has passed most trenchantly into the self-image of Americans is John Smith's clarion call for honest artisans. What he argued for is summed up in the hagiography of the northern settlements, also under Letters Patent to the Virginia Company, that became the home of the Pilgrim Fathers of the 1620 *Mayflower* expedition. Here were honest ordinary people yearning to be free of the yoke of English intrusion into the conscience and concerns of the individual, who set off to build a new society, a city on the hill, in a new land by the sweat of their own brow, with courage and determination, and beholden to none. The imagery of American history is that of pioneering and the frontier, just the images evoked in Disney's characterisation and setting of John Smith. To support that imagery, which is so deeply infused into the self-consciousness of all American cultural products, they neglect everything about the historic John Smith that detracts from the clean lines of received ideas.

   Disney's portrayal of Smith and Ratcliffe, their new history, must conform to the lines of American self-description and sensibility. From the city on the hill shines forth a very special light. In western civilisation exists the tradition, derived originally from Rome, transmitted through the ideas of Vico and Herder, that the light of civilisation is continually passing westward. America's self-consciousness is to see itself not as a repository of European heritage, but as a new distillation, a new civilisation arising out of the wreckage of the old decaying European civilisation. From the founding of the Republic, the United States of America, with its Declaration of Independence, self-consciously sees its standards as universal, and the practice of the best universal principles as summed up in the workings of its own constitutional processes and by extension all of its social and economic mores. His approach to the work of domination, through his relations with Pocahontas, as the object of her love and desire, as much as the fearless courage by which he makes the Indians tractable and serviceable to the new colony – this is what John Smith symbolises and must be understood

to symbolise in Disney's new history; that is the most important point of political correctness they must endorse. The subtext of the characterisation of Smith and Ratcliffe is the confirmation of the rightness of the Pax Americana, because America is the desire of all peoples, not just the huddled masses yearning to be free, as invited by the Statue of Liberty, who come from the Old World, but of all Others too as represented by Disney's Pocahontas herself.

Notes

1. 'Virginia born Lady' is the inscription that appears on Pocahontas's grave in St George's Church, Gravesend.
2. As, for example, propagated by Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1992.
3. 'From the very beginning of this project the filmmakers were determined to make a movie that would be both entertaining and true to history,' says Donald Ogden Stiers in the commentary of the documentary, *Pocahontas: Two Different Worlds, One True Love*, produced by the Wrightwood Company for the Walt Disney Company, 1995.
4. From the documentary, *Pocahontas: Two Different Worlds, One True Love*.
5. Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975, p. 46.
6. Quoted from 'Map of Virginia, with a Description of the Country, the commodities, people, government and religion, written by Captain John Smith, sometime Governor of the Country,' published Oxford, 1612.
7. This was too much even for Samuel Purchas who wrote that reports of child sacrifice must have been confused. However, it is Smith's interpretation of the ceremonial customs of the Powhatan that survived and spawned a lively tradition. For it was Smith's interpretation that confirmed the expectations of European scholarship. As William Strachey noted when he included similar material on child sacrifice in his account of Virginia, the practice was encountered 'over all the Indies'. The original source is the experiences of William White, a young labourer who was sent to live with the Indians to learn their language. White's actual account of the ceremonial in fact concluded by saying he did not know what happened to the young boys who participated in what is most likely to have been an initiation ceremony.
8. Quoted in H. C. Porter, *The Inconstant Savage: England and the North American Indian*, Duckworth, 1979, p. 324. John Smith first used the epithet 'inconstant' of the native inhabitants in a letter written in 1608.
9. William Strachey, *The History of Travel into Virginia Britania*, edited by L. B. Wright and V. Freund, Hakluyt Society, London, 1953; originally published in 1612.
10. Ibid.
11. John Smith included in his useful list of phrases of the native language published in his Map of Virginia the words for 'Bid Pocahontas bring hither two little baskets, and I will give her white beads to make her a chain.' Quoted by Porter, *Inconstant Savage*, p. 324.

12. Quoted in *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter 1606–1609*, edited by Philip L Barbour, Hakluyt Society, Cambridge, 1969, 2 vols, p. 185.
13. Ibid., p. 206.
14. Instruction of the London Council of the Virginia Company from *Records of the Virginia Company of London*, edited by Susan Myra Kingsbury, Washington, D.C., 4 vols (1906).
15. From a letter by Sir Thomas Dale included in Ralph Homor's *A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia and the success of the affaires there till the 18 of June 1614*, first issued London 1615, facsimile edition, Richmond, Virginia, 1957.
16. Ibid.
17. From the Ashmolean MS reprinted in Philip L. Barbour, *Pocahontas and Her World*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, Mass., 1970, Appendix III, pp. 247–52.
18. Ibid. All subsequent quotes from Rolfe's letter are from the same source.
19. Porter, *Inconstant Savage*, p. 112.
20. Quoted in Ralph Hamor, *A True Discourse*, pp. 59–61.
21. Quoted in *Court and Times of James I*, edited by R. F. Wilkins, 2 vols, London, 1849, p. 415.
22. Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrims*, London, 1625, pp. 118–19.
23. John Rolfe, *True Relation of the State of Virginia*, H. C. Taylor, New Haven, 1951, written in 1616, p. 407.
24. See Peter Mason's excellent *Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other*, Routledge, London, 1990.
25. From the documentary, *Pocahontas: Two Different Worlds, One True Love*.
26. John White's drawings are in the collection of the British Museum and were first reproduced to illustrate Thomas Hariot's *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, Frankfurt, 1590; facsimile edition, New York, 1972.
27. See Malik Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, Manchester University Press, 1986.
28. For an extended discussion of these points see Ziauddin Sardar, Merryl Wyn Davies and Ashis Nandy, *Barbaric Others: A Manifesto on Western Racism*, Pluto Press, London, 1993.
29. For a good discussion of this point see Lawrence J. Korb, 'Our Overstuffed Armed Forces', *Foreign Affairs*, 74 (6), pp. 22–34 (November/December 1995).
30. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, Touchstone Books, New York, 1993.
31. From the Letters Patent known as Charter of the Virginia Company, issued on 10 April 1606. Quoted in Barbour, *Jamestown Voyages*.
32. Ibid.
33. This and subsequent quotes in this paragraph from Instructions of the London Council of the Virginia Company, quoted in Barbour, *Jamestown Voyages*, pp. 49–54.
34. Ibid., p. 111.

10 The Ethical Connection: Christian–Muslim Relations in the Postmodern Age

We – the people of faith – are an endangered species. But unlike the endangered flora and fauna – the Indian tiger, the Malaysian tapir, and the blue whale – no one is campaigning for our right to survive. We face the same threats as other endangered species on this planet: secular men and women and their civilisation. But unlike the threatened animals, rainforests and wildernesses, we are also working towards our own extinction. I refer, of course, to those rapidly disappearing individuals who believe in the One, Omnipotent, Merciful Creator and a socially objective moral order: the believers.

Both Islam and Christianity are moral religions – that is, they define God–human relationships in moral rather than cultic or gnostic terms. Both share a common prophetic heritage, a God-centred vision and a common goal of establishing 'the kingdom of God' upon earth; it is not surprising, then, that what is important for both worldviews is what we do, how we live, what kinds of communities we build. But in both religions, doctrinal assertions about the nature of God, the nature and missions of the religion's apostles and the form of worship have become a source of internal and external conflict – in the Christian–Muslim relationship it is a conflict whose history begins before the Middle Ages, almost at the birth of Islam itself. Here I am not concerned with the nature of, or the reasons behind, this conflict; the imperatives of our own survival as believers in God demand that we put these differences and conflicts aside and combine our spiritual and intellectual resources to combat a universal, fatal disease that is crippling our very being: secularism, the AIDS (Acquired Inhuman Domination Syndrome) of religion, and its most recent, panic-striken offspring – postmodernism.

However, I am fully aware that given our burden of antagonistic and conflict-ridden history, it will not be easy for Muslims and Christians to co-operate with each other in fighting a common enemy. It is easy to issue the dictum – 'Co-operate!' – but to delineate the boundaries of co-operation and to suggest how that co-operation can come about is a task of a different magnitude. I am going to

suggest that it requires a fundamental shift in perception of our respective religions and in our basic attitudes, and feelings, towards each other, which cannot be engendered by the Christian–Muslim dialogues that have become quite fashionable in certain circles.

Christian–Muslim dialogue can easily be justified both from the scriptures of the two religions and from the need for joint platforms on a string of modern issues – nuclear weapons, genetic engineering, poverty, perversion, economic exploitation, ecology – that require religious responses from believers. However, since Islam and Christianity are religions of outreach, since 'spreading the news', as it were, is a religious mandate in both faiths, is it possible for such dialogues not to degenerate into preaching exercises? As Syed Z. Abedin puts it, 'Isn't there a possibility … that Muslims and Christians coming together on a precise platform … may yet unwittingly or in simple good faith make each other the object of *dawa* or mission and thus endanger the ends of trust and community?'[1] He suggests that those involved in dialogue usually come from 'self-conscious or committed groups' and take their religious responsibilities very seriously. My own experience of a few such dialogues shows that, apart from a few fair-minded scholars, most participants are, in fact, professional Christians or professional Muslims – that is, their religion is also the source of their livelihood. To preach is thus not simply a religious obligation for them; it is also a professional and economic necessity. However well-intentioned the motives behind such dialogues may be, they seldom rise above the scoring of theological points.

There is another, less innocent, side to Christian–Muslim dialogues, which seem always to be initiated by Christians with Muslims normally unwilling participants. One reason is suggested by Abedin:

> In the modern period, it was the Christians who were the dominant power; they had the means, the resources, the education, the will and the dreams. They were the ones who stepped out and made contact. They were the ones who rode rough-shod over enlightened elements of their own noble tradition and made inter-faith dialogue a dire prospect for followers of other, 'lesser' religions.[2]

But there is a more fundamental reason – and, here again, I speak from personal experience – these dialogues are the product of an

unnatural fear of Islam. This fear has an old ancestry antedating the Middle Ages which is responsible, as I have argued elsewhere, for the creation of the distorted imagination, 'a deliberate and calculated exercise that impedes mutual understanding between Islam and the West'.[3] Orientalism is, of course, one by-product of the distorted imagination. Today, the fear of Islam, in true postmodernist style, has reached panic proportions. Note that the call for dialogue began in the early 1980s after the Iranian revolution, after the so-called 'Islamisation' programmes in Pakistan, Sudan and Malaysia, after it became evident that there is a genuine upsurge – some call it a 'revival' – of interest in Islam and all things Islamic. No one was remotely interested in dialogues during the seventies, sixties or fifties. The basis of dialogue does not appear to be mutual respect, or a search for understanding, or even the Christian teaching of 'love thy enemy', but the secular demand of 'know thy enemy'. Consequently, it is not surprising that Muslims have been less than excited by invitations to participate in such dialogues.

Even if we grant that dialogue can be, and perhaps sometimes is, based on altruism, what is it supposed to achieve? Once the dialogue conference is over, the participants return to their respective theological shells; there is no fall-out, no joint projects, nothing that can take participation beyond the level of discussion. If we are to move from a situation of distrust to one of trust, from one in which we view the Other not as an enemy but as a friend, then we must, first, understand and remove, or at least try to remove, the basic causes of the distrusts that divide us, and, second, work continuously towards mutually developed and acceptable goals. We must move beyond dialogue to find a common ground for genuine discussion and continuous pragmatic action.

So, what divides us? What are the causes of distrust between believing Muslims and believing Christians?

Why Muslims Distrust Christianity

There are three fundamental reasons for the Muslim distrust of Christianity: the theological mistrust, the experiential mistrust and the academic mistrust.

Theological mistrust has two components, the first of which revolves around the fact that Christianity has been transformed into a cult of Jesus. The Islamic view of Jesus is quite straightforward: the Qur'an is unequivocal:

> He said: 'Behold, I am a servant of God. He has vouchsafed unto me revelation and made me a Prophet, and made me blessed wherever I may be; and He has enjoined upon me prayer and charity as long as I live, and (has endowed me with) piety towards my mother; and He has not made me haughty or bereft of grace.
>
> 'Hence peace was upon me on the day when I was born, and (will be upon me) on the day of my death, and on the day when I shall be raised to life (again)!'
>
> Such was, in the words of truth, Jesus the son of Mary, about whose nature they so deeply disagree. (19:30–4, Muhammad Asad's translation)

As the long history of debate on the nature of Jesus shows, Christian understanding of who is Jesus is not that simple; neither is there a single answer accepted by all Christians. Indeed, the problem arises in the Gospels themselves, where competing views of Jesus are offered. In Mark, we find Jesus to be a man whom God 'adopts' as a special source of revelation to the people of Israel. Mark begins his Gospel with the baptism of Jesus; his life before that event is considered by Mark to be totally with*out* significance. Luke sees Jesus as a great prophet; in fact, the final prophet. In Matthew, Jesus is transformed into a new Moses, a new lawgiver, who marks the dawn of a new age in the relationship between God and man. It is only in the Gospel of John that we see Jesus as a pre-existent being who intervenes in history to play a cosmic drama and departs back to God.

Over and above these images, how did Jesus understand himself? The weight of recent Biblical investigations, including such works as *The Myth of God Incarnate*,[4] shows that Jesus certainly understood himself as a prophet with a mission to communicate the message of God and reform society, but that he did not understand himself as the Messiah or Son of God – these titles reflect the Church's later attempts at exegesis, efforts to give significance to the person of Jesus for human history.

While the findings of recent biblical scholarship are much closer to the Muslim view of Jesus, the attribution of divinity to Jesus has had serious consequences for non-Christian cultures. The logic of this position has yielded a double-edged sword. If Jesus is God, then God allows himself to be edged out of the world and onto the cross. Thus God is weak and totally powerless in the world. He helps us not through his omnipotence but through his weakness and suffering. This has led Christian missionaries to impose a submissive

love on the members of non-western cultures they converted, thus paving the way for their colonisation or for sustaining an unjust status quo. And if Jesus is God and it is not possible to attain salvation, or indeed become fully human, except through acknowledging his Lordship, then any and all means are justified to attain that salvation for the less fortunate occupants of this globe. Moreover, if you have attained salvation by being 'in Christ', then you are naturally a member of a priviliged class – you have already carved out a piece of paradise for yourself. This claim has led to the persecution of countless indigenous people, as well as the persecution of Muslims, Jews, Africans, American Indians and other non-Christian peoples. On the basis of this claim, Christians have carried out, and continue to carry out, programmes of brutal extermination of members of 'pagan' faiths as well as adherents of traditional worldviews. As Charles Kammer notes,

> Churches have permitted and supported slavery, apartheid, and genocide by teaching that slave masters, apartheid rulers, and genocidal executioners can all be saved as long as they have a 'right relation with God' ... Likewise, the sorry history of Christian missionaries who have served as collaborators in the enslavement and oppression of the Third World people demonstrates the way in which a worldview can be a brutal support for the historical suffering of the people.[5]

The claim that the route to salvation lies only in the recognition of the divinity of Jesus has led, on the one hand, to enforcement of a suppressive, submissive love on those with less power, and, on the other, to a cultural and personal arrogance and imperialism that has done untold damage to non-Christian societies. Kammer concludes:

> If we are truly to honour and respect the person of Jesus and live out the implications of his life, death and teachings, we can no longer make claims about the absolute uniqueness of Jesus, or the necessity of the encounter with the person of Jesus for human liberation and salvation. To be true to the person of Jesus, his life of love and concern for other persons, his openness to persons of both sexes, all enconomic classes, all cultural backgrounds, we must repudiate a christology that measures the worth of persons on the basis of their relationship with Christ.[6]

The second component of the Muslims' theological distrust of Christianity concerns the adoption by Christianity of a Hellenistic dualism of body, feeling and spirit, a dualism which we do not find in the Bible but in St Augustine's interpretation of Christianity. Much of Catholic and Protestant church life and polity is based not on the teachings of Jesus but on St Augustine's dualistic Neoplatonic worldview. He divided humanity in two groups, living into two cities, created by two kinds of love: 'The earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly city by love of God carried as far as contempt of self.'[7] St Augustine was concerned only with loyalty to God, for this loyalty was enough to ensure that all else would fall into place. He thus told Christians to 'love God, and do what you want'. And they did: to the detriment of the rest of humanity. Christianity has to write off much of the Augustinian tradition and return to the truly profound wellspring of Biblical thought. As Matthew Fox and Brian Swimme state in their *Manifesto for a Global Civilisation*

> Specifically, the presumption that original sin is a valid starting point for spiritual living must be let go of; the preoccupation of Augustine with his own introspective guilt must be let go of; his confusion of Church with kingdom of God needs to be let go of; and his fear of women and the fear of his own sexuality along with the equating of spirituality with flight from passion needs to be let go of; his reduction of the Biblical word justice (*justitia*) must be let go of; his anti-semitism needs to be let go of ... Many of Augustine's philosophical and theological presuppositions continue to haunt Western spirituality and many are the Christians who believe in Augustine much more than they do in Jesus Christ.[8]

The second reason for Muslim distrust of Christianity, the experiential mistrust, is a natural outcome of the Augustinian tradition of dualism: those who love this world, being more philosophically and intellectually powerful, have subjugated those who love God; Christianity has thus become a handmaiden to secularism. Indeed, the intimate relationship between secularism and Christianity parallels that between the crippled and impotent Clifford Chatterley and his suppressed and frustrated wife, Constance, in D. H. Lawrence's famous novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Clifford was a philosopher and intellectual as well as the lord and master of his manor: 'He himself was absolute in all his universe ... his immortality, his heaven of the

pure truth, the pure ideal, the pure light, it was only himself in his own oneness exalted to an absolute and everything but himself fused away.'[9] Constance was the one devoted to love; and on the surface, Clifford gave Constance all the freedom in the world:

> He would seem to leave her absolute liberty. Never would he utter a command, never would he say You must! You shall not! I do not allow it! Never! He would always seem to leave her entirely mistress of her choice. And all the time he would subtly have stolen all choice from her, she could only choose as he willed.[10]

Christianity, it appears, always chooses as secularism wills.

Contemporary western secularism is a product of the conflict between science and Christianity that took place between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Secularism dethroned the ruling orthodoxy, the powerful institution of the Church, and gave rise to a vision of society that has captivated the western mind for the last 300 years. It was a vision of a society as rationally ordered. This vision produced extraordinary advances in science and technology; but as Stephen Toulmin argues, it has also perpetuated a hidden agenda: the delusion that human nature and society could be fitted into precise and manageable rational categories.[11] Contrary to popular belief, secularism did not actually produce a decline in religiosity – it simply transferred religious devotion from the concerns of the Church to the rational concerns of this world. Since the Enlightenment, this religiosity has been expressed in nationalism, communism, fascism, scientism, modernism and has now built its nest in postmodernism.

The grand narrative of secularism was the cornerstone of European imperialism; it was a universal mission not just to dominate and control the world but to secularise it: to restructure it in the image of the European man. European imperialism was not content simply with physical occupation of non-European peoples and nations; to be really effective, it had to occupy their cultures as well as their minds. The object of the exercise was to use the main weapon in secularism's arsenal, instrumental rationality – the dynamic, progressive truth within history – to absorb and subjugate all other viewpoints within the dominant worldview. Conflict, domination and a sense of superiority have thus been intrinsic to the secularist worldview from its inception.

Christianity is, or ought to be, an antithesis to secularism. Yet it became tied to a particular culture, a particular scholarly trend and historic experience of a particular people. Instead of explaining the Bible and Jesus's ministry within changing circumstances, cultural settings and different languages, scripture and Jesus were made to serve the ends of European secularism. It was both the shared vision as well as the common methodology of Christianity and secularism that led Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to argue that secularism is, in fact, a product of Christian faith; and that, in more recent times, has produced such Christian scholars as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who considers secularism to be the apotheosis of human endeavour, and, as a Christian, is quite happy to concede that human beings are capable of handling their moral affairs without invoking God![12]

Secularism, however, is not intrinsic to Christianity; it is a product of the Augustinian and rationalist interpretations of Christianity. As Naquib Al-Attas declares,

> The claim that secularization has its roots in biblical faith and that it is the fruit of the Gospel has no substance in historical fact. Secularization has its roots not in biblical faith, but in the interpretation of biblical faith by Western man; it is not the fruit of the Gospel, but is the fruit of the long history of philosophical and metaphyisical conflict in the religious and purely rationalistic worldview of Western man.[13]

The rationalistic worldview of Western man, it now seems, has almost totally devoured Christianity. Over the last three decades Christianity has undergone a radical transformation. It has abrogated the claim that religious experience offers a unique insight into moral behaviour; it has been politicised and has adopted the language of political and social theories of Marxism and liberal secularism; its spiritual content has all but evaporated as the faith is continuously reintrepreted in terms of the secular ideals. As Edward Norman noted in his 1978 Reith Lectures,

> The evaporation of any sense that religious tradition conveys a unique understanding of human life has been one of the most decisive changes in modern Christian experience. Instead of modifying or rejecting secular culture, the most influential of Christian thinkers have adopted it.[14]

The final phase of the secularisation of Christianity began with the adoption during the 1960s of humanistic ethics by Christianity. The humanist view of human nature, writes Edward Norman, is

> in direct contradiction to received religious attitudes, as Humanists themselves have always insisted. The 1960s crisis of values within the Western intelligentsia ought to have elicited a clear polarization between religious and secular attitudes on such fundamental matters as the doctrine of man. In practice this did not happen, and at least part of the explanation is to be found in the willingness of Christain thinkers to adopt the same moral and intellectual outlook as the Humanists. Humanists, on their part, adopted none of the premises of Christianity. But their view of man as morally autonomous and capable of progressive develop-ment, and the calculated hedonism of Humanist ethics, penetrated far into Christian attitudes during the 1960s, so that eventually even the most broad and liberal of the bishops started describing themselves as 'Christian Humanists' – and not, I should add, in the tradition of Erasmus, but in deference to the secular luminaries of the time.[15]

What this means is that there is hardly any difference between the attitudes and morals of most Christians and those of the liberal sec-ularists. No one illustrates this more aptly than the Reverend Don Cupitt, Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. 'Today,' he writes, 'left-wing postmodernists like me are turning religion into something like art: believers must continuously reinvent their own faith.'[16] If this is indeed the case, if faith has to be reinvented as though it were some sort of gadget, then why should anyone go to 'Christian' derivative postmodernists such as Rev. Cupitt for moral guidance when they can go straight to the source: postmodernist art in general, and the postmodernist novel in particular. The conse-quences for Christianity are obvious: it has lost its power as a religion of moral imperatives; it is incapable of defining the areas of public debate; instead of leading it follows the definition and priorities of others. As Edward Norman laments,

> Almost no one now looks to the Church for social teaching ... Even the fears of impending global chaos or annihilation do not elicit religious responses, as once the intimations of cataclysm would have done. The contemporary debate about world resources, over-

population, pollution, or nuclear catastrophe, is according to the
analysis of secular thinkers – although the Churches tag along,
offering a religious gloss to precisely the same ideas.[17]

Insofar as Christianity identifies itself almost totally with secular
ideals, its fate cannot be separated from that of secularism. Moreover,
this means that Muslims have to take Christians not as their friends
but as a part of the disease that is – at least for them – the funda-
mental problem of our time. What options are open to Muslims
when they note that Christianity is distinctively unchristian in its
attitude towards the world it wishes to change? Having read various
Christian reports on such world problems as poverty, overpopula-
tion and exploitation, and indeed having worked with numerous
Christian development groups, I know that the criticism of the right-
wing Christian contributors to *The Kindness That Kills*[18] is quite
correct: Marxist concerns are regularly reproduced in the reports and
calls to action made by Christian groups of various persuasions. But
neither do I find their own position that the status quo is just, that
naked capitalism is the best possible option that we can have, that
multinational corporations are the best route for Third World devel-
opment, all that Christian, or that rational. Both positions borrow
their political and social outlook and vocabulary, the issues they
regard as most urgent and requiring attention, and even their tests
of moral virtue, from the progressive thinking of the surrounding
secular culture.

If Christians have embraced the ideals of secularism with a
vengeance, then it is not surprising that most Christian missionar-
ies exhibit the major characteristics of liberal secularism –
imperialistic tendencies, dehumaniszation, domination and mean-
inglessness. If there is not much difference between the ideals and
norms of secularism and those of Christianity, then Christianity
becomes meaningless and irrelevant – at least in moral and social
terms. Its only option then is to recede inwards, increasingly to
become a faith of personal salvation. But, as I mentioned earlier,
even as purely a faith of personal salvation, based on the notion that
salvation can only be acquired by accepting the divinity of Jesus,
Christianity cannot cast aside the imperialistic character that is
intrinsic to any cult, a trait that has been reinforced by secularism.
Having been relegated to the position of irrelevance in the west,
Christianity shows its true imperialistic character in the Third World.
It is not for nothing that Christianity is shifting its numerical base

from Europe and North America towards the nations of the developing world. Indeed, this is a period of great Christian expansion: but it is open to debate whether the new converts enter Christianity from personal conviction or as a means of escaping their poverty. The latter appears to be true from what I have seen in Indonesia and India. To use the rice bowl as the weapon of conversion is indeed the ultimate in imperialistic exploitation.

Most people were probably shocked by Germaine Greer's description of the saintly Mother Teresa as a 'religious imperialist'.[19] But having seen Mother Teresa's nuns in action almost a decade ago on the streets of Calcutta, I know exactly what Greer means. Mother Teresa has a sense of innate superiority that is either a product of secularised Christianty or, more probably in her case, a creed of personal salvation. She has no humility when it comes to her Catholicism: she is ministering to the poor and the destitutes of Calcutta not for the sake of humanity, not because they are victims of a colossal system of injustice, not because their dehumanising poverty is a product of a global system of domination, but for the sake of her variety of Christianity. Greer describes how a photographer once captured the rescue of a dying man by one of Mother Teresa's nuns.

First picture: a young man, horribly emaciated, collapsed on a pavement in the sun. Second: a nun in a white and blue sari tugging at his arm. Third: nun hailing a passing rickshaw. Fourth: gaunt rickshaw puller begging not to have to take the dying man. Fifth: nun commanding two bewildered passers-by to lift the dying man into the rickshaw. Sixth: the anguished rickshaw puller running through the traffic with the dying man behind all askew, the white of his eyes showing. Seventh: the dying man sat against the wall of the corridor of Mother Teresa's hospice where, all unconscious of the bed and the baptism awaiting him, he died.

'Why did not,' Greer asks, 'the little nun sit by him on the pavement, shade his head from the sun, and pray with him, until it was all over?' Because humanity, the immediate needs of the individual, are not part of Mother Teresa's business; she is in the business of saving souls for God, not in the business of eradicating poverty or injustice.

The arrogant enterprise of saving souls for God is also the business of introducing liberal secularism and western capitalism into Third World nations, often at the cost of indigenous cultures. For example,

the work of Wycliffe Bible Translators, one of the world's largest protestant missionary organisations with active branches in over 40 developing countries, has been shown actually to kill the indigenous tribes of Latin America. The actual missionary work on behalf of WBT is carried out by the Summer Institute of Linguistics which is set up in developing countries and where the Bible is allegedly translated into unwritten tribal languages. Numerous studies of SIL's work have shown that its missionaries do not only bring the Bible to 'the Devil's paradise' of indigenous tribes, but they also open up the area for multinational prospectors and CIA infiltration and have often themselves carried out forced sterilisation. The missionaries try to change the tribal societies from within into prototypes of American capitalist and consumer culture; a transformation that, as a number of anthropoligsts have noticed, ends up killing the members of the tribe.[20]

SIL's work may be an extreme example; but missionary work in general tends to produce westernised elites in the Third World. These Church leaders superimpose western culture and liberal secularism on their newly converted flocks, who identify not with the indigenous norms and values of which they are a product, but with western values and modes of behaviour for which they fight tooth and nail with the indigenous leadership. Christianity, like Hellenism and Islam, is Oriental in origin. But in the imagination of the Christian elites of the Third World, and dare one say in the minds of Europeans themselves, the Holy Family is blond. But blond ideals and notions in an indigenous head give the appearance of authenticity: their westernised political Christianity, as in the ideologies of African nationalism, is mistaken for the voice of the world's oppressed. Christianity thus serves the interests of secularism in the Third World and, despite loud declarations of love and the appearance of authenticity, missionary activity often spreads a dehumanising form of western culture and capitalism.

A great deal has been written about the final, academic mistrust of Christianity by Muslims, and I will only limit myself here to a few points. Orientalism was, and is, as much a product of European imperialistic racism as of Christian missionary zeal. Of course, Muslims do not object to scholarly criticism from Christian or secularist writers: but they do object, and they must object, to the remoulding of Islam in Christian or secularist notions. And they object to the principle that has wide currency in western academic establishments: Muslims cannot be trusted to be objective about

their religion. The only really objective analysis of Islam and Muslims can come from non-Muslim, western quarters. This principle serves as a veto against Muslim scholars gaining a foothold in European and North American academic establishments. As Shabbir Akhtar writes,

> It is an empirically testable claim that in the West Islam is never taught by able intellectuals who embrace its inspiration. Nor will it do to retort that, for purposes of teaching as opposed to preaching, adherence to a faith prejudices one's outlook. For rejection also prejudices it, if in a different direction. In any case, why should Islam be singled out for special treatment, given Christians teach Christianity and Buddhists teach Buddhism, and so on? And would any liberal Western university allow Muslims to teach Christianity to balance the fact that Christians teach Islam? The reason for the total Orientalist monopoly on the teaching of Islam is simple. Orientalism is now increasingly about the politics of distress.[21]

Indeed, just like secularism and postmodernism, Orientalism is going through a new phase of panic and expansion based on self-glorification – as is evident from the plethora of books painting Islam and Muslims as the most retrogressive institution and bloodthirsty people since Genghis Khan. And we do not have to go too far to see the validity of that 'empirically testable claim'. This institution (where I am speaking), part of the Selly Oak Colleges of the University of Birmingham, is known as the 'Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations'. Since its inception in 1976 there has never been more than one Muslim serving full-time on the academic staff; Christians have always constituted 80 per cent or more of the full-time faculty.

Why Christians Distrust Muslims

The traffic of mistrust is not all one way; Christians, too, have genuine and serious distrusts of Muslims. We can identify at least two which require serious attention from Muslims. Let us call them the humanitarian distrust and the theological distrust.

It seems to me, and must be even more apparent to Christians, that contemporary Muslims have lost their humanity. I mean all contemporary manifestations of Islam appear to be based on a total lack of humanitarian concerns and a serious violation of human

rights. Muslims are the first to point out how Islam instituted basic human rights in society, how it served as a liberating force, how it instituted the notions of tolerance and respect for human life and dignity in its law. But everywhere today Muslims seem to be totally oblivious of basic humanitarian concerns: wherever there is talk of reclaiming society for Islam, of 'Islamisation', injustice, suppression and political violence are not far behind. Those countries that claim to be 'Islamic', that have 'Islamic governments', provide shining examples of all that is an affront to human dignity: suppression of political freedom, restrictions on intellectual and cultural expression, draconian labour laws, suppression and inhuman treatment of women, persecution of ethical and religious minorities, imprisonment without trial, torture ... the list is agonisingly long. Contemporary implementations of the Shari'ah appear to be limited to floggings, cutting-off of hands, beheading and the like. It is no wonder then that such a scholar as Bert Breiner is forced to say that Islamic law may be just, but its administration in modern times has seldom been so.[22] Indeed, there seems to be a paranoid preoccupation with the *hudud* aspects of the Shari'ah without due regard for their prerequisites: institutionalisation of distributive social, economic and political justice and implementation of the rights of individuals and groups in society.

It is in the contemporary quest for the 'Islamic state' that we find the real loss of the humanitarian spirit of Islam. Islam is an integrative worldview: that is to say, it integrates all aspects of reality by providing a moral perspective on every aspect of human endeavour. Islam does not provide ready-made answers to all human problems; it provides a moral perspective within which Muslims must endeavour to find answers to all human problems. However, Islamic movements have made the fundamental error of perceiving Islam as a totalistic ideology; and the pursuit of this ideology in the form of an Islamic state is supposed to provide solutions to all the problems of Muslim societies. Indeed, the pursuit of the Islamic state has itself become an ideology. The Iranian state is clearly based on this assumption; it also, equally clearly, demonstrates that the realisation of the ideological goal does not in fact solve any problems – indeed, cynics may argue it aggravates them. The reduction of the worldview of Islam into an ideology is, of course, a form of secularisation. Once Islam, as an ideology, became the programme of action of a vested group, it lost its humanity and became a battlefield where reason

and justice were readily sacrificed at the altar of emotions. As I have written elsewhere,

> Ideology is the antithesis of Islam. It is an enterprise of suppression and not a force for liberation. Islam is an invitation to thought and analysis, not imitation and emotional and political freebooting. Ideology ensures that mistakes and errors are perpetuated; Islam requires an open attitude where mistakes are freely admitted and efforts made to correct them. Islam is not, and cannot be, moulded into ideological boundaries.[23]

This transformation of Islam into an ideology, this secularisation of Islam, has had dire consequences for Muslims. In the chilling words of S. Parvez Manzoor, the step from a totalistic ideology to 'a *totalitarian* order of theocracy where every human-situation is open to state-arbitration' is a small one.

> Such a 'radical' solution to the problem of the Muslim situation not only introduces the reign of theory into Islamic politics, it also debunks most of Muslim history as un-Islamic. Thus when such a vision rediscovers a 'golden' past, it does so only in order to disdain the present and mock the future. Despite its desperate longing for power, all it achieves is a 'legitimacy-crisis' and messianic chaos: politics, as the regime of action, is paralysed and piety as the search for foundational truth takes over.[24]

The totalitarian vision of Islam as a state has transformed Muslim politics into a metaphysics: in such an enterprise, every action can be justified as 'Islamic' by the dictates of political expediency. It is not just the Christians who distrust and are alarmed by such a vision; it also sends shivers down the spines of concerned and enlightened Muslims.

The theological distrust of Muslims by Christians concern not so much the fundamental sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, but the judicial interpretation of these sources – *fiqh*, or classical jurisprudence. The legalistic rulings of the classical Imams, and their associated schools of thought – the five now predominant are the Hanafi school in the Indian subcontinent, west Asia and Egypt; the Maliki in north and west Africa; the Shafi in Malaysia and Indonesia; the Haanbali in Arabia; and the Jaferi in Iran and Iraq – were space and time bound. They were concerned with solving the problems of

their societies in the light of available knowledge; and they incorporated, despite their attempts to state the truth as they saw it, the prejudices and preoccupations of their own time. These rulings were not meant to be the final word on aspects of Islamic law, let alone the ultimate understanding of the Shari'ah. The great Imams emphasised that their rulings were their personal opinions and should not be accepted uncritically; they never intended their judgements to be eternal law: that would amount to claiming a divine authority. Today, *fiqh* has assumed the role of theology and many a Muslim believes more in *fiqh* than in the Qur'an or Sunnah.

The term *fiqh*, in its technical sense of jurisprudence, was not in vogue before the Abbasid periods. The early formulations of *fiqh* were focused more on the practice of faith than on questions of jurisprudence. This can be proved by an examination of such works as *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, attributed to Imam Abu Hanifa (d.150 AH), which deals exclusively with the basic tenets of Islam rather than with legal questions. There is nothing wrong with this aspect of *fiqh*, which focuses on matters of belief, prayer and rituals. However, when *fiqh* assumed its systematic legal form during the era of the Abbasids, it incorporated three vital aspects of the Muslim society of that period. At that juncture, Muslim history was in its expansionist phase, and *fiqh* incorporated the logic of the Muslim imperialism of that period. The *fiqh* rulings on apostasy, for example, derive not from the Qur'an but from this logic. Moreover, the world was simple and could easily be divided into black and white: hence, the division of the world into *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb*. Furthermore, as the framers of law were not by this stage managers of society, the law became merely theory which could not be modified – the framers of the law were unable to see where the faults lay and what aspect of the law needed fresh thinking and reformulation. Thus *fiqh*, as we know it today, evolved on the basis of a division between those who were governing and set themselves apart from society and those who were framing the law; the imperialistic assumptions of a 'golden' phase of Muslim history also came into play.

What this means in reality is that when this *fiqh* is applied in contemporary society, it throws up the contradictions that were inherent in its formulation and evolution. The application of *fiqhi* legislation, out of the context of its time and out of step with ours, gives Muslim societies a medieval feel. When narrow adherence to *fiqh*, to the dictates of this or that school of thought, whether it has any relevance to the real world or not, becomes the norm, ossification

sets in. 'The *ulemas* have solved all our problems' becomes the rallying cry; and it becomes necessary for a vested group in society to preserve their territory, the source of their power and prestige, at all costs. An outmoded body of law is thus equated with the Shari'ah, and criticism of *fiqh* is shunned by elevating it to eternal law.

It is the post-Abbasid formulation of *fiqh* that gives rise to the Christian distrust of Muslims. It is here that the prejudices and biases of the expansionist age of Islam make their mark. Ibn Taymiyyah, for example, recognises that non-Muslims living in a Muslim country enjoy the protection of their rights as enshrined in the Qur'an and Sunnah. But he adds his own view to the Shari'ah injunctions and advises Muslims to 'humiliate them (Christians), but do no injustice to them'. Given ibn Taymiyyah's stature, such a view can easily become part of the Islamic tradition which is so vehemently defended by pious Muslims. But humiliating non-Muslims is not the only violation of their rights that have become part of post-Abbasid *fiqh*. As Bert Breiner argues:

> Even among the more liberal jurists of the past there are serious problems from the point of view of human rights in Islam. According to all the traditional law schools, non-Muslims cannot testify in a Muslim court of law. Yet, in traditional codification of Islamic law there are no circumstances requiring that a non-Muslim be tried in an Islamic court. Very few would be willing to accept the position of being tried in a court of law where neither they nor their friends or relations could give evidence on their behalf. In these circumstances the non-Muslim would need to find a Muslim to testify on his behalf. That assumes, of course, that there exist Muslims who are competent to give evidence in that particular case. It assumes further that the Muslim would be able to withstand the special pressure which would come from other Muslims if he testified on behalf of a non-Muslim against a Muslim.[25]

The solution for such anomalies lies in distinguishing between Shari'ah, Islamic law and *fiqh* as three distinctive entities. Shari'ah is a set of regulations, a set of principles, a set of values, that provide Muslim communities with eternal guidance. Islamic law is what the Muslim community derives from the Shari'ah. *Fiqh* is what the classical Muslim jurists derived from the Shari'ah as appropriate laws for their period. What the Muslims must realise, as the late Fazlur Rahman writes, is that

the genesis and development of the whole Islamic tradition – the way the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet was approached, treated, and interpreted – was only one possible alternative among those available, which was chosen and then developed ... After the first few generations the interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah was not as an integrated whole, but as so many different pieces and parcels. The principle of analogy also did not prove as effective and beneficial as it might have, because it was applied after examining the two Islamic sources in a discrete and piecemeal manner, rather than after creating a unity out of the whole message, and then deducing laws and norms of behaviour from it.[26]

We need to explore other possible alternatives, to evolve a new Islamic tradition for the postmodern age, a *fiqh* of our time, that treats the fundamental sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as an integrated whole. While the Shari'ah does not change – it being the ultimate guidance from God – Islamic law continues to change as the Muslim situation changes: the challange facing contemporary Muslim scholars is to evolve a body of Islamic law that reflects the demands and needs of our time. Only such a development would put the Christian distrust of Muslims permanently to rest.

Co-operation and a Pluralistic World

These then are the hurdles that both Muslims and Christians have to surmount if they, as believers in their respective faiths, are to survive as believers and to co-operate in any meaningful joint venture. Both sets of believers have to work hard to overcome the impasse of their respective histories and traditions, and both have to recognise that mutual respect means that each group has the right to be described, and understood, in terms of its own religious concepts and categories. Both groups have to fight the imperialism of their own traditions and move from servile conformity and apathetic non-committal to a position where their worldviews are adoptive rather than ossified in a particular historic location. Christianity must end its marriage with secularism; and Islam needs to recover its lost humanity.

The removal of basic sources of distrust between Muslims and Christians would enable both religions to become adaptive rather than be absorbed in secularism or be ossified in a historic space-time

location. Working towards improving Christian–Muslim relations in our time will actually increase the chances of survival of both faiths as worldviews of contemporary relevance and social and moral action. Furthemore, it will be a natural step forward towards the creation of a pluralistic world and multicultural societies – which is an essential imperative for the survival of believers. The modern world is dominated by a single civilisation: that of western secularism. Whatever our personal beliefs, creed or colour, we live, move and breathe within the global secular civilisation.

Any work that involves the creation of genuine Muslim and Christian responses to contemporary reality directly challenges that global civilisation and the dominant notion that secularism is the yardstick by which reality is measured. Any attempt at dethroning the notion that secularist civilisation is 'the civilisation' is already a step towards the creation of a multicivilisational, pluralistic world. By putting their own houses in order, both Islam and Christianity will ensure that diversity of viable worldviews prevail at the global level, thus ensuring the survival of humanity as a whole.

A dominant myth of our time is that pluralism is only possible in the worldview of secularism. But secularism maintains this fallacy only so long as non-secularist worldviews conform to its dictates and do not challenge its basic assumptions. Once its assumptions are challenged, once its position of power and dominance is scrutinised, once the bogus mystique of secular culture is confronted, secularism becomes the most intolerant of worldviews. It maintains its domination, like Clifford Chatterley, by relegating its principles to the levels of absolute and by subtly stealing all choices from non-secular cultures.

As the dominant, all-powerful worldview, secularism will not willingly concede any territory; the secularist notion of freedom without responsibility is an article of faith that all secularists defend. Such a creed cannot promote genuine pluralism, for genuine pluralism requires that we surrender our power over others in order to ensure that they have the same freedom we desire for ourselves. Only religious worldviews that recognise diversity of spiritual ex-periences, and because of their faith are willing to combine freedom with social responsibility, can achieve genuine pluralism. Secularism also assumes that a people can form a community without a shared story to bind their lives. But, as Stanley Hauerwas argues,

Such a society seeks no more than a shared system of rules to ensure fairness among individuals, for whom society is no more than an arena in which to pursue their interests. This system of rules, precisely in order to be fair, must be defensible in terms that are publicly acceptable and that any objective observer would share. Hence, it must exclude precisely those elements that make our histories personal and particular. Religious belief, from this perspective regarded as personal and private, must be excluded from the public realm in the name of fairness. Any moral views I hold must be justified in terms available to anyone. The first person singular is excluded, and I am forced to regard my life as an observer would regard it. Individuality flourishes, to be sure, but only in private. In the public realm the individual's personal history – a vision of the good shaped by one's character and characteristic virtues – must be subordinated to a lowest-common-denominator set of rules that can be affirmed by all citizens, whatever their virtue or vices.[27]

When non-secular cultures are 'subordinated to a lowest-common-denominator set of rules', they can only survive either by maintaining a separate identity or by assimilating themselves into the dominant secular culture. Secularism thus promotes only separatism and marginalisation or total assimilation. Genuine pluralism can only be achieved on the basis of integration that allows distinct religious and cultural identity to flower and promotes inter-group relations on the basis of appropriate access to power and economic and intellectual resources. Such pluralism can thrive only in enlightened worldviews that put a much higher premium on social and moral virtues than on personal and power interests.

The improvement of Christian–Muslim relations is thus essential for the emergence of a pluralistic world as well as for the survival of the faiths as socially and morally relevant worldviews. But if co-operation between the believers is to go beyond exchange of pieties and differences of finer points of theology, towards removing the distrust between them, towards giving the two worldviews an authentic contemporary identity, we need something that permanently binds this co-operation. That 'something', which provides Christian–Muslim co-operation with meaning and direction, is the ethical connection.

