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# The Islamization of Science. Four Muslim Positions Developing an Islamic Modernity

Leif Stenberg, *Aga Khan University*



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*Leif Stenberg*

THE ISLAMIZATION OF SCIENCE



*Leif Stenberg*

# The Islamization of Science

Four Muslim Positions Developing  
an Islamic Modernity

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*For  
Agneta  
Johan and Carl*



## Foreword

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## **Abbreviations**

AJISS	American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences
AMSE	Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers
AMSS	Association of Muslim Social Scientists
EI	Encyclopedia of Islam
FEI	First Encyclopedia of Islam
FOSIS	Federation of Students' Islamic Societies
IIIT	International Institute of Islamic Thought
IIITM	International Institute of Islamic Thought Malaysia
MAAS	The Muslim Association for the Advancement of Science
OIC	Organization of Islamic Conferences
SEI	Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam



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# 1. Introduction

## *The first encounter*

In 1987 I participated in a project dealing with science and technology in the Arab World.<sup>1</sup> One purpose of the project was to collect bibliographic data on literature concerning the general status of science and technology in the region. As we carried out this task, we became acquainted with a number of books and articles by Ziauddin Sardar and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, which triggered my interest in what I later came to refer to as a *discourse on the Islamization of science*. Consequently, their works formed the original impetus for the present study.

A few years later, in 1989, I was visiting the London Central Mosque at Regent's Park. After having spent just a few minutes in the entrance hall I was addressed by an enthusiastic and well-dressed young man. He insisted on showing me the mosque. Later, we discussed Islam in general and various perspectives on the Islamization of knowledge in particular. It all ended with me purchasing two books by Maurice Bucaille. This was my first serious contact with his works.

In the beginning of 1990 I was attending a seminar in Sweden, and a Muslim convert showed me a copy of the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. That was my first acquaintance with the work of Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). The legacy of al-Faruqi and the institute's ideas on Islam and knowledge are primarily to be found in this journal. Nevertheless, the journal also publishes articles independent of the opinions of the IIIT.

## *Themes and aims of the thesis*

The aim of this thesis is to analyse a contemporary debate on the Islamization of science. The four persons whose works will be discussed here are individuals belonging to a Muslim intellectual elite: the French convert and physician Maurice Bucaille, the Persian-American scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the British-Pakistani author Ziauddin Sardar and the Arab-American scholar Ismail Raji al-Faruqi. They represent four positions in the contemporary understanding of Islam and they all have an influence among other Muslim intellectuals. The debate on the role and function of a specifically Islamic form of science has been crystallised and intensified during the last 25 years. It can be seen as part of a broader discussion where the overall question concerns the function of Islam in relation to modernity.

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<sup>1</sup>See Sternö, Stenberg & Knutsson 1988.

Today, a growing number of Muslim scholars and other intellectuals are attempting to combine Islam and scientific knowledge. At the same time, other Muslims are stating that while Islam is valid and has a place in the lives of individuals, it has no place meddling with scientific knowledge. At stake is the right to define the relation between Islam and science, and the function of Islam in general. In order to formulate ideas concerning the possibility of an Islamization of science, Muslims mobilize an Islamic terminology, and a certain interpretation of the history of Islam. Muslims in Europe and North America play a crucial role in this debate. The interpretations by al-Faruqi, Bucaille, Nasr and Sardar seem to influence the discussions in Muslim countries as well, and their books are referred to as authoritative expositions on Islam among Muslims in various contexts. The European and North American Muslims in the debate could, hypothetically, be seen as Muslims in a non-Muslim environment attempting to counteract the perceived marginalization of Islam. In their understanding, this marginalization is often depicted as a process of secularization. Today, it seems that their interpretations of Islamic traditions could forge new paths in the understanding of Islam among Muslims. Moreover, they represent specific and divergent standpoints in the debate.

My general aim is to present their perspectives on the Islamization of science and point at central elements and patterns in their respective positions. I will analyse their statements and uncover the presuppositions which underly their standpoints. Another aim of this thesis is to emphasize the importance of European and North American Muslims in the contemporary and ongoing discussion on the future prospects of Islam, and in the attempts formulated by believers to come to terms with modernity. Therefore, one question to be discussed in this thesis is the influence of the Western environment on interpretations of Islam. The strategies – the questions and the answers – that Bucaille, al-Faruqi, Nasr and Sardar present, appear to give a picture not only of their understanding of scientific knowledge, but also of how they wish to place themselves as Muslims in a global context. It should be emphasized that the present work primarily is of a descriptive nature since — to my knowledge — this is the first attempt on an academic level to survey the fundamental views of the main actors in this debate. The reader may therefore find the presentation somewhat “pedestrian” and elliptical, lacking a deeper foray into various specific issues. On the other hand, the reader is provided with informations as well as an analysis which lays the foundation for future research into this virgin soil.

From a theoretical point of view, this thesis is both a study of the history of certain ideas, and an analysis founded on methods within the social sciences. I will stress the social relevance of the ideas presented by the participants in the discussion. However, the most central concept in my analysis of the various ideas on the Islamization of science is “discourse”. It is borrowed from Michel

Foucault. The word is here used as a technical term denoting the practice that shapes different statements, a practice concerned with power. "Islam" is viewed as an on-going discourse where different trends are engaged in struggle, and where the successful contender becomes, for the time being, the established tradition, until it is challenged by yet another trend. This is a situation where many "Islams" fight to become the One Islamic tradition. My use of his concept "discourse" will be discussed below.

In general, studies of modern ideological movements among Muslim communities during the last 20 years have emphasized the tendencies usually designated "fundamentalist" or "Islamist". Such movements generally hold that Islam is a social and political order for the state as well as for the individual. In descriptions of these tendencies, their political objectives are often stressed.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, not my primary concern to study phenomena placed under these general headings. Rather, I would like to counterbalance the many studies on Islamism by focusing on interpretations of Islam made from other points of view than the Islamist. Therefore, the thesis contains a presentation of a debate on ideas expressed outside the context of Islamism. However, the ideological package of Islamism cannot be avoided by the exponents in the debate and they have to relate to that phenomenon in some way. They also share various presuppositions with exponents of Islamism, although their purposes and practices differ.<sup>3</sup> This study can be seen as an attempt to present various possibilities to interpret Islam in a specific situation, namely in the relationship with modern science.

## Theory and Method

### *An epistemological foundation for my outlook and the many Islams*

My presentation is concerned with, but is not part of, the debate.<sup>4</sup> In general, my approach implies viewing religion as a part of society and culture, that is, religion as a social phenomenon, and not society as a part of a transcendent religion, or society as a religious phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> Such an approach is quite different from

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<sup>2</sup>For an introduction to the anti-secularist policies of religion, see Hallencreutz and Westerlund 1996:1–23.

<sup>3</sup>Islamist movements as well as Bucaille, Al-Faruqi, Nasr and Sardar endeavour to subordinate politics and science to the superior religious order.

<sup>4</sup>The presentation in this section could be considered overly explicit. My intention, however, is to be clear on the points that differ in my approach from the ideas presented in discussions on the function of Islam in Muslim contexts.

<sup>5</sup>This is a "classical" view of religion among social scientists. I am guided by the scientific demands striving towards objectivity and open accounts on method etc. Thus, to be designated a "secularist" or "atheist" is not necessarily an obstacle. For example, Rodinson describes, in an eloquent manner, how an "outsider", in his case an atheist and Marxist, can bring new perspectives to the understanding of Islam. See Rodinson 1971.