The Ethical Connection

Up to now I have used the term 'Christianity' as though it described a monolithic entity. Christianity, like Islam itself, is expressed in a number of different forms. There are, of course, the major church communions – Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and numerous other Protestant denominations, each with numerous sectarian branches. And there seems to be considerable variation in what is actually believed and practised within a sect. There are even more fundamental differences across the denominations between Christians who regard Christianity as a specific set of beliefs, those who see it as a way of life, those who consider it as a set of rituals and cultic practices and those who regard it as some kind of evolutionary art that needs constant updating and remoulding. In this plethora of Christian understandings of Christianity, what exactly is the real essence of the faith? Shabbir Akhtar argues that there are three basic conditions for being accepted as a Christian:

1. Belief in the existence of one God – a uniquely perfect transcendent Being.
2. Acceptance of the ethical and religious authority and leadership of the historical personage of Jesus of Nazareth.
3. 'A commitment to viewing the life of Jesus as a disclosure and human exemplification of the moral excellence of deity such that the imitation of Jesus's behaviour is already a moral action in the believer's life.'[28]

Akhtar's condition three is interesting. As he explains,

> It makes a claim that is not equivalent to claiming divinity of Jesus: it is not a doctrinal commitment of his nature ... it deliberately leaves room for controversy over whether Jesus's ministry is an exclusive expression of God's manifold wisdom and righteousness or merely a pivotal and distinctive one.

If we accept this to be the essence of Christianity (anyone, writes Akhtar, 'who rejects any or all of these conditions is not even a heretic ... he is either not a Christian at all ... or he is an apostate consciously repudiating the faith of former days') and all else to be simply a matter of exegesis that can be reinterpreted, then the major hurdles for the theological distrust of Christianity by Muslims are

removed: Muslims can simply take Christianity to be a genuine monotheistic faith based on the revelations to Prophet Isa, for what was revealed to Isa, the Qur'an tells us, was the same truth. Moreover, if the claim of uniqueness of Jesus is suspended, then Christianity can at last reciprocate the ecumenical courtesy that Islam has always extended it: it can recognise the legitimacy of other monotheistic routes to salvation. And if there are other routes to salvation, then there is no need indiscriminately to impose or force western cultural beliefs on 'inferior' people. Christianity can at last put down the 'white man's burden' and truly liberate itself.

Islam, too, is in need of a similar liberation. As with the case of Christianity, we can also produce three basic conditions for entering the fold of Islam:

1. Belief in the existence of one God – a uniquely perfect transcendent Being.
2. Recognition of the Qur'an as a Word of God.
3. Acceptance of the Prophet Muhammad as the paradigm of ethical and moral behaviour and his life, the Sunnah, as a commentary on the Qur'an.

This is the essence of Islam; all else is exegesis and is open to reinterpretation. That means that the claims of historic *fiqh* to be the guardian of Muslim morality must be accorded the same fate as the claim of the uniqueness of Jesus. We can only have an interpretative relationship with the Qur'an and the Sunnah: each generation must reinterpret the textual sources in the light of its own experience. If it fails to do so it undermines one of its basic God-given freedoms: the freedom to re-understand the divine text in its own epoch. Once liberated from the confines of a suffocating and outdated *fiqh*, Islam can develop a more humane face and, hence, remove the humanitarian distrust that so many Christians have of Islam.

Once the barriers of distrust are genuinely down, we can work towards real Christian–Muslim co-operation. I suggest that this co-operation begin with the affirmation that is central to both faiths: the idea of an omnipotent God, the first of the three basic conditions for belonging to the House of Islam or the fold of Christianity. Here then, we are not talking about a God who is made in the image of the philosophers, the ascetics, the mystics, the social reformers, the ecologists or such left-wing Christian postmodernists as the Reverend Don Cupitt. The idea of God based on the monotheistic

'understanding of the universe and man's destiny', in the words of Brian Hebblethwaite,

> is that of an infinite, absolute, incorporeal, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly wise and good mind or spirit. God must be thought of as infinite and absolute, if he is indeed to be both metaphysically adequate ground and explanation of the world's being and also a religiously adequate object of worship. He must be thought of as incorporeal, since body is inherently limited and finite. He must be thought of as omnipotent and omniscient, since there is nothing outside him that could restrict his power or knowledge ... He must be thought of as perfectly wise and good, since nothing could deflect an all-powerful, all-knowing rational will from pursuit of the best. And he must be thought of by analogy with mind or spirit, since only a creative source, endowed with will and purpose ... can explain the being, nature and destiny of the world and especially of the human world.[29]

The purpose of Christian–Muslim co-operation is to seek a joint understanding of the will of this God and to shape the human world and human history in accordance with this will. In both Christianity and Islam the nature and activity of God have been held to determine not only the contents of ethics and spirituality, but also the actualisation of ethical ideals in society. In other words, the task before us is to relate the ethics that we derive from our monotheistic understanding of God to the ongoing structures of this world. This is a task far more formidable than simply finding a 'real togetherness' in 'common prayer' that Bishop Kenneth Cragg seeks in his *Alive to God*.[30] It is a formidable task for Muslims because, overburdened by the historic weight of suffocating and atomist *fiqhi* legislation, Muslims have paid scant attention to the development of a contemporary Islamic ethic that can provide moral guidelines in the minefield of modern problems. It is a difficult task for Christians because the teachings of Jesus are not focused on this problem, and because it demands a volte-face from the conventional direction of Christian thought which seeks to adopt the Scriptures to existing cultural and ideational realities.

Why do I think that joint development of a contemporary God-centred ethics is the most fertile ground for Christian–Muslim co-operation? For a number of rather important reasons. First, the truth of Islamic and Christian revelations resides not only in the

revelations themselves, but also in the ability of believers, using the revelations, to come up with convincing and humanly satisfactory responses to the problems we face. Virtually all our contemporary problems – from poverty and redistribution of wealth to nuclear weapons, the biomedical redefinition of life, the misuse and abuse of science, alienation engendered by technology, development and underdevelopment, inhuman economic theories – are all *ethical* problems; they are amenable only to ethical solutions. If, as Heb-blethwaite tells us, 'there is a difference between an objective God and "God" as a projected symbol of our highest ideal and there is a difference between believing and not believing in life after death'[31] then we ought to be able to demonstrate that difference. And that demonstration has to take place in this world with all its complexity and injustice and not, as Stanley Hauerwas argues, in some withdrawn utopia.[32] The virtues and ethics developed by withdraw-ing from an imperfect, unjust world, in the lives of a select few who then present a testimony of alternative possibilities for human life, is not for ordinary mortals. Such 'control experiments' miss the point that the dominant mode of contemporary reality is intercon-nection, interdependence and complexity. Isolated, simplistic solutions only work in isolation. Believers need to be where the action is, in all that interconnection and complexity, to produce authentic Muslim–Christian solutions to complex problems.

Second, a joint ethical front is needed from Muslims and Christians if either faith is to survive in a form other than a creed of personal belief and salvation. The fire of secularism burns thoroughly; and postmodernism is ever ready to sweep clean the ashes of all theistic worldviews. As Hebblethwaite warns, 'rational considerations have been pushed to irrational extremes, with non-rational factors conspiring to create a worldview that has no place for an objective God'.[33] And if we are to believe Francis Fukuyama, that worldview, the worldview of liberal secularism, has already triumphed and history has reached its conclusion,[34] then believers are truly an endangered species. Christianity has almost totally re-capitulated; and contemporary Muslim thought is ill-equipped even to recognise the problem, let alone tackle it in a positive manner. The lost ground can only be regained through ethical endeavour, through a joint enterprise that takes God-centred ethics to the very heart of the modern world.

And finally, a joint ethical endeavour is needed to put our own houses in order. Over three centuries of secularist domination has

left believers profoundly confused. Our plight is not dissimilar to that of the unnamed, devoted scribe of Peter Handke's novel *The Afternoon of A Writer*.[35] His devotion to his art forces him to be alone, but he cannot stand his loneliness. He needs social interaction to acquire material for his work, but he cannot stand company. He potters around his house that gives him a false sense of security; he walks around the city that is passing him by. Finally, he can do nothing else but lie still in his bed as Handke concludes, 'to himself he was a puzzle, a long-forgotten wonderment'. Like Handke's hero, we seek false arenas of security; we potter hither and thither, achieving nothing; finally, we withdraw into our theological shells, unable to come to grips with contemporary reality. It is clear that we do not have answers to fundamental questions: 'How should we act?', 'What should we do as believing Christians and believing Muslims?' and 'What kinds of communities should we build?' The secularist worldview provides ready answers to such ethical questions: we should seek to become fully rational beings; we should seek to control the natural world; we should build liberal secularist societies; we should construct capitalist–socialist economies. But the believers are uncertain about how to respond. We have become a puzzle to ourselves.

That puzzle can only be solved by developing authentic, appropriate and pragmatic ethical alternatives to contemporary issues and problems. What shape could a joint Muslim–Christian ethics take? Obviously, such an ethics must be rooted in the fundamental sources of both faiths as well as their traditions – but in the case of the latter we have to be creatively selective among the varying expressions of tradition. Such an ethics must also be related to human experience in general and be able to cope with rapid social change. I would suggest that the route to the development of such an ethics is through the identification of virtues that are clearly and distinctively Christian and Islamic (others may be able to suggest alternative ways of forming a joint Christian–Muslim ethics). The Bible has furnished us with such theological virtues as faith, love, hope, justice, courage, temperance and prudence. Muslims would have no trouble in accepting these virtues as guides to human behaviour. The worldview of Islam provides us with a number of interconnected value concepts that have a direct bearing on the conduct of human enterprise: *tawhid* (unity of God), *khalifa* (trusteeship of man), *ibadah* (worship), *ilm* (knowledge), *adl* (justice), *ijma* (consensus) and *istislah* (public interest) – to mention just a few. Most Christians should have

little trouble in accepting these value concepts as the credo on which moral life turns. Combine the two sets of virtues and we have a complicated ethics that is capable of shaping policies and providing distinct alternatives to the secularist options.

It is important to realise the interconnectedness of these virtues: emphasis on atomised virtues, virtues taken on their own and divorced from the nexus of the ethical network, can easily be turned upside down. Consider charity, which is surely a good Christian virtue. But as Charles Kammer notes,

> Emphasis on the virtue of giving can create a destructive paternalism in which one partner or class views itself as an all-wise, good giver, and the other party becomes the servile recipient of the other's generosity. In this way political, economic, social and sexual oppression can be masked by charity. The Rockefellers, the Carnegies, can exploit their workers and defile the environment but use their wealth to build libraries, museums, and to create foundations as masks for the injustice of the financial empires they have created.[36]

Luther used another well-known Christian virtue, concern about others rather than oneself, to reject the demands of oppressed peasants for adequate food and shelter and just treatment under the law. And nothing is more abused than the Christian notion of love: throughout history the dominant classes have justified endless exploitation, oppression and persecution on the basis that the oppressed should honour the command 'Love thy enemy'. It is thus not good enough simply to say that we must love; love must be integrated with justice, courage, consensus and other virtues – otherwise it has no positive meaning. Thus, if we are to love other creatures of God, how are we to show our love and ensure that justice is done and our obligations of trusteeship are fulfilled to those animals who become the victims of torture in laboratories? Similarly, justice must be integrated with other virtues: it is not, as St Augustine would have us believe, simply a matter of privatised righteousness. Justice must be combined with courage and has to be seen as an act of worship; it has social, political and intellectual components. Moreover, we are not simply concerned with denouncing, in a tone of righteous indignation, what is good and what is bad; we have to show in terms of policies and options, and where possible by

practical demonstration, how good can be attained. We know that war and indiscriminate killing are bad: but what provisions can we provide for self-defence in an age where weapons of mass destruction are the norm? Indeed, in many circumstances, it is not always possible to declare what is good: the good has to be sought, searched out, identified before it can be recognized. Is DNA research good or bad? As it has implications for both, we have to delve deep and find out what is really good to ensure that the good is promoted. All this can only be done if we use our ethical structure as a conceptual tool, as a methodology that is capable of analysing and focusing on any and all aspects of our rapidly changing civilisation.

What will such a joint ethical enterprise actually achieve? It will make a positive attempt to shape the world on the basis of God-centred ethics. Muslims have tended to provide post de facto rationalisation of secular events and developments. The 'perennial problem' of the Church has been the tendency to be dictated to by secular values and norms, to be led by them, so that 'it can be seen to be immediately relevant in the easiest and most palatable way'. Christians have dragged God 'Arian fashion, with the images and forms which society throws up about itself projected onto Him, to justify what society already thinks about itself and to bless the way in which society has already decided it will move'.[37] But genuine religion not only speaks to the culture in its midst, it also attempts to shape it. However, we cannot shape modern culture or, indeed, speak to it in any meaningful way by slavishly adhering to the literal meanings of the Bible or pronouncing and acting upon juristic opinions of a bygone age. The development of a Christian–Muslim ethics, and its realisation in all spheres of human behaviour, will be the first joint attempt by the believers to be faithful to the God of the Qur'an and the Bible, to the God who acts in human history.

Human history has now reached a particularly interesting turning point – which gives us our main reason for hope. The grand narrative of secularism has all but failed; under the passions, problems and predicaments of the twentieth century, the wishful intellectual structures of narrow rationality, the dreams of the unchecked one-dimensional secular progress of the Enlightenment, have collapsed. Philosophy is in total disarray and science is in crisis. All the changes of mind that were characteristic of the seventeenth century's turn from religion to rationalism are being reversed: from reduction we

are moving to synthesis, from parts to the whole, from structure to process, from clinical objectivity to epistemology, from building blocks to networks, from the notion of scientific truth to limited and approximate scientific descriptions of reality, from modernity as final solution to traditionalism; we are returning to tradition as the essence of the meaning and identity. Modernity has been stripped naked of its pretentions: deconstructionists such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault have shown how threadbare and transparent is the fabric of modernity. The pretence of a social order among collections of narcissistic, hedonistic, alienated strangers who fashion their lives on materialism and consumerism has run its course. Art, that saviour of postmodern culture, demonstrates the emptiness and arbitrariness of a sensibility bereft of contact with the real. It is hardly surprising then that contemporary society is in the grip of a moral panic. As a recent Swedish report points out, the dominant culture of aesthetic disorder and abstract methods of social control have profoundly demoralised Swedish society. 'Moral homelessness' has created a vacuum that produces profound uncertainty, the dissolution of shared values has produced a fractured society, civic virtues have been relegated to ceremonial display, and the future is not viewed with the same confidence as it was in the nineteen sixties.[38] One way out of such sublime existential discomfort is to return to religion. And this is exactly what, as John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene report in *Megatrends 2000: Ten New Directions for the 1990s*,[39] people, in both the Third World and the west, have been doing: there has been a revival of religious belief; in the last decade alone 300 million individuals turned towards religion. But, as is often the case in extreme times, this return to religion has been between the two extremes of 'fundamentalism' (of both Christian and Muslim varieties) and 'personal spiritual experience' – a variety of cults are having a field day.

Worrying about negative trends in society does not lead to anything positive and tends to demean rather than redeem. As modernity self-destructs in front of our eyes, we should become painfully aware that there is nothing to take its place. The onus is on the believers to fill the emerging, and exponentially increasing, moral and social vacuum with an ethical system that is both distinctively contemporary and deeply rooted in authentic religious traditions. As the grand narrative of secularism reaches a cul-de-sac, as the project of modernity loses its momentum, there is a dire need

for a successor programme. A joint Christian–Muslim ethical enterprise, designed to generate adoptive and pragmatic intellectual and social responses to the problems of our age, would be the most appropriate response of the believers to the demands of the postmodern age.

Harun and the Sea of Stories by Salman Rushdie is a postmodern tale for children. As is the case with Rushdie's other novels, it divides the world into two blocks: the light of secularism and the darkness of religion. Harun enters the world of darkness to confront the arch-villain Khattam-Shud whose name in Urdu means 'the end'. Khattam-Shud, the 'Prince of Silence' who worships a 'black stone' and a statue called Bazaban (tongueless), controls the sea of stories and is determined to pollute the sea to death. 'Why do you hate stories so much?' Harun asks Khattam Shud. 'Stories are fun.' 'The world, however, is not for fun,' Khattam-Shud replies. 'The world is for controlling.' 'Your world, my world, all worlds. They are there to be ruled.'[40] In this children's story we see the ideology of postmodernism spelled out clearly; but like all ideologies, *Harun and the Sea of Stories* presents an inversion of reality: it is not religion that spells *khattam-shud* but the grand narrative of secularism; it is secularism that seeks to rule all worlds and reduce every culture to a poor, plastic replica of western secular society. Religion still exists in a diversity of forms; but secularism exists only as monoculture and is determined to dominate, isolate, alienate, decimate and finally bore all cultures to death with uniformity. It is not religion, but secularism that, as Fukuyama announces so triumphantly, spells the end of history. *Khattam-shud*. The End.

Believers are indeed on the verge of extinction. Both Islam and Christianity will survive in their scriptures, even perhaps as individual creeds of personal salvation, but not as worldviews with contemporary messages that lead and shape the world; that honour will belong to a bogus mystique of culture based on the materialistic perversion of the ideal of liberty. For decades the Church has turned its back on the fight for the real dignity and honour of humanity: the fight against the false divinity of culture; the fight against a notion and practice of freedom that is divorced from responsibility and is based on self-indulgence and that tries to resolve moral and political problems with engines of self-enrichment, material expansion and economic manipulation; the life-and-death struggle against the grand narrative of secularism.

Muslims have been unwitting participants in this game; and where they have been aware of the true dangers of secular culture they have sought to resolve the problems by isolation, by censorship, by suppressing freedoms and by political violence. However, the postmodern age has no respect for or any need of obscurantist mullahs or a clergy that is a sorry excuse for secular apologia. Believers must now stand up and be counted as believers and demonstrate that their worldviews have genuine contemporary solutions to the vexing problems of the postmodern age. Only by making the ethical connections that are the true heritage of the Abrahamic faiths, and working together for the establishment of an objective moral order, can we make genuine progress towards the creation of true Muslim and Christian societies.

And let us also save the tiger, the whale and the tapir en route to the promised kingdom.

Notes

1. 'Dawa and Dialogue: Believers and Promotion of Mutual Trust', in Merryl Wyn Davies and Adnan Khalil Pasha (eds), *Beyond Frontiers: Islam and Contemporary Needs*, Mansell, London, 1989, pp. 45–6.
2. Ibid., p. 51.
3. Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies, *Distorted Imagination: Lessons from the Rushdie Affair*, Grey Seal, London, 1990.
4. Edited by John Hicks, SCM Press, London, 1977.
5. Charles Kammer, *Ethics and Liberation: An Introduction*, SCM Press, London, 1988, p. 23.
6. Ibid., p. 51.
7. St Augustine, *City of God* (translated by Henry Bettenson, with an introduction by John O'Meara), Penguin Books (Penguin Classics), 1984; p. 593.
8. Bear and Co., Santa Fe, 1982, pp. 17–18.
9. The quotes here are from *The First Lady Chatterley*, 1944; Penguin, 1973, p. 70.
10. Ibid., p. 69.
11. See his *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, The Free Press, New York, 1990.
12. See his *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 3rd edition, 1971.
13. *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future*, Mansell, London, 1985, p. 18.
14. Edward Norman, *Christianity and the World Order*, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 11.
15. Ibid., pp. 10–11.
16. *Weekend Guardian*, 16 December 1989. See also his *The Sea of Faith*, BBC, London, 1984.

17. Edward Norman, *Christianity*, p. 4.
18. Edited by Digby Anderson, SPCK, London, 1984.
19. *Independent Magazine*, 22 September 1990.
20. The best study of SIL activities is Sören Hvalkof and Peter Aaby (eds), *Is God an American? An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*, Survival International, London, 1981.
21. *Independent*, 6 October 1990, p. 15.
22. Bert Breiner, 'Human Rights Under the Shari'ah: A Christian Perspective', paper presented at the Regional Conference on Human Rights in Islam, Kuala Lumpur, 27–29 July 1989.
23. Ziauddin Sardar, *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come*, Mansell, London, 1985, p. 147.
24. S. Parvez Manzoor, 'Politics without Truth, Metaphysics or Epistemology', *Muslim World Book Review*, 10 (4), pp. 3–12 (1990).
25. Bert Breiner, 'Human Rights', the example of ibn Tammiyah is also taken from this paper.
26. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 101.
27. As paraphrased by Gilbert Meilaender, 'Virtue in Contemporary Religious Thought', in Richard John Neuhaus (ed.), *Virtue: Public and Private*, William Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1986, p. 19; from S. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.
28. *The Light in the Enlightenment: Christianity and the Secular Heritage*, Grey Seal, London, 1990, p. 49.
29. Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Ocean of Truth*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 8.
30. Oxford University Press, London, 1970.
31. Hebblethwaite, *Ocean*, p. 14.
32. In his *The Peaceable Kingdom* and *A Community of Character*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1983 and 1981. I am rellying on Meilaender's discussion of Hauerwas's work (see note 27).
33. Hebblethwaite, *Ocean*, p. 18.
34. Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History', *Guardian*, 20 September 1989; and 21 September 1989. Originally published in the conservative American journal, *The National Interest*, Fukuyama's article attracted considerable attraction; indeed, he has become a hero of the conservative right. Fukuyama writes: 'The end of history will be a sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism will be replaced by economic calculations, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands.'
35. Methuen, London, 1989.
36. Kammer, *Ethics and Liberation*, p. 134.
37. Graham Leonard, Iain MacKenzie and Peter Toon, *Let God Be God*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1989, pp. 39–40.

38. Lorentz Lyttkens, *Of Human Discipline: Social Control and Long-Term Shifts in Values*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, 1989.
39. William Marrow and Co., Washington, D.C., 1990.
40. Granta/Penguin, London, p. 161.

11   Total Recall: Aliens, Others and Amnesia in Postmodern Thought

Total Recall is one of the classic breeds of postmodernist films that emerged in the late 1980s (others include *Robocop*, *The Old Gringo*, *Crocodile Dundee* and *Blue Velvet*). Directed by Paul Verhoeven (a Dutch one-time art house director with impeccable liberal credentials), it has Arnold Schwarzenegger (an ardent supporter not just of the Republican Party but also of the rightwing gun-lobbyist, National Rifle Association), as a secret agent whose mind has been reprogrammed. Schwarzeneggear spends most of the film searching for his original identity only to discover that his 'real' self is evil and the new brainwashed character is in fact good. The film is mostly set on Mars where a rebellion is under way against the evil Recall Corporation, which controls the planet's air supply. The rebel colony consists largely of grossly deformed mutants who are in fact victims of Recall Corporation's unrestrained pursuit of profit.

The themes of *Total Recall* personify the concerns and characteristics of postmodernism: its concern with plurality of worlds – Earth, Mars, the world of Recall Corporation and that of the resistance of the mutants, including the plurality of its politics: leftwing director, rightwing star, leftwing appropriation of a popular, apparently reactionary genre; its deliberate playful confusion of the image and reality; and its dislocation and erasure of the personal history, and hence the identity, of the hero. In addition, postmodernism has two further characteristics: its emphasis on meaninglessness of everything and an overriding concern with fiction that's fiction both as narrative and as a lie. *Total Recall* is both: its other fiction lies in the hope that the marginalised will be saved by extraterrestrial intervention. This conclusion renders the whole narrative meaningless; as a spectacle it can only be judged on the basis of how spectacular it is: hence the ultra-violence and high-tech gloss.

Total Recall ends with the dawn of a new age on Mars. Postmodernism heralds the beginning of a new age on Earth; an age that transcends the modern, and which, in the words of John Gibbins,

both explains contemporary behaviour and attitudes and offers a radically new set of experiences, practices and life worlds for its inhabitors. The move from the modern to the postmodern worlds, like that from the classical to the medieval to the modern, were at first imperceptible. But unlike these transitions, and more in line with the development of the Renaissance and Enlightenment movements, postmodernists are conscious of the change.[1]

The transition from 'the modern to postmodern worlds' is based on a number of key developments that have jolted our modern consciousness in the last two decades: the demystification of 'scientific objectivity' and 'scientific truth' by Kuhn and Feyerabend; the emphasis on indeterminacy in quantum physics and mathematics (and the rise of castastrophe and chaos theory and fractal geometry); Foucault's emphasis on discontinuity and difference in history; Bell's sociology of postindustrialism; the rise of the 'magical realism' school of fiction; and the newly discovered concern for 'the Other' in ethics, anthropology and politics. The underlying theme in all these developments has been the rejection of 'metanarrative' (large-scale theoretical interpretations purportedly of universal application), including Marxism, Freudianism and all forms of Enlightenment reason. In the early eighties, these developments served as the basic edifice from which a recognisably coherent postmodernist outlook was forged. It is the philosophy of Jürgen Habermas, Jean-François Lyotard and Richard Rorty that gives postmodernism its distinguishing character.

The cultural discourse of postmodernism – the term 'postmodernism' originally referred to an antimodernist movement in architecture – now permeates every aspect of contemporary society. We do not only have postmodernist architecture, but also postmodernist art, postmodernist fiction, postmodernist cinema, postmodernist religion, even postmodernist science – and underlying them all a set of beliefs and behaviour that shape a culture. But is postmodernism a liberating force? Do the rejection of suffocating and totalising metanarratives, the arch concern of postmodernists from the Left to the Right, and close attention to Other worlds and Other voices, the emphasis on understanding differences and Otherness, as well as the representation postmodernism gives to a whole host of social movements (women, gays, blacks, ecologists, regional autonomists, colonised peoples with their own histories, etc.) spell a liberatory potential? Or is postmodernism just

a new twist to an old narrative: a new form of cultural exploitation? These are important questions, especially for those in Other non-western 'worlds' whose 'voices' have been silenced and whom postmodernism seeks to represent; particularly when, as Andrew Ross points out, postmodernism 'holds the promise of a cultural politics that would have no institutional boundries, high or low, and that would fight over, if not infiltrate, every last inch of the new historical terrain'. The issue of 'Other worlds' is central to postmodernism; it is an issue that raises a number of natural questions:

> What world? Whose world? and What possible world? Suddenly postmodernism has become an epic production almost in spite of itself, or at least in spite of what many saw initially as one of its possibly vital impulses – a dissenting response to the epic, or universal, claims of modernism.[2]

The World is an Onion

The truly epic nature of the postmodernist production can be judged from the project exposed in the philosophy of Richard Rorty, the American guru and antifoundational apologist of postmodernism. Rorty's basic thesis, outlined over a decade ago in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*,[3] is that thought cannot represent the world, mind is not the mirror of nature, and that western philosophy has been totally misconceived in its central project. Indeed, Rorty argues, philosophy with a capital P is no longer a possible and credible enterprise. As nothing – mind or matter, self or world – has an intrinsic nature which may be 'expressed' or 'represented', the ultimate context within which knowledge requires meaning is conversation. There may or may not be a world out there; but for Rorty, there is definitely no 'truth out there' waiting to be discovered; the quest for 'the nature of truth' is as meaningless as the discussion on 'the nature of God' and 'the nature of man'. In his book *Contigency, Irony and Solidarity*, Rorty declares the 'contigency of language, self and community' and spells out the true dimensions of the postmodernist enterprise: 'to drop the idea of langauge as representation and to dedivinize the world', to get to the point where 'we no longer worship *anything*, where we treat *nothing* as quasidivinity, where we treat everything – our language, our conscience, our community – as a product of time and chance'. How are we to proceed to this dedivinisation of the world? Since philosophy, and by extension,

theory, no longer function to ground politics and social criticism, the very shape and character of criticism changes: it must become more pragmatic, ad hoc, contextual, and local. Thus, Rorty's 'goal' is sought 'not by inquiry but by imagination'. It is fiction rather than philosophy, narrative rather than theory, that provide a better perspective on human behavior. Fiction, like that of Nabokov and Orwell (both of whom receive serious attention from Rorty), provides us with insight into what sort of cruelty we are capable of and awakens us to the humiliation of particular social practices.

But postmodernism is not solely dependent on fiction: the postmodern world is being built by 'the novel, the movie, the TV programme (which) have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress'. Rorty leaves out a few other equally important social outposts and agents of postmodernist change: the shopping complex, the postmodernist built environment, design, fashion and the glue that binds it all together: the postmodernist economy. Postmodernism is thus not some autonomous artistic and cultural current; it is deeply rooted in daily life.

The goal of postmodernism and its by-products, then, is to cast off the thinking self, its language and community, from its telic moorings; to demonstrate the total meaninglessness of the meta-narratives. Lack of direction and perspective, with the underlying message that all is meaningless, is the central hallmark of all things postmodern. On the spatial plane, this is demonstrated by Portman's Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles: a postmodernist enclave, a mirrored facade, a self-enclosed structure in which it is impossible to orientate oneself. On the intellectual plane, novels like Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*[4] and Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*[5] illustrate the total meaninglessness, well, of everything.

Foucault's Pendulum is an excellent mirror of Rorty's philosophy of contingency culture. According to an endorsement by Anthony Burgess on the dustjacket of the British edition, 'it exemplifies what postmodern fiction is about, with its learning – real and bogus – its concern with books talking to books, its elements of self-mockery, its semiological obsession. This is the way the European novel is going.' A long, erudite novel, sprawling close to a millennium, from the first crusades to last year, and wandering around three continents, it plunders almost every religious and mystical thought that one can think of (each chapter begins with a quotation from some worthy mystical, religious, occult, philosophical, scientific or

literary text or manuscript, from the Talmud and the Shia Imam Jafar as-Sadiq to Karl Popper, Madame Blavatsky, Henry Corbin, Francis Bacon, Borges, Hermiticus, Dante, Masonic rites), and uses them to play typographical, numerological and linguistic games.

The narrative concerns three editors of a Milan publishing house – Belbo the disillusioned romantic, Diotallevi the dyspeptic amateur, and Casaubon our hero narrator – who by contingency get involved in an occult mystery. The 'small but serious' publishing house of Garamond receives a visit from a mysterious Colonel Ardenti clutching a photocopy of a manuscript excavated from a Templar stronghold in Provins. The colonel tells how the eleventh-century parchments reveals a coded message to untap a source of extraterrestrial radioactive material 'greater than atomic energy'. Using the parchment, the three publishers decide to play a joke by fabricating an elaborate master plan, a metanarrative, which explains the whole of world history. Everything from the bogus Templar plan to all the manuscript pages of hermetic thought submitted to Garamond, as well as excavated material from archives and references in printed texts, are fed into a computer to build a structure of correspondences and coincidences.

But the joke backfires as the twentieth-century followers of the old Templars, their dreams of ancient power still very much alive, believe in the reality of the plan. Indeed, it seems that all absurdities, however far-fetched, fit with the previously established structure of the plan. As the three publishers are pursued by the 'Diabolicals' in an attempt to discover the fictionalised plan, Eco hammers home the main point of his thesis: the world is a whirling network of kinships, a 'saraband of anagrams'; there is no truth, all is relative and man can put his moorings, the fixed point of the world, anywhere he wishes; and, when all is said and done, everything is meaningless; in fact, the infinite universe is nothing more than an infinite onion which after countless peelings comes down to – nothing.

Like most postmodernist artefacts, *Foucault's Pendulum* offers only the suggestive power of swift juxtaposition, there is not even a hint of a perspective of any kind. 'Why write novels? Rewrite history,' Belbo says; especially when history and fiction are interchangeable. At the end of the novel, Belbo finds himself strung up under Foucault's contraption in the *Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers* in the old Paris church of Saint Martin des Champs. With Diotallevi already out of the way, Casaubon waits alone for the imminent arrival of the assassins wondering, 'Maybe I imagined the whole thing?' The total

lack of perspective within the novel is reflected in the lack of perspective in the new urban ensemble around Paris where Casaubon wanders aimlessly. As Frederic Jameson notes,

> not only has the street disappeared (that was already the task of modernism), but all profiles have disappeared as well. This is bewildering, (the) existential bewilderment (of) this new postmodern space (results in) the loss of our ability to position ourselves within this space and cognitively map it. This is then projected back on the emergence of a global, multinational culture that is decentered and cannot be visualized, a culture in which one cannot position oneself.[6]

While the culture of postmodernism is without perspective, it is certainly not without its crusading spirit. Postmodernists of both leftwing and rightwing credentials use all the power of their cultural products to promote their worldview. Rorty, despite reducing everything to contingency, cherishes cultural hopes that are not so contingent. No sooner does he denounce all metanarratives as meaningless, than he erects one of his own to take over all other metanarratives: 'postmodern bourgeois liberalism', to use the title of his well-known essay.[7] It is a narrative that explains all and marks the culmination of all human endeavour:

> For in its ideal form, the culture of liberalism would be one which was enlightened, secular, through and through. It would be one in which no trace of divinity remained, either in the form of a divinized world or a divinized self. Such a culture would have no room for the notion that there are nonhuman forces to which human beings should be responsible. It would drop, or drastically reinterpret, not only the idea of holiness but those of 'devotion to truth' and 'fulfillment of the deepest needs of the spirit'. The process of dedivination ... would, ideally, culminate in our no longer being able to see any use for the notion that finite, mortal, contingently existing human beings might derive the meaning of their lives from anything except other finite, mortal, contingently existing human beings.[8]

The culture of liberalism is also the only culture in which plurality can function. The argument goes as follows: since we cannot justify any particular culture on the basis of rationality, we are forced to

tolerate a whole variety of cultural forms. Thus, the rejection of the Enlightenment faith in the power of reason leads to pluralism. This argument, which has also been advanced by Isaiah Berlin,[9] has a well-known logical flaw. It involves an appeal to the indefensibility of all forms of cultural life in order to defend a single one. The error lies in the belief that since liberal democracy contains a plurality of beliefs, it is the only political system which reflects the fact that no one set of values is more worthwhile than any other. But to preserve that diversity one has to defend the values of liberalism and this cannot be done by declaring the indefensibility of all values.

Undeterred by the serious flaw in his argument, Rorty triumphantly proclaims *the* metanarrative of 'anything goes', that absolutely nothing is Bad, that no action or attitude can be perceived as naturally and inherently 'inhuman', and that there is no tribunal, even in times like that of Auschwitz, higher than that of 'finite, mortal, contingently existing human beings', and that liberalism is all that really matters. Rorty's notion of 'liberalism' incorporates two ideologies: capitalism and democracy. He thus seeks to defend his contingency culture with both the power of capitalism and the institutions and practices of the rich industrialised democracies. The postmodernist onion now reveals a worm-infested core!

How does the original sin of contingency cope with the *real* Evil out there; the evil personified in *Total Recall* by a corporation that has no moral scruples in controlling other peoples' air? In a human world configured by the contingent forces of language, self and community, how are we to cope with cruelty and suffering? Rorty provides us with a strategy to come to grips with the postmodernist onion. Irony, he suggests, is the only thing that can overcome public suffering and reconcile the demands of self-creation and human solidarity. Ironists are the Grand Saviours of postmodernism because they realise 'that anything can be made good or bad by being redescribed', and because they deny that 'any criteria of choice between final vocabularies exist', and because they are 'never quite able to take themselves (as well as the world and truth) seriously'.

Once again it is Umberto Eco who provides us with a fictional demonstration of Rorty's philosophy. *The Name of the Rose* (reduced to a linear narrative in the 1986 movie) is an erudite reworking of Conan Doyle (it too comes with an iconoclast endorsement from Anthony Burgess!) and has William of Baskerville, with an

adolescent sidekick, solving a murder mystery in a medieval monastery. The novel's main protagonist is Jorge, an elderly monk who takes himself too seriously and does not laugh; a tragic figure, he is the incarnation of dogmatic belief: outdated, a kind of living dead, a remnant of the past. The main message of its ideology, 'which might be called on the model of spaghetti westerns, spaghetti structuralism: a kind of simplified, mass-culture version of structuralist and poststructuralist ideas (there is no formal reality, we all live in a world of signs referring to other signs …)', is that lack of irony and laughter is the source of totalitarianism. This thesis, as Slavoj Žižek argues, has two basic flaws:

> First, this idea of an obsession with (a fanatical devotion to) Good turning into Evil masks the inverse experience, which is much more disquieting: how an obsessive, fanatical attachment to Evil may in itself acquire the status of an ethical position, of a position which is not guided by our egoistical interests. (Second), what is really disturbing about *The Name of the Rose*, however, is the underlying belief in the liberating, anti-totalitarian force of laughter, of ironic distance. Our thesis here is almost the exact opposite of this underlying premise of Eco's novel: in contemporary societies, democratic or totalitarian, that cynical distance, laughter, irony, are, so to speak, part of the game. The ruling ideology is not meant to be taken seriously or literally. Perhaps the greatest danger for totalitarianism is people who take its ideology literally.[10]

Thus, irony can, and does, serve to maintain the status quo. What Rorty seems to be saying is 'Laugh at bourgoise liberalism, it will ease the pain of finally accepting it.' Irony, ridicule and cynicism is what secularism used to undermine Christianity. And taken to its extremes irony and cynical reasoning, as Peter Sloterdijk's classic work, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, demonstrates, produces nothing but paralysis, a sensibility which is 'well off and miserable at the same time', unable to function in the real world. Other cultures, therefore, have to take postmodern liberalism, with its deep moorings in the grand narrative of secularism, *literally*. In its eagerness to represent and subsume Other worlds and Other cultures into a dedivinised world, postmodernism acquires a totalitarian character: with or without irony, postmodern liberalism spells the death of the Other.

History as Fried Bananas

The first port of call in the postmodernist project of dedivinising the world is history. It is history, and tradition, that give identity and meaning to the existence of non-secular cultures: the Others. History and tradition provide Other worlds with their modes of knowing, being and doing. In non-western cultures, history provides, to use the words of Ashis Nandy, a 'means of reaffirming or altering the present':[11]

- Past as a special case of the present
- Fractured present (competing pasts)
- Remaking of present including past
- New past

Such a view of the past gives an authority to history, but the 'nature of authority is seen as shifting, amorphous and amenable to intervention'. History therefore has a constant presence in traditional cultures not least by its periodic re-enactment. The ever-present historical memory provides a source of cultural identity, social cohesion, a sense of permanence amongst change and a means of rejuvenating the present and shaping the future.

By contrast, postmodernism is concerned solely with the present, the immediate, and, in rejecting Englightenment metanarratives, abandons all sense of historical continuity and memory. Just as Rorty makes the philosopher redundant, so Foucault reduces the role of the historian to an archaeologist of the past. But postmodernism does more then simply abandon a sense of historical continuity in values and beliefs; it conceives itself as a struggle against history, as a site where the final battles against history will be settled. Postmodernism thus seeks to represent the very form and substance of historical reality; and postmodern practices are supposed to be the very fabric of reality, the historical site of the collapse of any gap between ideology and history, between appearance and reality, between meaning and representation.

Postmodernism thus freely plunders history to render it meaningless, to fictionalise it, to appropriate it. Postmodernist novelists like Borges, Fuentes, Eco and Rushdie freely mimic history, dig up its remnants, juxtaposing and 'assembling them, side by side, in a museum of modern knowledge'. In *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie reproduces the entire life of the Prophet Muhammad, as

though from a standard textbook, juxtaposing it, fictionalising it, in postmodernist attempts at irony and cynicism, but most of all to render it meaningless, to desacralise it.[12] This distinguishing tendency of postmodernist texts to rewrite history, to drain it of invested (non-secular) meaning, to reappropriate it for secular culture, has two specific purposes. On the one hand, it neutralises the identity of the Other by subsuming all non-western identities and histories in the grand western narrative of secularism; and on the other, by inflating the history of secularism as *the* history, the yardstick of reality by which all Other cultures and histories are measured, it ushers in an 'era of inflated truth' which reasserts the claim to power of the Author, the Producer. If any history has a role in postmodernism, it is the history of victors who are now rightly claiming the spoils. As such, postmodernism can only have a murderous love for the Other, like that of the mother for her gifted daughter, Carrie, in Brian de Palma's film of the same name.

Historical identity is a function of the motivational power of tradition. After consigning living history to archaeological sites, satirising it into 'magical realism', postmodernism transforms tradition into a commodity and markets it as such. Postmodernism and heritage industry are intinsically linked and interweave to produce a shroud that separates our present lives from our living history. The search for *Roots* often ends up as a television series: as a series of images, or pastiche, of some romantic past.

How postmodernism sanitises history of meaning and identity and transforms the traditions of other cultures into commodities is best illustrated by the chain of 27 or so Banana Republic stores that are dotted all over the United States. Now owned by the clothing retail corporation Gap, Banana Republic Travel and Safari Clothing Company was started in 1983, and apart from department stores, it also functions as a mail order business. In his sharply observed essay, 'Visiting the Banana Republic', Paul Smith[13] points out that in its decor, rhetoric and retail practice, the company seeks to evoke an image of the colonial and postcolonial world of British imperialism. But in 'the company's postmodernist discourse' colonial 'historical data are taken up and altered', much as in postmodernist fiction. In the company's catalogue, irony and historic nostalgia are combined to produce an image of the Third World as 'a kind of benign theme park for adults, as well as a place redolent of a certain kind of purity'. All economically dependent Third World countries are comically described as 'banana republics' in which the owners visit 'vanishing

cultures ... to celebrate their uniqueness and discourage them from slipping into global homogeneity'. One of the catalogues proclaims that 'in Africa the dawn of the twenty first century casts its shadow on the dawn of man. On this continent there's no mistaking it: You know where you come from.' These kinds of announcements in the catalogues are accompanied, writes Smith,

> by quotations from the travel writings of men such as Sir Richard Burton, Henry Stanley, and Theodore Roosevelt. These in turn are juxtaposed with the writings (very often 'reports' on a particular item of clothing) of contemporaries like the photographer Carol Beckwith, the wildlife biologist Mark Owen, a self-described glacier and bush pilot, and contemporary writers as various as Gerry Trudeau, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Cyra McFadden, and Roy Blount Jr. In most of the season catalogs this peculiar admixture of the historical and the contemporary, along with fairly unabashed reference to current affairs or historical event (such as Watergate, Lord Kitchener's subjection of the Sudan, or in a piece of copy designed to sell 'paratrooper briefcases' the Israeli raid on Entebbe), is accompanied by some thematic motif ... (such as) a discourse on Africa ('we've opened the pages of this issue to many voices from Africa', few of which turn out to be 'native') ...[14]

The initial object of the exercise is to make the multinational postmodernist consumer feel at home in the world: 'You will never overheat or be at a loss for pockets, always look intelligently assembled ... You'll feel competent to haggle in the *souk*, chat up the concierge, sample untranslatable cuisines.' But the narrative does not end here: it also aims to make the consumer feel at home with the injustices of history and legitimise the injustices of the present. As Smith notes:

> By adopting its own 'brand' of postmodernist discourse, Banana Republic has replaced or reconstructed a whole history and its discourses – the history of colonialism – and re-represented the current phase of domination in such a way that those discourses cannot properly be called mystification. Rather, they are *de facto* the active, effective, and the real truths of contemporary American culture and need to be treated as such.[15]

Postmodernism then reconstructs history, represents it as the real truth of contemporary reality, to absorb the identity of the Other in its own discourse. A feature of Banana Republic catalogues is its multivocalism; it gives representation to Other voices but only, as in postmodern fiction, on its own terms. The Other is not allowed the use of its own categories and concepts, partly because they have already been rendered meaningless – by definition – in postmodernism and partly because they will be quite incomprehensible to its audience.

The presentation of history as fried bananas not only humiliates and deprives the Other cultures of their historic identity, it also undermines their future: without historic identity, Other cultures do not have a future as Other cultures, their future becomes an extension of the future of postmodernism. Without a sense of continuity and a confidence in their history, Other cultures become archaeological sites fit only to be represented in museums or exists only as a source of entertainment for the postmodernist tourist.