the study of religion and of Islam as this is carried out at most theological departments and institutions in Muslim countries.<sup>6</sup> Examples are the faculty of *sharī'a* (Islamic law) at the University of Jordan in Amman,<sup>7</sup> or newly established religious institutions in Europe, where the goal is to educate *imāms*, religious scholars, for Muslims in Europe.<sup>8</sup> The difference in opinion on the role and function of religious education was expressed by the *imām* leading the Friday prayer in the Birmingham central mosque in the early 1990s when he talked about a group of visitors he had received. They were in their final year of Christian theological studies at the University of Cambridge. The *imām* stated: "I asked them how many of you (20-25) believe in God? Only one of them raised his hand, and these are the people who are going to be responsible for the religious education of the children in this country!" This statement manifests a critical opinion of a situation that he sees as gravely erroneous. Adil Özdemir, a member of the Faculty of Theology at the September 9th University in Izmir, Turkey, is very resolute when he discusses the reasons for the existence of theological faculties. He says that "the true purpose in this and other areas is to create modern Islamic thought, the characteristics of a modern Islamic lifestyle, and a type of modern Islamic person."<sup>9</sup> The examples given here are views of a *normative* character. The study of a religion, according to this view, should give the student norms and values in life, but should also reveal the true and genuine forms of the religion studied. They express a *confessional* way of studying religion, which usually includes a comprehension of society as a religious phenomenon.

The present thesis is a descriptive and analytic undertaking. It follows an empirical way of studying religion as a part of society. The basic outlook of the study is that people's religious realities are socially constructed within the limits

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<sup>6</sup>I am not stating that science in Europe and North America is objective and value-free. For a discussion of objectivity towards the subject studied, see Bloor 1991.

<sup>7</sup>The faculty aspires to accomplish the following five aims: 1) To link the present life of the nation with its glorious Islamic civilization. 2) To educate Muslim generations according to the righteous Islamic life. 3) To meet the needs of Jordan and other Arab and Islamic Countries for qualified religious guides, preachers and Imams. 4) To graduate specialists in the teaching of the *sharī'a* to the students of secondary schools and other centers of learning. 5) To graduate efficient would-be judges who may work in Muslim courts and hold posts in Muslim Jurisprudence. See *The University of Jordan Catalogue* (1982:225).

<sup>8</sup>One institute for the training of *imāms* is the Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines in Saint-Léger-de-Fougeret, France. Another form of Islamic institute of higher learning is The Islamic Academy in Cambridge, England. The latter publishes the *The Muslim Education Quarterly*.

<sup>9</sup>Özdemir 1988:6. In general, the objectives of higher education in many Muslim countries expressed in university bulletins, more or less repeat Özdemir's words. See *The Bulletin of King Saud University* (1987:17) and *The Bulletin of Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University* (1993:5-7). There are also numerous articles in various Muslim journals concerned with ideas on Islamic educational methods. See Rabbaniha 1987:44-48 (on the International Islamic University in Malaysia); Siraj 1986:92f. (on the Hamdard foundation in Pakistan); *Arabia* 1986:92f. (on the International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan), *Middle East Education* 1982:19-21 (on the University of Kuwait); and *The Middle East Education* 1981:9-11 (on the King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia).

set by the natural environment and by biology.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the realities experienced, perceived, supported and propagated by people are socially and culturally located. Consequently, in this work the values, ideas and norms developed in a debate concerning the Islamization of science will be analysed as social constructions.

Each religion can have sets of rules, rituals, and some have a number of central – canonical – texts, but the meanings given to the rules, rituals and texts may vary from place to place and time to time. Within the framework in which human beings act, their activities are influenced by the social environment. In matters concerning religion the function of such a framework can be further elucidated by the following example: If your father is a *ṣūfī shaykh* within the *Shādhilīya* order in Damascus, you might become a member of that particular order; or if your father is a pious Muslim migrant from Pakistan and you live in London, it is possible that you, as his son, become a faithful Muslim. But, in both cases, it is also quite possible that you will construct another reality and refrain from joining a *ṣūfī* order or attending the local mosque in a London suburb. The construction of a certain position on religion depends on the context, but also contains elements of personal choice. To be a Muslim is not to be part of a uniform and closed environment. Rather, it is to be part of a continuously evolving tradition. Within that tradition, individuals constantly form new social constructions in order to meet changing realities, but also to meet the demands set by *the* Islamic tradition in general. These constructions contain general propositions which claim that “Islam” is a unique, closed, eternal and all-embracing order for the individual as well as for society.