The other side of the reduction of history to instant consumerism is a total loss of depth. Much of contemporary postmodern cultural production, with its fixation with appearances, surfaces, and instant impacts has no sustaining power over time. The reduction of historical experience to 'a series of pure and unrelated presents', writes David Harvey,

> further implies that the experience of the present becomes powerfully, overwhelmingly vivid and 'material': the world comes before the schizophrenic with hightened intensity, bearing the mysterious and oppressive charge of affect, glowing with hallucinatory energy'. The image, the appearance, the spectacle can all be experienced with an intensity (joy or terror) made possible only by their appreciation as pure and unrelated presents in time. The immediacy of events, the sensationalism of the spectacle (political, scientific, military, as well as those of entertainment), becomes the stuff of what consciousness is forged.[16]

In *Total Recall*, the Recall Corporation actually sell just such a consciousness; a slug in the brain ensures that one can experience Other worlds, Other cultures, Other times, from the comfort of one's chair as 'pure unrelated presents in time'. The images offered in the mental trips to Other worlds are said to be more real than the real thing. History as hyperreality, that is always and only a distorted image,

that has already been deconstructed and remodelled, that is merely that which can be modelled according to a Grand Paradigm, and that which already fits the model – this is what postmodernism offers Other worlds.

Crocodile Tears

In modernity, Other worlds are excluded, overlooked and marginalised. Over four decades of 'modernisation' programmes in the Third World have only led precolonial dependencies into postcolonial underdevelopment, destroying traditional societies, cultures and environments in the process.[17] But, argue the exponents of postmodernism, all that was in the bad old days:

> Postmodernism signals the death of such 'metanarratives' whose secretly terroristic function was to ground and legitimate the illusion of 'universal' human history. We are now in the process of wakening from the nightmare of modernity, with its manipulative reason and fetish of the totality, into the laidback pluralism of the postmodern, that heterogeneous range of lifestyles and language games which has renounced the nostalgic urge to totalize and legitimate itself ...[18]

In postmodernism, marginality takes centre stage through which western culture discovers Otherness and its own ethnocentric perspectives. 'Today,' notes George Yudice, 'it is declared, the "marginal" is no longer peripheral but central to all thought.' As such, marginality has become a liberating force:

> by demonstrating that the 'marginal' constitutes *the* condition of possibility of all social, scientific, and cultural entities, a new 'ethics of marginality' has emerged that is necessarily decentered and plural, and that constitute the basis of a new, neo-Nietzschean 'freedom' from moral injunctions.[19]

That's the theory. In practice we face an immediate hurdle in the unleashing of this liberating force, with postmodernism's uncompromising emphasis on the negation of history and historic identity. As Yudice admits, 'the very attack on the notion of identity is problematic in this respect, for identity is a major weapon in the struggle of the oppressed'. By disarming the marginalised of the principal

source of their struggle, postmodernism reduces the Other to an object of mere play. Once the Other is deprived of history and identity, it can serve no other purpose than simply to heighten what Harvey calls 'the sensationalism of the spectacle'. In both postmodernist cinema and postmodernist fiction, Other worlds are there not just to emphasise plurality but also to 'enrich' the narrative and heighten the spectacle.

To achieve this, postmodernism emphasises plurality of worlds in a particular way. Foucault's notion of 'heterotopia', which he defines as coexistence in 'an impossible space' of a 'large number of fragmentary possible worlds' or more simply, in Harvey's words, 'incommensurable spaces that are juxtaposed or superimposed upon each other', explains how it is done. In this implosion of different worlds in an impossible space, characters are not concerned with unmasking some central mystery, but wander totally dazed and distracted through these worlds without a clear sense of location, asking, 'Which world am I in, what is to done here and which of my personalities do I deploy?'

The films of David Lynch illustrate the point. In *Blue Velvet*, the central character moves to and fro between two incompatible worlds: on the one side, the adolescent world of small-town America in the fifties with its high-school, drugstore culture; and a bizarre, violent, sex-crazed world of drugs, dementia and sexual perversion, on the other. From one world to the next, the central character is not sure which is the true reality. In *Wild At Heart*, the dreams of the two lead characters frequently blur the distinction between hallucination and reality; the mother of the heroine exists in yet another world of her internal angst which gets mixed up with an evil external underworld. In the television series *Twin Peaks*, the lead character, Agent Cooper, shapes his reality by his dreams, as all sorts of characters existing in different mental worlds wander in and out of the narrative, which is itself concerned more with absurdities and obsessions of characters than with solving the central mystery.

Postmodern fiction explores incongruent ontologies in a similar way forming an 'anarchic landscape of worlds in the plural'. In Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, the two central characters, Saladin Chumcha and Gibreel Farishta, perpetually deluded and confused, swim through more than a dozen diverse and distinct metaphysical worlds, instantly changing personalities as though changing suits from a well-stocked wardrobe. The central characters of Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*, start off perfectly normal but

soon lose all sense of the real, to the extent of believing in their own fictional, and totally nonsensical, plan: all ontologies, even those which start life as a joke, become real. The postmodernist ontological landscape cannot be surpassed either in its capacity to delude or in the degree of its plurality.

When postmodernism gives representation to Other voices, as for example in Rushdie's fiction, it does so on a particular condition: it represents them *solely* with the categories and notions of the dominant system. In Paul Hogan's *Crocodile Dundee*, the aborigines not only appear as an appendix, but their voice is filtered through the character of Dundee. The storyline of *Crocodile Dundee* is simple: in the words of Meaghan Morris,

> a small, remote community of Walkabout Creek, with its fumbling exotica industry (emblematic of Australia's place in the global cinema economy), manages to export its crocodile poacher and, with a little help from the American media, market him brilliantly in New York.[20]

It is an ambitious fairy tale which combines the inner and outer reality of the film in a truly postmodernist style: the American success of Dundee in the film is reflected in the American success of Hogan. During the course of the narrative, 'Dundee does real or feigned battle with phantasmal Others of an equally phantasmal "white, male, working class" – beasts, blacks, deviants, uppity women, snobs.' To counter any criticism of its treatment of the Australian Others – the aborigines – the film places itself 'post': 'it historicizes radicalism as obsolete opinion'. Moreover, its very form of 'questioning', engaged in the form a dialogue between Dundee's muscular innocence of politics and the enfeebled liberal conscience of Sue, the American reporter who comes to the outback to interview him, 'is a mode of American ignorance'. The dialogue take place at night. Sue asks two questions:

> Each raises a problem of appropriation, framed in two different ways: bad (white land taking, black taking back the land) and good (reciprocal borrowing between cultures). On the first night, Sue begins by posing the ultimate global question: the arms race. Dundee refutes the need for general political statements ('gotta have a voice') by specific cultural context: 'Who's going to hear it out here?' Foiled by outback eccentricity, she tries something

'closer to home': Aboriginal land rights. He still doesn't state 'his' opinion. Instead, he paraphrases Aboriginal belief – Aborigines don't own the land, they belong to it. This is, in one sense, true. But it is significantly partial truth ... While implying that a land rights politics of reappropriation is un-Aboriginal, he discursively appropriates the right to Aboriginal speech ... Aboriginal land claims, however, are not made for 'the land' in general, but for particular sites. Dundee effaces this distinction in a discourse on (European) romantic nature and confirms its supremacy by casually throttling a snake.[21]

This is not to say, as Morris is quick to point out, that those who watch *Crocodile Dundee* 'emerge as anti-land rights fanatics'; the point is that opinions are shaped not just by contents, but as much by *mood*. 'Film is an industry in a Western megaculture': it establishes a mood across the globe. When this mood is reflected and reinforced in television programmes and literature, it crystallises into something permanent. The average Anglo-Saxon can be forgiven for believing that 'the eye of the beholder, wherever it is placed, is always American'.

Postmodernism, thus, plays a double con trick on non-western cultures. On the one hand, it invites plurality, attempts to liberate Other cultures from marginality and seeks their representation under conditions that are not tailored on the exclusionist and dominating cultural rationality of modernity; on the other, as Andrew Ross argues in *Universal Abandon*, postmodernist plurality 'brings with it a new arrangement of power and therefore new structures of inequality'. For plurality in postmodernism serves an end in itself: it is not the contents of Other cultures that concerns postmodernism, but simply the fact that they are different.

The emphasis on difference generates a meaning itself; but, as Frederic Jameson argues so powerfully, it is 'not a meaning that has content'. Postmodernism does not pose the problems, 'How do we relate to Other cultures?', 'How to we fight our own ethnocentricity?', 'How do we understand the Other in terms of its own categories and description?' It is interested only in registering the difference. It is a strategy both of negating the difference (by elevating it into a hyperreality) and, as Jameson notes, 'a way of getting rid of content'. In postmodernism, the very invitation to plurality is an exercise in domination through representation, discourse and subjectivity. Hence, Andrew Ross is forced to conclude:

'For those closest to the center – white, Western, middle-class, for example – it has had the greatest appeal; for those farther away, it often looks simply like a new kind of assimilation or collaboration.'[22]

The One-Dimensional Chop Suey

The new kind of postmodernist 'assimilation' of non-western cultures is best seen in the market place, where the concerns of postmodern cinema and fiction, with their different worlds collapsing upon each other, are mirrored with a vengeance. All manner of the world's commodities, with all manner of ethnic cultures juxtaposed, are assembled under a single roof for the consumer to experience 'different worlds'. Most western cities have an array of ethnic restaurants where one can dip into an Other culture for the evening. The cultural plurality of the postmodern market place has all the familiar features: the concern with 'the values and virtues of instantaneity'; the concern with fiction – diffusion of the real and the imaginary, the amalgam of fact and fantasy; and the total absence of meaning and depth.

What this means is not simply an emphasis on instant goods and services (fast food, disposable consumer items, built-in obsolescence, instant gratification) or being able to throw away consumer baggage, but also, in the words of David Harvey, 'being able to throw away values, lifestyles, stable relationships, and attachment to things, buildings, places, people, and received ways of doing and being'. It further means a total confusion between the original and the copy, with the real taking on many of the qualities of the imitation and the fake being indistinguishable from the real. A common sight in the cities of South-East Asia is of people totally dressed in fake designer labels, looking every bit as chic as their counterparts with the real goods on the street of New York, Paris and Geneva. 'Made in Thailand, thousand years ago', mocks a famous Thai pop song, 'made in USA two hundred years ago'. In this banal plurality and confusion of the real and the artificial, meaning is sought by the purchase of an image. For the postmodern society, the image is all-powerful, it makes and breaks individuals, it shapes the present and the future. 'The acquisition of image (by the purchase of a sign system such as designer clothes and the right car),' says Harvey, 'becomes a singularly important element in the presentation of self in labour markets and, by extension, becomes integral to the quest for individual identity, self-realisation, and meaning.'

The construction of new sign systems and images is a major feature of postmodernism; and nothing plays a stronger part in the creation of images of instantaneity than television. TV is the *real* world of postmodern culture which has

> *entertainment* as its ideology, the *spectacle* as the emblematic sign of commodity form, *lifestyle* advertising as its popular psychology, pure, empty *seriality* as the bond which unites the simulacrum of the audience, *electronic images* as its most dynamic, and only form, of social cohesion, *elite media politics* as its ideological formula, the buying and selling of *abstracted attention* as the locus of its marketplace rationale, *cynicism* as its dominant cultural sign, and the diffusion of a *network of relational power* as its real product.[23]

The first target (beneficiaries or victims depending on your perspective) of the manipulative power of television is youth. As Bo Reimer argues, on the basis of a survey, the proliferation of postmodern signs and messages engendered by television means that young people are now more and more concerned with immediacy, with subjectivity, as the only value criteria, spreading across all youth.[24]

The active use of public relations to shape and sell politicians and political images is another indication of the power of signs and images produced by television: the manufacture and imaging of Thatcherism, the projection of an ex-movie actor, Ronald Reagan, to one of the most powerful positions in the world, the use of subliminal images in the French general election of 1989, are clear signs that postmodern politics is shaped largely by images. Novelists too are produced and packaged as images: both Rushdie and Eco have been projected as mega-images on the international market.

Media images play a very significant part in postmodern cultural practices. And advertising is no longer about selling products; it is about creating lifestyles, manipulating desires and tastes, selling images and outlooks. The diversity and plurality of the world is experienced only as an image, a simulacrum, in the postmodern scene:

> The whole world's cuisine is now assembled in one place in almost exactly the same way that the world's geographical complexity is nightly reduced to a series of images on a static television screen. The same phenomenon is exploited in entertainment palaces like Epcott and Disneyworld; it becomes possible, as the US commercials put it, 'to experience the Old World for a day without actually

having to go there.' The general implication is that through the experience of everything from food, to culinary habits, music, television, entertainment, and cinema, it is now possible to experience the world's geography vicariously, as a simulacrum.[25]

Just as advertisements appear to have less and less to do with the products being sold, so also postmodern capitalism seems to have little to do with commodities. As Baudrillard argues, capitalism is now predominantly concerned with the production of signs and images. The world stock markets trade not in commodities but in social and political signs and electronic images. The western economy is now largely based on the production of fictitious capital which is lent to real estate agents who inflate prices on behalf of the stockbrokers and bankers who manufacture fictitious capital. When, during the Writers' Guild strike, the image production machine of Los Angeles came to a sudden halt, people realised 'how much of its economic structure is based on a writer telling a producer a story, and that finally it's the weaving of the tale (into images) that pays the wages of the man who drives the van that delivers the food that's eaten in the restaurant that feeds the family who make the decisions to keep the economy running'.[26] The concrete monuments of capitalism too are based on a similar fiction:

> It is, perhaps, appropriate that the postmodern developer building, as solid as the pink granite of Philip Johnson's AT&T building, should be debt-financed, built on the basis of fictitious capital, and architecturally conceived of, at least on the outside, more in the spirit of fiction than of function.[27]

But the price of fiction is stagflation. The cultural products of post-modernism have much more to do with sheer profit seeking than with aesthetics. Inflation has affected the production and con-sumption of art and ideas just as much as the commercial markets. Just as fashions and tastes change overnight, new ready-made intel-lectual and artistic movements emerge from nowhere signalling 'the reign of the cult of creativity in all areas of behavior, an unpre-cedented non-judgmental receptivity to Art, a tolerance which finally amounts to indifference'. Art and literature are no longer a function of aesthetics but only a cultural aspect of postmodern capitalism. Art practice, Jameson notes, is now a fully capitalistic practice. Moreover, the abandonment of historical continuity in

values and beliefs and the reduction of the work of art to a text stressing discontinuity and allegory, have made criticism superfluous:

> The quantum increase in the scale of the international art market, the unprecedented importance of dealers in creating (or managing) reputations and manipulating supply and demand, the emergence of a new class of 'art consultants', and the large-scale entry of corporations into the contemporary art market have all contributed to the effective redundancy of art criticism. Art stars and even 'movements', with waiting lists of eager purchasers in their train, stepped into the spotlight before any art critics knew of their existence ... the current state of art criticism represents the final dissolution of what was, in any case, only a fragile bulwark between market forces and their institutional ratification, a highly permeable membrane separating venture capital, so to speak, from blue-chip investment. As a result, art criticism has been forced to cede its illusory belief in the separateness or disinterestedness of critical discourse.[28]

Postmodernism thus implies little more than logical extension of the power of the market over the whole range of cultural production. The quality of a novel is measured by the size of the advance received by its author; the aesthetic value of 'high design' and craft depend on their price tags. An example of the latter is the furniture produced by the Memphis group of Milan in the early eighties: 'This work,' Peter Dormer tells us, 'had no popular appeal, nor is it clear that it was intended to. Museums have bought it as a cultural phenomenon and a few wealthy collectors have followed suit.'[29]

Given its deep roots in the market, its inflationary hyperreality, its historic amnesia, its pathological concern with instantaneity, its confusion with reality and image, where the simulacra can in turn become the reality – given all this, postmodern culture is simply a lie, but a lie that is experienced as truth, a lie which pretends to be taken seriously. It is a deceit that is spread far and wide by transmitters of cultural images: higher education, fiction, cinema, television, theatre and museums – all who process and influence the reception of serious cultural products. When Other cultures are trapped by this deceit, the end products will be rather like the replicants in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. These are not simply imitations but totally authentic reproductions, quite indistinguishable from human beings but with two distinctions: they have a lifespan of only four years and

they are the slave subjects of humans. The postmodernist embrace for Other cultures is designed with the same goals in mind.

Tie Your Camel

Postmodernism represents itself as a new movement, as a sharp break from modernity. As such it has become a rallying call around which western intellectuals have gathered to discuss the 'wholesale abandonment of the universal proposition that provides the ground for the Enlightenment idea of politics and social transformation'. But this exercise, as Andrew Ross notes, itself resurrects the position of the 'universal intellectual' (as opposed to Foucault's 'specific intellectual'), who speaks as, and on behalf of, the consciousness of society as a whole. This is a position concomitant with the universalist Marxist tradition itself, and it brings back with it the moral high ground that has been shunned by new types of organic intellectuals. But it is not just Marxist positions that are intact in postmodernism; the entire philosophical grounds of modernity are stable too.

   Postmodernism does not represent a discontinuity with history, a sharp break from modernity, but an extension of the grand western narrative of secularism and its associated ideology of capitalism and bourgeois liberalism. Whereas Nietzsche, providing a philosophical basis for modernity, declared that 'God is dead', 'there *are* no facts, only interpretations' and 'there is no truth' ... 'there are no moral phenomena at all, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena', postmodernism reaffirms that God is indeed dead and there is no truth and extends Nietzsche's assertions by declaring that even a moral interpretation of phenomena is not possible.[30] Whereas Nietzsche announced that 'life itself has become a problem', postmodernism adds that it is a meaningless problem. Whereas Nietzsche declared that 'this world can be justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon', postmodernism has appropriated aesthetics and made it its own to ensure that aesthetics triumphs over ethics as a prime focus of social and intellectual concern. Whereas for Nietzsche art is, ultimately, 'worth more than truth'; postmodernist fiction extends the dictum by elevating itself to the level of *the* absolute where it has become a source of values and ensures that images dominate narratives, ephemerality and fragmentation take precedence over eternal truths. Nietzsche desired 'art and nothing but art', and postmodernist capitalism delivers inflationary art of an

inflationary era. Whereas Nietzsche announced that 'philosophy, religion, and morality are symptoms of decadence', postmodernism embarks on a crusade to ensure that those with these symptoms, the non-secular cultures, the believers in an objective moral order, the Others are either transformed into an ahistorical identity-less mass (like the mutants in *Total Recall*); or isolated and excluded from representing the existing social and political powers by ridicule and irony (like Jorge in *The Name of the Rose*); or subsumed into, and hopefully transformed into champions of, the grand narrative of secularism (like Umberto Eco and Salman Rushdie). In short, postmodernism is nothing more than the domestication of modernity and the reduction of its tarnished aspirations to a laissez-faire, 'anything goes' market capitalism and ideology.

Such a system of thought cannot be made the basis of social origination and cultural endeavours. As John Gibbins asks, 'How are society, politics and morality possible when we accept partiality, relativity, uncertainty, the absence of foundations, incommensurability, pluralism, fragmentation and polyculturalism?' And, after Harvey, we can ask further, that if we 'cannot aspire to any unified representation of the world, or picture it as a totality full of connections and differentiations rather than as perpetually shifting fragments, then how can we possibly aspire to act coherently with respect to the world?' The postmodern answer is that we should rely solely on pragmatism, instead of seeking coherence and meaning. But even pragmatism has to be based on a certain logic:

> Baudrillard ... considers the United States as a society so given over to speed, motion, cinematic images, and technological fixes as to have created a crisis of explanatory logic. It represents, he suggests, 'the triumph of effect over cause, of instantaneity over time as depth, the triumph of surface and of pure objectivization over the depth of desire'. This, of course, is the kind of environment in which deconstructionism can flourish. If it is impossible to see anything of solidity and permanence in the midst of this ephemeral and fragmented world, then why not join in the (language) game? Everything, from novel writing and philosophizing to the experience of labouring or making a home, has to face the challenge of accelerating turnover time and the rapid write off of traditional and historically acquired values. The temporary contract in everything, as Lyotard remarks, then becomes the hallmark of postmodern living.[31]

But the greater the ephemerality, the greater the fragmentation, the more acute is the need for individuals and societies to manufacture some kind of eternal truth from the situation. In a period of confusion and uncertainty, a pronounced turn to aesthetics is only natural – the next natural step is for aesthetics to acquire the position of absolute truth and ensure that the function of all cultural practices becomes one of domination and *solely* of that. The idea that nothing is to be believed, the supreme reign of perpetual doubt, is itself a kind of orthodoxy of belief. For, as Peter Dormer argues, 'in its extreme form, scepticism undermines everything and everyone; it legitimizes every act of cruelty, neglect and intolerance because it denies the point or purpose of anything'.[32] While there is a place for scepticism in all spheres of human thought and action, 'even the hardest sceptic has to head for the warm sea of belief if he or she is to find what makes any kind of life tolerable – innate values'.[33]

Despite its total denial of all beliefs and rejection of all metanarratives, postmodernism is itself a system of belief (or disbelief, if you like) and a pathological kind of grand narrative. Even if all the beliefs and metaphysical underpinnings of postmodernists are supposedly surmounted by rational and pragmatic thought and action, belief systems are deeply ingrained in the cultural products of postmodernism. Postmodernists may no longer believe; but their cultural products believe for them. Other cultures thus get trapped in a system that denies all beliefs but is itself an overriding system of belief. While actively seeking plurality and representation for Other voices, postmodernism in effect dismembers Other cultures by attacking their immune system: eradicating identity, erasing history and tradition, reducing everything that makes sense of life for non-secular cultures into meaninglessness; it places the inhuman and degrading on a par with the humane and ethical. It is thus the most pathological of all creeds of domination, the final solution of the cultural logic of secularism – the acquired inhuman domination syndrome (AIDS) of our time.

In *Total Recall*, Schwarzenegger recovers his memory and the associated original identity with sheer muscle power and brute violence. The dominating powers are beaten by activating a nuclear power generator that provides Mars with an atmosphere and free air for all. The power station was built by aliens. It is probably much easier, and more rational, to believe in God and tie one's camel.

Notes

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25. Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 300.
26. Scott Meek in the *Independent*, 14 July 1988; quoted by Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 332.
27. Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 292.
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29. Peter Dormer, *The Meaning of Modern Design: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1990, p. 10.
30. Quotes from Nietzsche are taken from Ian Forbes, 'Nietzsche, Modernity and Politics', in Gibbins, *Contemporary Political Culture*.
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32. Dormer, *Modern Design*, p. 179.
33. Dormer, Ibid., p. 12.

12 Bosnia and the Postmodern Embrace of Evil

Die you scum, the Serbs are the champions. Come out onto your balconies and hail the white Serb race.
– Song on Bosnian Serb radio after it announced that 'normality has been restored to "Free Srebrenica"'[1]

Consider two apparently unrelated events that have dominated the press in Britain during the mid-nineties. The first concerns an individual, Cedric Brown, managing director of British Gas. When the national asset that was British Gas was privatised, Brown fired thousands of employees of his corporation, declaring them 'surplus to need' and helped himself to what used to be their wages: he increased his own salary by about 400 per cent and awarded himself a million pound share option. Next, he increased the profit of British Gas by increasing the price, downgrading services and closing showrooms and refused to award a 3 per cent increase in the salary of his workers. The nation was outraged at this cynical use of power: but no one could do anything about it. The parliamentary committee which summoned Brown for an explanation was totally impotent; the government declared that there was 'no practical' solution to corporate greed; the individual shareholders huffed and puffed from the sidelines but, in the face of the corporate share-holders of British Gas, were totally helpless. Meanwhile, Brown appeared on our television screens with a wider and wider grin.

Now consider the second event: the plight of the small nation of Bosnia Herzegovina. The Serbs want to swallow it as a realisation of their dream of a 'Greater Serbia'. The Serb military is well equipped, consisting largely of the battalions of the army of former Yugoslavia, while the Muslim Bosnians are largely without weapons. The Serbs are not just the aggressors but show – as a state – a strong tendency towards fascism; the Bosnians are established multiculturalists. The United Nations imposes an arms embargo on both countries, thus effectively ensuring that the Bosnians can never have the ability to defend themselves. When the Serbs begin to butcher the Bosnians, the United Nations declares a few cities to be 'safe havens', disarms

the Bosnians of the few weapons they had managed to acquire despite the sanctions, and feeds the people trapped in these enclaves: dependency is added to despondency and dignity is sacrificed at the altar of 'humanitarian aid'. Then the Serbs begin to run amok in the undefended 'safe havens' and what does the UN do? The UN, like the parliamentary committee that summoned Brown, declares its outrage but cannot take sides or stop the Serbs from doing whatever they want to do. Malcolm Rifkind, the (then) Foreign Minister, declares that there are 'no realistic military' solutions to the problem of Bosnia. (Rifkind himself would not have been here had Churchill declared that there are 'no realistic military' solutions to Hitler: but we will let that irony pass!) The few newspapers and individuals with conscience shout from the sidelines but are helpless. Meanwhile, our television screens are full of pictures of weeping women and children, streams of bewildered refugees, bodies of butchered Muslims, crowds fighting over loaves of bread.

The rhetoric that has come out of Britain concerning Brown and Bosnia is remarkably similar: often the same words appear in the two cases. Why? Because it is the rhetoric of cynical power. In postmodern times, power is not just about financial and military muscle – over and above anything else, it is about cynicism. In other words, those with and in power, are motivated purely by self-aggrandisement, which is itself enhanced by demonstrations of the total helplessness of the victims of power. Brown used his power to increase his self-importance and laughed at the inability of others to stop him. The west would not use its power to stop the Serbians because that would not lead to its self-aggrandisement; it could lead to the loss of British, French or American lives but it would not bring any tangible benefit for the 'contact group' of countries that is suppose to safeguard the 'safe havens'.

Postmodern cynical power thus has nothing to do with ethics or morality; indeed, postmodernism has dismantled all the dominant value and ethical systems and replaced them with a vacuum – we are supposed to rejoice at this and consider the vacuum to be a virtue. Postmodern power moves only when its own self-importance can be increased. But the war in Bosnia, unlike the Gulf War, does not provide an opportunity to increase the conceit or the power of the west: it is about racism and fascism, about morality and ethics. That is precisely why the west will do nothing about Bosnia: it will, determinedly and consciously, ensure that Bosnia bleeds to death, and exists only as a state in limbo.

The comparison with the Gulf War is telling. The Gulf War was a war about commodity; Bosnia cannot be commodified: it has nothing that the west needs and in its present state it cannot even be considered as a 'market'. The Gulf War was about cynicism: it was a demonstration of the military muscle of the west; and about humiliating the aggressor: showing him to be totally powerless in the face of western might – that is why 400,000 young Iraqi conscripts had to die. The Gulf War was about money: the Saudis and the Kuwaitis paid with two decades of their future for the war. Bosnia cannot pay! The Gulf War was about testing a whole array of new weapons; both the terrain and the fact that the enemy is not confined to a clearly demarcated territory in Bosnia prevents the testing of any new weapons, if there are any left to be tested after the Gulf War. The Gulf War was about demonisation. But while Saddam Hussain could easily be demonised as he was clearly non-European and black, the European Serbs cannot be demonised: they *are* a part of western culture and civilisation. Thus despite genocide in front of television cameras, concentration camps, mass gang rapes of young women, 'ethnic cleansing', the holding of UN hostages, and clear use of racist terminology and rhetoric, the Serbs are Serbs: they are not 'terrorists', 'fundamentalists', 'savages', 'bloodthirsty' or 'debased' – the kind of labels that are so easily appended to non-western individuals and groups in general and Muslims in particular. Indeed, most newspapers and television programmes even shy away from describing them as fascists.

It is not surprising that when President Chirac declared that, 'if we have the will, we can stop an enterprise that threatens yet again to destroy our values', his call fell on deaf ears.[2] What values is he talking about? First of all there are few values left in postmodern times that are actually recognised as values. Prime Minister John Major discovered this a couple of years ago when he launched a nationwide programme that was supposed to take Britain 'back to basics'. The whole campaign had to be abandoned when it was realised that there were no basics left to return to![3] Second, even if we grant that there are some values left, they are certainly not worth fighting and dying for. In postmodern times, all values are relative: you can argue for or against them but there is nothing eternal about them, for everything, but everything, is contingent and fleeting. Third, values do not motivate anyone in the west, let alone the politicians: only ego and profits can lay claim to motivation.

And when President Chirac announced that 'it is hard to see the presence of the UN forces as anything other than some sort of accomplice to this barbarism',[4] he was talking in the framework of modernity. Barbarism is the unthought of modernity – it is integral to it, as Stjepan Mestrovic, amongst others, has shown.[5] Just as there is honour amongst thieves, their is some moral discernment in barbarism. Modernity produced the Holocaust;[6] but it also produced a will to stop the barbarism of the Third Reich. In modernity, the will to act against perceived barbarism (often in Other, non-western cultures) is intrinsic and automatic. But postmodern times are not about barbarism: they are about the total embrace of evil. The western reaction to the Serb aggression is not a product of some conspiracy of impotence, or absence of will in the face of barbarism: it is part of a conscious design. In other words, what motivates the Serbs also motivates the west. Bosnia, a multicultural Muslim republic at the heart of Europe, is an affront to all that the west stands for; it personifies all that the west has always projected on the Other. The Bosnians, like the British gas workers, are 'surplus to need'. A UNHCR official once described Srebrenica as a 'zoo'. 'It's a zoo,' he told the London *Observer*, 'where people are fed by the UN and kept in by the Serbs.'[7] But Bosnians have even less value than animals: while Bosnians are caged in a zoo, Britain is witnessing numerous demonstrations and protests against transportation of live animals to Europe. Many of these demonstrations are violent; one even claimed a martyr in the shape of a housewife who was crushed when she was trying to stop a lorry leaving with its load of live animals for the continent. There has not been a single demonstration on behalf of Bosnia! Western terror of the absence of light – of anything that is outside the circumference of instrumental rationality and Enlightenment values – has come full circle: postmodernity hugs the darkness. Evil may be transparent, as Baudrillard tells us,[8] but in these best of all possible postmodern times, the west finds excuses for it, rejoices in the absolute powerlessness it produces in its victims, even celebrates it.

'Our people,' President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia has said, 'were a good people. When the fighting started, we found out that they were a courageous people as well. They succeeded in creating something from practically nothing.'[9] Consider a future two decades from hence. When the infants whose fathers were taken to the 'butcher's shop' where 'their throats were cut',[10] whose mothers and sisters were raped again and again, who 'have nowhere to go now';[11]

when the infants of Bosnia were being made orphans, displaced, and made destitute as the voyeuristic television cameras relayed their plight in an effort to increase ratings to a western audience more concerned about cattle than human beings; when the western world made excuses for evil as evil expressed its will to power; when the infants have grown up: what will the west have created? What will the west have created from a multicultural, peace-loving society renowned for its love of art and culture?

Consider a future 20 years from hence when the world will witness the emergence of a new brand of 'terrorist'. He or she will be a young, angry Muslim who will have been born and grown up in Europe. But by that time the legitimation of their anger will have been forgotten – postmodernism has no memory let alone much respect for history. The 'terrorists' will be seeking revenge, seeking justice, seeking homelands – and their powerlessness will leave them no recourse but that of terrorism. Thus today's victims of the west will become tomorrow's demons of the west. And evil will have triumphed totally.

Notes

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13   Postmodern(ising) Qawwali

This world, the old Sufi mystics used to teach, is a mirage. There is a higher Reality that exists by its own essence. The purpose of existence is to love the higher Reality more than this mundane world of illusions. Like the (oblivious?) selfless moth immolating itself in the candle flame, Sufis direct their passion towards *fana*, or the annihilation of self in the higher Reality of the One. In the particular form of Sufi devotional music practised in the Indian subcontinent, Qawwali, the function of the performance is to enable the self-annihilation of the listener.

In recent times western audiences have been alerted to Qawwali through the work of one of its great exponents: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. How Nusrat became a chic cult in the west is, however, only part of my tale. Appropriately, since our subject is Qawwali, mine is a story of annihilation, involving considerable self-immolation. It is the amazing adventure of the one Qawwali most people in the western world are likely to have heard: Nusrat's *Dum mustt qualander*, or *Mustt Mustt* for short. The story of *Mustt Mustt*, how it came about, how it evolved, changed and transmogrified, is a revealing narrative of our postmodern times.

To set the scene, I must begin at the beginning, with the origins of Qawwali, a compendium of the Indian subcontinent's musical traditions. Its invention is attributed to Amir Khusrau, an immensely colourful and influential character in Indian music and literature. A court poet of Ala-ad-Din Muhammad Khilji, Sultan of Delhi (1296–1316), Khusrau is credited as the first Urdu poet in history. Sufi tradition also credits him with introducing such musical instruments as sitar and tabla to the subcontinent. There is an apocryphal account of how in a spate of invention he cut the *pakhavaja* (a drum with twin striking surfaces) in half, thus creating the two small drums of the tabla, one to be played by the right hand of the drummer, the other by the left. Khusrau also invented new vocal forms, as well as *rags* and *tals*.

Rags are central to Indian music, yet they have no counterpart in western musical theory. Loosely, *rag* is equivalent to melody, which in Indian classical music exists in free rhythmic form. The concept of *rag* is that certain characteristic patterns of notes evoke heightened

states of emotion. Each *rag* can be described according to its ascending and descending lines (which may involve turns) as well as its characteristic melodic figures. Indian melody can also be presented in its metric form, its tempo governed by the *tal*, a particular time measure. *Tal* is a cycle with both quantitative and qualitative aspects: the quantitative concern the duration of a cycle measured in terms of time units or beats which can be slow, medium or fast; the qualitative concern the distribution of stresses or accents within the cycle at different levels of intensity. In a *raga*, a composed piece, the character is derived from the specific deployment of the *rag* and *tal.* There are over two hundred extant *rags*, each a melodic basis for composition and improvisation, each performed at a different time of day or season to enhance particular emotions.

Qawwali is a fusion of the emotive power of Indian music with the emotional content of Sufi mystical poetry. The work of poets such as the Arab Sufi ibn Arabi or the Turkish mystic Jalaluddin Rumi is difficult to fathom for rationalist minds. In a society where one has to 'freak out' or 'drop out' to pursue mystical leanings, the idea of infinite emotion that is both unbridled passion and controlled, purposeful, spiritual endeavour is difficult to grasp. For Sufis, poetry is not just a vehicle, it is a transport of direct mystical experience. It represents and perpetuates the legacy of Sufi saints and teachers. This is why Sufi poetry provides such a vast range of aesthetic expression for mystical love, often utilising stylised imagery of human love as a metaphor for the manifestation of spiritual passion:

> O wondrous amorous teasing, O wondrous beguiling
> O wondrous tilted cap, O wondrous tormentor
> In the spasm of being killed my eyes beheld your face:
> O wondrous benevolence, O wondrous guidance and protection.

Amir Khusrau wanted to combine the passion of Sufi poetry with the heightened emotions of a *rag*. However, since Sufi poetry often incorporated a verse from the Qur'an or a saying of the Prophet Muhammad, it was important that the texts remained intact and their meaning was not distorted – a tricky situation to which Khusrau provided an ingenious solution. He was also the originator of the *tarana* style of vocal music, a type of singing in fast tempo using syllables. To an ordinary listener, the syllables appear meaningless but when they are pieced together they form recognisable Persian words with mystical symbolism. Khusrau introduced a few

syllables of *tarana* to add balance to the *rag* in which the piece was composed (called *shudh kalyan*) and Qawwali was born.

The word Qawwali itself is derived from the Arabic word *qaulah*, meaning to speak or give an opinion. As an artistic form, it is strong on opinion: the Urdu or Persian couplets that form the invocation and mystical text of the Qawwali are all important. This distinguishes Qawwali from a classical *raga* where music has primacy over text. The *tals* used in Qawwali are also distinct, being of a type seldom used in classical music. But the real difference between Qawwali and all other musical idioms of the Indian subcontinent is its specific mystical function and context of use. Qawwali is designed to perform three specific functions: to generate spiritual arousal, to convey the mystical message of the poetry and to react to the listeners' diverse and changing spiritual requirements.

Sufis consider a rhythmic framework and an emphatic stress pattern or pulse, reflecting the heartbeat, to be essential for stirring the soul. The recurring beat suggests the continuous repetition of God's name and guides the Sufi towards ecstasy. The rhythmic framework itself is characterised by two techniques. The first is hand-clapping; the second is a particular drumming technique that uses mainly open-hand or flat-hand strokes. With the downbeat of the drum, the listener's head moves in silent repetition of God's name; indeed, the drumbeat alone may cause ecstasy. By the time the Sufi utters the word *'Allahu'*, that is, 'God is', he is already on the way to another realm. It is said that the thirteenth-century mystic Sheikh Qutbudding Bakhtiar Kaki was so overwhelmed by ecstasy that he died while listening to Qawwali. Many Sufi saints, like the Indian mystic Sheikh Nizamuddin Chishti, have been known to go into a deep trance during Qawwali and remain oblivious to the world for days on end.

So, Qawwali is basically a form of mystical worship. Subcontinental Sufis often describe it as *zikr*, remembrance of Allah, which is the basic pillar of Sufism. Therefore, the music must serve to clarify the text, both acoustically, by making it clearly audible, and structurally, by placing emphasis on the salient formal features of the poem. Acoustic clarification of the text is sought by volume, singing at a high dynamic level, often with strong and exaggerated enunciation of consonants. Group singing reinforces the solo voice; the solo performer picks out the pertinent units of text that are repeated by the group.

As a form of spiritual communication, Qawwali is not a one-way exercise; singer and musicians must themselves react to the listeners, respond to their changing requirements, adjust their performance to their audience's state of being and ecstasy. The interaction requires the Qawwali to isolate both musical and textual units and repeat them as necessary, amplifying or cutting short any unit of the text, rearranging or even omitting an element, going forward, backwards or proceeding in an infinite loop. Or, it may require the creation of additional musical units as a setting for portions of text that may need to be inserted out of the blue! I have heard the same poem presented in two minutes and performed for over two hours. The audience and musicians are mutual participants locked in a mystical encounter. The listeners' ecstasy can impose a particular structure upon the music and take the musicians for an unplanned ride.

This incredibly versatile and rich musical tradition has been sustained since the time of Amir Khusrau by the Sufi communities of the Indian subcontinent in the *mahfil-e-sama*, or the 'Assembly for Listening'. Through the act of listening – *sama* – the Sufi seeks to activate his personal link with his living spiritual guide, with saints departed, with Ali, fourth Caliph of Islam who was the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, with the Prophet Muhammad himself and ultimately with God. By opening himself to the Qawwali, the listener means to transcend his mundane, materialist and conscious existence by kindling the spiritual flame of mystical love. Once ecstasy has been reached, the goal of both Qawwali and the listener is to sustain the intensity of the experience and, well, go *Mustt, Mustt*, or totally loose oneself in the love of God.

One cannot have a more profound or vivid Qawwali experience than at an *urs* – the commemoration of a noted saint's own final union with God, held at the saint's shrine on the anniversary of his death. Throughout the Indian subcontinent, shrines continue to be the centres for mystical teaching and tradition, and therefore prime foci for Qawwalis. At any time of the year one can find an *urs* in progress somewhere on the subcontinent. I have attended Qawwali *mahfils* in Lahore and Pakpattan, two important centres of *urs* in Pakistan. But the *urs* to beat all *urs*, where the Qawwali reaches unparalleled heights, is the *urs* of the great saint Nizamuddin Auliya and of his favourite disciple, Amir Khusrau himself, that takes place in Delhi.

The Qawwals, the performers of Qawwalis, not surprisingly, tend to be both followers of the Sufi path as well as highly versatile

musicians. The ideal voice for a Qawwal is considered to be loud and full, a voice with life and strength, rather than one that is melodious or modulated. As Qawwals have to project their voice in huge assemblies that gather at shrines, they tend, like operatic tenors, to be rather large. Enter the subject of our story: the late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

Nusrat was not just a big man with a big voice; he was big in every way. And as befits big men, he is shrouded in myth and legend, much like Amir Khusrau and the Sufi saints of yesteryear. The popular story of Nusrat's life that circulates in towns and villages of Pakistan is an enchanting narrative of dreams, remote sensing, and mystical encounters. These begin at the beginning: with his name itself. Apparently, his original name was Parvez, meaning 'conqueror', 'lucky', 'happy', a common enough and perfectly acceptable designation amongst Muslims of the subcontinent. Yet, one day a mystic by the name of Pir Ghulam Ghaus Samadani came to see Nusrat's father, Ustad Fateh Ali Khan, himself a noted Qawwal. Our hero entered the room and when his father introduced him as 'Parvez', Samadani was startled and enraged. 'Change his name at once,' he thundered. 'Do you know who was Parvez? He was the king of Persia who tore up the letter sent to him by Prophet Muhammad. This name does not augur well for a boy destined to be a global Qawwal. It should not be the name of someone who will sing the rosary of Allah.' There and then, the fat boy's name was changed to Nusrat.

The word 'Nusrat' means 'God's grace' and 'success with His help'. So the young Qawwal was only too conscious of his prospects. On the way to his global triumph he is said to have performed several musical miracles. Take, for instance, the occasion when he was called upon to accompany the Indian classical singer Pandit Dina Nath on the tabla. The good Pandit had declared himself disappointed by all the tabla players in Pakistan – none of them could keep sufficient tempo to enable him to express himself fully. But the youthful Nusrat and his nimble fingers did such a brilliant job that the Pundit had to declare, 'I am defeated. Nusrat is highly talented.'

It was at the Amir Khusrau Festival in Islamabad in 1975, marking the poet's 700th Anniversary, that Nusrat performed his break-through musical miracle. All the great Qawwali singers of Pakistan were invited to the festival, which was broadcast live on radio. However, Nusrat, as yet an unrecognised Qawwal, was the last to be invited. So, by the time he and his party arrived the other Qawwals had already picked all the more popular poems and songs of Amir

Khusrau for their own performances. It seemed there was nothing left from the Khusrau heritage for Nusrat. But the up-and-coming artist astonished them all by singing a rare and hardly ever performed poem:

> *Mein to pia sey nainan mila aayi rey*
> *Par nari ganwari kahey so kahey*
> *Mein to pia sey nainan mila aayi rey*

> I am not thirsty, I have met my beloved
> Whatever the ignorant girls of my village might say
> I am not thirsty, I have met my beloved.

After that, Nusrat went on to perform one of Amir Khusrau's most difficult compositions in a particular style of Qawwali known as the Qaul Qalbana. Divided into five *tals*, Qaul Qalbana is only attempted by the most accomplished artists, those confident in their total mastery of their art. This was Nusrat's way of telling the other Qawwals and everyone listening not only that he had arrived but also that he was on his way to higher places.

So far our tale has been of the world of tradition, Sufi tradition that continues to circulate and whirl around its own concerns. Clearly, Nusrat was established, so much within his proper ambit that his own life took on the form and character of popular Sufi narratives, replete as they are with the little miracles of daily life. But we live in one world, and eventually even the unworldly are tracked to their assemblies and whirled by centripetal forces onto the global stage. And so it was that Nusrat was propelled on a trajectory no other Qawwal had ever taken, or even dreamed might exist: to the recording studio of Peter Gabriel.

Gabriel is the unquestioned doyen of world music, the eclectic genre of chic that merchandises the illusion we are real aesthetes, full members of a pluralist global culture. The great achievement of World of Music, Arts and Dance (WOMAD) and RealWorld, the organisation and record label founded by Gabriel, has been to purloin, appropriate and commodify traditional genres of music from distant corners of the world and thereby make fortunes for recording companies, but for few if any of the traditional musicians involved. The world, as the Sufis say, is a mirage, a distorted flickering image of reality. Or as a western poet once noted: The world is too much with us, late and soon, getting and spending. I

merely note that what world music commodifies is the lure of other-worldliness, in easy, though contextually incomprehensible, form. For the west, spirituality, mystical power is the continuing domain of non-western, natural man. The three fifths of the world who remain bereft of the worldly goods of modernity have only ethereal consolation in other-worldliness to warm their hands and stir their mess of porridge by, it has become a natural order in quite a different sense of the word.

World music summons an assembly of listening for the global mirage based on the assumption that by being fascinated by what we do not understand we actually belong to one world. It is a delusion, because it lacks exactly those defining criteria that make Qawwali: mutual endeavour for a common higher purpose. Yet, if world music fails to transport us beyond the dynamics of the mundane natural order, at least it sounds nice.

And so it was that Nusrat was drawn to participate in that most bizarrely eclectic and truly postmodern exercise of adding a Qawwali to the sound track of Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*. What better accompaniment to the deconstruction of Christology could there be than decontextualising another spiritual tradition? Postmodernism is nothing if not the vehicle to transport us all beyond the meaningful content of grand narratives of belief. In the studio, goes the story, Nusrat performed a number of *ragas* and Gabriel kept on recording the recital. Then Nusrat did something unusual. He sang the tunes of Darbari *ragas* in higher tones, rather than his characteristic falsetto. Gabriel liked it and it ended up on the track of the film.

When the recording was complete Gabriel said: 'I wish you could do something with western musical instruments.' Again the postmodern refrain, the quest for fulfilment by losing all meaning in hybrid fusion form. Decontextualised, uprooted and free-floating postmodernism would have us absorbed in meaningless pastiche. Nusrat started to hum and play on his harmonium in an absent-minded way. After a little while, he rendered the scale:

sa re sa: ni sa pa ni ma pama ni ga re ga.

Nusrat immediately realised the significance of what he had done. Peter Gabriel so liked what he heard he proceeded immediately to record it. Thus was born Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's masterpiece, *Musst Musst*. When cinema audiences heard the intriguing sounds of

Qawwali they asked for more. They too wanted to go '*Musst Musst*', and lose themselves in dreams of postmodern inclusiveness. Nusrat became a must on radio and in record shops far and wide.

Irony is a special delight of postmodernism. The first incarnation of *Musst Musst* was released on the Real World label. Although guitar and other western instruments are there, the Qawwali is sung in the traditional way largely to the accompaniment of tabla. The text is a mixture of Urdu and Punjabi and its *subject* is Caliph Ali:

> *Dum mustt qualander, mustt mustt*
> My remembrance moment by moment
> Ali in my every breath

The text is not altogether original. Rather, it's a variation on the old Punjabi Qawwali *Dama dum mustt qualander* which I have heard many a fakir sing in the streets of the Pakistani province of Sindh. As Qawwali, *Musst, Musst* exists within the traditional orbit of improvisation, with a new element added out of the blue. It includes some enchanting *tarana*, and Nusrat presents the whole performance as a showcase of virtuosity and talent. A passive assembly for listening among the uninitiated can be transported by fascination without commitment, yet it works within the terms of a committed assembly for listening.

The opening words of the Qawwali are very significant. The word *Dum* has the double meaning of 'life' and 'breath'. *Mustt* is the state of being lost to this world, or being located in another realm, or intoxicated in the love of God. *Qualander* is a mystic. So, collectively *Dum mustt qualander, mustt mustt* signifies a mystic lost to this life and breathing the very love of God. The Qawwali is both an expression of mystical experience as well as an invitation to abandon worldly life and adopt the mystical way, the way of the *qualander*. The nod towards western music and tastes is quite marginal; as a global recording phenomenon this Qawwali speaks its own language as much as it ever has.

And now our story takes another turn, ascending cadence becomes descending. The infinite loop of improvisation cuts short, backtracks, goes forward, amplifies and lays its stress on something quite unexpected. It is the responsibility of the Qawwal to react to the listeners. Nusrat himself now proceeds to produce two further versions of *Mustt Mustt*. In its second incarnation, the Massive Attack remix, Nusrat seeks to engage with that assembly for listening that

is his new western audience. As all Qawwals must, he searches for a means to keep in step with the spiritual capacity of his audience. So at the second turning of this story he brings instrumental music to the fore and renders the text, the words that are anyway incomprehensible to his listeners, secondary. Some of the conventional Qawwali vocal features disappear altogether. But, for all that, the *subject* of the Qawwali is still Ali, a refrain simple enough to be repeated emphatically and picked out by the most untrained ear.

The third turning of our tale describes a loop back to the ground on which Qawwali was first born. *Musst Musst* returns home, this time to know its birthplace as it has become. In its third incarnation it is released largely for audiences in the Indian subcontinent. It is the function of the Qawwal to attend to the changed spiritual requirements of the assembly for listening, a subcontinental audience that can both understand and know the tradition and engage with the path presented. So what is one to make of *Musst Musst* Mark 3, released in the subcontinent under the title *Mustt Qualander*? To what realm does it transport? It is a fast-paced affair with Nusrat joined by female vocalists. The synthesised music drowns everything and all is lost in funky *tal*. Although Ali is still there, he is no longer the subject of the song. What was meant to be listened to in devotion and ecstatic contemplation now becomes disco dancing music – ecstasy of quite another kind.

It was at this point, with just three versions in hand, that I determined to make *Musst Musst* a subject of a diatribe on the awful assaults of global postmodern popular culture on my heritage. My assembly for listening was to be, appropriately enough, in Delhi. Listen to this anti-progression, this heedless descent into meaninglessness, I began. I played the three incarnations only to become aware of a certain lack of reaction in my audience. Were they not concerned at how our tradition was being debased by the pernicious influences from the west? They had news for me. Never mind three versions, now there are four: 'but you chaps living in the west would have no idea about that,' they noted. Feeling like some innocent abroad I listened as they brought me up to date.

The fourth incarnation of *Mustt Mustt* appears in the Indian film, *Mohra*. Here the original subject disappears totally and becomes an *object*: an object of material and sexual desire. The lyrics are changed slightly so the original idea of losing oneself in the love of God evaporates and objectified sex comes into play:

Tu chees bari hay, mustt mustt.

The word *chees* translates as 'things', 'commodities' and 'material'. In the original version the word *bari* refers to higher saints. Here, wordplay is used to connote the idea that a purely sexual object of love can also be divine and you can get 'high' on material things too! The changed spiritual requirements could not be more explicit. This is a world turned upside down, but, as my audience in Delhi clearly pointed out, the turning was a home-grown revolution. There was more to come. You should get yourself a copy of the new compendium edition, I was told with a certain impish glee by my audience that had now become my teachers. They sent me in search of the appropriately named New Massacre version of *Mustt Mustt* by Boota and Master G. Here, a number of different versions of the Qawwali – including the original and the Indian film version – are brought together in a postmodern blend. But instead of *tarana*, we have Rap. The entire amalgam is defined by absolute meaningless-ness. The *object* now becomes a pure extravaganza, a fusion of sounds that is 'with it', a commodity that is only a commodity.

Like a moth, irresistibly drawn to the flame, I followed the path of *Mustt Mustt* to the final immolation, the *coup de'grâce*. It was delivered during the 1996 Cricket World Cup. Where once the subcontinent had spiritual passion it now has unbridled devotion for cricket, and, incidentally, leads the world in betting syndicates that corrupt that erstwhile gentlemanly path as well. The sponsors of the game broadcast a special advertisement on numerous satellite channels throughout Asia and selected countries in Europe. The advertisement features a group of young children playing cricket in a Pakistani village. On the sound track *Mustt Mustt* is just about audible. It's a joyous occasion with much colour and excitement around the game. Then a child hits the ball, which flies towards the sky, spins as if catching fire and revolves into the symbol for 'Coke'. The soundtrack swells with the unmistakable sound of *Mustt Mustt* at full volume. What became a commodity now promotes another commodity, one with rather imperial tendencies. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's crowning achievement, the Qawwali that brought him the accolade of 'Shahen-Shah-e-Qawwali', the King of Kings of Qawwali, is finally drained of all its original meaning. Its real essence, intoxication in the love of God, is reduced to the desire for Coke: 'the *real* thing'.

I remember asking Nusrat, shortly after *Musst Mustt* took off, whether it was a good idea to westernise the Qawwali. 'I cherish the

tradition of classical music more than my life,' he said. 'I consider its protection and preservation as my spiritual duty. As an experiment I do not mind the use of western musical instruments. But it will be great injustice to introduce any change in classical music. I use western musical instruments because I believe that you can dress up a pretty child in any clothes and it will stay pretty. But the more important thing is that the child should not get injured while putting on those clothes.'

In the case of *Mustt Mustt*, the clothes did much more than injure the child. Innocence, as the Sufis are quick to point out, is no barrier to annihilation. But the story of *Mustt Mustt* has a strong moral. We live on one planet, in multiple worlds, we are different assemblies of listeners for we have not yet the wit to learn how to communicate across and through our differences. I am that traveller that returns to tell we have more problems than we know. There is not only one postmodernism out there. There is not merely one global popular culture that proliferates the meaningless mundane cause of pure commodity – the world is busy building many and different post-modernisms, we are all rushing headlong to meet each other on the common ground of nothingness. The flames are dying out all over the world.

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14   The End of Civilisation?

We forever come out by the same door we went in – a fitting maxim for the Rushdie affair to date. Passions have been stirred, old familiar positions rehearsed and re-entrenched, but knowledge has hardly been increased on either side of the barricades. Two mutually uncomprehending viewpoints dominate the clamour; getting no nearer to communication, they stolidly reinforce each other's stereotypes, mutually satisfying each other's self-righteous certainty in the correctness of their opinions. Arranged around the unheard fringes stand the salient issues raised by this affair, an agenda waiting for dialogue. Dialogue, in this case is no woolly idealism. It is a social and political necessity within and between communities and nations. For, while the clamour of mutual incomprehension rages, mutual intolerance acquires new recruits and mutual frustration lays the seeds of discord. What retreats further and further into the shadows is the task of making genuine plural societies in a genuinely plural world.

The Rushdie affair has consistently offered the uninviting prospect of choosing sides on the old conventional lines between Us and Them, forced to state whether one is 'for Us' or 'against Us', on both sides of intemperate battlelines. 'Us' and 'Them' have been severely defined and depicted in the course of outrage; yet all the pictures are familiar, another chapter to a standard work. Our course has been to suggest we investigate the nature of these battlelines before leaping to defend them. A proper understanding of the context in which offence is given, on both sides, identifies most of the rhetoric that has been generated as no more than knee-jerk conditioned responses, certainly not reasoned debate of a substantive issue. The substantive issue, which we have called defining the limits of forbearance, is one that will not go away. Viewed from a different angle, as part of an ongoing story, we have tried to open up the ground for dialogue.

The battlelines that have been thrust upon us by the Rushdie affair have a long history, a history that admits of more than just two perennially opposed constructions. Those who have been first and loudest at the barricades do not have a monopoly on setting the context or telling the history with which we scoff at each other today. But context is all in making the conditioned responses of both

sides apparent, just as context is all in comprehending what Rushdie has written. The rise of militant dogmatic secularism, the triumphalism, of the postmodern culture of panic and doubt, emerges from the history of Europe trailing its ancestry in readily reopened wounds. The knowledge of the secularist is self-knowledge, schooled by local history which is imposed upon all others, remaking all histories in its own image, according to its own issues and concerns. In this, secularism is true to its imperialist ancestor. This continuity amidst the change in western civilisation is what we have called the distorted imagination.

While the Rushdie affair has been perceived as a clash of worldviews, the true protagonists have not been identified. On one side is militant, dogmatic secularism, which claims the realm of literature as its new religion, an absolute where unlimited freedom should be exercised by the high priests of modern culture, the artists. On the other, there is the religious worldview wherein freedom of thought and expression arises from the existence of the sacred and the ideas of respect for sanctity, tolerance for others and responsibility in the exercise of freedom. No matter what other dimensions have been added by those seeking to dominate the course of this affair, it is this clash of worldviews that is the underlying issue, an issue that will not swiftly go away. Unless the Rushdie affair is seen in this context, then there can be no meaningful debate or appropriate responses. Without reasoned debate, panic measures will be advocated and taken on both sides, and such measures can offer no confidence that they address the real issue nor adequately deal with any fact of the problems we now face. Panic has now become a feature of the postmodern world, but to resort to panic measures rather than a measured dialogue means handing our entire future to the monolithic vision of militant dogmatic secularism.

The distorted imagination is more than a blind spot in the western perception of the Others. It is a distinctive construct engineered to fit traditional cultures into the conventions of the west as negative projections of the west's own fears. The distorted imagination emerged as a rationale for domination, and continues to dominate, offering only a choice of enduring subservience to non-western peoples. The distorted imagination is not a conspiracy theory, though its effect can appear to be conspirational in being self-interested. Nor does possession of the distorted imagination make the west a demon bogy fit for use by the Muslim world, or any of the others, as a scapegoat for their own historic *problematique*,

though it is most often used as such. The distorted imagination is the *métier* of crude realpolitik in a world of domination and power relationships; that is its most pernicious, pervasive and dangerous form. It is also entrenched as conventional wisdom in the attitudes and commonplace ideas of the ordinary citizen of the west, a latent suspicion and store of antipathy ever ready to resurface.

This benign version of the distorted imagination is a cultural barrier that has been turned into a barricade in the course of the Rushdie affair. The distorted imagination is a part of western civilisation, a feature of historical reality and contemporary circumstance; it is the convention that makes the Muslim world, the world of the Other, familiar to the west. To insist that the distorted imagination exists is merely to set a proper context for discussion and, hopefully, for dialogue. It is to argue that the context requires placing a powerful body of imagery in its proper home, which is within the perceptions of western history. The distorted imagination chronicles how the west has envisioned the Other, in this case the Muslim and Islam, according to its own historical conditions, development and interests; and the distorted imagination is just that: a false, garbled perception of a reality that is still waiting out there to be discovered.

History is the particular record of particular people through time and space; it marches first and most easily to its own drummer. Other civilisations have their own histories which march to different drummers, a point that has totally escaped western perception. The distorted imagination is an ethnocentric convention, which takes ethnocentrism as a universal starting point. What makes western ethnocentrism so distorting is the confusion by which it has taken its own ethnocentric universalising tendency to be the one (and probably the only) tenable universal viewpoint. The battles that have stirred within Europe, that originated within the conventions and failings of its medieval history, are not taken as particular experiences, or as a metaphor of general tendencies, but as *the* battles that must be endured by all peoples. World history is made one history.

Histories of non-western civilisations then become a mere appendage to the grand history of European civilisation. All other histories, all other cultures, are subsumed by the organising principle of European society, secularism. European ethnocentrism presents a conflict-ridden view of history, honed and sharpened by the techniques employed to effect change in European consciousness. Its rallying cries are familiar: liberty, individual conscience, equality, democratic freedom, justice, fraternity, liberality, tolerance, freedom

of speech. All of these are noble qualities and enduring values. The distortion comes in understanding them only as they have been defined and delivered within the cauldron of a western history of conflict. The problem resides in taking the way these values were denied within western experience as the problem endured, and lingering still throughout the rest of the world – even when the rest of the world's problems of modernity have in large measure been created by western imperialism, intervention and imposition.

The distorted imagination is taken to be an objective assessment of the reality of both the history and the character of Other cultures. An ethnocentric perception is elevated into the status of the truth of those cultures, but the distorted imagination has no meaning and only counterproductive utility for them; it is not the history they have lived and experienced, nor a reflection of how they experience and understand their own religions, cultures and civilisations. The distorted imagination is, nevertheless, a coherent logic in the world of power relationships. The global problem created by the distorted imagination is the way it silences mutual comprehension and communication. Whether or not the end is intentional, the effect is always the same – the predominance of the distorted imagination makes the Others inaudible and invisible, unable truthfully to represent themselves. They are permanently confined to the role of contending with the distorted imagination to gain a voice. Yet the very process of argument, according to the rules and agenda of the distorted imagination, confirms its stereotypes and entrenches a false notion of itself within the global community. It is this Kafkaesque experience that has confronted so many Muslims during the course of the Rushdie affair. They have found their sense of hurt and pain compounded by the seeming impossibility of conveying their ideas as they understand them to a western audience, which is deafening itself with the clamour of distorted imaginings.

In a world where domination is the rule, as well as the ruler, the distorted imagination has been appropriated within the traditional cultures through the colonisation of the mind. The effect is the appearance of those who accept the logic of the distorted imagination and gratify the west, amplifying its prejudices and repudiating their own cultural patrimony. A product of a particular historical legacy, these are the brown sahibs.

The brown sahib was a conscious creation of the colonial era, as well as an opportunistic response to the realities of colonialism and neo-imperialism – that you cannot beat them unless you join them.

In the years since independence, brown sahibs have continued the predominance of colonialism within the non-west and some of its most notable second generation have moved into the establishment of the west itself. The logic of the brown sahib requires destruction; its tools are the constant rejection, abnegation and denigration of indigenous tradition, as a positive means of achieving the end they accept as good. The objective is the remaking of the non-west in the image of the west, according to the historical pattern of economic, political and social progress that occurred in the west and with the axioms, principles and forms of the west. It is the one-way logic of modernity that lurks even beneath the rhetoric of one-world relativism.

The trouble, so far as non-western people are concerned, is that this involves catching a disease in order to be cured by a specific treatment. The brown sahib's fractured self is not a diagnosis shared by non-western people, nor is the brown sahib's prescription acceptable to them. Many other responses to modernity exist and share a common premise: that survival in today's world depends on reaffirming cultural integrity, the wholeness of the cultural identity. This can be a road of uneasy compromise, rejection of the west or, increasingly, the reforging of traditional cultural premises. However it is expressed, it staunchly opposes any further incursions of the distorted imagination into non-western territory.

That is not to say that the rest of the world either today or in history has been an idyll where exemplary values were enjoyed in an exemplary manner. That is the position of the nostalgics who validate tradition as it exists on the basis of a roseate vision of their own history. It is the easiest position to advocate, ministering as it does to battered pride and replacing insult with confidence-boosting assurance. But the trouble with nostalgia is that it breeds another kind of disease, that of complacency. If all questions are answered by tradition, then no real questions need be addressed. Tradition does not need to be questioned for urgent solutions to current dilemmas and disasters. Merely the application of received tradition will, in and of itself, bring the return of the Golden Age. There is a growing understanding in the Muslim world, and elsewhere in other non-western civilisations, that nostalgia may make good slogans but produces and reifies a reductive vision of indigenous history. Both the dominance of the distorted imagination and the more visible opposing ranks of the nostalgics and their closest associates, the apologists, are an impediment to the recovery of genuine

autonomous history, a realistic perspective upon what constitutes tradition and how that tradition can be employed today.

Behind the leadership of the nostalgics and apologists in the Muslim world stands a whole range of diverse positions and ideas, and a genuine debate that is inaudible to the west, precisely because it takes its starting point as the validity of non-western civilisation and tradition. But the diversity and gradations of opinion that exist have little access to dialogue. The pervasive and corrosive effect of the distorted imagination lumps all positions together. The concerned Muslim is a fundamentalist, and fundamentalism is incomprehensible; it is also violent, barbaric, irrational and intolerant. It is not the kind of idea the distorted imagination invites to tea for a polite chat. Therefore, the effect of the distorted imagination is to return to the only response that comes naturally, the realpolitik of power and domination. As usual, the majority of Muslims find themselves marginalised, this time on both sides of the barricades.

There is a true story told about a Pakistani boy who knew Muslim history which was not western history. The boy marched to a drummer that his history teacher was not even aware of. His attempt to reassert his history was an attempt to have his Muslim identity recognised. Within Muslim tradition the aspirations for liberty, freedom, equality and justice have been understood according to Islamic premises, incorporated differently into lifestyles themselves different from those experienced by western society. Some of the values that define western ideals have been absent as problems by being present as lived experiences, others have fared worse. All the noble ideals have had their domesticated construction derived from discrete Islamic sources of inspiration. Ideas about political and democratic freedom, equity and justice in politics and society, liberties of the person, conscience and the group, from family and community to the multiethnic, multilingual and what approximates to multinational body of the ummah, the worldwide Muslim community, have all been derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah – the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad – where they are all represented. They have been debated and a wide range of actions has resulted from this base, as well as a diversity of interpretation. There have always been lively arguments within the world of Islam. But none of these arguments has been about the abolition of the starting point, the foundation stone: Islam of the Qur'an and Sunnah. No tradition with a grain of sanity can be expected to contemplate

suicide as a rational choice. The route to understanding and the struggle to fulfil noble ideas remains for Muslims within the conventions of their own domestic tradition. It is within these traditions that liberty, equality and tolerance have true meaning and purpose.

The Rushdie affair has demonstrated the basis upon which this whole array of positions agrees. Whatever shade or quarter people come from, wherever they wish to move, however they envision the future of Islam in the modern world, they all concur in opposing the distorted imagination and stand unanimously behind the defence of the integrity of Islam, its Prophet, the community of faith and practice instituted by the Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime and that of the first four Rightly Guided Caliphs who were his immediate successors. This is a remarkable achievement, a measure of the surgical precision with which Rushdie's offensive outrages were aimed at the heart of Islam.

Reunderstanding Islam

The Rushdie affair has some important lessons for Muslims and Muslim societies. It has brought to the fore something that thinking and concerned Muslims have known for decades: Islamic law, as it is derived from centuries-old *fiqh*, the juristic interpretive legislation, needs to be rethought. The tradition of thought upon which the Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa relies, derives from *fiqh*, and not from the basic sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The development of the body of opinion on which the fatwa is based is a function of how jurists in history have reasoned according to their historical circumstances. Such human reasoning cannot be elevated to the same status as the eternally valid and superior sources of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. But this reasoning has become a matter of power and territory: Muslim scholars see *fiqh* in terms of their own power in the community as well as a matter of survival. However, whatever Muslim jurists may say, the legal tradition upon which the fatwa relies is not a necessary, inflexible, unquestionable summation of Islam that must therefore be blindly followed and be incumbent upon all Muslims. The legal tradition of *fiqh* is something that has been made by Muslims in history and is the aspect of received tradition that needs most urgent reassessment and critical endeavour by Muslims today. Hence, the fatwa is and must become open to debate, as well as to clear and unequivocal disavowal.

Historical precedent is one thing, the fate of the law itself a much more urgent matter. With complacent pride, Muslims accept that the development of Islamic jurisprudence is one of the glories of their civilisation – nothing could be more true. The jurisprudence that emerged in history was a dynamic process of critical reasoning, designed for use, developed in use, and not a codified body of imperishable, unchanging statutes. The greatest glory of the system of legislation, *fiqh*, built upon the unchanging principles of the Shari'ah, was that it must be attuned to the needs and context of the society and social milieu in which it operates. Many Muslims are aware that critical reasoning to develop the law is no longer a feature of Islamic legal training; critical thought directed towards the philosophy of Islamic jurisprudence and its development fell into abeyance some centuries ago. The nature and character of Muslim society has radically altered since that time. The whole corpus of Islamic law requires review and intellectual and social effort on the part of scholars and the entire Muslim community alike. There is one crowning principle of Islamic law Muslims everywhere would do well to ponder: that the preconditions of any religious obligation are themselves an obligation. This can be stated in another way: the Muslim community earns the right and the responsibility to implement the letter of the law when they have responsibly fulfilled the preconditions of the law. The limits, the *hudud* in Islamic terminology, are not bald self-subsisting impositions, they are the extremes of a system. Without the system one cannot lay claim to just imposition of the limit. To operate the limit as a substitute for the entire system is to distort and even negate the meaning of Islam as a total system of balanced and harmonious regulation of the whole of human existence.

What is certain is that the law must be exercised as a procedure of justice. Even if one could agree with the legal ruling issued from Tehran, it would have no validity except through a legal hearing, a procedure of the law courts. This raises the important question of the jurisdiction of Islamic courts, the legitimate scope of any Islamic legal ruling, fatwa, in the complexity of the modern world. This is another issue that has neither been debated nor considered by Muslims in the course of the Rushdie affair. It is part of the culpable negligence jointly shared by the entire Muslim community. We can find no warrant for a legal opinion, issued without benefit of a hearing, becoming the basis for a bounty hunt. Those who incite such a bounty hunt and anyone who acted upon this incitement

would be beyond the pale of Islamic law, and worse, they would be bringing the law into disrepute. The status of Islamic law as the best we can achieve in the name of Islam is the Muslim aspiration for the future; to denigrate its clear guidelines, with their emphasis on justice, equity and fair dealing, is to denigrate the law and present Islam as an obscurantist faith to the eyes of the world.

However much Muslims may wish to see the totality of Islam in operation in their societies, today they have been duped into accepting the outer limits of Islamic law before any comparable effort is made to fill in the preconditions of that system. Muslims will be held responsible, as individuals and as a community, in that final court of appeal, God's judgement in the hereafter, in so far as they are responsible for the fate of Islamic law in this world. It is the mass of Muslims who must now demand that Islamic scholars and leaders re-establish the totality of the Islamic system, with its emphasis on justice, equity, fair dealing and genuinely alive freedoms that are relevant to their daily problems in today's world. The reality of Islam exists not at the limits but in the establishment of the preconditions. Every Muslim believes in his or her heart that concentration of effort on the preconditions of the Islamic system would obviate the need to go to the limit. It is for the community itself, the mass of the Muslims, to demonstrate this as a reality. However, it is not a case of the mass of the people waiting for enlightenment to be handed down by the learned. This kind of inertia has been indulged for too long. Islamic endeavour is the sacred trust of every Muslim, and concerned Muslims must now begin to act upon their own Islamically informed initiative.

In the Rushdie affair we have not one fatwa, but two differing legal opinions that have been put forward, both grounded centrally within the tradition of Islamic legal thought, that of Imam Khomeini and that of Al-Azhar, the oldest surviving centre of Islamic learning. It is understandable, if disappointing, that only Imam Khomeini's legal ruling has attracted attention in the western press. The truly depressing fact, however, is that while many Muslims have privately been glad of the minimal publicity given to Al-Azhar's view, it has not prompted Muslims publicly to debate the issue. The reason is not hard to find. The pressures imposed upon Muslim aspirations by the distorted imagination have bred a habit of apologetic solidarity. The consequence has been a tendency for Muslims invariably to support and defend other Muslims. The effect has been

that Muslims themselves now seem to be giving credence to the view of Islam as a monolith, a uniform, inflexible system. The diversity and debate of Islamic ideas has no place in the mainstream; it has been a marginalised discourse but one that must now be brought forward. It is Muslims themselves who bear responsibility for pressing the diversity of their opinions and ideas upon the media, and thereby making them available to the general, non-Muslim public to form their own informed and reasoned judgements.

Hyperbole and rhetorical flights of fancy have been a stock-in-trade of Muslims for many years. A fresh breath of reality needs to be breathed deep, however painful the coughing fit it is likely to produce. The Qur'anic ideal of Islam stands as the eternal challenge and potent admonition of all Muslim societies, historical and contemporary. To speak of this Qur'anic Islam as though it exists as a solid state of being in the here and now is self-delusory. All such talk achieves, for it is merely talk, is to force further and further apart the gap between aspiration and action in the urgent task of grappling with contemporary reality. This is no new argument for Muslims, but it takes new colour and context from the Rushdie affair. The Qur'anic ideal of Islam can never be reduced to what Muslims say and do in the name of Islam, any more than Christianity is merely the catalogue of the actions and sayings of Christians.

Islam is perceptible to Muslims as the eternal ideal, the totality of the eternal values to which they must aspire and the way of life they must actually produce in this far from ideal world. It is in the divergence of the ideal and reality that a divergence of opinion arises about how to change things in this world, according to the ideals of Islam, to produce a better world. To express a difference of opinion about how change can be effected, or the meaning of the ideal in terms of policy for change, is not to call the ideal into question but to make the ideal more central and more comprehensible to all people. It is in the open and lively exercise of critical Islamic thinking that we make Islam perceptible to ourselves and to others. It is this new language of self-expression Muslims must develop and articulate. We cannot expect to find too eager or comprehending a public in the west. But it is only by this means that we can address our own urgent agenda and continue the long war of attrition on the distorted imagination – until the old bogies simply fade away.

The End of Civilisation?

The Rushdie affair has some pertinent lessons for western society and the secularist tradition. At the very least, it has brought home the point that Muslims, however degenerate they may otherwise be, are very much alive to their traditions and sacred history. By their protests and campaigns, Muslims have clearly established the limits of ridicule and abuse they are willing to take: this far and no further, we are no longer fair game. At best, the Rushdie affair may trigger off a chain of reactions that would mean 'the end of civilisation as we know it'.

'Civilisation as we know it' has always meant western civilisation. Civilised behaviour and products of civilisation have been measured by the yardsticks of the west. Europe, and now North America, has always contemplated itself as the focus of the world, the axis of civilisation, the goal of history, the end product of human destiny. But other people can accept Europe as 'the civilisation' or manifest destiny only at the expense of their historical and cultural lives. Colonial history and colonial Christianity did their utmost both to annihilate non-western cultures and to obliterate their histories. Now secularism in its postmodernist phase of desperate self-glorification has embarked on the same goal. But the Muslim protest over *The Satanic Verses* has forced the realisation that the west cannot ignore the world outside, has stopped postmodernist panic and doubt in its tracks and forced many thinking secularists to re-examine their own positions.

A common and recurring theme in contemporary western thought and philosophy, from Nietzsche to Marx, Russell to Sartre, Ayer to Foucault, Bloom to Baudrillard, is the total and profound sense of despair at its inability to give not just a complete and satisfying account of the human being and of society, but even of being able to give an intelligible account of itself. As Leonard Binder noted,

> Though it may be widely believed that there is much of value in the long philosophical heritage of the West which began in ancient Greece, we cannot offer an absolute justification for this cultural complex upon which our civilization is based; nor can we be sure that there is no better way of organizing human life.[1]

But we can be sure that there are different ways of securing and living by those great human values which are the common heritage

of all mankind: justice, freedom, equity, fair dealing and cultural authenticity. The western way, the secularist way, is not the only way – those who think so still live in the nineteenth century.

The postmodernist environment is that of a multicivilisational and multicultural world. It is not a world of 'civilisation as we know it'; it is a world of civilisations – western, Islamic, Indian, Chinese, to name the most obvious – which they will rediscover and renovate themselves and enrich and enlighten each other with synthesis and mutual respect and co-operation. In this postmodernist environment, the secularist and *homo occidentis* can adjust only by learning that not all history is the history of western civilisation and by rediscovering the modesty of their origins.

Freedom from ridicule and abuse is a prerequisite for the cultural survival of non-western societies. However, cultural survival and critical consciousness are not the sole demand of Muslims, even though their pursuit is a common and general response of people who have been victims of history and of one form or other of distorted imagination – communities, cultures, civilisations, which are now trying to rediscover their own visions of a desirable society, 'less burdened', in the words of Ashis Nandy, 'by the post-Enlightenment hope of "one world" than by the post-colonial idea of cultural relativism'.[2] This search, this rediscovery of cultural identity, means that Muslims, or for that matter other non-western cultures, are not going to westernize or secularise their souls in order to find a place in a world which is not of their own making. It means that Islamic culture and other non-western cultures have to be understood on their own terms, by their own inner dynamic, by how they see themselves, by what they think their sacred scriptures are saying – in other words, far above and beyond the distorted imagination, at the level of genuine authenticity.

The basic hurdle towards the creation of a pluralistic world with genuine multicultural societies is the intrinsic seeds of domination within the vision of secularism. As long as the secularists continue to act out their Promethean vision, they force their lifestyles and choices on others, under pain of subjugation or cultural annihilation. Muslims have their fair share of fanatics and bigots; but fanaticism and intolerance are not the monopoly of Muslims. Secularism can be just as fundamentalist and fanatical as any worldview. The point is that the more secularism seeks to dominate, the more it places non-western cultures against the wall, the more fanaticism and conflict it generates. As such it distorts a culture's

own perceptions of itself which sees its survival only in living out a grotesque parody of itself. On the other hand, it produces distortions in that culture's perception of the west. The challenge for Muslims is not to shape a contemporary identity for themselves based on their reactions to the west; if this were so, Muslims would make the same mistakes as the west and develop a fictional image of western society and its people. The challenge for Muslims is to rediscover a contemporary identity for themselves which is true to their own history, traditions and worldview. When Muslims look towards the Medina State of the Prophet Muhammad, they are not looking to go back to some medieval history; they are looking forward to capturing that sense of equality, freedom and justice of which the Medina State provided such a perfect worldly example. But that movement forward to a sacred history can only happen if Muslims can fight off the suffocating embrace of the distorted imagination and the abuse and ridicule that they continuously receive from the secularist quarter. The Rushdie affair has demonstrated that Islam is not ready to go the way of Christianity. The sooner secularism incorporates this realisation into its vision, the sooner conflict will give way to mutual learning.

That learning process begins with the realisation that secularism does not have an absolute right either to dominate or to ridicule and abuse the sacred territory of non-western cultures. Neither are the secular purveyors of art and literature superior to other human beings, nor do they have absolute right or privileges over and above the rest of humanity. In the final analysis, the absolute right of novelists to write or say what they wish, regardless of distortions or consequences, in the name of criticism and progress, is an issue of power and territory. It is an attempt to accumulate further powers onto themselves and conquer new territories for secularism. It is a desire that will be resisted by any non-western culture that wishes to survive with its sanity intact. Conflict, therefore, is writ large in this dominating vision of secularism. The way forward is to bring social responsibility into the equation and recognise that a writer is as great as the responsibility she or he shows to other cultures and human beings while illuminating some aspect of the human condition.

As far as the issue of freedom of thought in Islam is concerned, the vast and admirable creative outpouring of Muslim civilisation from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries testifies to the unfathomable riches of Islamic culture. The fact that philosophy could grow unabated, that mysticism could flourish and engage in a

continuous argument with scholasticism, that revolutionary currents such as the Ismaelis and Kharijis existed at all, that they assaulted political and religious orthodoxy, that some thinkers were able to transcend the mentality (Islamic, Christian or otherwise) of their age, that some scholars such as al-Ghazzali first doubted and then believed and placed doubt at the prime focus of their belief ('No one believes, unless he doubts'), that poets such as Abu Nawas could openly proclaim their unbelief (and countless others thought as he did) and still be revered for their poetry – all this not only dramatically belies the usual notions about the monolithic character of Islam, it also demonstrates that thought and progress are possible without abuse and ridicule and that they thrived long before secularism made an appearance on the globe. As Islam teaches, and Muslims believe, argument, not abuse, is the basis for survival and progress. 'Argue and survive' could become a contemporary slogan for Muslims and secularists alike.

But before such a catchphrase can become a rallying call, the distorted imagination must follow on the footsteps of colonialism. In *The Colonial Harem,* Malek Alloula[3] commented on his collections of picture postcards of Algerian women, produced and sent by the French during the early part of the twentieth century. One postcard showed a woman totally covered in black, her eyes peering through and staring straight at the observer, her breasts hanging out of the two slits cut in her black chador of modesty; another, lying on a couch, was totally covered with the exception of her breasts; yet another stood by her child who was serving tea, fully clothed but her neckline had been opened to reveal her bosom; a number of couples were shown smoking water pipes, drinking tea, serving coffee, but naked at the essential areas. This is the distorted imagination that produced *The Satanic Verses* – the colonial picture postcard of modernist fiction. 'What I read on these cards does not leave me indifferent', Alloula recorded.

It demonstrates to me, were that still necessary, the desolate poverty of a gaze that I myself, as an Algerian, must have been the object of at some moment in my personal history. Among us, we believe in the nefarious effects of the evil eye (the evil gaze). We conjure them with our hand spread out like a fan. I close my hand back upon a pen to write *my* exorcism: *this* text.

Like Alloula, what Muslims read in *The Satanic Verses* does not leave them indifferent: for them, it reveals the abject poverty of an historical legacy that insists on demeaning their collective history, themselves and all that they hold sacred – the ever present, the all devouring, the lurid gaze, the evil eye of the distorted imagination.

Notes

1. Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberation*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1988.
2. Ashis Nandy, *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in Politics of Awareness*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987.
3. Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1986.

Other Futures

15   The Problem of Futures Studies

It is simple. The future has been colonised. It is already an occupied territory whose liberation is the most pressing challenge for the peoples of the non-west if they are to inherit a future made in their own likeness.

Even though thinking about the future is a tricky and hazardous business, it has become big business. Tricky because our conventional way of thinking does not normally incorporate the future – it requires considerable conscious effort to imagine how the future may unfold, what anticipated and unexpected possibilities lurk on distant horizons. Hazardous because the probability of getting one's forecasts wrong is very high. But this has not stopped the business of forecasting from spreading like a global fire. Anticipating the future nowadays means little more than forecasting the future. And forecasting is one of the major tools by which the future is colonised. No matter how sophisticated the techniques – and they are becoming more and more refined and complex – forecasting simply ends up by projecting the (selected) past and the (often privileged) present onto a linear future.

Despite numerous failures, unfulfilled promises, and misplaced optimism about the ability of technology to usher in a more humane and saner future, technological trends dominate the business of forecasting. The future is little more than the transformation of society by new western technologies. We are bombarded by this message constantly from a host of different directions. The advertisements on television and radio, newspapers and magazines, for new models of computers, cars, mobile phones, digital and satellite consumer goods – all ask us to reflect on how new technologies will transform not just our social and cultural environments but the very idea of what it is to be human. 'The future,' according to a mobile phone company, 'is Orange.' According to a car manufacturer: 'The future is Vauxhall Vectra.' And computer junkies sing in unison: 'The future is the World Wide Web.'

It is highly significant that the filler material, what appears between programmes broadcast by satellite all over Asia, relies

heavily on supposedly informative vignettes wherein western experts reiterate the message of high technology as the creative potential of the future. The subtext is that the future technologies are the resources of the west which will enable the non-west to have a future; the future it will have is a clone of the western future. If that seems empowering and inclusive, it is only an illusory surface seduction that obfuscates how that future is made.

Business and corporate books, available globally and at any airport, tell us how we will all be connected to the internet, tuned in to hundred of channels, working from home, and generally living in a technological bliss in the decades to come. For example, John Naisbitt's *Megatrends*[1] tells us that global trends are moving us from the industrial age to the information age, from national economies to a world economy, from representative to participatory democracy (where on earth can you find even an inkling of a participatory democracy?) and from either–or to multiple logic. The future will thus be better all round and for everyone. (Richard Slaughter has shown that Naisbitt's 'megatrends' are half-truths which cannot be clearly discerned and that the book itself amounts to little more than a brochure for liberal capitalism.[2]) Peter Drucker's *Managing for the Future*[3] advises corporate types to hang on to their culture as the future is already with us. No need to contemplate what could or will happen in the next decades as they have already collapsed on us. And in *Rethinking the Future*,[4] we are told how the new science of complexity will enable us to manage uncertainty and generate new methods for creating tomorrow's advantages, strategies for growth and reinvent the basis for competition. The future, therefore, will not be much different in at least one respect: corporations will continue to dominate and they will have new theories and tools to maintain their domination.

The message of such works is translated into visual metaphors by global television programmes such as CNN's *Future Watch* and BBC's *Tomorrow's World*. The sheer repetition and the intellectual and visual power with which this message is hammered home have profound consequences for our future consciousness. It is thus not surprising that the vast majority of humanity thinks of the future only in terms of advertising clichés, corporate strategies and gee-whiz technological gadgets.

But 'reality' at ground level also comes wrapped in this notation. Consider the most profound developments of recent years. The information and communication revolution owes everything to

advancements in technology. The cloning of Dolly the sheep is a wonder of bioengineering – a short step from cloning man and not too far from redefining the whole notion of humanity. The eradication of dreaded diseases like smallpox and the containment of AIDS with a cocktail of new drugs are achievements of technology-based medicine. Moreover, technology is providing choices where once there were none. A host of new fertility treatments now enable barren women to have a much wanted child (or two, three or more), even to choose the baby's sex; and in the not-too-distant future, its physical qualities, features and character could also be selected. All these developments make some individuals genuinely happy – and hold the rest of us in awe, imprisoned in the glare of technological advancements.

The inherent problem of the information revolution, however, is that most information is recycled in new packaged forms that are rigorously selected. To make children computer literate is a worldwide aspiration, to do the best for the future generation. In the non-west, it is seen as an imperative. Yet this well-intentioned determination not to be left behind again becomes the prime means of foreclosing the future. The resources available, the learning programs students can run on their computers, are more dominated by the west's selective vision than any library, bookstore or school yet devised. To surf the net is to immerse one self in the worldview and interests of white male American college students. The grand strategies being offered of cheap technology which instantly circumvents marginality and exclusion (though it is not cheap enough to include the poor) again foster the idea that the world of all the knowledge that matters can by brought direct to classrooms and homes in the non-west instantly. Indeed information can be delivered – but it will have less non-western content, more seductive clone-making intent, than was ever conceived possible in the headiest days of the development decades.

There is thus an inbuilt momentum that seems to take us towards a single, determined future. Technology is projected as an autonomous and desirable force. Its desirable products generate more desire; its second-order side effects require more technology to solve them. There is thus a perpetual feedback loop. One need not be a technological determinist to appreciate the fact that this self-perpetuating momentum has locked us in a linear, one-dimensional trajectory that has actually foreclosed the future. This trajectory is in fact an arch-ideology, and like all ideologies it is inverse to the

truth. An illusion of accelerated movement is created to shroud the fact that we are, at best, standing still if not actually slowling down. Faster and faster cars are actually not taking us anywhere but straight to a gridlock. No wonder concerned citizens in the west are giving up their cars for bicycles. Faster, intelligent computers are not solving any problems but creating newer ones. Being connected is a substitute for being a real community. All biotechnological advances have nightmarish underbellies and generate ethical paradoxes that are almost impossible to solve.

The reality is that we have reached a technological plateau. The futuristic revolution turns out to have had very little conception of the future – witness the billions that were spent because computer programs could not recognise dates beyond the year 1999. The millennium was beyond the consciousness of those who wrote and manufactured more and more sophisticated computer programs; instant solutions foreclose the future more effectively than planned ones. The future has been made only by projecting instant techno-logical answers and that means pushing forward the desires of the powerful. New technologies may appear to be better, faster and more promising, but in reality they do not improve our lives, or deliver greater material benefits to most of humanity, or make us happier. While the belief in the power of technology to rescue our future continues to gain more ground, it is, in fact, a dangerously obsolete ideology. The future is thus waiting to explode.

The future is being colonised by yet another force. Convention-ally, this force was called 'westernisation' but now it goes under the rubric of 'globalisation'. It may be naive to equate the former with the latter – but the end product is the same: the process that is trans-forming the world into the proverbial 'global village', rapidly shrinking distances, compressing space and time, is also shaping the world in the image of a single culture and civilisation.

Globalisation can be identified with (at least) two main elements. Firstly, the economic wave of liberalisation that began in the eighties and achieved global proportions after the fall of communism. Markets are becoming free from all constraints of the state and capital can now move across borders with ease. Multinational cor-porations move from country to country in their quest for cheap labour and tax exemptions. Globalisation has meant that a single consumer product, such as a computer, may actually be made in segments in several different places and put together in yet another place. While the management remains in the industrial world, many

sectors of manufacturing industry are now being located offshore in developing countries where corporations can take advantage of cheap labour, lower taxes and liberal labour-protection and environmental-protection regimes. On the whole, the manufacturing facilities play very little part in fuelling the economy of the developing countries. Global capital is now shifting from resource-based and market-seeking investment to spatial optimisation and absolute maximisation of profit opportunities. The end result is that the economy in most countries, both industrialised and developing, is becoming dominated by consumer and lifestyle choices, production is being replaced by consumption as the central economic activity, and privatisation is becoming the norm.

Secondly, the wide acceptance of liberal democracy across cultures from Eastern Europe to Africa, is leading to a total embrace of western culture. Even though the trend towards the universalisation of western culture is actively contested, it has become the dominant norm, encouraged and aided by Hollywood, television, satellite, pop music, fashion and global news networks like CNN, News International and the BBC World Service.

Thus, globalisation maintains all the well-known patterns of western economic and cultural imperialism and goes further. It promotes a dominant set of cultural practices and values, one vision of how life is to be lived, at the expense of all others. And it has serious practical consequences: not only does it erode non-western, local traditions and cultural practices but it kills non-western future options. Once again, the future is locked into a single, linear projection.