In this work “Islam” is not understood as an objective phenomenon. Religion is not perceived as independent of peoples’ personal beliefs or interpretations. In the same way it is in my opinion incorrect to assert that a specific religion/ideology contains a system of rules, laws which can be derived unambiguously from normative religious sources. For those who hold the opposite opinion, religion is “objectified”. That standpoint – the “objectification” of Islam – implies a form of *realism*, in the philosophical sense of the word, primarily in regard to Islamic terminology. Islamic terminology and Islamic terms are Arabic words stemming primarily from the Quran. They are, however, not seen as tied to a certain language. The terminology exists in many languages, such as English, Persian, Turkish and Malay and are used among Muslims in majority as well as minority situations. The use of Islamic terminology creates a form of Islamic jargon. The expression jargon is used here to describe a specific way of interpreting religious texts and symbols. A jargon is not necessarily formulated with the conscious intention of manipulating people. Jargon as a means of

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<sup>10</sup>See Berger & Luckmann 1985 (1966):65ff.

communication is directed towards the receiver of the message. The aim is to mobilize people and create support for a specific interpretation of the sacred sources.

In the same way that the human beings whom one studies engage in the social construction of their realities, researchers also construct pictures or models of reality. In order to develop ideas on Islamology we can note that the work of an Islamologist is in itself an expression of a certain socio-historical construction, conditioned by his or her positioning in a contemporary political and cultural framework. Therefore, there are indirect sources of a possible eurocentrism, which can be equally present among scholars from countries without a colonialist past, since one, at least in part, tacitly follows given traditions of interpretation and scholarship. Consequently, I do not think that a descriptive approach would make me objective in my approach. There can be no empirical study without a given perspective. This perspective may be explicit or implicit, but it still introduces a value-based element. Hence, the reading of the text material as well as the understanding of the conversations that form the foundation for the present thesis are influenced by the researcher himself.

### *The point of departure*

A provisional postulate of science implies that I do not share the claims which the participants in the debate on Islamization of knowledge ascribe to Islam.<sup>11</sup> The positions that they develop lead to a desire to formulate strategies in order to give the revealed word of God – the Quran – its rightful position in a modern context. Therefore, I consider the contemporary debate concerning the Islamization of science to be a segment of a “classical” discussion centred around various claims of both science and religion, although imbued with typical modern connotations. The latter is explicit in the participants’ relation to modern technology, and their use – in my view, for a rhetorical purpose – of their knowledge in the field of cultural studies. In their argumentation, they use themes from the ongoing critical debate on knowledge and science carried out in Europe and North America. However, I wish to avoid passing any judgement concerning the potential correctness of the various – and sometimes overlapping – approaches to the Islamization of science studied. I have in discussions with Muslims often met such expectations. To avoid making judgments is, however, a difficult task. The foundation for my work implies a criticism of the view on the relationship between religion and science held by the participants in the debate. However, I think it may be fruitful to critically study a phenomenon from another perspective. Hopefully, this can lead to a greater understanding between various tradi-

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<sup>11</sup>For the idea of science as provisional, see Weber 1991 (1919):138.

tions, both religious and scientific, and also serve as a comparison between different understandings of the function of religion and scientific knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

The different participants in the debate will hopefully recognize themselves in my portrayal. I have therefore approached the four scholars discussed in the thesis and asked them to participate in a discussion with me.<sup>13</sup> Some of them kindly accepted, and I am very thankful for their readiness to help me in this respect. This does not mean that they have accepted, or have had any influence over the analysis: The latter is made on the premises of the researcher.