Finally, the future is being colonised in the way futures studies itself is being shaped into a discipline, with fixed boundaries, a set of basic principles and assumptions and all the other trappings of a crystallised discipline: established authorities, designated areas of research and thought, learned and professional organisations, bibliographic tools and study guides. As yet, futures studies is not a fully-fledged discipline; although it has acquired the trappings of a discipline. Traditionally, futures studies – like cultural studies – developed as an intellectual and social movement emphasising the plurality of futures, with a particular accent on alternative futures. As future studies was domesticated and institutionalised, particularly in the corridors of American and European corporations, that emphasis began to evaporate. In this organisational framework, futures studies is synonymous with western interests. The aim here

is to preserve a future landscape where technological advances can be employed to maintain the hegemony of the west.

A direct outcome of the corporatisation of futures studies is the belief that America is the locus not just for futures studies but the future itself. This is the basic assumption and prime principle of much of the futures thought that emanates from even the grass-roots American organisations such as the Washington-based World Future Society (WFS). The society's monthly journal, *The Futurist*, bi-monthly abstract journal *Future Survey*, and the learned journal *Futures Research Quarterly*, are consciously designed tools to create a professional discipline that, like anthropology and orientalism, serves the interests of the dominant culture. *The Futurist* regularly offers a comatose vision of how technology will make our life better in – perhaps, I am being charitable here – an unconscious attempt to validate the most debilitating forms of technological consumerism. *Future Survey*, the most important bibliographic tool in futures studies, seems to be totally blind to anything relating to the future that does not yield some kind of dividend or early warning signal for multinational corporations. The textbooks produced by WFS, like Edward Cornish's *The Study of the Future*,[5] cast the worldview of *The Futurist* and *Future Survey* into disciplinary stones.

On the whole, futures studies is sponsored by scholars who are not just totally divorced from any political and cultural movements, but are quite unaware of the fact that the future has anything to do with critical questions of power, history and politics. Indeed, of the numerous intellectual movements that have swept over the American social sciences since the seventies, few are so utterly shallow and xenophobic, so opportunistically unreflective towards the non-west and so ahistorical in their analyses. The recently published *Encyclopedia of the Future*[6] sums up the whole argument. Brief entries for countries like India and civilisations like Islam are there only as a necessary evil. Other countries involved in serious futures planning, such as Malaysia, are conspicuous by their absence. There is absolutely no awareness of the numerous non-western notions of the future, time, being or knowing. The list of the 'one hundred must influential futurists' contains only one person from the non-west. Clearly, the future is a western territory that has no place for the non-west.

This is not to say that there are no western futurists who use non-western philosophies and modes of knowing as the basis for constructing alternative visions of the future. But even here, both

the research and the vision are strictly enframed within the European tradition of humanism – a tradition that is totally enveloped in the secularist worldview. The end products of their labour are often a grotesque parody of non-western thought, philosophy and tradition. As such, even the 'new spirituality' and the New Age 'values' that these more aware futurists offer ultimately conform to the dictates of western secularism. Hence, it is always the secular forms of Eastern mysticism – like Zen Buddhism – with which these futurists find sympathy. The vast corpus of non-secular non-western traditions is almost totally ignored. There is also the added irony of the product of western humanism borrowing 'traditional thought' from a non-western culture, and subsequently presenting the repackaged confection to the natives. At best, the appropriation of non-western ideas and thought amounts to little more than a second hand regurgitation of 'eastern mysticism' as in the case, for example, of the 'small is beautiful' guru E. F. Schumacher. But whatever his standing in the west, as a mystic in the Eastern tradition, Schumacher is decidedly an infant: the non-west has greater minds and a long historical tradition to learn from. At worst, non-western ideas are used in an opportunistic exercise to make dubious reputations, as is the case with Fritjof Capra.

Thus, even when futures studies is allegedly borrowing and incorporating non-western thought into its framework, it remains rooted firmly in western philosophical ideas. All the future alternatives are actually worked out within this single, dominating, philosophical outlook. Other cultures are there, at best, for decorative purposes, or worse, to be used to prop up a system of thought and action that is actually responsible for the present dire predicament of humanity.

Of course, there is nothing special in the way futures studies has developed and is evolving towards a discipline. It is following a well-trodden path laid out in history by anthropology and oriental studies and in more modern times by development studies. It is worth noting that these disciplines are remarkably similar in how they approach the non-west. Operating within a linear teleology, which makes western civilisation the yardstick for measuring progress, norms and values, these disciplines have evolved by using non-western cultures and societies to define themselves and to develop and grow. In following suit, futures studies has not only colonised the future, it is itself becoming an instrument for maintaining and enlarging that colonisation. Futures studies thus has an unsavoury underside that is – ultimately – much darker than mere anthropol-

ogy or orientalism. Elsewhere, I have compared the evolution of futures studies with the unfolding of development studies:

> In that field, western 'authorities' were first created by citation analysis, literature surveys and study guides and the boundaries of the discipline were pegged to the research interests of these 'authorities'. The textbooks produced by these authorities became the essential teaching instruments in the Third World; while the masters of the discipline went to the Third World as consultants and authors of national development plans. It is only a matter of time until the 'experts' (identified in the *Encyclopedia of the Future* and other disciplinary texts) make their appearance in the Third World as consultants to set up university departments and long-range future plans. Already the signs are ominous. Just as the 'national development plans' of so many developing countries reflect little concern or respect for indigenous culture and local needs, so many of the national futures plans reflect the concern and interests of Western futurists rather than the hopes and aspiration of the local population. The priorities of such futures studies as Malaysia's Vision 2020, China 2000, Mexico 2000 have been set not by local populations but by the US Global 2000 report.[7]

The colonisation of the future by these powerful forces means that the future ceases to be an arena of action. We are in the domain of a new kind of colonisation that goes beyond physical and mental occupation to the seizure of our being and hence total absorption. Modernity tolerated our existence as an appendage to western civilisation. But the postmodern future is less tolerant – it will settle for nothing less than complete assimilation of all non-western societies into western civilisation. Modernity raised the question: Can non-western societies actually survive the future with their sanity and cultures intact? The colonised horizon of the future forces us to ask a new question: Can we survive as distinctive entities, as something different, something Other than western civilisation?

Given the myopic vision and one-dimensional logic with which western civilisation pursues its goals, and given the lack of concern for the future amongst non-western intellectuals and thinkers and the consequent (almost) total lack of future consciousness in many non-western societies, my contention is that the prognosis is grim. Unless: we start to think more concretely and imaginatively about the future; we transform the future into a site of both real and

symbolic struggle; and hence we change the future by opening it to non-western possibilities and move from one future to a plethora of futures. Changing the future means both questioning and resisting the forces, and the values and canonical myths associated with them, that have colonised the future.

Surviving the future thus involves confronting the deterministic, western future and altering the political and intellectual landscape of the future. The non-western intellectual project of futures must insist on exposing the political dimension of all knowledge relating to the future and cast the future not as an autonomous and inevitable domain but as a contested arena of conflictual practices – technological, global and scholarly – bound up with the perpetual expansion of the west. In theoretical terms, the project involves studying not what the future might or will be, but how new alternatives and options can be made to emerge, and how alternative futures can be shaped according to the desires and visions of non-western societies. In practical terms, the project has to focus on evolving a discourse of social involvement: in raising the future consciousness of communities (including communities of intellectuals and academics), in articulating the visions of societies, and in involving citizens in efforts to shape their own futures.

To liberate the future, the non-west must overcome a number of significant disadvantages. A great deal of emancipatory thought in recent years has concentrated in the recovery of a discrete past. The non-west is coming to appreciate the creativity of its own traditions, and halting steps are being taking towards studying that creativity as a dynamic concept. However, that still leaves the problem of dislocation between past and present, let alone past and future. The past becomes, and for many Asian conceptual traditions has always been, a lacuna where ideals and aspirations reside. So a chasm is opened between appreciation of tradition and the imaginative capacity to think traditions forward. The imaginative leap is made even harder by the limitations of the language and techniques of futures studies and methodologies. A perception of a discrete past was intended to bolster the search for alternatives to western dominance, to provide a means for continuity of values so that the non-west could move forward with its identity intact. However, it is a moot point whether the search for alternatives has not generated a public perception in the non-west of being the equivalent of opting out of the future altogether. Tradition is sold outside the technological wizardry of today and tomorrow. It provides perhaps a comforting answer to the

dire needs of poverty, not a handle on power. Alternative technology became technology for the poor while the mainstream concern of 'real' development was getting a handle on modern western technology. Critiques of western technology have so far failed to develop a concerted field of alternative-technology products that offer a new nexus of possible lifestyles with market possibilities for either the non-west or the New Age markets of the west.

The recovery of history has been a truncated endeavour in the non-west. Yet it does have the potential to upset the limited vision and self-satisfied composure of futures forecasters. History holds a model for a different perspective on what is actually happening today, and from this can come new questions about how the future can be created. Corporate futures forecasters have leapt to embrace the so-called 'Pacific century', the Pacific Rim-centred view of the future. Much of Asia is preparing to dememorialise the arrival of Vasco da Gama and incidentally recover the world his arrival disrupted. What stands behind this is an Indian Ocean-centred vision of the world, its history and interconnections that opens a new perspective not merely on the distant past but also on present trends and hence has the potential to engineer different plural futures. Yet, how many alternative thinkers in the non-west are prepared to jettison the west as an integral part of their thinking and the centre of their future consciousness? The trading world of Asia operated irrespective of Europe in minor and distant markets. The trading world of Asia worked through plurality and interconnection – through difference. Once more the trading world of Asia has the potential for sustained long-term growth by trading within itself. The fulcrum in the past was the South-East Asian archipelago; today that again is a source of dynamic growth that can ripple outwards and reconnect the old world of Asian interconnection. This is a rich topic for integration of past and future thought but it has been analysed so meagrely that it has failed to generate much of an output to challenge the might of 'official' futures thinking. It is a timely conceptual basis from which to subvert the whole 'official' idea of how the future was made and will be shaped.

From this perspective, futures studies is not and cannot be a discipline in the conventional sense. Indeed, if futures studies were to become a fully-fledged discipline it would follow in the footsteps of ecology, cultural studies and feminist studies and become totally domesticated. Awareness of the future involves rescuing futures studies from any disciplinary constraints and from the clutches of

tame professionals and academic bureaucrats. Futures studies must be openly incomplete and unpredictable, and must thus function as an intellectual movement rather than a closed discipline. It must work in opposition to the dominant politics and culture of our time, resist and critique science and technology (the most powerful agents of change and thought), globalisation (the most powerful process of homogenisation) and linear, deterministic projections (the official orthodoxy) of the future itself. It must, in the words of Ashis Nandy, become 'a game of dissenting visions',

> an attempt to widen human choices, by reconceptualizing political, social and cultural ends; by identifying emerging or previously ignored social pathologies that have to be understood, contained or transcended; by linking up the fates of different polities and societies through envisioning their common fears and hopes.[8]

For the genuine transformation of futures studies into a movement for resisting the status quo, its conceptual language has to change. Futures studies will remain alien to the non-west as long its basic concepts and categories are those of the dominant civilisation. This is why in non-western societies, despite the best intentions of its practitioners, it often ends up subverting indigenous visions and futures. If the future is a state of awareness then that awareness can have genuine meaning only if it emanates from the indigenous depths of a culture. This means that there has to be a whole variety of futures studies, each using the conceptual tools of a particular culture and thus reflecting the intrinsic values and concerns of that culture. The plurality of futures has to be reflected in the plurality of futures studies.

Thus, intellectuals in non-western societies will have to take the future seriously or become prisoners of someone else's future. They will have to change the actualised future by changing the future consciousness of their societies and by articulating the visions of their cultures in terms of each culture's own notions and categories. It is probable that futures studies in different cultures will not be fully comprehensible across cultural borders, or more particularly there will be incommensurability, in a Kuhnian sense, between indigenous notions of non-western futures studies and western futures studies. This incommensurability will arise from different norms and cognitive values, as well as different experiences, and it will be a

product of the fact that that many non-western concepts and categories cannot really be rendered in English. Moreover, the incommensurability will itself be a source of resistance, ensuring both a multiform of dissent and a plurality of options for the future. Futures studies could thus become a genuinely high adventure, generating a kaleidoscope of visions and fusing Other imaginations and moral concerns with political activism.

Problems often contain the seeds of their own solutions. Our awareness of the colonisation of the future arrives at a key moment in history when the colonising civilisation has reached the end of its golden age. As ibn Khaldun would have said, the west, like all other civilisations, must now decline, to rise again in some far, distant future. The present phase of the cycle of the rise and decline of civilisations favours the Asian civilisations. The next century belongs to Asia in general and India and China in particular. The centre of world trade has already moved to the Pacific Basin – the economic problems of South-East Asia at the tail end of the twentieth century notwithstanding. For the west, the growth of Asia could mean a return to a future of a thousand years ago. Both India and China, poised to become global civilisations, stand at the beginning of a cycle that could last a millennium; western civilisa-tion stands at the end of a cycle that is already a thousand years old.

But it is insufficient merely to accept the growth potential of Asia, enormous as that is, even though it is reconceptualised in the language of cycles. Alternative futures will genuinely emerge when Asia starts to think afresh by marginalising the west. That is the kind of equation western dominance is working tirelessly to maintain as non-thought. South-East Asia and the high performing economies of East Asia were insulated from the recession of the eighties by the potency of their growing economic interaction. This is a topic which does not figure largely in official futures thought. But it must be a starting point for us, a willingness of Asia to think the unthinkable. Rather than be a victim of a totally colonised future, Asia needs to imagine that it can be a source of its own alternatives; that it can generate its own power base. The story so far is that those Asian countries that have most confidence in their long-term growth potential are also most in thrall to the power complex of the west; they are least able to see even their own power other than in western terms and the language of western futures studies. It seems that colo-nialism has predisposed the colonised to think only in colonial terms. That is the cycle that must be broken.

History and its cycles give us hope by serving as future-oriented memories. We can use our history and tradition to break the power of the present over our future. But first we have to equip ourselves to meet the formidable task. So, prepare yourself to rescue all our futures.

Notes

1. Warner Books, 1984.
2. Rick Slaughter's 'Looking for the Real "Megatrends"', *Futures*, 25 (8) (October 1993)
3. Butterworth, Oxford, 1992.
4. Rowen Gibson (editor), London, Nicholas Brealey, 1996.
5. World Future Society, Bethesda, Maryland, 1977.
6. George Thomas Kurian and Graham T. T. Molitor (editors), Macmillan, New York, 1996 (two vols).
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8. 'Bearing Witness to the Future', *Futures*, 28 (6/7) August–September 1996.

16 Asian Cultures: Between Programmed and Desired Futures

Culture is a notoriously ambiguous concept. There are as many definitions of it as there are anthropologists, ethnographers, sociologists and other varieties of social scientists. It was the German ethnographer Gastav E. Kleman who, in 1843, first gave an anthropological meaning to the word. The classic – that is, the most often quoted – definition was, however, provided by E. B. Tylor in 1871 in the opening lines of his *Primitive Cultures*: 'Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.'[1] Before Kleman, 'culture' in the west meant 'to cultivate', the same sense in which we use it as a suffix in 'agriculture' – 'cultivation of the soil'. This was the basis of the word 'cultured', meaning 'having refined tastes and manners'. Cultivators – those who 'cultivated the soil' – considered themselves a step above non-cultivators – such as hunters or fishermen. There was thus an inherent two-layer hierarchy within the concept as it evolved in Europe.

The linguistic implications of the term have never had any real meaning for western society. The inhabitants of much of what became colonial space were considered to have no *dominium*, that is right of ownership, over their own land. The lack of ownership derived from their *failure to cultivate the land*, according to European usage. In the European imagination, the semantic field of the term *cultivate* has always included the notion of the application of science, technology, and energy to effect manifest transformation of the environment. The low-impact, divergently scientific and technological agricultural way of many indigenous people rendered their property 'free land' available to the first Europeans to take an interest in its possession.

The Age of Reason and Enlightenment – the historic era that followed the first burst of colonial activity – extended the meaning of the word to include cultivation of the human mind. Thus in More, Hobbes, and Jonson, culture signifies mental and intellectual evolution. Henceforth the educated urban elite occupied the top

rung of culture, the farmers and peasants dropped a notch and the cultivators and hunter-gatherers were regarded as totally devoid of culture. The semantic implications thereby kept pace with the sophistry of the justifications for colonial domination.

Kleman used 'culture' in the same sense in which 'civilisation' was used in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century universal histories and philosophies of such authors as Hegel, Ernest Renan, Gustav Le Bon, and Oswald Spengler. In the *General Cultural History of Mankind* (1843–52), Spengler traced the evolution of man from savagery, through domestication, to freedom. Enlightenment thought worked within the theory of three Ages: stone, bronze and iron. This was a neat inversion of the classical construct, as used for example by Lucretius, where the passage from gold to silver, bronze and iron, represented the declining moral state of man; iron being an era of present time for classical writers. The inversion to produce an upward trajectory of the rise of civilisation coincides with the growing perception that Europeans were outstripping the achievements of the ancients, not least of which was subduing whole areas of the globe unknown to the writers of Greece and Rome.

To the Enlightenment these ages represented the history of civilisation as a technological progress. It was some time before the aspect of moral decline was submerged and detached from the conceptual schema that Adam Ferguson,[2] a leading figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, began the anthropological practice of equating these ages with specific social and cultural features which led to a threefold ranking of living cultures: savagery, barbarism and civilisation. From the outset, however, civilisation was a unitary term: savagery and barbarism were seen as transitional phases in the progress of the emergence of a true, full-blown civilisation, the highest achievements of which were represented by European society. To achieve its eminence, European society had progressed through the stages of savagery and barbarism. Contemporaneous savage and barbarians societies were viewed as vestiges, survivals of an actual history that Europe had transcended by an intensifying process of cultivation, of technology and other refinements.

Anthropologists like Morgan and Tylor further ingrained the notion of hierarchy into the concept of culture. Each of the specific rungs of the ladder of civilisation was associated with specific cultural traits, everything from material technology to marriage customs, kinship systems, and social and political organisation. Yet to Tylor the terms 'culture' and 'civilisation' were interchangeable and were

used exclusively in the singular. All cultures and civilisations were records of what in another context was termed the manifest destiny of civilisation to progress to its apex, European or western civilisation. Other cultures had failed to cultivate the dynamic conditions for transformation and remained static and tradition-bound at their respective place on the social evolutionary scale.

When anthropology and sociology discovered the concept of multiplicity – the plurality of Other 'cultures' and 'civilisations' – they did so by becoming explicitly ahistorical disciplines, detaching themselves from the study of the evolutionary framework of their predecessors. Malinowski[3] pioneered the abandonment of the concept of history, except as a limited contextual charter of events that make the present work. He made history into an invented realm of human social and cultural construction. The corollary of this move to ahistoricity was increased emphasis on tradition and stasis. 'Cultures' came to be seen as bounded systems of perennial human reinvention whose objective was to remain unchanged. In consequence, it became impossible for anthropology to envisage or substantiate any theory of social change, except as a result of external imposition or the effect of outside influence.

While remaining a constant source of controversy, formulation and reformulation, the basic idea of culture has not changed much during the last centuries. However, over the last decade, postmodernism has changed the perception of what actually 'cultivates'. In modernity, and post-Enlightenment thought, 'culture' had a second application as an accolade accorded to those human endeavours that epitomised the pursuit of the cultivation of the intellect and mental refinement. 'Culture', in this general sense, was really 'high culture': western art, literature, theatre, dance. Every other form of human behaviour that could not be described as culture was really second class and inferior. In postmodernism, the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture has been erased: all culture is good; and almost every human activity is now seen as cultivating the mind and the body. As Gilbert Adair, a British guru of postmodern culture, notes: 'Prizes, festival, magazine profiles, newspaper reviews, biographies, bestseller lists, questionnaires, publicized feuds, gala premieres, suits for plagiarism, scandals, personal appearances, interviews, obituaries, anthologies, manifestos, readings, signing session ... [all] that is the stuff of which contemporary culture is made.'[4]

Underlying the western notion of culture, from its origins in the colonial period to its modifications in modernity and reformulation

in postmodernism, are two basic assumptions. The first assumption is that culture is essentially a product of human behaviour. 'Primitive culture' is what 'primitive people' do. 'High culture' is what the young and not so young do, throughout the world, and what present-day global icons do in their private and public lives. The second assumption is that culture is an integral part of the environment. Primitive cultures are primitive because of the primitive condition, in which they exist. To evolve and move towards modern and high culture, primitive societies have to change their environment – give up their primitive notions and values and material conditions – and become modern. And to partake in contemporary culture, one had to imbibe western pop music, popular fiction, Hollywood film, scandals, French perfume, consumer goods and all the paraphernalia that goes with postmodern lifestyles.

From the perspective of Asia, these are absurd, not to say perverse, notions. Asia is a home to two of the oldest, and one of the youngest, civilisations of the world. Chinese, Indian, and Islamic civilisations have a rich cultural heritage and distinct worldviews that are best described as traditional – that is to say, these civilisations are alive to history and to their unique and sentient traditions. For these civilisations, culture is not what people do, but it is an attitude of mind, a mental outlook, a worldview. While they evolve, grow and even get modified, Asian cultures do not, indeed cannot, cut themselves from their sustaining roots. To a very large extent, Asian cultures are a priori given: individuals move in a culture towards a collective ideal of society. Human behaviour may modify a culture but it does not define it. The definition comes from the worldview which the society accepts as a matter of faith.

The defining attributes of Asian culture are, thus, its modes of knowing, being and doing. These encompass a society's view of knowledge: what it believes to be its rightful sources. They embody a society's way of becoming what it sees as the goals of human existence. And they incorporate a society's ideals of behaviour: what it holds as essential, valuable and desirable in norms of human conduct. Asian cultures, indeed most non-western cultures, guide individual behaviour towards what is considered to be socially valuable and desirable. It is in this sense that culture forms the basis of choices, transactions and human relations of Asian societies. Thus the Asian idea of culture is diametrically opposed to the concept of culture as it has evolved in the west.

The single difference is that culture in Asia denominates a core of conceptual principles that underpin traditional ways of knowing, being, and doing. These acts of knowing, being, and doing are not static. Change is an integral part of human experience, a potential of human ingenuity and refinement. Yet change is a qualitative term; positive or negative, its quality is determined by reference to the enduring principles of one's tradition. What cultures do can change as a function of what is conventionally termed 'tradition'. Traditional culture is an adaptive resource to keep people in touch with those principles they consider essential, valuable, and desirable.

Moreover, the Asian notion of culture is non-hierarchical. In the western framework, it is unthinkable that a peasant – simply because he or she is a peasant – will appreciate Wordsworth, Shelley or Eliot. But stop a peasant in the Punjab and ask him about his favourite poet. The person will not only defend the choice of his favourite poet but will recite his poetry – often complete *diwans* (anthologies) – from memory. In Europe, only a certain class of individuals goes to the opera. In the subcontinent, *mushairas* or poetry recitals or Qawwalis or music concerts are patronised by people of all classes. Similarly, as is widely acknowledged, there is no distinction in Asian art between aesthetic and utility. Beautiful art objects and master craftsmanship are produced not just to be appreciated but also to be used; this is unlike the west where pieces of art are produced for collectors, galleries and museums. Cultural expression and creativity in Asia have not been the privilege of a select class or group of individuals. All can participate in cultural expression; all can appreciate and 'consume' the end products of creativity; and there has never been such a things as a 'high' or 'low' culture.

This distinction between cultures as it has evolved and is understood in the western framework and as it is seen within the perspective of Asian civilisations is important for understanding Asia's present, as well as in thinking about its future.

Suffocating Past, Fragmented Present

Contemporary Asia is a product of a colonial past and a fragmented and unstable present. Colonial powers systematically and consciously suppressed traditional cultures in Asia and tried, with some success, to replace them with their own cultural traits and patterns. For example, they replaced a number of images that Asian societies had of their own cultures, and therefore of themselves and of their

own identities, with one dominant image: the image of western culture as a standard for civilisation. The most pernicious aspect of colonialism is that it convinced the colonised societies that the only way to dignity and identity was to be like the west. This transformed the self-perception and self-image of Asian societies.

In traditional societies of Asia, cultural images condition the operative reality of individuals. Individuals move in a sea of culture, which defines the norms and boundaries of behaviour. The imposition of the western framework of culture on Asian societies played havoc with the defining parameters of the identities of such communities as the Muslim, the Hindu and the Chinese. Individuals and communities clinging to tradition were like 'fish out of water' in the dominant and imposed culture of colonial powers. Those who internalised the dominant image came to regard their traditional selves, their past, their societies, their worldviews as inferior and, thus, developed a schizophrenic perception of reality: they sought to mould a largely traditional environment (both self and social) into the diametrically opposite framework of western culture.

The departing colonial powers left two not-so-departing legacies. The first of these was a class of the ruling elite which had totally internalised the image of the west as the yardstick for cultural behaviour. Thus, after independence in the late forties and early fifties, most Asian countries followed a westernised pattern of cultural and political 'progress' and 'development'. The classical definition of development conceived a total transformation of Third World societies, including their culture and belief systems. Development was synonymous with modernisation and was defined as 'the process by which a society comes to be characterized by a belief in the rational and scientific control of men's physical and social environment and the application of technology to that end'.[5] This process of transformation further entrenched and institutionalised the denigration and marginalisation of traditional culture and worldview and the rupture between the political and cultural leadership and the populace in Asian countries. The last 50 years have witnessed a constant tension between the elitist leadership with its occidental worldview and images, and the common citizens with their generally traditional outlook and images. The idea of western culture as the zenith of civilisation, and its associated hierarchy which places local cultures squarely at the bottom, has become such an integral part of the self of Asian elites that nothing can knock it from its pedestal. Indeed, its removal would destroy the self-image

of Asian elites and all that they stand for. Preservation of this image is, thus, a matter of life and death, both metaphorically and literally. This is why none of the rethinking in development studies has had any impact on the development policies of Asian countries. No matter how development is redefined, no matter how much it emphasises respect for, and 'preservation' of traditional cultures, no matter how much it is hedged with notions of 'sustainability' and concerns for local ways of knowing, being and doing, the westernised patterns and strategies continue unabated. The physical environment of Asia continues to be transformed to suit the conditions of western cultural behaviour; the mental outlook is constantly promoted, elevated and privileged.[6]

The second colonial inheritance was the eighteenth-century European concept of the nation-state. The imperialists colonised a diverse array of Asian empires, kingdoms and communities; they left behind uniformly unstable nation-states, artificially created with fabricated boundaries enclosing clusters of discrete communities and ethnic cultures. In many cases, ethnic and religious communities were divided into a number of different states: the Kurds found themselves spread between Iran, Iraq and Turkey; the Muslims of colonial India scattered between India and West and East Pakistan; the Malaysians confronted with large populations of Chinese imported by the imperial powers as plantation labourers, and so on. This ripping apart of religious and ethnic communities was to ensure permanent instability in the region. But the nation-state is not simply a geographical terrain – it is also a mental landscape. The physical manifestation of the nation-state in Asia has also produced mental boundaries amongst the cultures and ethnic communities of the region. So Asia is not just off balance physically with various unstable nation-states laying claims to each other's territories, it is also mentally unbalanced with each ethnic group cerebrally locked into seeking fulfilment through a 'national identity'. Thus throughout Asia, ethnic minorities are engaged in constant battles to create their own sovereign nation-states. And the existing states themselves spend a sizeable proportion of their resources in suppressing indigenous breakaway and independence movements. The more a fabricated, imaginary national identity is imposed by the westernised elites, the more alienated the ethnic minorities become; the more they desire cultural autonomy, the more they get suppressed.

Just as imperial powers rewarded the westernised elites during the colonial times by giving them positions in the civil service, access

to westernised education and other benefits that enhanced their power and prestige in society, so they granted certain concessions and favourable economic terms to selected nation-states which showed potential to become Asian extensions of western culture. Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore have joined the status of the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) not because they have some inherently superior work ethic, but because they have been consciously and systematically nursed and nurtured as islands of westernised prosperity in a sea of traditional poverty. They provide shining examples of how adoption of western culture leads to industrialisation and economic prosperity and how traditional worldviews, habits, customs and social structures obstruct the achievement of high levels of economic growth. The NICs have been constructed, and are there, as a demonstration of the innate inferiority of the traditional, non-western outlooks.

Colonialism and the last 40-odd years of postcolonial 'development' have thus instilled a deep inferiority complex in the vast majority of Asian people. All that is local, indigenous, and low-impact is considered inferior; and all that is imported, conspicuous, and consumer-oriented is believed to be superior. Asian societies have become perfect markets for western cultural products and consumer goods! Mentally, they have been placed in a prison without walls – a prison that has led to the incarceration of the very soul of the Asian people.

It is natural, then, for certain segments of Asian society to try to break out of this cultural prison. Islamic and Hindu fundamentalism, to a very large extent, is a reaction – albeit an extreme reaction – against the imposition of western patterns of cultural thought and behaviour. The emergence of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran, for example, was a direct consequence of the rampant, and quite insane, westernised development policies, and the attendant suppression and denigration of Islamic thought and customs implemented by the shah.[7] Most fundamentalists – certainly those who are not manipulating the religious sentiments of devout people for their own political ends – perceive their struggle in terms of preserving their religious and traditional identities, in terms of recovering their self-respect and the dignity of their lifestyles.

Asia is now beset with a totally unstable and fragmented present. The fragmention is evident at all levels: individual, communal, national and regional. The individual is split between his or her traditional identity and a 'modernised' environment that labels that

identity as intrinsically inferior. The communities have no avenues for the creative expressions of cultural authenticity and are locked in a life-and-death struggle between religious fundamentalism on the one hand and unchecked globalisation on the other. Nations are being torn apart by the conflict between ruling elites, with their own cultural visions, and the vast majority of citizens, who wish to proceed in a diametrically opposite direction. And the region itself is divided between small, thoroughly westernised economic havens and extensive, densely populated countries where people with traditional outlooks have been submerged in an ocean of poverty. On the whole, cultural alienation, social dislocation, religious and secular fundamentalism, rampant westernisation, independence movements, banal violence and pockets of conspicuous affluence are the norm. In thinking about the future of Asian cultures, we need to keep this fragmented present, as well as the suffocating colonial past, firmly in view.

Three Scenarios

Asia faces three possible cultural futures in the next 20 years. The first of these we can call the more-of-the-same scenario. Here, a delicate balance is reached within the overall pattern of fragmentation and imbalance. The demands for cultural autonomy from various ethnic minorities continue but so does the suppression of cultural groups by nation-states, without satisfactory resolutions, in endlessly perpetual cycles. Internal strife and violence will drain the resources of many countries, drawing them away from such important areas as education, rural development and poverty eradication. Thus illiteracy, urbanisation, unemployment, social strife, ethnic violence, terrorism, poverty in absolute terms and the gap between the conspicuously rich and the abjectly poor – as described in numerous ESCAP reports[8] – will increase across the region in general, and South Asia, Central Asia and Indonesia and the Philippines in South-East Asia in particular. The NICs as well as those seeking to attain the status, will continue on their present trajectory in the near future, until they hit the inevitable protectionist measures of the United States and the European Community. Japan will own a great deal of the assets in the NICs and will become the main (economic) imperial power in Asia. Cultural fragmentation and alienation will thus become the norm in the region. Many indigenous cultures and ethnic groups, such as the tribal cultures of Thailand and the forest

people of Borneo, could be displaced and suffer irreparable damage.[9] Constant strife between ethnic groups pursuing cultural authenticity and expression and ruling and urban westernised elites seeking to suppress them in the name of progress and national identity will make all cultural exchanges banal and meaningless. All this will lead to pile-up on the highway of future history.

The second future can be termed the *fossilisation of alternatives* scenario.[10] This involves the ruling elite, with the power and the military might of the states behind them, winning the day for western secularism and market economies. The fundamentalists and movements for cultural and territorial autonomy are not just forcefully suppressed but their political and economic options are shown to be demonstrably fossilised in history and tradition and thus quite irrelevant to the modern world. To some extent, the fundamentalists are already doing this: they look back to a romanticised past and project an arcane and obscurantist framework of thought. Their political programmes – where these actually exist – are unreal, and experience with managing a modern state is either nonexistent or has been a dismal failure (for example, the Jamaat-e-Islami participation in the General Zia government of Pakistan or the management of Kalantan state in Malaysia by PAS, the Malaysian Islamic opposition). It can also be shown that many independent movements in Asia are seeking to establish states which would not be economically viable. Thus an independent Khalistan (the name for an independent Sikh state) or an independent Sind, will suffer from what is known in the development literature as 'small-country problems': such states would not possess enough resources to survive economically and would become client states of their big neighbours.

The 'fossilisation of the alternatives' would actually mean a large-scale – but not total, since there will always be cultures which will resist westernisation – triumph of the monolithic and hierarchical culture of western civilisation, with all its implications for globalisation and standardisation. Asia would become a large bazaar where all sorts of consumable local worldviews and artefacts will vie for attention with western consumer goods, fashionable lifestyles, and cultural artefacts. Authentic Asian traditions would cave in and exist only as exotic consumables. Postmodernism would rule.

One future expression of the 'fossilisation of alternatives' could be the 'Singaporisation' of much of Asia. By 'Singaporisation' is meant attempts at duplication of the success of the city-state model of Singapore: sanitised, semi-authoritarian, open markets with an

ethnic gloss over a thoroughly solid westernised core. Thailand could become like Singapore reflecting its economic success as well as its total assimilation and absorption in western culture; Taipei and Seoul, to a very large extent, already look like Singapore. Other South-East Asian countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, would culturally emulate Singapore without actually acquiring its economic benefits. Elsewhere, special economic zones and westernised enclaves developed to attract foreign investment would become westernised city-states within traditional nation-states.

In this scenario, all aspects of culture would become commodified. Genuine traditional culture would exist only as artefacts in museums. Tradition would become a voyeuristic commodity to be packaged and paraded in front of tourists. Just as the sensuality of some cultures has been packaged as modern sex industry, aspects of traditional lifestyles, customs, art forms and performing arts would be packaged as commodities for increasing number of tourists and for export abroad. Living, breathing, and authentic expressions of non-western cultures and lifestyles would be buried under the sheer weight, power of projection, and the insatiable ability to penetrate every aspect of human thought and behaviour, of western cultures. To some extent this is already happening.

A possible variation in this scenario is the 'Malaysian Model'. Countries on the verge of industrialisation, like Thailand and Indonesia, and countries with a reasonably developed scientific and technological infrastructure, like India and Pakistan, could choose to follow the example of Malaysia rather than Singapore. Here, different – ethnic, religious and class-based – cultures share power within an agreed authoritarian framework. A particular kind of democracy, that ensures that certain ethnic groups and political elites always retain power, is adopted and communal strife is suppressed in favour of economic benefits. This enables different cultural groups to guard and enhance what they think are the important aspects of their culture. A modicum of political power at the disposal of minorities ensures some measure of success in promoting cultural authenticity and traditional lifestyles within an overall pattern of westernisation – the top end of postmodernism.

The third option for cultural futures in Asia is the 'balkanisation' scenario. Here, the Asian states collapse under the weight of virulent nationalism, the forces of fundamentalism and demands for independence from ethnic minorities. China, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia all have ethnic minorities

actively seeking to break up the state. Some of these countries have a long history of minority groups engaged in a bloody struggle for liberation and self-rule. Although success has eluded liberation movements so far, it is always possible that they may succeed in the near future.

The first domino to fall would probably be China – perhaps the most transparently artificial nation-state of our time – simply because ideologically it is almost totally exhausted. Many of the 55 'nations' which have been forcibly confined to the territorial state called China are clamouring for old-fashioned liberation. For example, the 60 million Muslims in China are drawing inspiration from the newly liberated Central Asian Muslim republics hoping to follow in their footsteps. In the event of the collapse of the People's Republic another half-dozen Muslim republics in the region may be produced. Initially, China would then be divided into two: southern China, including Hong Kong, where capitalism and market economy will rule; and northern China, where socialism will maintain a presence. This is already an undeclared official policy. However, immediately after the death of the old-guard communists, the new generation of Chinese decision makers would move ahead with democratisation and a national free-market economy. Henceforth, China would follow much the same path as the old Soviet Union, with much the same results.

The next probable candidate for balkanisation is India, which could, in the coming decades, be further partitioned. Should that happen, it would have a direct impact on Pakistan, which would also break down into smaller states. The breakdown of South Asia would indirectly inspire and promote the balkanisation of other states in the region.

This is a bloody and fighting scenario. It could lead to a total destabilisation of the region, with all its attendant consequences. While balkanisation would lead to a more authentic cultural expression and lifestyle for certain minorities – for example, the Muslims in China – for others, self-rule in a small, unstable nation-state, could mean suppression of cultural expression by abject economic dependency. A hungry and homeless population does not care much for cultural expression. The experience of Bangladesh provides us with a good example. After 'East Pakistan' broke away from 'West Pakistan', and became Bangladesh, the standard and quality of life dropped sharply in the new country: absolute poverty, homelessness and unemployment increased dramatically. Today,

Bangladesh is so economically crippled that it has almost been written off as a future viable economy. In addition, the Bihari community, born and bred in East Pakistan but Urdu speaking, found itself in the wrong home. They were not only totally marginalised within Bangladesh but were also seen as the enemies of the new country. Their plight was only resolved when they threatened mass suicide. It is quite insane to talk of cultural expression and promotion of traditional lifestyles under such circumstances. It is highly likely that self-rule for many ethnic minorities in Asia would produce similar experiences.

The three scenarios for cultural futures in Asia are not totally independent of each other. It is probable that balkanisation may proceed with westernisation, thus further suppressing the emergence of any viable cultural and political alternatives. In social and cultural spheres, the industrial world's control over Asian people could increase exponentially. Already, Asian states have consciously or unconsciously imported models of education, communication, cognitive structures, healthcare systems, population planning, co-operatives, housing and transportation systems, even models for the expression of dissent. These models are not just profoundly unsuitable and inappropriate for solving the basic needs problems of the majority of people in Asia, but they also promote self-fulfilment and self-realisation of the three futures scenarios for Asian cultures. The existing models of thought and action could thus propel Asia towards three, highly unsustainable and contentious, cultural futures.

None of the above scenarios is desirable. More desirable cultural futures for Asia will not come about automatically. Unlike the 'more of the same', 'the fossilisation of the alternatives' and 'balkanisation' scenarios, which have been programmed in both the past and the present of Asia, desirable futures will have to be delineated consciously, planned much more acutely and worked for systematically. Desirable futures are thus a totally different enterprise.

Desirable Futures

The articulation of desirable cultural futures begins with an awareness of what is likely to happen if the present trends continue; only then can one develop strategies of resistance and viable alternatives. The underlying theme of the three possible scenarios is perpetual tension and conflict between tradition and modernity in

Asia. What is cultural in Asian societies is simultaneously traditional. Cultural anxiety, cultural expression, cultural conflict, cultural domination – everything cultural is intrinsically connected with the image and perception of tradition in Asian societies. Working towards desirable futures thus requires tackling tradition; and that means evolving strategies for promoting cultural authenticity and cultural autonomy.

Within the historic experience of western civilisation, tradition has constantly been employed to validate, justify and provide a gloss for profound novelty and substantive change. But when the west looked at non-western societies, tradition acquired the implication of invariant unchanging models of thought and action, the very antithesis of the possibility of autonomous change. It is this Euro-centric and wholly unworkable notion of what constitutes tradition that has to be rethought globally. Not least of the areas where this rethinking is an urgent priority is the social sciences where the rejection of nineteenth-century social evolutionism and the impact of Darwinian evolutionary thought has resulted in a theoretical mess of the most fundamental kind, making any discourse on tradition a cul-de-sac of impenetrable imponderables.

In the Asian context, the rethinking of the concept of tradition is a process of recovery of its indigenous meaning and the develop-ment of its inherent potential to author stable autochthonous change. We need to explore how the corpus of traditional worldviews gets ossified and becomes fossilised; and examine the mechanism by which tradition was confined and removed from authority over increasing areas of social, political and economic life and made into a preserve of private, domestic and exotic peasant 'cultural' expression. The corollary of this inquiry is the recovery of an understanding of the flexibility, adaptability and wide parameters of what tradition actually meant and was, and can again be, capable of achieving. Only under the tutelage of a recovery of indigenous history can tradition turn from being a backward-looking imposition of the formal attributes of a romanticised golden age to being an appreciation of principles of the past that are future-oriented.

Cultural authenticity simply means that traditional physical, intel-lectual and spiritual environments and values should be respected and accorded their proper place in society. How could this be done? First, by seeing traditional systems as a source of strength and a reservoir for the solutions of people's problems. Second, by empha-sising indigenous development stemming from traditions and

encouraging norms of language, beliefs, arts and crafts of a people – the very factors which provide meaning, identity and richness to the lives of Asian people. The corollary of all this is a sensible check on the onslaught of western patterns of consumption and those consumer goods that represent the omnipotence of technology – the very factors which induce dependency, thwart self-reliance, and expose Asian societies to physical and mental domination. As A. K. N. Reddy has so elegantly pointed out,[11] indigenous technology is frequently more sophisticated intellectually and just as technological as the dominant consumer variant. The distinction is that indigenous, appropriate technology submits itself to the demands of the indigenous cultures and humane social and economic criteria. What is important is not the abandonment of technological advance but the refashioning of what criteria determine whether an advance has been made, and the devising of wholly new criteria to generate new forms of production processes and products locally, to satisfy local needs. The very expression of cultural authenticity, leading to a degree of self-reliance, self-respect and pride, transforms a culture into a force of resistance. Desirable futures require the delineation and articulation of strategies for cultural authenticity, and hence the transformation of traditions into cultures of resistance.

But we must not be romantic about traditions and traditional cultures. They do not, and cannot, provide us with answers to every problem that the modern world throws at Asian societies. There is also a great deal in Asian cultures that is not at all desirable. 'Cultures' have always been in the process of internal debate. Many of the features deemed negative can be shown to be recent acquisitions induced as traditional resistance, a function of the imposed stifling and marginalisation of traditional debate under the impact of colonial tutelage and control and later 'development' and westernisation. Any debate, of course, assumes the existence of divergent opinion and behaviour. Not all the negative aspects of tradition are products of deformation induced by dislocation and rupture: many are genuine local products. What has been unnatural is the acquisition of a conception of tradition that insists that everything that is termed tradition is beyond question, debate, and change. There has always been indigenous obscurantism, and other characteristics that generate negative traits, by whatever standards this is judged. Moreover, Asian cultures suffer from a great deal of ossification and obscurantism. However, there is nothing in Asian cultures per se that circumvents change, growth and evolution. It is change forced by

external and dominating influences that produces disjunction and rupture that give cause for concern and are often resisted. The issue is to change within meaningful boundaries without destroying the very roots that give Asian cultures their defining characteristics. The desirable futures option makes it necessary to work towards releasing internal forces of dynamism and change that are intrinsic to all cultures. For example, within Islam the dynamic principle of *ijtihad* – sustained and reasoned struggle for innovation and adjusting to change – has been neglected and forgotten for centuries. A strategy for desirable futures for Islamic cultures would articulate methods for the rediscovery of this principle – a rediscovery which would lead to the reformulation of Islamic tradition into contemporary configurations. Other cultures have similar principles hidden from view: the challenge is to bring them to the fore and use them to rediscover cultural heritage in forms that empower and resist the onslaught of virulent modernity and postmodernism – in other words, desirable futures can only be conceived of and planned for where plural processes of autonomous cultural adaptation are the accepted norm.

Just as we can document the transition in western discourse in the usage of the terms culture and civilisation from the singular to the plural forms, so we need to effect a change in the usage and meaningful content of the term *modernity*. At present, the term means, and implies, only one thing: the slavish (one ought to say traditional) replication of the process of social, cultural, political and economic transformation that occurred in Europe and in the western civilisation.

In shaping their unique modernities, Asian cultures need to rediscover and apply their modes of knowing and doing to contemporary problems and situations. Exciting work in this regard has already begun and needs to be enhanced and promoted. For example, the work on rediscovering Indian logic, philosophy and mathematics, described by Goonatilake[12] and Siriniva[13] is designed to 'defossilise' and breath life into genuine alternatives. Similarly, recent development in rediscovering a contemporary Islamic science, the 'Islamisation of knowledge' debate discussed by Davies,[14] the extensive research and practical work done on Islamic economics[15] and the increasing awareness of shaping authentic Islamic futures,[16] are producing both theoretical and practical alternatives to western ways of thinking and acting. It is developments such as these which will transform Asian cultures into cultures that can resist the

dominant cultures of the west, and which will demonstrate the existence of pragmatic alternatives to them.

Desirable futures also demand strategies for cultural autonomy. Cultural autonomy does not mean isolating a culture from the outside world, or shunning the benefits of modern society. It means simply the ability and the power to make one's own choices based on one's own culture and tradition. Contrary to popular belief, cultural autonomy does not compromise 'national sovereignty', it is not an invariant threat to unstable nation-states. There are two dimensions of cultural autonomy. The external dimension requires Asian countries to seek their economic and political development, with the accent on local traditions and cultures. The internal dimension requires nation-states to provide space and freedom for ethnic minorities within their boundaries to realise their full cultural potential, make their own choices and articulate their own cultural alternatives. Cultural autonomy has to be seen as a dialectical concept. It embraces both the macro-level of cultural, religious or ethnic groups and the micro-level of human mind. It begins with the simple idea that cultures and individuals within cultures have a right to self-expression and leads to the blooming of pluralism and multiculturalism. It is mere historic accident that the European definition of nationalism, and hence the nation-state, should emphasise one unique and dominating cultural identity. In part, this is derived from the cultural homogeneity of European community. Its other prop was the historic legacy of a system of thought that defined the only rightful citizen as the orthodox, that is one who subscribed to the orthodox beliefs of the Church, which under-pinned the whole concept of governance. When religious orthodoxy broke down in Reformation Europe, so new political entities were formed. Where this did not happen, people changed their religious affiliation to match that of the sovereign. The quest for liberty of conscience is the origin of both the movement for political enfran-chisement and citizens' rights and the secularisation of thought and society in Europe. Even then it was a quest that did not imply an accepted place for multiculturalism and heterogeneity, since the religious dissenting citizens shared the same cultural ancestry and, in many respects, the same culture as the rest of the nation-state. Asian experiences have been quite different. Genuine heterogeneity of culture, within communities and systems of governance, has been an integral part of Asian history and experience. Recovery of tradition should focus on the rediscovery of the means of stable

plurality within communities and states. Asia is virtually the only place where this desperately needed human resource can be championed. Ironically, given contemporary events, it is the only logical place to search for actual, working, historic models of pluralism and multiculturalism that are not based on secularism. It should also lead to the preservation of what is good and life enhancing in traditional thought; legal, economic and political arrangements for the equal participation of all cultures in wealth and social opportunity; the elimination of distrust between cultural groups; the encouragement of meaningful communication between peoples and cultures; and the elimination of extremist positions and actions. Thus, strategies for cultural autonomy are the sine qua non for shaping desirable futures.

There is nothing inevitable about the future of cultures in Asia. If awareness of our violated past and fractured present is translated into visions, alternatives, methodologies and strategies for desirable futures, Asia will be true to its rich and varied heritage of cultures and traditions. Asian cultures will not only survive with their sanity intact, but will flower and enrich the entire globe. Programmed futures, the extension and continuation of current trends, will leave Asia, and the world, a much diminished place.

Notes

1. E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Cultures: Research into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Customs*, John Murray, London, 1871.
2. Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1966 (original 1767).
3. Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, Chapel Hill Press, Chapel Hill, 1944.
4. Gilbert Adair, *The Post-Modernist Always Rings Twice*, Fourth Estate, London, 1992, p. 5.
5. J. A. Kautsky, *The Political Consequences of Modernization*, Wiley, New York, 1972.
6. Tariq Benuri, 'Development and the Politics of Knowledge: A Critical Interpretation of the Social Role of Modernization', in F. A. Marglin and S. Marglin (eds) *Dominating Knowledge: Development, Culture, Resistance*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990.
7. Robert Graham, *Iran: The Illusion of Power*, Croom Helm, London, 1978.
8. ESCAP *Social Development Strategy for the ESCAP Region Towards the Year 2000 and Beyond*, United Nations, Bangkok, 1992.
9. Gehan Wiyeyewardene (ed.), *Ethnic Groups Across National Boundaries in Mainland Southeast Asia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1992.

10. Yogesh Atal, 'Anticipating the Futures: Asia-Pacific Region', *Futures Research Quarterly*, Winter 1988, pp. 15–27.

11. A. K. N. Reddy, 'Appropriate Technology: A Reassessment', in Z. Sardar (ed.) *The Revenge of Athena: Science, Exploitation and the Third World*, Mansell, London, 1988.

12. Susantha Goonatilake, 'The Voyages of Discovery and the Loss and Rediscovery of "Others" Knowledge', *Impact of Science on Society*, 167, pp. 241–64, 1992.

13. M. D. Siriniva, 'Logical and Methodological Foundations of Indian Science', in Z. Sardar (ed.) *The Revenge of Athena*.

14. Merryl Wyn Davies, *Knowing One Another: Shaping an Islamic Anthropology*, Mansell, London, 1988.

15. On Islamic economics see Muhammad Akram Khan, *Islamic Economics: Annotated Sources in English and Urdu*, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1983.

16. Ziauddin Sardar, *The Future of Muslim Civilisation*, Croom Helm, London, 1979 (second edition: Mansell, London 1986), and Ziauddin Sardar, *Islamic Futures: The Shapes of Ideas to Come*, Mansell, London, 1985.

17   Other Futures: Non-Western Cultures in Futures Studies

In Mike Nichols's surprisingly literate film *Wolf*, a book editor, played by Jack Nicholson, is bitten by a wolf and turns into a werewolf with both predictable and unpredictable results. In western literature the werewolf and other ethereal villains of numerous horror films like *Dracula* have been used as a metaphor for the darker side of humans, the natural animal within, which once unleashed is capable of untold savagery and demonic destruction. And sure enough, Nicholson's werewolf, unable to control his lust for human flesh, sets off on an all too predictable murderous spree. At the beginning of the film, the werewolf-to-be finds himself at an unpalatable party where a grand old dame, quoting the *New Yorker* magazine, announces that civilisation is crumbling. 'Rainforests are being destroyed so rapidly, new viruses are going to colonise the world and destroy vast sections of the population ...,' she declares. 'You could make the case,' retorts Nicholson, 'that the world has already ended. Art is dead. We are exhausted. Instead of art we have pop culture, day time TV, gay senior citizens, women who have been raped by their dentists confiding in Oprah, exploration in depth of why women cut off their husbands penises ...'

This short exchange, which initially appears to be quite incidental to the main narrative, embodies a number of key assumptions and contradictions about our planet and its future. The anonymous old woman, representing an average western individual, equates the 'world' with 'civilisation'; in other words, the 'world' is seen as a single, universal civilisation: the civilisation of the west. Yet the events that will destroy 'civilisation' are *ipso facto* placed outside the west: deforestation in the Third World, plagues of killer viruses coming, like AIDS and the newly discovered and even more deadly monkey virus *Ebola zaire* (named after the country where it was first discovered), from Africa and other underdeveloped regions of the globe. The werewolf's response equates the death of the world with the death of western art and blames the demise on the emergence, and fire-like expansion, of western junk culture. Ironically, it is this same trash culture, which has taken a universal form, that threatens

to suffocate all non-western cultures. Thus the future is presented both as a western challenge and a western opportunity; the non-western input comes only in a negative form: as a threat to 'civilisation'.

Such plainly chauvinistic assumptions are not simply the fare of popular western culture. A great deal of what goes under the rubric of academic or intellectual study and exploration derives its legitimacy from exactly the same assumptions. It is almost a convention in western thought and writing to see non-western cultures as the Other, the darker, inferior side of western civilisation: the demonic werewolves whose society and culture, due to their uncontrollable emotions and irrationality, wicked and murderous nature, unhealthy lifestyles and mystical bent, are less then human. The west is the yardstick against which all Other cultures are measured and to which all Other cultures aspire. Consider, as examples, just two debates that were *causes célèbres* at the close of the twentieth century: those around Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History*[1] and William Henry III's *In Defense of Elitism*.[2] Both books, and the theses they represent, have aroused controversy and ripples of excitement right across the globe; and both have a serious bearing on how we – as collective humanity – see the future.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, Fukuyama sees 'an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism'. It is not just communism that has collapsed; all non-western histories and social, economic and political organisations have been vanquished. The future spells western liberal democracy and free-market economies – there is nothing else. Indeed, 'the end of the Cold War' means nothing less than 'the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalisation of western liberal democracy as the final form of human government'.[3] Thus all histories, all cultures, have been evolving towards a single goal: westernisation. The histories of the great civilisations of India, China, Islam and numerous other cultures were simply primitive stages in the evolution of western civilisation. For the past 500 years, since the fateful day when Columbus sailed from Spain to discover, enslave, eradicate and colonise the non-west, all societies and all cultures have been working to prove the innate superiority of the white man and his civilisation and secure its 'universalisation'. Since 'history' – that is the history of non-western cultures which Fukuyama has subsumed under the title of the Universal History of the White Man – incorporates the worldviews, value systems and

cultures, what we could call the total mode of being, of non-western societies, the termination of history also terminates the very being, the very identities, of all non-western societies. The future *is* the west. There can be no other future in Fukuyama's worldview.

   In contrast to Fukuyama's absurd 'end of history' thesis – a disingenuous adaptation of Hegel – William Henry III unashamedly posits western culture per se to be superior to all other cultures. *In Defense of Elitism* defines a superior culture in terms of certain basic criteria which include:[4]

1. 'A superior culture preserves the liberty of its citizens ... whatever moral or spiritual or other virtues a conquered culture may offer, they cannot redeem the loss of freedom.' In other words, superiority of a culture is defined by its power. A superior culture is one that is armed to the teeth, ready to defend any perceived threat to its 'freedom'. Since only the west possesses that kind of might, all other cultures, by definition, are inferior.
2. 'A superior culture provides a comfortable life, relatively free from want.' Thus all those cultures, living at a subsistence level, for whatever historic reasons, are inferior.
3. 'A superior culture promotes modern science (and) western medicine.' Thus the sciences and medical systems of all other cultures are, by sheer logic, inferior and worthy only of being relegated to the proverbial dustbin of history.
4. 'A superior culture expands, by trade or cultural imperialism or conquest or all of the above.' So imperialism and conquest are signs of superiority (as opposed to moral and spiritual virtues which are signs of inferiority) and conquered, subjugated, exploited and looted cultures are, by very design, mediocre.
5. 'A superior culture organizes itself hierarchically, tends towards central authority, and overcomes tribal and regional divisions, all without suppressing the individual opportunity for self-expression and advancement.' Thus hierarchy, centralisation and individualism are good and superior notions; non-hierarchical societies, communal living and social consciousness are inferior, and societies that values these traits deserved to be subjugated by superior, imperialistic cultures.

Thus in this picture, Columbus did a favour to the American Indians by conquering, murdering and enslaving them, for with his 'civilizing voyages' he enabled them to escape 'indigenous poverty

and terror through such European-promoted notions as charity, economic opportunity, and individual freedom and rights – not to mention modern medicine'[5] (like everything else, charity, economic opportunity and medicine are western inventions; they did not exist before west arrived on the globe!); stereotyping and demonising of Other cultures and blacks is 'founded on empirically accurate under-standing about contemporary black behavior compared to contemporary white behavior';[6] and American culture is 'superior culture ... precisely because of its individualism'.[7]

While most of the arguments in *In Defense of Elitism* are plainly jingoist and defy rationality, despite the author's alleged affinity for western rationalism, the objective of its thesis is to further enhance the alleged superiority of western, white, imperialistic culture in the United States, and by logical extension throughout the world. Now: this is not a view from the racist right. William Henry III is a self-confessed campaigner for minority rights and a liberal democrat! The western notions of the demonic, werewolf Other, especially now that non-western cultures have become an integral part of American and European society, have been deeply internalised and have become part of the everyday western conventions. The representations of the Other now cross all political barriers and ideological divides.

The White Man Endeth

Both the 'end of history' and the 'western elitism' theses, as well as a number of other similar exercises over the last decade, and the sheer excitement they generate in the affluent North, reveal a deep anxiety and fear of multicultural and multicivilisational futures. They are basically attempts to foreclose the future to all but western possibilities and alternatives. However, all chauvinist assertions and arguments for cultural superiority recede into insignificance when the demographic future of the world is considered. The west has always harboured an intrinsic fear of being swamped by non-whites. And explorations of the future tend to bring this apprehension to the fore. Paul Kennedy's *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*[8] illus-trates the point.

Kennedy starts by telling us that in 1825, when Malthus was making the final amendments to his original *Essay on Population,* only one billion people lived on the planet. Then industrialisation and modern medicine allowed the population to increase at an increasingly faster rate so that 'in the following hundred years the

world's population doubled to 2 billion, and in the following half century (from 1925 to 1976) it doubled again, to 4 billion. By 1990, the figure had advanced to 5.3 billion.'[9] If this trend continues, there will be between 8.5 and 9.4 billion people on the globe 25 years from now. And by the second half of the twenty-first century, the earth could be sustaining anywhere between 10 and 14.5 billion inhabitants. So the demographic explosion foretold by Malthus 200 years ago is happening now in the Third World where global population is increasing by a billion every ten years. But the agricultural and industrial revolutions that saved Europe from the Malthus trap by feeding and paying the growing population are now over, while the transnational free-market economy is increasing the gap between rich and poor regions. The market 'losers', the vast majority of the poor in the Third World, will thus migrate to the lands of the 'winners': North America and western Europe will face a massive onslaught from migrants from the developing countries. Catastrophe in the twenty-first century appears inevitable unless the Third World population explosion can be stopped. Kennedy's solution 'to ensure a decrease in fertility rates, and thus in population growth, is to introduce cheap and reliable forms of birth control'.[10] But surely, a cynic could ask, there must be other ways. Kennedy dismisses the alternatives in a footnote: 'In theory, of course, there are other ways, such as abstinence from intercourse and marrying later. How that is possible for fifteen-year-old brides in male-dominated societies in Africa and India is difficult to see.'[11] However, Kennedy does permit one other option: rich countries could help the Third World by building technology-based industries and by lending their expertise in biotechnology to improve food production. However, this strategy could lead to an increase in the living standards of the people of developing countries which would not be without global consequences. An increase in the level of consumption in the South to that of the North, and the consequent expansion of world production, would create environmental problems so devastating that our current environmental *problematique* would be dwarfed into insignificance. Thus in Kennedy's Hobbesian view of the future the very existence of the non-west spells doom for western civilisation. The poor of the world are clearly not capable of doing anything themselves about their problem – they can only be helped by the west. If they are allowed to breed and remain poor they threaten the west with migration. If the west sells them more technology – in the form of contraceptives or biotechnology, or by establishing manu-

facturing bases in the Third World – and they succeed in raising their living standards, the entire globe will suffer with unimagined environmental consequences. Short of a mass suicide on part of the Third World there is no hope for western civilisation! The werewolf must be banished!

The real message of the demographic trends totally escapes Kennedy and numerous others who offer this kind of mundane and intellectually pretentious analysis. At present only one-sixth of the world's population is white – that is, lives in the North and forms the human capital of western civilisation. If the trends continue as Kennedy and others predict, then by the mid-twenty-first century westerners will constitute around 1–5 per cent of the world's population. So within the next few decades, in the words of Jim Dator, 'Goodbye whitey! It was nice to know ye!'[12] As the demographic pressures inevitably lead toward the extinction of the white man, what happens to his western civilisation? As Dator asks: 'How will it – why *should* it – survive if the peoples who created it are such a tiny fraction of the future?'[13] The reason for the present dominance of western civilisation and the globalisation of the ideas and the cultures of the west is not just its undisputed technological and economic power, its clearly superior imperialistic and subjugating culture and the centuries of colonialism and neocolonialism generated by it, its appropriation of most of the global resources both in history and the modern world, and its absorption of the histories of all Other cultures, but also – and this is a vital 'but also' – 'there were so many westerners on the globe to spread their culture around'.[14] But not for long! Even in the United States, as William Henry III tells us, 'sometime within the next fifty or so years, non-Hispanic white people will become demographically just another minority group. They will be collectively outnumbered by Hispanics of all races, blacks, Asians, Indians (in both vernacular meanings), and assorted other ethnic groups not associated with western Europe.'[15] Alas! The constellation of ideas about the future derived from the myths and fears of western civilisation and its culture, Dator notes, will be 'imperilled by these demographic changes, and new ideas and projects based on the worldviews of different cultures, may leap forward'.[16] Enter the werewolf – through the back door!

The future, or at least our images and perceptions of the future, is set to change by default. Such pronouncements as 'the end of history' and clarion calls for a return to 'western elitism' are the last

hurrah of the white man. And along with the future, futures studies too is on the verge of a transformation.

Conventional futures studies, as it as developed since the sixties, incorporates all the basic assumptions and colonising tendencies of western civilisation. Elsewhere I have analysed the inherent Euro-centricism of futures studies by showing that works such as Marvin Creton's and Thomas O'Toole's *Encounters with the Future* and Joseph F. Coates and Jennifer Jarratt's *What Futurists Believe* unashamedly project colonial thought in its most expansionist and self-glorified mode; bibliographical tools like *Future Survey* and *Future Survey Annuals* see the future only in terms of western concern and western opportunity; and journals like *The Futurist*, published by the World Future Society, project the future largely as a construction and product of western science and technology.[17] Here, I would simply like to state the four basic, unwritten and often unconsciously adhered to, assumptions that have, up to relatively recently, framed much of future studies:

1. The only worldview, and the associated metaphysics and values, worthy of attention is the worldview of western civilisation. The future is essentially a projection of the hopes and aspirations of the west – the other civilisations and cultures of the world are either irrelevant or, where they have something positive to offer, that something (which often comes in the form of a package labelled 'Eastern Wisdom') can easily be appropriated for the benefit of the western future.

2. There is only one science of nature that is objective, positivist and universal: western science. Western science steadily advances, constantly producing better and better technologies and ways of organising, and hence future generations will, apart from facing a few problems caused by second-order effects of technology, like environmental pollution, continue to be better off than are current generations – as long as the Third World doesn't rock the boat! Inherent in this tenet has been the idea that better technologies and social organisation facilitate better control over nature; more science and more technology will solve most of the problems of mankind [sic].

3. Reality, however it is defined, is constructed in the image of the white man. Just as the white man himself keeps his values, facts, spirituality, images, perceptions, goals and desires in separate compartment so has nature constructed different disciplines –

like physics, chemistry, biology, economics, agriculture, engineering, forestry – in total isolation from each other. Each discipline leads to a unique answer when used to tackle a complex problem. Once the problems of the future have been identified and goals and targets have been clarified, they can be delegated to experts in respective disciplines to solve, and to legislative bodies to enact.

4. The vast majority of the people in the world have nothing really to do with the future. The concerns, hopes and aspirations of people of the Third World are of no real consequence to the future. Anyway, cultural differences will fade away as people discover the superiority of rational western culture. The only thing of concern as far as the developing countries are concerned is their reproductive rates and the consequences of these for the west.

During the last decade, these assumptions have been exposed and increasingly challenged by a new breed of futurists. The emergence of Third World futurists like Ashis Nandy, Sohail Inayatullah, Susantha Goonatilake, Rajni Kothari, Antonio Alonso Concheiro and Tae-Chang Kim has brought the concerns of non-western cultures to the heart of futures studies. New texts, like Eleonora Barbieri Masini's *Why Futures Studies?*[18] have tried to assimilate the works of non-western futurists into the mainstream of futures studies. While these trends will continue, it is now necessary to provide a multicultural basis for futures studies by design. As Jim Dator point out, 'it is absolutely essential that all people who have a stake in the future be involved in determining it ... that means that not only the elite but all marginalised persons should participate fairly, fully and frequently'.[19]

Other Ways of Being, Knowing and Doing

As we move towards providing a multicultural base for future-relevant knowledge, bring the periphery to the centre as it were, what aspects of non-western cultures must we take into account? How can we open futures studies up to non-western possibilities and perceptions, images and alternatives and greatly enrich its knowledge base in the process? For futures studies to be truly concerned with all our futures, and not just the future of western culture, it must incorporate non-western ways of being, knowing and doing in its fundamental framework and methodologies.

The power that western civilisation exercises over Other cultures derives not from its military or technological might, nor even from its economic strength or political muscle and stability. The real might of the west resides in its power to define. The west defines everything – and the rest of the world is expected to accept and embrace these definitions. The west defines what is science, rationality, religion, civilisation, freedom, democracy, human rights … Other cultures must accept these definitions and the enslavement and cultural subservience that inevitably follows; they can only reject these definitions at the expense of being demonised, branded as werewolves and labelled as deviants, barbaric, uncivilised. By accepting western definitions of social, cultural and civilisational terms, we severely limit the ways we can imagine the future. This is why a great deal of futures studies is so sterile, so banal: it derives its images of the future from an overused, monolithic stock; far from being a liberating, motivating enterprise, futures studies has become a colonising, subjugating discipline; and this is why, on the whole, it is meaningless for the vast majority of people of the Third World who are supposed, on the basis of stock western images, to take actions to improve their futures. Thus the first move towards multiculturalism in futures studies is not just to be open to Other definitions of civilisational terms, but to actively incorporate them in our work and study. This involves accepting the glaring fact that western civilisation and its cherished notions are not universal but only a manifestation of a particular culture which, at present, has taken on a global, imperialistic form. There are Other ways of being which are valid and rationally satisfying for a vast majority of humanity.

Definitions of what it means to be human and civilised will be a contested arena in the future. Asian civilisations (China, India, Islam), for example, have their own definitions of what is freedom, participatory governance, human rights and so on, that differ sharply from western notions. Western civilisation has made atomism its key metaphysical premise and its understanding of the social world is based on the notion of the freedom of the individual. Western political philosophy, especially that which is rooted in the thought of John Locke, stresses the individual and considers society to be sum of its individuals. Hence democracy and individualism go hand in hand. Similarly, western economic thought emphasises individual producers and consumers, with supply and demand being the sum of their respective activities. As Richard Norgaard points out:

Tolerance and freedom to choose are very much a part of modern liberal rhetoric. But it has been a tolerance for individual deviation and for the freedom of individuals to choose. Individuals banding together in communities and choosing with a cultural system of understanding, values, and social pressures is portrayed as oppressive. Even one's preferences are portrayed, at least in economic theory, as being independent of one's cultural or social association. In the name of liberalism, modern peoples have pressured each other, as well as modernizing peoples, to choose independently of whatever cultural heritage they may have. In the face of the material and other choices offered by modernity, the cultures of all but the strongest or most isolated peoples have broken down. Through its emphasis on individualism, modernity is culturally disrespectful, even while respecting individual differences. Ultimately, however, people are only different because of the values and ways of knowing they share as members of different cultures. Western respect for the individual, in short, breaks down the cultures which make individuals different. And the resulting identity crises of individuals is typically assuaged through consumerism, thereby both validating the materialism and importance of exchange and further bolstering liberal individualism with a positive feedback.[20]

Western atomism is rejected by Asian civilisations, where communal harmony is preferred over individualism. Already, Asian societies are increasingly repudiating the idea of 'human rights' as just another tool of imperialism and have replaced it with their own notion of 'human dignity', which incorporate the rights not just to political dissent, but also the right of meeting basic needs and freedom from exploitation and cultural imperialism. Similarly, western notions of democracy have come under sharp attack as Asian countries demand space to experiment with their own ideas of participatory governance. When we take the perspectives of Asian civilisations on board, one-dimensional questions, such as 'What is the future of human rights?' are transformed into multidimensional ones: 'How can we preserve human dignity in the future?' The simple exploration of 'the future of democracy' takes on the form of exploring emerging forms of participatory governance in future. When such notions are subjected to rigorous, futuristic analysis, new images and perceptions of the future emerge – and, who knows, some of them may actually benefit western societies themselves.

After being comes knowing. Western civilisation has defined science as the *only* way of knowing, the sole path to universal knowledge, the exclusive arbitrator of what is true and what is false. It has further defined its science, that is western science, as *the* science: sciences of all Other civilisations are considered to be irrational, irrelevant, irredeemably obscurantist. It has subsequently defined its notion of reason, that is instrumental rationality, as the only rationality worthy of consideration. We thus have a totally closed system: the only true knowledge is western knowledge, the only way to this knowledge is western science, and the only approach to western science is through instrumental rationality. QED. This truly absurd contention, which has been dominant for some 300 years now, has been discredited from within western science itself – for example, by the work of such historians of science as Thomas Khun, Paul Feyerabend and Jerome Ravetz, by progress in sociology of knowledge and anthropology of science, by the output of postmodern philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard – as well as from recent advances in the histories of non-western science and the work of indigenous knowledge movements across the globe that seek to rediscover and contemporise non-western sciences such as Indian, Islamic and Chinese science. Western science cannot remain the dominant way of knowing for long; and futures studies must become contemplatively aware and informed about non-western science and Other ways of knowing.

While western science has marginalised, suppressed and outlawed non-western science, it has not been totally immune from appropriating the notions of non-western modes of knowing. In fact, whenever western science has reached an impasse, it has freely colonised the ideas and notions of non-western ways of knowing. The appropriation by complexity theory of the Chinese notion of self-organising nature is only the latest example of the colonising tendency of western science.[21] Futures studies must go beyond simple appropriation of this or that idea or concept from this or that non-western culture. Non-western concepts and modes of thought should be used to develop genuinely alternative images of the future.

Western civilisation is unique in insisting that knowledge and values exist in two, separate watertight compartments; that 'objectivity' can be totally freed from subjective considerations. One outcome of this intrinsic duality in western thought is its approach to nature. For western science, nature is something hostile out there

that needs to be conquered and, as Bacon said, 'tortured' so that its secrets can be wrestled out. This is why, in such forms as vivisection and endless reduction, violence is so central to the enterprise of western science.[22] In all non-western cultures, knowledge and meaning, facts and values, physics and metaphysics are integrated within their modes of knowing – from the rationally objective to the culturally subjective. Thus Other cultures have totally different perspectives on nature: from nature as a self-organising, autonomous system in Chinese thought, to the Hindu notion of humans and nature forming a single continuum, to nature being a trust from God to be nursed and nourished in the worldview of Islam. These holistic perceptions of nature have led to radically different metaphysical assumptions about the cosmos, the universe, time and our place in the creation. The word 'universe' in Chinese thought, for example, means a conceptual continuum of time and space, as we read in *Huai Nam Tzu* (published and used 1800 years before Einstein's theory of relativity): it as combination of *Ju* which is a time concept between the ancient time and now; and *U* which is a space concept in all directions. The Chinese word for cosmos is *kun-kon*: *kun*, meaning sky and *kon*, meaning earth. However, the true meaning of the word is a world of time and space perceived by the being 'me'. In other words, *kun-kon* (cosmos) is an ontological and elderly being, intrinsic in the structure of human consciousness. When the Chinese think about the creation and the beginning of the universe, they think about reality which is *li*. This *li* forms the Great Absolutes which have the nature of becoming *yang* by moving and becoming *yin* by staying static. Continuous changes and advancement are made amid harmony between *yin* and *yang*, which is called *chi*. But *chi* is not just a metaphysical principle – it has physical and material connotation as well. By focusing on the principle of *chi*, which is now a subject of intense research in China, Chinese science brings the notion of values and aesthetics right to the heart of material and rational understanding of nature. One thus has a system of problem solving that can yield both universally valid and culturally specific results.

The concept of *sastra*, the Indian counterpart to the western notion of 'science', is also an integrated system of thought, knowledge and inquiry. *Sastra* is applicable to any discipline of knowledge, from grammar to astronomy, mathematics to dramatics, physics to Ayurvedic medicine, music to chemistry. Thus even a subject as rational, objective and abstract as mathematics is not seen

as totally divorced from values and cultural concerns. This, of course, does not limit the 'universality' of Indian mathematics – which is as universal as any mathematics, and, as has now become evident, is the foundation of much of western mathematics.[23] Given such a system of knowing, it is not surprising that Indian logic, based on Sanskrit language and grammar, integrates mathematics with cognition. The classical Panini's grammar is considered to be an apex of sophisticated and totally integrated theory of knowledge. Nvya Nyaya, a relatively recent Indian school of logic, which has a highly developed technical language for representing the structure of cognition, embodies an even more intricate and exhaustive theorisation of the foundations of knowledge. Consider then the impact on future studies, if instead of the binary ('*X* is either *A* or not-*A*') of western logic, futurists began to develop alternative futures scenarios on the basic of the fourfold logic of the Indian Buddhist tradition ('*X* is neither *A*, nor not-*A*, nor both *A* and not-*A*, not neither *A* nor not-*A*') or the sevenfold logic in the Jain tradition, integrating abstract rationality with human cognition. The last decade has seen an upsurge in India in the appreciation, study and application of traditional Indian theories in the area of logic, linguistics, mathematics, cognitive science and epistemology. Already their application in the areas of computational linguistics and numerical processes have borne significant results. The impact of this work on the future of not just India but the world cannot be less than significant.[24]

Islamic science has similarly synthesised knowledge and values. The true and monumental contribution of Islamic science to the development of western science is only just beginning to be realised; what is, perhaps, not appreciated fully is the integrated framework of the Muslim civilisation within which Islamic science flourished. The fierce contemporary debate about Islamic science in the Muslim world[25] has led to the reformulation of the conceptual matrix within which scientific knowledge is sought. This matrix is based on a set of Qur'anic concepts that actually shape the goals of Muslim societies: the concepts generate the basic values of Islamic culture and form a parameter within which an ideal Islamic society progresses. There are ten such concepts, four standing alone and three opposing pairs: *tawheed* (unity), *khalifah* (trusteeship), *ibadah* (worship), *ilm* (knowledge), *halal* (praiseworthy) and *haram* (blameworthy), *adl* (social justice) and *zulm* (tyranny) and *istislah* (public interest) and *dhiya* (waste). When translated into values, this system of concepts embraces the nature of scientific inquiry in its totality:

it integrates facts and values and institutionalises a system of knowing that is based on accountability and social responsibility. How do these values shape scientific and technological activity? Usually, the concept of *tawheed* is translated as unity of God. It becomes an all-embracing value when this unity is asserted in the unity of humanity, unity of person and nature and the unity of knowledge and values. From *tawheed* emerges the concept of *khalifah*: that mortals are not independent of God but are responsible and accountable to God for their scientific and technological activities. The trusteeship implies that 'man' has no exclusive right to anything and that he is responsible for maintaining and preserving the integrity of the abode of his terrestrial journey. But just because knowledge cannot be sought for the outright exploitation of nature, one is not reduced to being a passive observer. On the contrary, contemplation (*ibadah*) is an obligation, for it leads to an awareness of *tawheed* and *khalifah*; and it is this contemplation that serves as an integrating factor for scientific activity and a system of Islamic values. *Ibadah*, or the contemplation of the unity of God, has many manifestations, of which the pursuit of knowledge is the major one. If scientific enterprise is an act of contemplation, a form of worship, it goes without saying that it cannot involve any acts of violence towards nature or the creation; nor, indeed, could it lead to waste (*dhiya*), any form of violence, oppression or tyranny (*zulm*) or be pursued for unworthy goals (*haram*); it could only be based on praiseworthy goals (*halal*) on behalf of public good (*istislah*) and overall promotion of social, economic and cultural justice (*adl*). Such a framework propelled Islamic science in history towards it zenith without restricting freedom of inquiry or producing adverse effects on society.[26] The contemporary research on rediscovering the nature and style of Islamic science could have a tremendous effect both on policies and the content of science in the Muslim world.

When we consider the re-emergence of civilisational sciences in the future, the futures horizons change dramatically from being the monolithic product of a single, increasingly abstract and alienating western science to being a synthesis of a variety of sciences of nature, each as effective as the other in solving the problems of modern and postmodern societies, and each generating a universal content that could be easily replicated by Other cultures and civilisations. The arrogant contention that dismisses these sciences as 'higher superstition' is not just culturally violent but also destructive of the future. To become a genuinely multicultural discipline, futures studies will

have to integrate Other ways of knowing into its basic methodo-logical framework. We need to address ourselves to such questions as: What kind of future worlds would non-western sciences produce? How would the nature and practice of science change if instrumental reason was humanised and coupled with values? What non-western perceptions of nature become the main method of accommodating and understanding nature? What impact would it have on the bulk of humanity; and how would it transform the west itself? Et cetera.

And so to doing. Unlike other disciplines, futures studies has a strong activist dimension: it is concerned with helping people to examine and clarify their ideas, fears, hopes, beliefs and hence images of the future. It is thus a specifically empowering discipline: it seeks to empower people both to crystallise their visions and to shape, direct and improve the quality of their actions in order to realise their visions. But futures studies has yet to take the next natural and logical step: to use the internal and traditional resources of non-western people as a basic resource both for articulating alternative futures and for developing plans and actions that can realise these futures. Most futures exercises, including such classical studies as *The Limits to Growth* and *Mankind at the Turning Point*, assume that the goods and products of modernity are our basic resource for shaping the future – that the future will be shaped by the appliance of modern science, the contrivance of western medicine, the machines of western technology and the economic institutions of capitalism. Over five decades of development in the Third World have shown this prescription to be erroneous and alienating at best, and highly destructive, subjugating and inhuman at worst. Genuine and meritorious development in the Third World will be a product as much of indigenous traditional resources as of appropriate contemporary technologies and sensible policies. There are Other ways of doing, and futures studies will have to incorporate them into its framework to generate worthwhile and sensible schemes for realising alternative futures.

What are these Other ways of doing? The Congress on Traditional Sciences and Technologies of India provided an indication of the range and potential of traditional resources in the subcontinent: over 2000 papers described, analysed and evaluated traditional ways of doing agriculture, building houses, managing water, forests and cities, delivering healthcare, producing a host of materials and processes – all workable, productive and, in most cases, *more*

effective, cheap and ecologically sound than their modern counterparts. As the introduction to the Congress declares:

> If houses can be built only with cement and steel, then it is quite possible that there may be no way in which we can think of housing for all. The picture changes substantially if we include in the list the wide variety of materials and techniques traditionally employed by our people in different parts of our land in making houses for themselves. If we include in our plans the wide variety of proven medicine, practices and principles that have been indigenously involved for health care in our society, then the resource position in the health care front may not appear as bleak as it now seems. If the wide range of material and techniques that our farmers have traditionally employed to ensure land fertility, pest control, high yield etc. are included in the list of resources at our command, then the prospect of enhancing food production substantially in an ecologically and economically sound manner may not appear as daunting as it seems to be now ... Thus there is a wide variety of skills and knowledge that our people possess, which, if properly understood and recognised, can make a substantial contribution to all our productive efforts and endeavours ... We have laboured under the severe yoke of resource scarcity largely because we did not recognise the existence of a large indigenous and traditional resources base with our people. Our list of resources largely included only those materials, processes, skills and theories that the west has been using after achieving full modernization and international domination. Limiting ourselves to these options alone was almost like entering a race with both the feet tightly tied together.[27]

Like India, other civilisations too have equally rich reservoirs of traditional skills, materials, processes and theories. *Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor*[28] describes traditional ways of doing from numerous Other cultures. And to these we must add the 'tacit knowledge' of numerous indigenous cultures: that is knowledge which is specific to a particular culture, has meaning and use only within this culture, and is one of its major resources. For example, the inherent abilities of aborigines to find their way across the arid wastes of central Australia and achieve feats of unerring direction finding and tracking, or the ability of the Pacific Islanders to navigate vast oceans without instruments.[29] Incorporating all these non-western

ways of doing in the futures equation thus liberates enormous hitherto suppressed and unrecognised resources – unties the feet as it were – for shaping desirable alternatives. When duly recognised and appreciated, such knowledge could become a source of positive development for the bulk of humanity as well as making the futures visions of non-western cultures more realistic and realisable.

An indication of the global impact of Other ways of doing is provided by Islamic economics. Islam strictly bans all forms of usury, including interest or making money with money, as a blameworthy (*haram*), exploitative and unhealthy activity. Contemporary Muslim economists were thus faced with developing alternatives to western economic thought and practice. Some 30 years of theorising has produced a host of unique economic and commercial institutions (including interest-free banks, investment funds that promote praiseworthy (*halal*) economic enterprises and institutions which operate solely on the basis of equity participation and profit sharing) that are not only widely and firmly established throughout the Muslim world but have made an enormous contribution to shaping the economies of such countries as Malaysia, Pakistan and Egypt. The institutionalisation of *zakah*, the compulsory tax on behalf of the poor that Islam bestows on all earnings, has made serious inroads into poverty eradication. Indeed, Islamic economics has been so successful in certain areas that even western banks are now opening 'Islamic counters'! However, despite its success, Islamic economics is only a nascent, embryonic discipline; once it truly matures, in the next few decades, it will have revolutionary and transforming powers.[30] Its impact on the future of the global economic order has to be considered in any worthwhile exercise about global futures.

Embracing the Wolf

Whatever the Other-phobic intellectuals, academics and thinkers in the west think or believe, the future is not an arena free of non-western influence. By default, by the sheer physical presence of Other people who will increasingly constitute a massive, overall majority on the globe, the future is non-western. By design, by hindsight, by foresight, by wisdom, futures studies should make non-western ways of being, knowing and doing an integral part of its knowledge base. This requires:

1. Acknowledging that western civilisation cannot continue to define what it is to be human and civilised for the rest of humanity. Western instrumental rationality, false duality, and the organisation of life transactions on the basis of the individual ego, selfish desires and the perpetual compulsion for consumer goods are only a few amongst many contending ways to be human (or, as some would argue, inhuman!).[31]

2. Treating non-western societies as civilisations. India is not a nation-state but a civilisation; Islam is not simply a religion but a global civilisation; China is not a country but a civilisation whose languages are the most commonly used tools of human communication on this planet. As civilisations, non-western societies have their own, unique modes of being, knowing and doing. All futures work must incorporate the possibilities inherent in these different ways of being human.

3. Non-western concepts and analytical tools becoming an integral part of futures methodology. Ways of envisioning and studying the future should make full use of the rich reservoir of ideas, notions, values and theories of non-western culture without appropriating them and with full awareness of their cultural origins.

4. Global futures projections, planning, predictions and explorations of alternative possibilities taking full account of indigenous cultural and physical resources of non-western cultures.

5. Futures activism seeking genuine empowerment of non-western societies by promoting the articulation of futures images and visions by members of these societies and not seeking to impose western images and perceptions, projections and foresights on Other cultures and people.

There is more to the Other than meets the eye. But to discover the true diversity, the depth and width of knowledge, the formidable reservoir of resources of non-western cultures, one must approach them with an open eye, uncovered mind and, most of all, a sense of equality. Futures studies would be elevated to a new quantum level if it becomes truly open to the multitude of non-western possibilities.

Other possibilities. Other futures. One doesn't have to believe in other notions of knowing, being, doing; other rationalities, sciences and ways of being free; other ideas of being human and other systems of protecting human dignity. Being open to them as possi-

bilities is enough. And this is what the Indian doctor (played by Om Puri) in *Wolf*, whom Jack Nicholson goes to see, hoping to find a cure that would stop him from turning into a werewolf, stands for. The doctor doesn't actually believe that Nicholson's character will turn into a werewolf: 'only to the possibility'. 'Not all who are bitten change', he tells the book editor. 'There must be something wild within – an analogue of the wolf ... sometimes one doesn't even need to be bitten.' Evil is not the monopoly of the werewolf: it even lurks within those who point a finger at him, who look down on all Others, who see themselves as intrinsically and innately superior. The doctor shocks Nicholson: he asks him actually to bite him. 'You'd rather be damned than die?' an amazed werewolf-to-be asks. 'Damnation is not part of my system of belief,' the doctor retorts. 'Demon wolf is not evil. Unless the man he has bitten is evil.' And, in a surprising twist from the conventions of ethereal villains' lore, the werewolf not only turns out to be good but also finds true love and lives happily ever after.

Notes

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3. Francis Fukuyama, in John T. Rourke (ed.), *Taking Sides*, The Duskhin Publishing Group, Guildford, Conn., 1991, p. 341.
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6. Ibid., p. 28.
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14. Ibid.
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21. See Ziauddin Sardar, 'Conquests, chaos and complexity: the Other in modern and postmodern science', *Futures*, 26 (4), pp. 665–82 (July/August 1994).
22. See Ashis Nandy (ed.) *Science, Hegemony and Violence*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988; Claude Alvares, *Science, Development and Violence*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992; and Ziauddin Sardar (ed.), *The Revenge of Athena: Science, Exploitation and the Third World*, Mansell, London, 1988.
23. See George V. Joseph, *The Crest of the Peacock: Non-European Roots of Mathematics*, Penguin, London, 1990.
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25. The debate is described in Ziauddin Sardar (ed.) *The Touch of Midas: Science, Values and Environment in Islam and the west*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984; and Nasim Butt, *Science and Muslim Societies*, Grey Seal, London, 1991.
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18   Healing the Multiple Wounds: Medicine in a Multicultural Society

It is frequently said that the National Health Service is the glory of Britain. The model of a publicly funded health service free at the point of use for all citizens is claimed as Britain's gift to the modern civilised world. There is only one problem with this statement from the perspective of a multicultural Britain in the twenty-first century. The problem has nothing to do with underfunding, the crumbling of the infrastructure, postcode lotteries, the inroads of privatisation by overt or covert policy, or the ethical dilemmas and exponentially increasing costs of high-tech medicine. The problem is about the provenance, and therefore the universality, of the values invoked in support of our National Health Service.

Muslim Britons should be quick and insistent in pointing out that the first public hospital dispensing treatment free at the point of need to any citizen opened its doors in Baghdad in AD 809. In short order no Muslim city was without such hospitals. These were hospitals as we understand them today, with specialist wards where patients were assigned according to their ailment and treatment needs. The hospitals were organised as teaching institutions where medical and pharmacological education and qualifications were standardised and regulated by state authorities. They were centres for advancing clinical understanding, centres of excellence where medical and surgical practice was pioneered.[1] The hospitals were supported by state funds. They were also funded from one of the most ubiquitous institutions in Muslim history, *waqfs*, or private, individual charitable foundations and endowments made in perpetuity for a designated purpose, provision of healthcare being prominent among these, along with education.

How Baghdad, the newly created city soon to be the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, came to have free public hospitals is neither a mystery nor a quirk of history. It was the logical outcome of basic Islamic values which, at this precise moment in history, were being crystallised and institutionalised in Muslim consciousness and social practice. Provision for the infirm, the sick and the needy is one of the

functions for which *zakah*, the annual welfare obligation often translated as the 'poor tax' and described as one of the five pillars of Islam, is paid by all Muslims according to their financial means. The state used *zakah* and other sources of funds, such as *waqfs*, to establish a network of hospitals; a national health service before the National Health Service was born.

Free medical treatment for all at the point of need is a core Islamic value. Making this point is not a petty matter, a 'me first' piece of one-upmanship. It is a reminder, a vital indicator of how narrow a grasp we usually have in public debate of what are termed 'universal' values. To look at the universe solely from the perspective of British or western history is to cast our terms of reference too narrowly. Britain's health service is an expression of core western values as they came to be understood and institutionalised at a particular point in history. But it is not only an expression of western values, it draws support from the values of many other cultures and civilisations, just as these values have found institutionalised expression in other histories. To narrowcast our view inevitably leads to ignoring the wider, more universalist foundations on which we must build to secure the practical fulfilment and delivery of shared values in a multicultural society, today and in the future.

Values are derived from the worldview by and through which we live. How we enjoy life, what we think of our bodies and how we treat them, how we shape our environment – all this is governed by our worldview. While worldviews shape lifestyle, lifestyles determine our state of health. Most modern illnesses are related to lifestyle. In his highly regarded *Diseases of Civilisation*, Brian Inglis lists heart diseases, cancer, mental illness, infectious diseases and iatrogenic disorders (illnesses induced by doctors and their treatments) as the main illnesses of western civilisation.[2] With the exception of iatrogenic disorders, all these illnesses are related to lifestyle. For example, heart diseases are a consequence of affluence: they are the result of overeating, rich food, refined foods, stress, chemicals in the environment and lack of physical exercise. But lifestyles do not only produce new illnesses. They can also radically transform old diseases. Diseases can be reactivated, or assume newer deadly forms. For example, in the early nineteenth century, polio existed in the USA as a mild childhood illness. It started to disappear in the 1920s as American cities began to clean and purify their water supplies. However, a few decades later it came back: this time, it could kill and cripple. It had now become a disease of affluence, the consequence

of pure drinking water. Consider also herpes, which has been with us in a harmless form for centuries as cold sores. But as genital herpes it assumes a newer more irritating shape: sexual behaviour has changed the epidemiology of the disease. Worldviews do not only shape lifestyles; they also shape the external environment within which these lifestyles are pursued. And this external environment plays just as important a role in producing diseases as lifestyles themselves. Many modern health problems can be traced to environmental problems. For example, the rise of infertility amongst men in the United States has been traced to toxins like PCBs which concentrate in men's reproductive organs, drastically reducing sperm counts. Over the last half-century, sperm counts of western males have seen a 50 per cent drop; the size of the male organ has shrunk, and the incidence of malformed penises, undescended testicles and other reproductive disorders has increased.

There is thus a direct relationship between worldview and health. By promoting certain lifestyles and producing an environment within which these lifestyles can flourish, worldviews determine the state of health of individuals and societies. But worldviews also form the matrix within which attempts are made to find cures for illnesses and promote health. Medicine is thus a direct offspring of worldview: modern medicine is a product of the worldview of western civilisation. And non-western medical systems – Islamic, Chinese, Ayurvedic – are products of their respective civilisations and worldviews.[3]

A multicultural society, by definition, contains a number of distinct groups with a diversity of worldviews. To identify the points of convergence, the common principles and shared values of the ethical and moral frameworks of different worldviews is a necessary step in uncovering the creative strength of a genuine multicultural society. The idea that the institutions of British society might have resonance with and derive a moral rationale from the values of other cultures, the cultures of migrant populations now part of British civil society, is a kind of multiculturalism we have not yet conceived. But without incorporating into our public and health policies certain values and approaches to medicine from the worldviews of migrant populations, we cannot speak of any meaningful multiculturalism.

An inclusive approach could be thought of in paternalist terms, as some kind of benevolent nod towards migrant cultures. But the exercise has to be carried out for the benefit of Britain as a whole. In a multicultural society that is confident, informed and alert, shared

values and common principles would provide renewed strength and resilience for basic institutions, such as the health service. Such a multicultural society would be able to develop a more creative dialogue of values. It could explore new insights and ways of thinking that can be developed by looking at familiar arguments from a different perspective, for while shared principles exist, different cultures and worldviews with their different histories have distinctive ways of building these principles into social patterns and structures of argument. Common values and shared principles can mean much more than platitudes or simplistic truisms; they can liberate our ability to perceive the multiplicity of means by which values can be made relevant and given practical form in new kinds of delivery system.

The greatest impediment to incorporating non-western values into the National Health Service is that Other, non-western, worldviews are not seen as equal or full partner projects within multicultural society. The Otherness of Other worldviews is often expressed in terms of a language of inferiority. This can be seen in the very descriptions of non-western medicines as 'alternative', 'complementary' and 'traditional' systems. Such a terminology not only equates a sophisticated and socially objective system of medicine, such as the Chinese, with more recent New Age upstarts; it also relegates them to a substandard position by definition.

Thus, the first step towards accommodating non-western worldviews that continue to influence the social habits and lifestyles of minority groups within the fabric of modern British society is to look at medicine itself in a radically different way. It is already acknowledged that multiculturalism is changing medicine in a practical way. For example, we now see the epidemiology of a multicultural society as a new challenge: the incidence of heart disease and diabetes is much higher among Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations, sickle-cell anaemia is a particular affliction among Afro-Caribbean and African Britons. Gradually, it has been recognised that respect must be accorded to non-western ideas and attitudes, both as a matter of basic principle and civil right and also as a pragmatic means of insuring the effective delivery of rights and services to minority groups. New cultural realities and preferences affect the delivery of health services. Health workers with appropriate language skills and conversant with different cultural practices; access to an increased numbers of female doctors; working with the broad range of community groups and organisations to encourage

use of available health services: all these are part of the landscape. Accommodation of difference is an important aspect of achieving social inclusion, a significant value in our multicultural society. However, the multiculturalism of pragmatism and difference is a long way from engaging with the Other worldviews as equal partners in a dialogue of values.

Constructing a dialogue of values requires seeing medicine in a totally different light. Our popular, common-sense understanding of the term sees medicine exclusively as modern western medicine.[4] This is a myopic, ahistorical view of medicine, one that assumes there was nothing before the arrival of modern, scientific medicine; that diseases, sickness, ill health and premature death were the norm before the emergence of the modern scientific miracle. In such a view nothing that existed before modern medicine is really important since it has been completely superseded. What we now know envelops all the past, making it irrelevant and incapable of making any significant contribution to the concept or practice of modern medicine. So prevalent is this view that we can no longer imagine what it was like not to know what is now common knowledge among the expert adepts, the specialists and professionals. It is therefore necessary to make a special effort to remind ourselves that what we call modern medicine is as old and venerable as 60 years, beginning with the development of penicillin. Until 120 years ago, when Pasteur pioneered the germ theory of disease, western medicine was not only like medicine in all other civilisations, it was in large measure a product of knowledge and expertise acquired from Other civilisations. Only the advent of penicillin and antibiotics transformed medicine from a healing art into a true science in the mechanistic mould constructed as the idealised view of western science. The great and very recent leap forward is supposedly epitomised by the vanquishing of the great epidemic diseases, the example par excellence being the eradication of smallpox. This vision of history is now a distinct tradition that underlines the separation between the west and the rest, the separation of this newly created west from its own history and the incommensurability of modern western values with those of all other civilisations.

This rewriting of history eradicates how much the present competence and expertise of modern medicine owes to non-western civilisations. For example, the medical encyclopaedia of Abu al-Qasim al-Zahrawi (c. 936–1013) illustrated the basic set of surgical

instruments that would be recognisable to modern surgeons. Known to European history as Albucasis, his book was available long before its contents became incorporated into the normal practice of surgery in Europe. What we now denigratingly describe as 'alternative' or 'complementary' medicine was in fact the foundation on which modern medicine is built. It also hides the degree to which new developments in medicine are being effected by appropriating, without attribution, knowledge from traditional non-western medicines, ethnopharmacology and its scramble to patent new drugs being a notable example. Such bad history traps us in an inherently monocultural outlook, and makes conceiving a genuine multiculturalism almost impossible. It makes it difficult to acknowledge that until the arrival of penicillin western medicine was essentially the same as Islamic medicine. In both cultures, ibn Sina's (980–1037) *Canons of Medicine* was a standard text for centuries. It obliterates the fact that in 1716 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, wife of the British Ambassador to the Ottoman court in Istanbul, became fascinated by the widely practised technique of infecting healthy people with a weakened strain of smallpox to confer immunity. Lady Wortley Montagu took a keen interest because she herself was badly scarred by smallpox, a common enough occurrence in Europe at that time. On her return to Britain she popularised the technique among the social elite. Before that, al-Razi (854–935), the renowned Muslim doctor and scientist, had described the disease in such detail that his observations are considered a scientific marvel even today.[5] Yet, western medicine confers the pioneering breakthrough, the invention of a smallpox vaccine, to Edward Jenner (1749–1823) and the victory over smallpox to the modern medical delivery systems of the twentieth century.

My argument is that western medicine should be seen not as something apart from history, but as a tradition. Indeed, it is the youngest of a number of great traditions of medicine. It is not *the* medicine, the standard absolute, but a way of doing medicine within a worldview. When scientific medicine commenced it appeared to have miraculous powers, death-defying capacity. It is little wonder that ordinary people were filled with awe at the potential, the rapid and ever expanding capabilities, of modern medicine. Modern medicine has a right to be arrogant, I would concede. But it also has, I would argue, the responsibility, the obligation, to regard itself as a tradition and submit itself to the discipline of tradition.

Tradition is not a given. Tradition, in an ideal sense at least, is a context of debate, testing, tempering and amelioration subject to an enduring set of values, ethical constraints and overriding purposes that enables enhancement by both change and continuity. Viewing western medicine as a tradition, we not only bring its values, constraints and moral and ethical parameters to the fore, but also imagine how it can grow beyond its narrow confines and transcend the dilemmas it encounters or creates. When we see medicine in this way it becomes possible to debate the balance between healing and disease eradication and all the attendant questions these two elements bring in their wake. Moreover, it becomes possible to see Other traditions of medicine as equally valid, and to highlight the correspondence and similarities between traditions as well as to critically evaluate their differences. But if medicine remains an absolute, a singularity detached from history, a non-tradition, such debates and the new lines of inquiry they could promote are impossible, a genuine multicultural discourse of values, a stillborn, utopian pipedream.

From the non-western perspective, two values in particular are important. The first is context. Non-western traditions of medicine place a great deal of emphasis on the context of the patient. The patient's family, social and financial circumstances, as well as the general situation of society and environment are important factors in diagnosis. Modern medicine sees the human body as a machine made up of a number of different parts, the organs. Diseases are well-defined entities responsible for structural changes in the cells of the body and tend to have singular causes. Disease is caused by germs, bacteria and viruses; recently it has been accepted – only in the face of mounting evidence – that environment too is a causative agent. The body is attacked by outside forces that cause breakdowns within the body. If these external factors are isolated and crushed, by chemical or surgical intervention, the body can be repaired and the patient cured. In contrast, non-western medical systems look at the body in holistic terms; illness can be caused as much by personal, social, and environmental circumstances as by the discrete outside invaders, the disease agents.

The point is not that the western, reductive mechanistic approach should be abandoned; but that context should be integrated into the way we think about sickness and health. We need to do that not only because the reductive model, despite the propaganda on its behalf, has been successful in only a few special cases, such as acute

infectious processes, but also because it cannot explain the overwhelming majority of illnesses. Nor is this kind of medicine the reason for the immense improvement in human health and lifespan. The decline in the mortality rate over the past century owes almost nothing to modern medicine. The credit belongs, as recent research has shown, to pure or treated drinking water, pasteurised milk, indoor plumbing, closed sewers, improved nutrition, clean and safe workplaces and shorter working hours. In other words, improvements in health came through improvements in social and societal context. As Thomas McKeown has shown in his elaborate historical-epidemiological studies, modern medicine cured individuals but had little impact in the overall improvement of health in industrialised Europe in the late nineteenth century.[6] After examining the possible causes for declining mortality, he finally settles for improved nutrition. A similar study in the USA attributed the fall in mortality rates to the disappearance of eleven major diseases: influenza, whooping cough, polio, typhoid, smallpox, scarlet fever, measles, diphtheria, tuberculosis, pneumonia and the diseases of the digestive system.[7] With the exception of the first three, all the other diseases disappeared almost entirely before medical intervention made an appearance. So, our own research and experience shows that broader context is important. In non-western traditions of medicine, the first question is why an illness occurs and the diagnosis aims at removing the conditions that lead to it. Modern medicine tries to understand the biological mechanism through which the disease operates, thus curing the individual but leaving the conditions that produce the illness intact. Thus, on the question of the rise in infertility amongst American men, emphasis is not placed on removing the toxins in the environment which cause infertility. However, enormous financial and intellectual resources have been expended on finding ways and means of making infertile men fertile again. Further valuable resources have been devoted to the collateral approach: developing the whole technology of artificial insemination by donors to permit women, either as individuals or as part of an infertile couple, to bypass the entire problem. A more balanced approach requires bringing the wider context back into medicine.

The second non-western value relates to power. In non-western traditions of medicine the power of healing belongs to the patients and not the doctors. Ultimately doctors can offer remedies, but they work with the power of the whole person, the patient. In western medicine, the patient is not only totally helpless but society itself is

epistemologically removed from medicine. If disease and illness are external to the body, and sickness is cured by isolating the disease and exterminating it, then the role of society in both producing and treating sickness becomes irrelevant. By trying simultaneously to identify and manage ill health and to conceal its origins, the embeddedness of health and illness in social and economic relations, modern medicine operates as an ideologically constructed power structure. The power of the medical establishment, the consultants and the doctors, is absolute. No wonder patients arriving in a hospital perceive themselves as helpless victims whose only function is to bring diseases for the doctors to fight and defeat. Thus an expectant mother, as I discovered during the birth of my own children, becomes a helpless patient who is 'ill'. Pregnancy is not seen as a natural phenomenon but as a form of sickness that can only be cured in hospital. A worldview that places no premium on family life, indeed that actively undermines family relations, is bound to see the home as an unsafe place for giving birth. In Britain, it is against the law to practise childbirth at home, unattended by qualified medical practitioners. And doctors who encourage natural childbirth are sometimes disciplined. Nature cannot be trusted to produce a normal birth; it has to be actively managed by technology. Once inside the hospital, the pregnant woman has no control over her body. She lies there helpless while obstetric technology takes over. Even though obstetric procedures often do more harm than good, it is not always obvious to the victim, who is led to believe that home births are infinitely more dangerous. However, the most common danger to women in labour is haemorrhaging. The remedy requires plasma and sterile water, but midwives are not allowed these supplies, not because they cannot administer plasma drips, but because handing even this limited amount of technology to the midwife means that the medical establishment undermines its own control and power.

Childbirth is not the only aspect of natural life that has become a medicalised condition and has thereby been passed from the control of the individual person into the domain of expertise of the medical profession. Fatness has become a medical condition, eating and the epidemic spread of eating disorders is a medical issue and depression has become one of the most common ailments and reasons for drug intervention in western life. If we have not yet made life a full-blown disease we have certainly expanded the definition and number of treatable conditions beyond the carrying capacity of the ordinary

general medical practitioner. What has passed into the power and territory of the medical profession cannot emerge unless we can think ourselves into a more sustainable view of health as well as of disease and medical intervention.

With such a power structure in place, there is little sense in talking about non-western values or indeed a viable National Health Service for a multicultural society. In such circumstances, systems of medicine based on other worldviews are naturally seen as a threat to the power and domination of modern medicine. On a very simple level, they present an economic threat: in the western worldview, both healthcare systems and diseases are commodities. Medicine is about income; and advances in modern medicine are made not with health, but with financial rewards, as well as prestige and fame, in mind. Witness the history of heart transplants. But beyond economics, non-western medical systems present a real threat to the very notion of modernity itself. That is why, under colonialism, they were ruthlessly suppressed and banned, their research centres were closed, and their practitioners threatened, outlawed and in some cases killed. In India, Islamic and Ayurvedic medicine were declared inferior and irrelevant, and outlawed.[8] In Tunisia, many hakims, practitioners of Islamic medicine, were charged with subverting the state and sentenced to death for practising their art of healing.[9] We need to break this power structure not just for non-western values and medical systems to be incorporated into the National Health Service but also because such authoritarianism is no longer viable. The recent cases of Dr Shipman, who mass-murdered his patients unsuspected and undetected for decades, and the consulting gynaecologist Rodney Ledward, whose botched operations over 16 years have left a trail of more than 400 maimed women, well illustrate the malaise within the system.

It is the emphasis on the whole person and the power of the patient to heal herself or himself that has made non-western medical systems so popular in Britain. Overwhelmingly, patients are discovering that non-western medicine can deliver. What does it deliver? The answer comes in two parts. It delivers cures and relieves symptons, and it delivers a quality of caring for the patient as a whole person that has slipped out of the practice of modern medicine. Its cures, therapies, and medications have developed and evolved over very long periods of time. Non-western medicines have extensive experimental and anecdotal evidence to back their therapies. The form in which this wealth of evidence is preserved

may not always appear commensurate with the habits of modern scientific practice – but this only takes us back to the idea of worldviews and the embedded nature of theories and evidence within them. What most British users of non-western medical systems know is that they deliver cures in less potent and less invasive ways. That is why increasing numbers of affluent, educated citizens of our society are voting with their feet and choosing traditional therapies, at their own expense, over modern medicine. It is also leading the medical profession to accept the efficacy of some traditional therapies and increasingly to include them within the context of modern medical practice.

But there are other reasons why this shift in emphasis is important. Non-western therapies can be expensive lifestyle options in western society; but in much of the world – the Third World where these systems originate and continue to exist – they are cheaper, and more easily and more widely available, than modern medicine. In the non-west they meet the expectations and preferences of people in ways that modern medicine does not. In the west they offer people preferable therapies by being less invasive, less potent; for which we can substitute the ideas of being less toxic and having fewer unwelcome or unwanted side effects. Non-western therapies present a basic idea people find easy to accept – that health promotion is a good thing, that it is a long-term proposition, and that it is not the work of medicine alone. The generation brought up on instant gratification has matured into the generation that recognises a basic choice. You can take a pill which, though it cures your illness and symptoms quickly, may knock you out for a couple of days, and carries the very real possibility of side-effects. Or, a better result can be obtained over a longer period by traditional means that will not make you feel like a zombie in the meantime, nor have unpleasant side-effects. A further realisation comes with non western therapies: the longer you take to deal with the illness the more you learn about yourself, your own body and the other subtle aids to promoting health that have always been part and parcel of non-western medicine. Paying customers like the idea of empowering themselves to become agents of their own health promotion.

If we make the transition from modern scientific medicine as the absolute standard to a tradition of medicine, a distinctive way of thinking and acting, it becomes interlinked, commensurate with other systems of medicine. Seeing modern medicine as a tradition opens another field for consideration: all traditions can also atrophy,

decline, become obscurantist and tyrannous, delivering domination instead of generally uplifting the human condition. We know there are imperfections in both the conception and practice of modern medicine. Yet, we have acute difficulty in finding ways to debate a system that is fraught with enormous problems and often gives the appearance of being a juggernaut careering beyond our ability to re-establish reasoned controls. It is equally true that the traditions of non-western medicine have atrophied under the onslaught of modernity. Not everything extant as traditional medicine is valuable, noble and positive. Critical capacity is an essential ingredient of, not an alternative to, the very definition of tradition: it is only consciousness that permits continuity and growth. In the column of criticism, charlatans and quacks are no longer to be found only on the wilder fringes of traditional non-western medicine and 'alternative' therapies, they are also within the domain of scientific medicine. Not all commensurability is positive and idyllic, but the purpose and nature of a living tradition is to provide the means of tackling the bad just as much as promoting the good.

   In the end, genuine multiculturalism in medicine, as much as in society as a whole, is not a question of different values. It is much more the knotty questions of what medicine should do and how it should do it that have a different structure in non-western systems – and provide us with new ways of coming at answers. It may also be that non-western traditions have retained more of the ideals of healing and health promotion, including environmental health provision, because they have been on the outside, lacking access to modern medicine. These attitudes could provide the ballast modern medicine needs to develop as a more humane tradition. There is more at stake here than bowing to public demand and market forces, whose place in medicine I would vigorously question, whether modern or non-western. And there is definitely more involved than simply a grudging acknowledgement of the fact that non-western medical systems really work. There is a conceptual definitional substance that we need the honesty to acknowledge. The recent resurgence of non-western medicine and traditional therapies points to philosophical lacunae in our whole concept and practice of modern medicine – its failure to come to terms with itself as a tradition and therefore to mature beyond the arrogance of adolescence into the humility and wisdom of age. As traditions, the diversity of systems of medicine can learn from each other, interact with each other, and co-operate with each other. Medicine then

becomes a model of how a multicultural society operates as an ongoing dialogue of values among citizens sharing equal responsibility for improving the well-being of society.

Notes

1. M. W. Dols, 'The origins of the Islamic hospital: myth and reality', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 61, pp. 367–90 (1987).
2. Brain Inglis, *Diseases of Civilisation*, Paladin, London, 1981.
3. For a more detailed discussion of worldviews and medicine, see Ziauddin Sardar, 'Medicine and metaphysics', in Z Sardar (ed.) *The Revenge of Athena: Science, Exploitation and the Third World*, Mansell, London, 1988.
4. Just as we see modern science as *the* science, the only systematic and objective way to study nature. See Ziauddin Sardar, 'Above, Beyond and at the Centre of Science Wars: A Postcolonial Reading', in Keith Ashman and Philip Baringer (eds) *After the Science Wars*, Routledge, London, pp. 120–39, 2001.
5. For a general introduction to the history of Islamic medicine, see Emilie Savage-Smith, 'Medicine', in Roshdi Rashed (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of the History of Arabic Science*, Routledge, London, 1996, volume 3, pp. 903–62; and Manfred Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1978.
6. Thomas McKeown, *The Role of Medicine*, Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, London, 1976.
7. John McKinlay and Sonja McKinlay, 'The Questionable Contribution of Medical Measures to the Decline of Mortality in the US in the Twentieth Century', *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly: Health and Society*, Summer, 1977.
8. John Hume, 'Rival Traditions: Western Medicine and Yunani-tibb in the Punjab, 1849–1889', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 55, pp. 24–31 (1977).
9. Nancy Gallagher, *Medicine and Power in Tunisia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

19　Beyond Development: An Islamic Perspective

Development. The word itself contains a notion of superiority. Since its inception, in the late fifties and early sixties, development has been synonymous with 'progress' and 'modernisation'. But progress is always a movement away from something, something that is considered inferior: one progresses from a (perceived) lesser state to a (perceived) higher state of existence. The basic assumption of development, no matter how it is defined, are always of a linear teleology vis-à-vis the standard yardstick of measurement: western civilisation. The western nations are thus the model of 'developed' states, with their industrial policies, free market economies, technological advancement, political, social and cultural institutions providing the best examples of all that constitutes human endeavour; other nations and cultures are there simply to follow this example, to 'progress' and 'develop' along a straight incline with the goal of becoming as good as the west. The lesser, inferior baggage that the non-western nations are supposed to abandon, in the quest for development, is their cultural and traditional heritage, their sacred and religious values, which interfere with 'progress' and 'modernisation'.

But the experience of over four decades of development, set in motion in the late fifties when the UN declared 1960–70 to be the First Development Decade, reveals this baggage to be much more resilient than first imagined; and that there is something rotten at the core of the very concept of development. There is, as Claude Alvares has argued so powerfully, an 'intrinsic link between development and *himsa*' (violence), and the 'intensity of *himsa*' seems to increase 'with the expansion of the development thrust'.[1] The violence inflicted on non-western societies by development is both direct and indirect:

> In the name of development more people are consciously deprived of their rights and livelihood in the South today than in colonial times … people's rights are taken away and substituted by a litany of people's needs, which are defined by westerners. In the name of development, science and technology, modernisation

and foreign exchange, a justification is provided for bartering one's dignity and self-respect, and the country's valuable resources; even while modern economic theory continues to preach that the people of the South can only be helped by catering first to the affluent of the planet.[2]

Development strategies have devastated the agriculture of non-western societies (most notably by the 'Green Revolution' in India and Pakistan),[3] impoverished and further marginalised the poor in Africa and the Middle East,[4] and transformed independent states into serfdoms of international banks and multinational corporation.[5] Often the relief from the violence of development has come from traditional sources: indigenous agricultural practices that not only produce better yields but have also shown to be ecologically sound and far superior to imported, 'modern' methods;[6] traditional and generic medicines that are not only accessible to poor rural folk but are far cheaper and more effective in curing and preventing common diseases;[7] banking practices that rely on the traditional notion of communal trust rather than the imported idea of collateral;[8] and indigenous institutions, including religious institutions, that have not only provided support for the poor but defended their dignity and rights in the face of ruthless development policies.

Undisciplined Disciplines

My aim here is not to provide a litany of development's woes or to demonise development: a considerable literature exists that does just that. Neither am I interested in listing the successes of indigenous resources and institutions and romanticising tradition. I intend only to point out that for the non-west development is largely a superfluous concept. It is, in fact, like the imported '*Banyan*' in the popular Punjabi poet Anwar Massod's poem of the same name:

> You go out to buy a vest; you come back with a vest
> When you try to put it on, you can't get it on
> If you get it on, you can't get it off
> If you get it off, you can't use it again.

No matter how you define and redefine development, how you rework it and rethink it, it just does not fit non-western countries; and when it is imposed on them, it fragments, dislocates and

destroys societies based on traditional worldviews. It is almost a truism to say that development is not a universal concept, applicable to all societies at all times. It is a product of a specific culture that happens to be the dominant culture in this particular phase of human history. But this truism, like much traditional wisdom that comes wrapped in self-evident maxims, is often forgotten. The dominance of western culture, and its globalisation through this dominance, is often confused with universalism. But just because a notion, or a particular discipline, is accepted or practised throughout the world, it does not mean that that notion or that discipline is universally valid and applicable to all societies. After all, burgers and Coke are eaten and drunk throughout the world, but one would hardly classify them as a universally embraced and acceptable food: what the presence of burgers and Coke in every city and town in the world demonstrates is not their universality, but the power and dominance of the culture that has produced them. Disciplines too are like burgers and Coke: they are not made in heaven nor do they exist out there in some 'reality', but are socially constructed and develop and grow within specific worldviews and cultural milieus. Neither nature nor human activities are divided into watertight compartments marked 'sociology', 'political science' or 'economics'. All those disciplines from which development is derived and obtains its sustenance – economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, history – are culturally specific: they are all products of a particular culture and a particular way of looking at the world and are hierarchically sub-ordinate to that culture and worldview. They do not have autonomous existence of their own but have meaning largely in the worldview of their origins and evolution. The division of knowledge into various disciplines as we find them today is a particular manifestation of how the western worldview perceives reality and how the western civilisation sees its problems. For example, the discipline of orientalism evolved because western civilisation perceived Islam as a 'problem' to be studied, analysed and controlled. Anthropology emerged because Other, non-western, cultures, had to be managed, controlled and kept subordinate. Economics is based on the vision of eighteenth-century England, incorporating both the religious as well as the philosophical beliefs of the period which promoted a 'whatever is, is right' worldview. As Ali Mazrui notes,

Adam Smith took this optimism about the religious, philosophical universe and focused it on economics. If you let economical market forces operate unimpeded, all discord would in reality be harmony … All partial evil would become common good, an invisible hand will see to that. This optimism about the benevolent consequences of unimpeded market forces [has] dominated economic thought in the west …[9]

Economics has maintained the facade of a creditable discipline by pretending a value neutrality that is dangerously obsolete.[10] It has evolved within 'a paradigm that was explicitly modelled on classical physics' and has been 'a "normal" science in the sense articulated by Thomas Kuhn'. But it is no longer tenable to maintain 'the fiction of a "normal" economic science'. Complex situations involving ethical choices, ecological variables, and the goals and aspirations of traditional, non-western societies 'cannot be measured by simple analogy with the cloth fairs of Adam Smith's day. If the valued goods that give richness to our lives are reduced to commodities, then what makes those lives meaningful is itself betrayed.'[11] Development economics too has pretensions of being a 'normal' science; but, from the perspective of the South it is nothing more than a new apologia for the civilising mission.[12] As Ashis Nandy writes,

Development is not merely a process having historical parallels with the growth of science and colonialism, both of which reached their apogee in the 19th century. It is an idea contextualised by the ideological frame within which the social changes that we retrospectively call development took place between the 17th and 19th centuries in European societies. The ideology of development has come to faithfully mirror the key ideas of the colonial worldview and Baconian philosophy of science, as many in the South have come to experience these ideas, either as beneficiaries or as victims. The origins of development may be in the Judaeo-Christian worldview, in the sense that development has shown a historical correlation with the emergence of Protestantism, especially of the Calvinist variety. But the idea of development is grounded in a concept of science, that promises not only absolute human mastery over nature (including human nature) but even human omniscience, and in an edited version of the white man's burden vis-a-vis those living with 'Oriental

despotism' and the 'idiocy of rural life' in the backwaters of Asia and Africa.[13]

Indeed, western imperialism and notions and values of superiority and conflict are so deeply entrenched in economic, and therefore development, theory, that even the scholarly efforts to produce 'new economic order', or 'rethink Bretton Woods', or develop models of the much vaunted 'sustainable development', cannot expunge them. For example, the model of development offered by Alain Lipietz in *Towards A New Economic Order* involves an acceptance of 'the logic and laws of macroeconomics', an adjustment of 'the contradictory and conflictual behaviour of individuals' and the 'rules of the market'.[14] Apart from assuming that economic activity in non-western cultures is dominated by adversarial behaviour on the part of individuals, this sort of analysis presumes that we can tinker with the notion of development – change this, adjust that – to produce a just economic order, and that the notion itself is not fundamentally flawed. It takes the western values that form the axioms of development for granted and suggests that the problems of the Third World can be solved simply by introducing certain codes of conduct and legislation; indeed, the price mechanism will itself see to that! This kind of blind faith in the free market ignores the overwhelming evidence that it has failed not only to bring about equitable distribution of wealth in non-western countries and to protect their economies, but also to protect the planet. The idea that human behaviour is necessarily conflictual, and that there is some inescapable logic of macroeconomics, as well as the whole notion of the 'free market', are all assumed to be universal norms of economic development, yet they are essentially western values that, in the guise of a discipline, are being imposed on non-western societies.

The overall development baggage, as can be seen from Lipietz's analysis, comes complete with the basic maxims of the ideology of capitalism. The notions that the sole goal of economic activity is to maximise profit; that individual preferences are the most important aspects of human well-being; that individuals should be given total freedom – unhindered by government or by collective value judgements – to pursue their self-interests; and that selfish individual self-interest will unselfishly end up serving the whole community: these are central not just to capitalism but also to the discipline of development economics. This kind of unbridled individualism is a fundamental component of the western *Weltanschauung*, but is quite

contrary to the communal outlooks of most non-western countries. Thus, in the guise of development policies, naked capitalism is imposed on the countries of the South. Elites of non-western societies often collaborate in this disciplinary imperialism, for they stand to benefit considerably from a system that exploits their own people. Capitalism and development go hand-in-hand; and the globalisation of the former, including the cultural products of capitalism, is a product of the hitherto unquestioning acceptance of development by the nations of the South.

While the values of eighteenth-century Europe and the ideology of capitalism continue unabated in the very axioms of economic and development theories, new western values are being constantly added to new models of development. For example, the well-meaning 'Rethinking Bretton Woods Project' of the Washington, D.C.-based Center of Concern places strong emphasis on 'development that is equitable, participatory and sustainable' and that has 'the empowerment of the poor and disadvantaged as one of its strategic aims'.[15] Development is now defined as 'a healthy growing economy which (a) distributes the benefits widely, (b) meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generations, and (c) provides for human rights and freedoms, effective governance, and increasing democratisation'.[16] 'We are discovering,' write Jo Marie Griesgraber and Bernhard G. Gunter,

> the essential truth that people must be at the centre of all development. The purpose of development is to offer people more options. One of their options is access to income – not as an end in itself but as a means of acquiring human well-being. But there are other options as well, including long life, knowledge, political freedom, personal security, community participation and guaranteed human rights.[17]

Apart from the fact that the 'essential truth' that people matter above everything has taken some five decades to discover, this rethought model of development presents what non-western cultures took for granted as 'development options'. So non-western people do not have an innate right to long life, personal security and community participation, but these rights now come as 'options' under the umbrella of development! It is worth noting that all traditional societies enjoyed these rights: indeed traditional lifestyles are all about community participation, security within the framework of

communal existence, and long life based on healthy and ecologically sound lifestyles. First, development undermines these rights by demeaning and suppressing tradition, breaking up rural communities by promoting urban development, increasing insecurity by displacing traditional agriculture and introducing debt finance; then, to really add insult to injury, a rethought notion of development offers these very things as 'options'. But there is another dimension to this new notion of development that brings hitherto hidden western values right to the fore: the linking of 'development' with democracy and 'human rights'. The discourse of democracy and human rights, as so many non-western writers have argued, is the most evolved form of western imperialism.[18] Development now becomes a function of a particular type of political order and a particular notion of what it means to be human: to develop, non-western cultures have to accept that western-style liberal democracies are the only type of good governance there is and that a society is nothing more than a collection of individual autonomous human beings, who have rights and absolute freedoms but no responsibilities. During the eighties and the nineties, both democracy and human rights have been used by the west as a stick to beat the non-west and to force patterns of development that would ensure and encourage the dependency of Third World economies. The authors of *Promoting Development* acknowledge this much: 'In practice human rights rhetoric', they write, leads to the 'imposition of free-market and electoral ideology';[19] indeed the World Bank and the IMF have been doing just that. But this acknowledgement does not lead to questioning the link between development and human rights; on the contrary, they argue that 'new substantive and procedural standards for the realization of human rights by development finance agencies' should be developed. Once again, faith is placed on codes of conduct and the fundamental flaws in the notion of development are overlooked.

One can make a similar critique of 'sustainable development'. Here 'sustainable' codes of behaviour are appended to the notion of development. What turns development into sustainable development, according to Richard Welford, for example, is the principle that it should meet 'the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.[20] But this is, in effect, the essence of traditional lifestyles which are intrinsically future-conscious: life-enhancing tradition has always been about preserving resources for posterity. So what need

is there for sustainable development; we should simply allow traditional lifestyles to continue, adjust to change according to their own criteria, and thrive. But to do this would be to act against a cardinal principle of development: that it is the west which must dictate what the non-west should do and how it should do it, even if the non-west has been doing what the west is asking it to do for centuries. One of the parameters of ecologically and environmentally sound sustainable development is recycling. It has now become imperative for the sustainable development lobby to exhort non-western countries to recycle their resources, preserve the rainforests and be more environmentally conscious. But the idea that development can be attained through sustainability only brings out the contradiction in combining the terms 'sustainable' and 'development' in the first place. This contradiction emphasises the fact that perpetual development has now become a necessary component of modernity. To be modern, one must develop, and continue to develop. But how then can one also be sustainable at the same time? Either the non-western countries can become sustainable and move forward to their traditional lifestyles; or they can develop along the lines of the west, embrace free markets and its natural consequence, insatiable consumption.

In fact, non-western societies were sustainable and ecologically aware centuries before the west discovered the notion of sustainable development. Even today, people in the Third World are practising recycling on a much bigger scale than is recognised. It is a common practice, in India and Pakistan for example, for people to take yesterdays newspapers to the newsagent and exchange them for today's paper at a discount; and for the pile of yesterday's newspapers to be picked up by schoolchildren returning home, for their mothers to convert them into paper bags to be resold to the grocers. This simple practice, and so many unconsciously carried out traditional activities, means that paper consumption in the Indian subcontinent is only 5 per cent that of Britain with a population that is 25 times larger than Britain! Walking through any bazaar, one can find people making and selling small cartons and containers made of recycled Coca-Cola cans on which labels could still be seen: a container for a western drink often ends up as a vehicle for carrying water to the toilet! What this means is that non-western societies do not need lessons in sustainability from the west, which itself is one of the most unsustainable of all civilisations. What non-western societies actually need, and what postcolonial writers and thinkers

and poets like Anwar Masood are now powerfully articulating, is a replacement of the imperialistic notion of development with a restoration of their own notions and categories of what it means to be a dynamic, thriving society. Masood's poem '*Banyan*', that I quoted earlier, continues (the translation misses not just the rhythm and the rhyme of the poem, but also much of its side-splitting wit):

> Take my vest:
> when you want to put it on, you can put it on;
> when you take it off, you can take it off.
> And when you take it off, you can use it again.
> My vests are superb; my vests are top class
> Authenticity speaks for itself
> It catches the sun,
> And sits like a new bride on the washing line.
> You can wear them as long as you wish
> Then turn them into nappies and knickers for the kids.

Cultural authenticity speaks its own language that addresses the deepest hopes and desires of a people and articulates ways and means by which these hopes and desires can be realised. Any vocabulary is itself a system of analysis. As long as development remains the catchword for the dreams of non-western societies, they cannot articulate their own desires nor produce viable, authentic ways of moving forward. As long as non-western countries seek to 'develop', western logic and social grammar will continue to dominate them. Cultural authenticity, on the other hand, does not mean being glued to a romanticised notion of the past; on the contrary, traditional cultures are dynamic entities, they are constantly renewing themselves and changing, but they change according to their own logic and grammar. What cultural authenticity requires is a deep respect for norms, language, beliefs, knowledge systems, and arts and crafts of a people – the very factors which provide richness and meaning to their lives. It requires appreciating the fact that traditional cultures are capable of solving their own problems within their own systems of beliefs and knowledge, with their own categories and notions and within their own civilisational parameters. This, I believe, is the desirable course for the future.

Multicivilisational Futures

The future, the century around the corner, will be a multicivilisational future. It will not be a world of 'civilisation as we know it'. 'Civilisation as we know it' has always meant western civilisation: civilised behaviour and products of civilisation have been measured, up to now, by the yardstick of the west. But the twenty-first century will mark the end of civilisation as we know it; and herald the beginning of a world of civilisations – Indian, Islamic, Chinese and western, to name the most obvious – as non-western civilisations rediscover and renovate themselves and enrich and enlighten each other with synthesis, mutual respect and co-operation. There are two fundamental reasons for the emergence of a multicivilisational world.

The first is provided by global demographic trends, which, as we discussed in Chapter 17 (see 'The White Man Endeth'), are set to make the white man an endangered species by the mid-twenty-first century.

The second reason is that the predominantly young populations of non-western civilisations will articulate their desires on their own terms, based on their own individual histories, and will shape a world that is distinctively different, markedly more diverse and multicultural than the one dominated currently by western civilisation. As Richard Halloran writes, the turn of the century

> will register the opening of an age in which the Rising East will acquire the political, economic, and military power to rival that of North America and Western Europe. That power, much of which has already been accrued, will enable Asians to exert influence not only in their own region but throughout the world. They will become peers with American and Europeans in the high councils where decisions are made on war and peace. Asians will not only play in the center court but, as a Malaysian scholar put it, 'have an equal say in writing the rules.'
>
>   The twenty-first century will thus be shaped by new racial and cultural forces. For several hundred years, the world has been dominated by white Europeans and Americans who hold to Judeo-Christian traditions. They will soon be obliged to accept as equals yellow and brown Asians who adhere to the tenets of Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam. Not only will Asian strength be felt on international decisions, but the way they exert influence will differ. Westerners, for instance, tend to be logical and

analytical; Asians are more intuitive and sometimes more emotional. Westerners assert rights, Asians respond to obligations. In the West, the individual takes priority, in Asia, the community. Westerners, especially Americans, are governed by law and contract, Asians by custom and personal relations. In the West, decisions are made by voting; Asians decide by consensus.[21]

Of course, Halloran is (unwittingly?) orientalising: *they* are emotional, *we* are rational; *we* do things by the book, *they* by the hook, et cetera. But the point he is rightly making is that the power shift towards Asia will introduce different non-western ways of doing things in the international arena; in other words, the definitions of the west will not be the only definitions around in the future. Indian, Chinese, Islamic and other non-western civilisations will redefine the globe according to their own notions and categories, and a genuinely multicivilisational world will be created: there will be more than one, dominant, way of being human, of being free and there will be more than one way to 'develop'.

So the western idea of development is set to become quite obsolete. In a multicivilisational world, each civilisation will produce its own notion of advancement, its own idea of movement forward to a desirable state, according to the principles of its own worldview. This is not to say that each civilisation will exist in its own vacuum sealed space; of course, there will be constant and continuous inter-action between civilisations, civilisational boundaries will often become diffuse, there will be considerable synthesis and consequent emergence of totally new ideas. But the civilisational identity of each civilisation will be shaped by its unique epistemology, historiography, and philosophy of life. Substitutes for the idea of development will come from the effort and the struggle that each civilisation undertakes to define its own identity in terms of its own notions and categories.

The Discourse of Islamisation

How the idea of development will give way to indigenous notions and categories of Other civilisations can be illustrated by briefly examining the discourse of 'Islamisation of knowledge'. This discourse, which had its origins in the early eighties, is based on the realisation that all social science disciplines are cultural constructions of western civilisation and have virtually no meaning or

relevance for Muslim societies.[22] The purpose of Islamisation of knowledge, which has now become a worldwide movement and an international discourse, is to generate disciplines that are a natural product of the worldview and civilisation of Islam; and hence to use Islamic categories and notions to describe the goals and aspirations, the thought and the behaviour and problems and solutions of Muslim societies.[23] The discourse of Islamisation has been led by Islamic economics which has now produced a vast literature on both the theory and the practice of economics within the worldview of Islam;[24] but considerable work has also been done during the last decades on anthropology (which, according to Islamic criteria, should not exist), sociology, psychology and political science. What Islamisation of disciplines has actually meant for development can be judged by looking at the work of Muslim economists who first tried to undermine the western connotations of development by hedging it with Islamic terminology and ideas and then replaced it totally with Islamic categories.

The ideas of Jafar Shaykh Idris and Khurshid Ahmad provide us with good examples. Idris equates development with 'service to God' and describes it as a category of a person's existence and life.[25] For Islam, the essence of a human being is a faculty with which everyone is naturally endowed: to be a complete human being, an individual must direct all his or her activities towards the service of God. This internal reality of a Muslim, argues Idris, must be reflected in the external organisation of human society, the pursuit of which is seen by Idris as 'development'. Within the framework of the Islamic way of development, material and spiritual aspects of life are complementary. 'To be able to live the good life of devotion of God, we have, therefore, to make the best use of the material resources of our world.' Talking about development without considering the spiritual side of people is meaningless; development must preserve the essence of our humanity:

> The qualities which make (humans) human are the cement which binds them together in a human society, and which keeps them wholesome as individual persons. Once they are lost, the individual starts to disintegrate, and the disintegration of society follows as a matter of course. When the individual finds no meaning to his(/her) life … then the society of which those individuals are members is sure to decline and fall. Why should one who does not care for his[/her] own life, care for others? Why

should one who sees no meaning in life defend the people to whom he[/she] happens to belong?[26]

Thus, for Idris, development is the pursuit of meaning in an individual's life as well as the pursuit of material benefits – for him, the two go hand in hand. This approach to development, he argues, will free Muslim societies from being an annexe of western civilisation, where they have to borrow everything they have, including 'the worms in their intestines', and allow them to flourish with their own identity and culture intact.

Khurshid Ahmad offers a much more conceptual analysis. He argues that the philosophic foundation of the Islamic approach to development is based on four fundamental concepts: *tawheed* (the unity of God); *rububiyyah* (divine arrangements for nourishment, sustenance and directing things towards their perfection); *khalifah* (a person's role as the trustee of God on earth); and *tazkiyah* ('purification plus growth').[27] *Tawheed* and *khalifah* are two of the fundamental concepts of Islam and define the basic relationship between God and person, person and person, as well as person's relationship to nature and his/her terrestrial environment. *Rububiyyah* is 'the divine model for the useful development of resources and their mutual support and sharing'. *Tazkiyah* is the concept that relates to the growth and development of people in all their relationships: the ultimate goal of *tazkiyah* is to purify and mould an individual, that holistic aggregate of individuals which form a society, and the envelope of material things and products that constantly interact with the individual and collective elements of society.

Ahmad's definition of *tazkiyah* focuses on individuals and relationships. *Tazkiyah* in all its dimensions, he writes, 'is concerned with growth and expansion towards perfection through purification of attitudes and relationships'. In another essay, he isolated six 'instruments' of *tazkiyah: dhikr* or remembrance of God; *ibadah* or acts of servitude to God; *tawbah* or seeking the forgiveness of God; *sabr* or the spirit of perseverance; *hasabah* or criticism and self-criticism; and *dua* or supplication. All these instruments of *tazkiyah* essentially operate on the individual leading to his/her *fallah* – prosperity in this world and the hereafter.[28] This understanding of *tazkiyah* leads Ahmad to identify five essential features of development within an Islamic framework, which he compares and contrasts with the dominant understanding of the concept:

(a) The Islamic concept of development has a comprehensive character and includes moral, spiritual and material aspects. Development becomes a goal- and value-orientated activity, devoted to optimisation of human well-being in all these dimensions. The moral and the material, the economic and the social, the spiritual and the physical are inseparable. It is not merely welfare in this world that is the objective. The welfare that Islam seeks extends to the life (in the) hereafter and there is no conflict between the two. This dimension is totally missing in the western concept of development.

(b) The focus for development effort and the heart of the development process is man. Development, therefore, means development of man and his physical and socio-cultural environment. According to the western concept it is the physical environment – natural and institutional – that provides the real area for development activities. Islam insists that the area of operation relates to man, within and without. As such, human attitudes, incentives, tastes and aspirations are as much policy variables as physical resources, capital, labour, education, skill, organisation, etc. Thus, on the one hand, Islam shifts the focus of effort from the physical environment to individuals and communities in their social setting and on the other enlarges the scope of development policy, with the consequent enlargement of the number of targets and instrument variables in any model of the economy. Another consequence of this shift in emphasis would be that maximum participation of the people at all levels of decision-making and plan-implementation would be stipulated.

(c) In an Islamic framework, development is nothing but a multi-dimensional activity. As effort would have to be made simultaneously in a number of directions, the methodology of isolating other key factors and almost exclusive concentration on that would be theoretically untenable. Islam seeks to establish a balance between the different factors and forces.

(d) Economic development involves a number of changes, quantitative as well as qualitative. Involvement with the quantitative, justified and necessary in its own right, has unfortunately led to the neglect of the qualitative aspects of development in particular and of life in general. Islam seeks to rectify this imbalance.

(e) Among the dynamic principles of social life Islam has par-
     ticularly emphasised two: firstly, the optimal utilisation of
     resources that God has endowed to man and his physical
     environment; and secondly, their equitable use and distribu-
     tion and the promotion of all human relationships on the
     basis of rights and justice. Islam commands the value of *shukr*
     (thankfulness to God by availing of His blessings) and *adl*
     (justice) and condemns the disvalues of *kufr* (denial of God
     and His blessings) and *zulm* (injustice).[29]

These essential features of development in an Islamic framework lead
Ahmad to define six goals of development policy in an Islamic
society: human resources development, expansion of useful
production, improvement of the quality of life, balanced develop-
ment in different regions within a country, evolution of indigenous
technology and reduction of national dependency on the outside
world and greater integration within the Muslim world.

Both Idris and Ahmad were writing in the early eighties when it
was still thought that the western notion of development could be
'Islamised' – that is, changed and modified to fit the worldview of
Islam. But, as critics pointed out later, what was actually happening
was that Islamic ideals were being unwittingly accommodated to
certain implicit axioms in the notion of development itself.[30] Thus
we find Ahmad's analysis of *tazkiyah* to be rather limiting. Just as
development economics emphasises individual producers and
consumers, with supply and demand being the sum of their
respective activities, so has Ahmad confined *tazkiyah* to the role of
personal piety and individual salvation: in his scheme, development
is achieved through personal salvation rather than societal transfor-
mation. The focus of *tazkiyah* is not just the individual; Islam not
only insists that the individual is the sole arena of operation, as
Ahmad argues, but it also seeks to build a society which enables its
various elements and components to practice *tazkiyah* in a positive
atmosphere.

The literal meaning of *tazkiyah* is purification. It is a process of
purification that all Muslim individuals and societies have to apply
if they seek to be in a constant state of *islam*. However, *tazkiyah* is
not a static state of purification: it is a dynamic concept that seeks to
motivate individuals and societies to grow by a constant process of
purification. The Islamic institution of *zakah*, purification of one's
earnings by giving a fixed proportion of them to the less fortunate

members of society or by using it to promote works of public benefit, which is regarded as the third pillar of Islam and is a religious duty incumbent on every Muslim, is etymologically derived from *tazkiyah.* The idea of growth through purification is particularly unique to Islam; it incorporates the strange notion (to western minds) of increasing one's wealth by actually subtracting from it: that is, giving it away to less fortunate members of society. Moreover, the process of purification acts as a rein on unchecked growth which could indeed make it impossible for societies and individuals to practise the instruments of *tazkiyah.* On the other hand, static or declining societies which could not even meet their basic needs would be unable to practise *tazkiyah* in its totality. *Tazkiyah*, therefore, demands that individuals and societies should grow within particular limits which provide them with time, ability and the environment for self-reflection and introspection, criticism and self-criticism, promotion of values and cultural authenticity – the societal elements that give a living form to the process of purification.

Tazkiyah, then, is that quality in an Islamic society which ensures that it maintains critical variables within limits acceptable to its social and cultural values and organisational and institutional structures. It is a steady, selective growth that requires Muslim societies to maintain their fundamental, internal balances while undergoing various processes of change. It requires Muslim societies to grow as far as it is necessary to meet their basic requirements but it also demands a pace of change that makes it possible for people to match genuine needs with available resources and potentials and find acceptable means for the realisation and implementation of feasible alternatives. *Tazkiyah* applies growth with the consensus of the people (otherwise the process of purification would be nullified) allowing no change without full backing from the entire society and with firm conviction of its necessity. It requires preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of Muslim societies as a living, dynamic environment from which they can draw their sustenance and aesthetic pleasure: this is purification in total action.

Analysis of Islamic concepts such as *tazkiyah* forced Muslim scholars and economists who tried to 'Islamise' development during the eighties – most notably, Umar Chapra, Nejatullah Siddiqi, Muhammad Abdul Mannan and Monzar Kahf – to the realisation that development could not be 'Islamised', any more than alcohol can be declared an Islamic beverage. The notion of development just could not be applied to Muslim societies, no matter how the coy

Muslim academic redefined it to placate Islamic sensibilities, without doing violence to the worldview of Islam and placing Muslim societies in a linear teleology vis-à-vis the west. In a classical study, Lucian Pye defined development as being a multidimensional process of social change.[31] The idea of social change, of movement of a society from one state of organisation, one system of ideas, beliefs and traditions and one stock of equipment to another, is central to the concept of development. Thus, Muslim scholars and economists have come to realise that to ask or motivate Islamic societies to develop is to ask them to leave their system of ideas, beliefs and traditions for another system that is perceived to be higher up on the scale of development. There is just no way of shirking the issue: development can never have any meaning for Muslim societies, even when it comes wrapped in Islamic terminology. But the wrapping of development in Islamic terminology does perform a very important function for both traditional and modern elites in Muslim societies: it provides an Islamic justification for propagating capitalism (indeed, Islamised development has been uncharitably described as 'capitalism minus interest'); it serves as a useful instrument to whip up sentiments and support for obscurantism; and it can be used to legitimise the power base of certain leaders with allegedly Islamic credentials.

Not surprisingly, concerned Muslim scholars are now becoming coy about Islamising western concepts and categories. In recent Islamic economics literature, the concept of development is conspicuous by its total absence. Muslim economists are now increasingly using Islamic categories to describe the process by which Muslim societies move from a dependent state to a fully self-sufficient one. The most common notion for describing this process is not *tazkiyah* but that of *fallah* which is loosely translated as 'human well being'. In his seminal work, *Islam and the Economic Challenge*, Umar Chapra describes *fallah* as the fundamental goal of a Muslim society; the notion of *fallah*, he argues, gives 'utmost importance to brotherhood and socio-economic justice and requires a balanced satisfaction of both the material and the spiritual needs of all human beings'.[32] Muhammad Akram Khan describes *fallah* as a

> comprehensive state of spiritual, cultural, political, social and economic well-being in this world and God's pleasure in the hereafter. Because of its eternal nature *fallah* is primarily a state of

bliss in the hereafter. But it is also applicable to conditions of survival, economic well-being and human dignity in this world.

At the micro level, it refers to a situation where an individual is gainfully employed, free from want, enjoys freedom, participates in social and political life and has opportunities to grow spiritually and culturally …

At the macro level, a society can achieve *fallah*, for example, if it is politically and economically independent, has institutional arrangements to establish economic justice, involves its people in decision making and provides environments congenial to physical and spiritual health. Its GNP may not match any of the present-day industrially developed societies. It can still be at a state of *fallah*.[33]

It is important to note that *fallah* does not incorporate the ideas of perpetual growth or continuous, linear movement towards more and more material prosperity: indeed, overabundance and wastefulness would negate *fallah*; and *fallah* can be had without material prosperity. The idea of balance and harmony is deeply embedded in the concept of *fallah*. Given the power of authentic Islamic notions such as *fallah* and *tazkiyah*, it is not surprising that attempts to build a contemporary Islamic economics now rely exclusively on Islamic categories and notions not just for theory building but also for devising pragmatic policies and practical societal solutions.

The abandonment of the concept of development in recent Islamic economic and political thought is an indication not just of the confidence that Muslims are acquiring about their own culture and civilisation, about their own ways of knowing, but also of the re-emergence of a thriving, dynamic Muslim civilisation of the future. What is happening in Muslim civilisation is also happening in Chinese and Indian civilisations.[34] It will be a few decades before we witness genuine plurality on the global scale, before authentically different ways of knowing, doing and being human become the norm. But that future, as they say in Muslim societies, is written: written in non-western concepts and categories that are now coming to the fore. Of course, a multicivilisational world could lead, as Samuel Huntington has argued, to a 'Clash of Civilisations'. But that, as Huntington's own analysis shows, is purely a western worry.[35] Our concern must be that such standard and hollow thought could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. The only alternative is a determined commitment to overcome the fear that is inherent in the western

psyche, to embrace the emergence of true diversity and plurality, not as the loss of the west's own definitional power but as an opportunity for a new kind of recovery and expression of its better self. As Ashis Nandy has written,

> The flip-side of any cultural self-expression outside the west has to be an archaeology of knowledge which excavates and fights for the lost or repressed west. Knowledge, too, like suffering, is an indivisible human experience. Self-aware, self-critical knowledge has to realise its own indivisibility by reaffirming the indivisibility of human and social choices in the matter of human happiness and suffering and human ends and means.[36]

The recovery of the 'repressed west' involves the abandonment of the concept of development with its embedded implications of a struggle for superiority and an onslaught of imperial aspirations. A development-free multicivilisational world could generate a more companionable concept of distributive well-being, of new kinds of growth that can be shared, or new alliances of interests and common aspirations that can collaborate across civilisational lines without demanding the denial of anyone's identity either in the non-west or the west. Development-led imperialism required the west to stand behind it own, self-made barricades of bravado. It has brought the west affluence, but it has also remorselessly exacted considerable costs. A development-free world of numerous big and small civilisations, each working out its distinctive way of knowing, doing and being, offers the prospect of discovering that the highest human aspirations are shared values, whose expression through difference makes their realisation more attainable for all people – in the non-west as well as the west. Humility is just as central to the western value system as to any other, for all that it has so seldom been employed. Beyond development, it might work wonders for us all.

Notes

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4. See Idriss Jazairy, Mohiuddin Alamgir, and Theresa Panuccio, *The State of World Rural Poverty: An Inquiry into Its Causes and Consequences*, IT Publi-

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5. See Rajni Kothari, *Poverty: Human Consciousness and the Amnesia of Development*, Zed Books, London, 1993.

6. See Congress on Traditional Sciences and Technologies of India, *Proceedings of the Congress on Traditional Sciences and Technologies of India: 28 November–3 December 1993*, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, (2 volumes).

7. See Zafrullah Chowdhury, *The Politics of Essential Drugs*, Zed Books, London, 1995.

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10. See Paul Ormerod, *The Death of Economics*, Faber & Faber, London, 1994; Cristovam Buarque, *The End of Economics: Ethics and the Disorder of Progress*, Zed Books, London, 1993; and Hazel Henderson, *Paradigms in Progress: Life Beyond Economics*, Adamantine Press, Twickenham, 1994.

11. Silvio Funtowicz and J. R. Ravetz, 'The Worth of a Songbird: Ecological Economics as a Post-Normal Science', *Ecological Economics*, 10, pp. 197–207 (1994).

12. See Ziauddin Sardar, *Science, Technology and Development in the Muslim World*, Croom Helm, London, 1977.

13. Ashis Nandy, 'Culture, Voice and Development: A Primer for the Unsuspecting', *Thesis Eleven*, 39, pp. 1–18 (1994), p. 7.

14. Alain Lipietz, *Towards A New Economic Order: Postfordism, Ecology and Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 2.

15. Jo Marie Griesgraber and Bernhard G. Gunter (eds), *Promoting Development: Effective Global Institutions for the Twenty-First Century*, Pluto Press, London, 1995, p. 24.

16. Ibid., p. 124.

17. Ibid., pp. 105–6.

18. Smitu Kothari and Harsh Sethi (eds), *Rethinking Human Rights*, New Horizon Press, New York, 1989; S. Parvez Manzoor, 'Human rights: secular transcendence or cultural imperialism?', *Muslim World Book Review*, 15 (1), pp. 3–10 (1994); Vinay Lal, 'The imperialism of human rights', *Focus on Law Studies*, 8 (1), pp. 5–11 (Fall 1992); Chandra Muzaffar, *Human Wrongs*, Just World Trust, Penang, 1996; Raimundo Panikkar, 'Is human rights a Western concept?', *Breakthrough*, 10 (2–3), Winter/Spring 1989, pp. 30–4; and Bhikku Parekh, 'The cultural particularity of liberal democracy', in David Held (ed.), *Prospects for Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1993.

19. Griesgraber and Gunter, *Promoting Development*, p. 90.

20. Richard Welford, *Environmental Strategy and Sustainable Development*, Routledge, London, 1995.

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22. Ismael Al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*, IIIT, Herndon, Virginia, 1988; AbdulHamid Abu Sulayman, *Towards*

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25. Jafar Shaykh Idris, 'The Islamic way of developing nations', in *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Convention of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists*, Association of Muslim Social Scientists, Plainsfield, Indiana, 1982.

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20 What Chaos? What Coherence? Across the River I Called

What are the 'non-western cosmological views of coherence and chaos'? An attempt to answer this question would be an exercise in subordination. We have already heard the western views of coherence and chaos – the non-western views come after the western views and in the hierarchical structure of this conference they have already been rendered inferior and subordinate. The 'right' perceptive has already been presented; I am now supposed to present the marginal – and some would argue the irrelevant – views so that those with a guilty conscience can sleep more easily.

When is a question not a question? When it inherently enframes the answer in an oppressive mould. To ask what views do non-western cultures have on coherence and chaos is to enframe non-western ideas into the western conceptual categories 'chaos' and 'coherence'. To answer the question is thus already to accept enframement by categories that are alien to non-western cultures. Meaningful appreciation and concepts: the way they describe themselves. Thus, instead of attempting the folly of forcing non-western cosmologies into currently fashionable notions of the west, I will offer a non-western perspective on chaos and coherence.

We Will Tell You What to Say!

The most powerful force for coherence on the global scale is the definitional power of the west. It is the west that defines what it is to be civilised, free, democratic, advanced, developed scientific ... By accepting these definitions, non-western cultures enslave themselves in a chaotic incoherence of self-identity while, from a western perspective, presenting a global picture of coherence! This coherence is a trick of definition, a linguistic phenomenon, an imposition of western perception of order on non-western societies. Most of the buzz words used to deploy the messages of chaos theory have already been overwritten as the western diagnosis of the indigenous condition of the non-west. This is true not just of terms

like 'chaos', 'disorder', 'randomness', 'simplicity' and 'complexity' but even of the 'aesthetic values' of the 'new mathematics of fractal geometry' which, according to Gleick, 'brought hard science in tune with the peculiarly modern feeling for untamed, uncivilized, undomesticated nature. At one time rainforests, deserts, bush and badlands represented all that society was striving to subdue.'[1] The descriptors 'chaos', 'disorder', 'randomness' and 'simplicity' belongs in a set with 'untamed, uncivilised, undomesticated'. They are categories that have been rigorously created and reformulated over time, social constructions, that explore the dichotomy between complexity and simplicity, civilised and uncivilised nature and artifice, us and them. As such, these terms carry with them the continuing reverberations of distortions of reality which have been used to achieve dominance over people, to subdue that which is not the west. Thus, from a straightforward, non-western perspective we can define coherence as the definitional power of the west; and chaos as the attempts of the non-west to break away from the definitional stranglehold of the West. This is, of course, not the scientific meaning of the term 'chaos'.

The Moving Finger Writes

Chaos theory is the new science of non-linear systems. Chaos itself has been defined in a number of different ways: 'a kind of order without periodicity', 'apparently random recurrent behaviour in a simple deterministic (clockwork-like) system', and 'dynamics freed at last from the shackles of order and predictability ... systems liberated to randomly explore their very dynamical possibility ... exciting variety, richness of choice, a cornucopia of opportunity'.[2] However, the new science, as well as various attempts to define chaos, are part and parcel of the western worldview of science. This despite the fact that chaos theory presents a challenge to the conventional world picture of science.

Chaos is a loaded term. Its widespread application as the name for a new science, a new perspective on the natural world, does not convey with precision or clarity the nature of the phenomena its methodology has made apparent. This point has been made by those who consider 'chaos' to be a poor name for the 'new science' because it implies randomness. For them, the overriding message of the theory is that simple processes in nature can produce edifices of complexity without randomness. In non-linearity and feedback lie

all the necessary tools for encoding and then unfolding structures as rich as the human brain. Yet chaos is the name, and the name is significant. The complexity produced from simplicity by non-linearity and feedback makes chaotic all the assumptions and assurances on which science has been operating for the last 400 years of its dominance of modernity, and the two millennia of the exclusively western history that it traces all the way back to Euclid and his geometry. The chaos so pertinently named is in the selection process that made western science, made it dominant, and the cutting edge of a worldview that specialised in domination.

As a new worldview, chaos demonstrates that the universe and all that is in it cannot be approximated in straight lines, as a ball rolling down a table through time; equally it shows that predictability is a rare phenomenon, one operating only within the constraints that science has filtered out from the rich diversity of our complex world. Quite simply, chaos theory shows that 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'[3] The most significant question we have to ask is whether the deeply entrenched enterprise of scientism, all that has been built on the foundations of the scientific method, will react to this jolt like that other Horatio, Horatio Nelson, who when sent a signal he did not wish to receive merely placed his telescope to his blinded eye. The other alternative, accepting the signal sent by this vision of complexity, opens for the first time a genuine opportunity for debate between the west and the non west – if only we can capture the real import and meaning of the complexity so wonderfully revealed.

What is 'new' about the 'new science' of chaos is the mathematics. The actual insights revealed by chaos theory are hardly new for non-western cultures, for humility before nature, richness and diversity of life, the generation of complexity from simplicity, the need to understand the whole to understand a part – these are the things that the non-west not only believed but acted upon; they are intrinsic in most non-western worldviews. The west did not accept these axioms when the non-west offered them as an alternative vision; now, however, that they have been proved mathematically they are rapidly becoming common currency. The aesthetics of the Mandelbrot set have astounded scientists and enthralled laypersons alike; however, for someone whose visual sense has been formed by Islamic art and design, what is the revelation? Go inside any historic mosque and look at the ceiling! There you will find simple patterns

generating complexity as a mental tool to focus the intellect on the contemplation of the Infinite.

Consider the insight of chaos theory that simple variations in initial conditions can yield radically different complexities. Now examine the alternative development literature, the critiques of the Latin American schools of dependencies, the Indian criticism of modernisation, the Muslim scholarship on westernisation. They are all saying the same thing: sensitive dependence on initial conditions would not allow the western model of development to work in their region! And 20 years on, chaos enscapsulates the same criticism in trendy mathematics and eye-catching computer graphics. One could say that the arrival of chaos substantiates that critique as authoritative. In my opinion, that would be similar to requiring a cart to start pulling the horse. Those of us who have had our eyes on the real world have known all along the theorem of sensitive dependence, the impossibility, illiberality, not to say totalitarian imposition of creating the right initial conditions for economic take off in the non-west. Common sense and experience of the real world were all that was necessary to make the breakthrough to a rigorous critique of the enterprise of development at all levels and in all the details of its operation. Over and over again the scholars of non-western cultures have urged that the complex initial conditions of our civilisations and environments have been insufficiently understood, that valued elements in our holistic context have not been taken into account and thus the grandly devised simplistic programmes could not achieve their projected ends. The litany of case studies to substantiate the point is too long and too well known. Gandhi summarised the point rather neatly when he said: 'If it took a quarter of the world to make Britain an industrialised nation how many planets would India need?'

Now consider what is perhaps the most relevant insight of chaos to futures studies: sensitive dependence on initial conditions is not only a fact but the exact nature of all relevant initial conditions is unknowable. Therefore, forecasting and futures planning must incorporate built-in redundancies, adaptability, the capacity to cope with a variety of diverse potential situations. One can no longer rely on there being crucial determining factors – all factors are crucial and key indicators. We already have an example of precisely the shift we need to make due to this 'new' insight in dealing with real systems in the real world. If we look at the literature on the Sahelian drought of the early seventies we find just the kind of case study we

need. The Sahelian drought became one of the formative examples of the theory of man-made disasters. The event of successive failure of the monsoon rains and subsequent crop failure and famine brought forth a great response from the international community. Aid was driven across the desert to remote, desolate outposts, while new initiatives of remote sensing, re-greening the desert and a whole array of techniques to alter the steady southward drift of the sands were debated. Climate was initially seen as the determining factor in a serious human tragedy. Remote responses involved the greatest sophistication of modern science while in the short term successive waves of aid were fed into the affected regions to stave off what was expected to be recurrent famine until some large-scale relief could be found to rebalance the climate of the region. As a bonus, however, the nomadic people of the region, much to the relief of local administrations, could be settled at the centres where they came to evade starvation.

Some time afterwards the human dynamic of the development of the region came under scrutiny. The subtle interplay between colonialism and the exploitation of the environment it introduced as a precursor to the development policies of the era of independence was introduced into the debate. It was this dynamic system of societal exploitation, as many of the most perceptive social studies early in the history of the Sahelian drought pointed out, that held the real predictive and forecasting power for the disaster that unfolded. Colonialism allowed the best agricultural land in a fragile environment to be siphoned out of subsistence farming. Subsistence became the function of marginal land and the amount of marginal land devoted to the business of growing food for sustenance continued to be gradually reduced. The trend persisted in the region after independence, when the drive was for cash crops to earn hard currency to sustain the broad-ranging development plans of the new nations.

Now the Sahel has always been a region of mixed sedentary agriculture and pastoralism, a mix that reflected a complex adaptation to the ecological realities of a region that has always been prone to periods of drought. The traditional pattern had been for farmers to hold extensive stocks of standby grain to tide them over lean years, yes, even as much as to last seven lean years, for experience had taught that droughts would come in waves when they came. Then subsistence would move from the best land to marginal agricultural land which was another form of fallback reserve. In good years

marginal land had always been shared with pastoralists who spent most of their time in the non-agricultural areas, exploitable in good years but requiring the fall back of the marginal land in poor years. The dynamic of the changed used under colonialism, and then under the impetus of development, completely undermined the prudential traditional strategy, which enabled maximum use to be made of the available land within the recognised constraints of the environment and the variability to which it had long been subject. This maximum use included the complex symbiosis of sedentary agriculture and pastoralism. In the history of the genesis and management of the Sahelian drought it can be shown that every long-range strategy was the wrong choice. Even the international aid developed a classic cycle of dependency long after the drought proper had come and gone, and acted only to sustain the dependency it had created. For never in such an environment under such policies as were deemed conventional wisdom was there a safe time to send the population back to its previous pursuits.

The only way in which modern forecasting could have assisted in strengthening the region against the onset of another drought would have been to encourage a return to traditional strategies, an option that was not top of anyone's agenda. Instead, settling the pastoralists as a response to the first Sahelian drought significantly aided the onset of the second Sahelian drought, which duly followed after a few years. The project of modernity has tried to overwrite a complex region of the world with inane simplicity, it brought forth a highly complicated cycle of dearth, dispossession and death, a human disaster on a vast scale. The only strategy that could have been effective was what the people affected once took as their own wisdom; a wisdom that virtually no one consulted or treated as a repository of ideas and solutions to pressing problems. This traditional prudentialism, the keeping of surplus grain as a hedge against bad years, basing one's land-use needs on the worst-case scenarios to allow for the variability of unforeseeable events, events which are not unnatural but actually deeply natural irregularities, all these now sound like the kind of ideas that could march straight out of the science of chaos, as an ideally adaptive answer to the new vision of the world and how dynamic systems operate. Chaos is simply stating the non-western obvious with a sense of real discovery – and wrapping it in mathematical formulae as proof positive that at last, by Jove, you've got it!

The Number of the Rose

The western notion of science and rationality is deeply rooted in mathematical realism. Only that which can be described by mathematics is real and can be believed. The laws of nature are writ large in the heavens in indelible mathematical ink waiting to be discovered. The conviction that the true meaning of nature is to be found only in mathematical formulae goes back to Pythagoras, who believed that both reason and intuition can be encapsulated in the harmonies that numbers display, and to Plato, for whom mathematics is a pointer to the ultimate reality of the world of forms that overshadows the visible world of sense data. Whatever western scientists actually believe, they work – indeed, the dominant paradigm of science forces them to work – as though pi is really in the sky. This approach, as John Borrow notes, 'elevates mathematics pretty close to God in traditional theology. Mathematics is part of the world, but transcends it. It must exist before and after Universe.'[4]

Most non-western cultures believe that the world is potentially and actually intelligible because at some level it is algorithmically compressible and can be described by mathematics. Witness the mathematical achievements of Hindu science (which introduced zero and the decimal point), Chinese science (which first integrated mathematics and aesthetics) and Islamic science (which discovered and formulated algebra and trigonometry). However, while the western perception equated mathematics with truth and reality, the non-western cultures and civilisations have always held both reality and truth to be infinitely more complicated and certainly not totally amenable to a single (mathematical) approach. When al-Baruni, the eleventh-century Muslim mathematician and scholar who first measured the specific gravity of numerous base metals, first came across yoga in India, he immediately declared his mathematical knowledge to be useless in the study of the new science he had encountered. The relevant questions one can ask of yoga, he declared, are not amenable to mathematical answers; a different reality was at work here and one needed a different method and approach to study it. For him there was no question of superiority or inferiority: his two subjects of study, yoga and the determination of the co-ordinates of Indian cities, required two different approaches, each as valid as the other. But a western mind would immediately have relegated yoga to be an inferior science because it is not amenable to the western God: mathematical formulation.

The different approach to mathematics in the west and the non-west also generate different notions of truth. In most non-western cultures truth is a priori given; in Islam, for example, its source is revelation. In western perception, truth is arrived at by some act of observation and mathematical formulation; it is known only a posteriori. Thus, while non-western cultures start with a set of basic axioms, western civilisation is forever searching for truth, something to believe in. Chaos theory is the latest manifestation of this perpetual and insatiable quest.

For the last few decades, the quest for the truth that can be indisputably proved has accelerated, partly due to the breakdown of all belief systems in the west and partly due to the awesome power for mathematical manipulation that the computer has unleashed. In mathematics, this quest has manifested itself in a number of fashions and fads. Each fashion was supposed to provide us with new all-encompassing insights into nature and reality and bring us face to face with ultimate reality. In the fifties, games theory was supposed to describe human behaviour and thus lead us to controlling and managing it. In the sixties, René Thom's catastrophe theory, which describes the dynamics of certain non-linear systems, was projected as a universal law that explained everything from embryological development to social revolution. Then came fuzzy sets for which equally grandiose claims were made. Now we have chaos theory, and the most passionate advocates of this theory claim that twentieth-century science will be remembered only for relativity, quantum mechanics and chaos theory. But even as we discuss chaos at this conference, it is being overshadowed by complexity, the theory of 'life at the edge of chaos', which, according to Roger Lewin, 'includes the entire spectrum from embryological development, evolution, the dynamics of ecosystems, complex societies, right up to Gaia ... it is a theory of everything.'[5] If one examines the claims made for each of these theories in the literature, one notices that not just the claims for each theory have the same tone, but the words used to describe these claims are almost exactly the same. Physics has been marching to the same tune: string theory, the current hot topic, is now supposed to lead us, to use Stephen Hawking's words, right into the 'the mind of God'. For the last half century, western thought has been moving in a spiral constrained by well defined boundaries.

Underlying these fads and fashions in western science is the Grand Desire of absolutism, which can be encapsulated in unitary code, thus reducing nature, intuition, the world, human beings, the entire

universe into a single equation that can be printed on an outsize T-shirt. When this is done there can be an answer, as presented in the pithy satire of Douglas Adams's *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*;[6] the answer can also be printed on a T-shirt. Once this goal of absolutism has been realised, it will be necessary of couse, to ask once again what is the question.

Despite its obvious holistic nature, its emphasis on diversity and its claims to be the end of reductive science, chaos theory is actually part and parcel of self-glorifying, reductive western science. Chaos, like western science itself, postulates the universe as a computer. It is the latest manifestation of the search for a Theory of Everything. From the perspective of non-western cultures, one can ask the obvious question: Why should the categories of thought and understanding of Western science, including chaos theory, be able to cope with the scope and nature of the real word, let alone describe everything that is out there? From within western science, there seem to be only two options for the future of chaos theory. It can go the way of previous fads on the conveyor belt of theories with little technological use, to be overtaken by the next hot topic to come along. Or it can become a technique, settle into normalcy as routine science. Both of these options leave the science of chaos very much in the mainstream of what science has been and how it has being doing its stuff.

But there is another option that seems self-evident from the non-western perspective. It arises from taking the insights which non-western perspectives have always held about reality, and the new vision that the science of chaos offers, as description rather than a how-to manual, and beginning to think afresh about the enterprise of science itself. Here is the opportunity to question the shortcomings of science both as vision and practice, to appreciate the violations of the real world, to cross-examine the values and aesthetics it has authored, and to put back into the fabric of science the debates it has expunged in order to assure its dominance. This means including moral and ethical scrutiny in the heart of the operation of science, and hence humanising it. It means making holism the focus of science and including social responsibility as part of its total responsibility to the whole of the real world.

Can You Tell the Difference Between Butter and Margarine?

If chaos theory is going to be a springboard for reformulating the enterprise of science, which would necessarily include opening it to

the perceptions and insights of the non-west, it has to discover a different set of questions that it can meaningfully ask. To this quest for meaningful questions there is no pre-existing, predetermined answer. There is a necessity for a new kind of debate based on mutual respect and equality between science and other perspectives, as well as between the west and the non-west.

Conventional western science is best at home attacking problems that require technique rather than insight. It is a science based on mathematical recipes that asks and seeks to answer a set of predetermined questions. The search for the Theory of Everything is the quest for the ultimate recipe, the technique whose application could decode the message of Nature in every circumstance. The radical option for chaos theory is to make the non-questions that western science has been asking and hammering away at visible in all their patented irrelevance, and to accept the limitations intrinsic to scientific methodology – there will always be circumstances beyond the reach of technique.

Chaos theory must proceed with the fact that the prudential understanding of the non-west is the equivalent of the insight chaos theory proclaims as the new improved brand name. It must find a way to go beyond the repetitive cycle of questions that western science always asks. The theme of this questioning boils down to this: Can you tell the difference between butter and margarine? Butter is a product which has been with us since before recorded history, a peasant product, which is one use of the term 'natural'. But it is not a naturally occurring product, it is a technology, based on the understanding of the principle of how to turn a liquid into a solid. It is not simple. Indeed, here both the terms 'natural' and 'simple' partake of the construction of ignorance characteristic of the western knowledge industry. Because the science and technology of butter had been around longer than anyway cares to think critically about, they can be taken for granted, they can be dismissed as simple and natural. This leaves little space for a genuine appreciation of the distinction between mankind as artificer and processes on which the manufacturing hand of mankind has had no impact. What we call the natural environment, after all, is already the product of a long process of interaction between man and nature, a decided product of non-linear feedback peocesses. Even the rainforest, the last frontier of the wild, so-called, is a human habitat of great sophistication, one where so-called primitive people have in effect demonstrated the most enterprising adaptability in devising

a system of symbiosis with natural potential. Many of the essential ingredients of the modern diet, such as the potato, were first domesticated in the Amazon rainforest.

Some time ago butter was accused of being a dangerous product, a contributory factor in heart disease, a significant cause of death in developed societies and a rising factor amongst the causes of death even in the non-western world. So along came margarine, a synthetic product engineered to be healthier by the appliance of science. If you ate butter you were not only stupid for eating something that was killing you, but inferior is not recognising the superior product of mathematics.

Now the science which recognised butter as potentially injurious as well as the science which engineered margarine were quite impeccable. The trouble is they were both faulty in social understanding, too partial and too partisan to be sustainable answers to what is actually a non-problem. First, it is not butter which is causing heart disease, it is an over-affluent lifestyle, incorporating too little exercise, or physical labour, plus an overindulgence in the consumption of butter among a long list of other rich foods. Secondly, the object of the exercise was to diminish the cause of death, where death is defined as anathema, an unnatural process incompatible with a high quality of life!

The non-western view of the question 'Can you tell butter from margarine? begins from a different premise: death is a natural process. The quality of life then includes the necessity of death, the epidemiology of the quality of life does not model itself on the need to chip away at each new successive worst offender in the cause-of-death stakes. Incidentally, science confines itself only to those causes of death it feels it can manipulate, that is, hope to eradicate. The most likely cause of death for a young adult male in the United States today is violence, but that is not, we are told, a scientific problem – just let them eat margarine. Viewed from a non-western perspective, the flaws in all the studies which have tracked the course of the differential benefits of butter and margarine become evident. There are too many initial conditions to which the studies were insensitive, too many variables for there to be any reliance on the predictable results of making a shift from butter to margarine having any demonstrable effect whatsoever on the incidence of degenerative heart disease as a cause of death. And, of course, ultimately death would result anyway. It might very well be a socially significant change in behaviour for large numbers of people to shift from

consuming butter to margarine. But do they also give up cigarettes and alcohol, move to a clean air environment (if they can locate one) sufficiently vary their inert lifestyles, convert to the doctrine of jogging and exercise and switch to designer-label mineral water (in which case, which designer label? not all being equal) and so on and on runs the list. And at the end of it all come the studies demonstrating margarine too can be injurious to your chances of living forever. Just as there are competing studies demonstrating the different virtues and vices of coffee, a gain in the colon cancer department for the determined coffee drinker, but a minus when it comes to other cancerous processes.

So the question, Can you tell the difference between butter and margarine? is a highly emotive non-question. A synthetic product cannot get off the ground unless it mirrors the taste of a 'natural' product, but the answer to the question of whether you can sufficiently suspend disbelief or confuse your taste buds provides no meaningful answer to the conception or resolution of a problem to which the devising of margarine was supposed to contribute. Hey, if you're going to die anyway why not select a comfortable trajectory including butter? None of the studies prescribes or actually predicts what will happen to any given individual anyway.

It is a basic function of western science to go on and on generating questions and things to investigate without ever considering the whole picture, the context in which its enquiries acquire meaning and significance. The human chaos that is derived from pursuing the question 'can you tell butter from margarine?' in part was revealed by studies of indigenous peoples in various parts of the world where the simple scientific model did not hold true, where people could contentedly eat their butter and fatty foods without keeling over from heart failure. It has become increasingly common in many different disciplines of western knowledge in recent years to look to the example of 'primitive' or 'simple' societies, all non-western, to generate explanatory models that elucidate the complexities that perplex the modern west. But all this generates only noise, for there is no overarching framework for the results of such cross-checking to be rendered meaningful. We end up with numerous scientific papers that tell the average sentient layperson precisely nothing about the most appropriate way to organise their eating habits. The results of the appliance of science is a cul-de-sac, lamented movingly by the folk group the Corries in the song 'The Food Blues': Imagine walking into a motorway restaurant and asking,

'What can I eat that's going to make me last?' The waiter gives you a litany of the perils and pitfalls of the menu, everything from hormones in meat, mercury in fish, to pesticides on fruit and vegetables and cholesterol in eggs. Eventually, he suggests you could take 'A small drink of water in a tiny wee glass' – but after a pause for thought he adds, 'Never mind the water, there's carcinogens in it.' And that's how you get the Food Blues and end up walking out into the street realising there's nothing you can eat!

So, in pondering the question 'Can you tell butter from margarine? – or margarine from butter?' we can effectively usher in the entire conception of chaos. One should, of course, remember the subtle distinction in how the question is posed: 'Can you tell butter from margarine?' is a different question from 'Can you tell margarine from butter?' and the answers can't be conflated to make them a response to the same thing. If in doubt, ask any polling organisation. People too are sensitive to initial conditions, even, or especially, when it comes to non-questions.

There's Logic in Them Semantics

Words are important in any discourse. If there is to be a dialogue between the west and the non-west that is constructively enhanced by the arrival of a new scientific worldview then the import and meaning of chaos needs to be established.

The philosophy and methodology of conventional western science did not develop in a vacuum. It arose with initial conditions in a social context, and developed in a feedback loop, a reciprocal relationship with its particular societal context. Even the prologue to the most abstract mathematical article uses words, words embued with significance and resonant with the social context and its history, to establish the parameters within which the mathematical inquiry has relevance. Or to paraphrase Mary Midgeley's point about even the most abstract thought in science: it is associated with a world picture and the picture is informed by words and ideas of long ancestry and pervasive resonance within a social context.[7] The social context, not to be coy, of course, is that most notorious of all non-linear dynamic systems – a civilisation. To be absolutely precise, in the case of modern science the social context is western civilisation.

The semantic field of the term chaos is deeply embedded in the western psyche. It has an ancestry as a term for the primordial condition, or anti-condition out of which the world as we know it,

the natural world, the world of human existence and thought, was created. It is the term for all that is not ordered, for what lies beyond the boundaries of the ethos, ideology and philosophy that established the means of knowing, being and doing of the world in the right way. Chaos is antithesis, or perhaps more properly antimatter, to all that makes life sustainable and knowable. Regularity, rule, order, belief in doctrine, these are the substance of the habitable world of matter-of-fact existence, the world after chaos. Chaos has played a part in every speculation about social or material order, it has taken the role of the alternative, the Other, the unacceptable backdrop operating as imperative and necessity urging on the human constructs that seek to promote order.

Chaos is something more than disorder. It is the absence of any possibility of rule or rationality. Disorder is something that can emerge within or as a consequence of order itself. Disorder marches to the same drummer, but mischievously or maliciously, it recognises that which it flouts or defies. 'Disorder' is another of the recurrent words in the literature of scientific chaos. One of the reasons for the perception of disorder is the new science's apprehension of randomness, that things do not happen with regularity, periodicity, and predictability. Randomness is related to chance, to factors that cannot be quantified, to impulses or impetus arising from outside the system.

The notion of systems ushers in two ubiquitous categories used in the terminology of this new science: simple and simplicity, and complex and complexity. The new proposition that is being demonstrated by this new science is that simple systems can give rise to complex behaviour and complex behaviour answers to simple rules. The world pictures associated with the terms 'simple' and 'complex' are the most elaborated and wide ranging socially constructed notions, value-laden terms par excellence.

Yet the phenomena that scientific chaos observes neatly invert the familiar socially constructed implications of the terms 'simple' and 'complex.' Simplicity without outside influence is an information system that generates complexity. Complexity, the term which social science has reserved exclusively for the developed west, becomes nothing more than the operation of simple rules. Variety and diversity is not just the beauty of the natural order but its strength and resilience, its ability to sustain self-similarity no matter what. We could also have told you that. Had you been listening, it is what

the non-west has been proclaiming and it is the practice, in the guise of cultural resistance, that we have had to adopt for our very survival.

Then what of the name chaos? The development of science was a liberation because it overturned the doctrinaire rigidities of the religious worldview. Chaos theory is a liberation because it overturns the rigidities of the straight-line thinking of conventional science. It creates the feelings of being free, of having an almost anarchistic freedom in the diversity of possibilities it opens. Hence the name chaos, which makes a direct appeal to a certain generation of western scientist, that generation that gloried in the idea of just letting it be. However, the selection of the name, the accumulation of the terminology of the world pictures this theory deploys, tempts another more ominous construction: that it is another twist of the romantic fallacy of wild nature. Romanticism has been around the spiral before. Perhaps this time its to be the passport to irresponsibility. So far chaos theory has been silent on the ends it can perceive for the means it has not devised.

Return to Go!

You cannot desensitise the world to complexity. That has been the approach of modernity, and such an approach is now revealed to have been, not an impossible dream, but a brute beast's bludgeon violating the essence of nature itself; it has been a Faustian nightmare. Complexity is; it is the order of the universe; and from all of us, of the west and the non-west, it must occasion an appropriate response. The greatest response must come from those who are furthest removed from the appreciation of the forms and content of complexity. The onus of change is on the western viewpoint: it is western chaos. The west's own engine of originality has now shown the partiality, the bias and hence the limited imagination and apprehension of the world's reality, the banality of certainties it has used to remake the world. The crucial question is what will the establishment, the dominant establishment do now? How sensitive will the panoply of dominance be to a new vision of initial conditions, how ready to accept culpable blame for the negligence of being partial, incomplete and arrogant? How ready will the institutional might of western science, embedded as it is in the economic and political dominance of the west, be to repatterning itself in consonance with

this new vision of complexity? These are potent questions but they are questions to the west, about the future of the west.

The bad truth is that chaos, as western science now apprehends it, has little to teach the non-west. But it does present the west with an opportunity to raise questions that do not formulate and enframe their answers in oppressive moulds. To acquire the ability to generate such questions one needs to look at more than the extremes of chaos and coherence, one must feast one's eyes upon the whole spectrum of diversity and thought, insight and wisdom that is hidden from your view in non-western cultures and civilisations.

Understanding requires holism. The enterprise of science can only grow up to true complexity when it can integrate into its ends and means a moral and ethical dimension. This additional reflex must be preservative of diversity, respectful of complexity, and supportive of choice. It is hard to see that the new science of chaos, for all the wonder it harbours and encourages for the beauty of the natural world in which we live, will actually develop a greater sense of the necessity and imperative of moral and ethical discourse as the guiding dynamic of its inquiry and way of doing science. If the holism is to be taken into account then the values of all the world's cultures in all their diversity are salient initial conditions to which sensitivity is essential, and this holds just as true for the moral and ethical ideas of the west itself – they have all played their part in making the richness of our world. They cannot be ignored if we aim to make improvements in the quality of people's lives that are meaningful to the individuals concerned.

We have to accept a new equivalence between perspectives. We would do well to realise that the only place western science can turn to to relearn the centrality of moral and ethical debate to the intellectual scientific process is the emergent discourses of cultural resistance that have been reviving the sciences and technologies of non-western traditional worldviews. Through chaos and beyond, we have to emerge into a dynamic new era of interrelationship.

Notes

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Ziauddin Sardar:
A Working Bibliography

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A comprehensive bibliography of Ziauddin Sardar's writings, spanning 30 years and covering his scholarly and intellectual output, as well as essays, journalism and reviews, would be a book in its own right. Here, we concentrate almost exclusively on his books and papers. But we have included most of his intellectual articles from the 'Ideas' section of *Afkar: Inquiry*, the magazine he conceived and edited from June 1984 to September 1987. *Afkar: Inquiry*, which ceased publication in December 1987, is now seen as one of the most influential English-language Muslim magazines of recent history, and played an important role in the formation of Sardar's own thought. Also include are a selection of key articles, which initiated the contemporary discourse on Islamic science, from *Nature* and *New Scientist*; as well as major review articles from *The Muslim World Book Review*. Books that have appeared in different editions, as well as translations (although it has not been possible to trace all of the translations of Sardar's work into other languages) and papers and articles published in more than one journal, are grouped together under the year of the original publication.

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