### *The second encounter*

Since the idea to study Bucaille, al-Faruqi, Nasr and Sardar was born, I have strived to establish personal contacts with them, as well as with other individuals who share the same outlook. I have exchanged letters with Nasr, Sardar, various individuals at the IIIT, Bucaille, and the adherents of their respective positions. The idea has also grown out of a broad discussion on how to present and represent the ideas of the Other. One outcome of the encounter with representatives of different standpoints in the debate is that I have gained respect for their ideas as well as for them as individuals. In the end, I hope that this has made me understand their views better. I have visited Seyyed Hossein Nasr on two occasions in Washington DC, and have also attended a series of lectures that he delivered at the University of Birmingham, England. Nasr has read and commented on outlines of the chapter that concerns his position in the debate. I have met Ziauddin Sardar on two occasions in London and have sent him drafts of the chapter that concerns his ideas. He has also commented on earlier outlines of “his” chapter. I have never met Ismail al-Faruqi personally, since he tragically was murdered in 1986, before the work leading to the present thesis was begun. I have, however, been in contact with the IIIT. My contacts at the institute have been Yusuf T. DeLorenzo and, to a lesser extent, Muhyiddin Atiyyah. I have on two occasions visited the IIIT in Herndon, Virginia. During my last visit, deLorenzo received an outline of the chapter on al-Faruqi and the IIIT. Maurice Bucaille has declined to meet me. In letters to me he states that the reason for his refusal is his lack of competence in discussing questions concerning an Islamization of science. He is not interested in discussing various theories of science, and suggests that a reading of his books is enough for my enquiry. Bucaille did, however, accept to read and comment on the parts of the thesis that concerns his ideas. It goes without saying that my personal contact with these individuals and their suggestions have influenced my understanding of their ideas and the content of the chapters.

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<sup>12</sup>This goal can receive support within the field of theory of science (Elzinga & Jamison 1981:59f.).

<sup>13</sup>The character of the contacts will be discussed below, but I will underline that I have chosen to designate them as “conversations” in order to stress the informal character of the talks.

*Choosing Bucaille, al-Faruqi, Nasr and Sardar – and some limitations*

A reason for my choice of Bucaille, al-Faruqi, Nasr and Sardar is that these specific individuals are considered important and their perspectives are widespread among Muslims in Europe and North America. It is difficult to judge their influence, but many educated Muslims are familiar with their names, especially those who have an interest in questions concerning the function of Islam. The books of these four scholars are readily available in Muslim bookshops in Europe and North America. They are also popular among educated Muslims on the Indian subcontinent and in South East Asia, especially in Malaysia. In general, the books are inexpensive. They are accessible in paperback, and in most cases written in an accessible style. A recent trend is also an increasing representation of ideas formulated by the IIT, Sardar and Nasr in Muslim countries in the Middle East. Bucaille is already an authority among various Muslim groups in the West and in Muslim countries in general. In essence, the prominence of the persons that I have chosen to investigate have made them a Muslim “jet-set” travelling world-wide from conference to conference discussing the interpretation, function and future of Islam. Finally, it should be noted that Al-Faruqi, Nasr and Sardar are also participants in non-Muslim debates.

My selection of the four positions can be seen as a strategic and, hopefully, representative choice of what the discussion on the Islamization of science concerns. The ideas of Islamist movements and religious scholars will play a part in the thesis, but not as independent positions. A totally different position is the idea that science and religion are separate entities: A specific Islamic science does not – and cannot – exist, just as there is, in this view, no Christian science or Jewish science. One exponent of such a position would be Abdus Salam, professor in theoretical physics and Nobel laureate in physics 1979. His *Ideals and Realities, Selected Essays of Abdus Salam* (1987)<sup>14</sup> is a polemical text directed against the position taken by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and a reply to Nasr’s book *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (1966). A more recent publication is *Renaissance of Sciences in Islamic Countries* (1994) being an edition of articles and speeches.<sup>15</sup> Abdus Salam is not active in the Muslim debate to the same extent as the exponents of the four positions studied here. His idea – that science and religion are separate entities – is vehemently opposed by Nasr, Sardar, Bucaille as well as al-Faruqi and the IIT. Other examples of individuals involved in the discussions are, or were, the Syrian-German Muslim scholar Bassam Tibi, the British Muslims Syed Ali Ashraf and Akbar S. Ahmed, and the late American Muslim Fazlur Rahman. Syed Ali Ashraf is a British-Bangladeshi Muslim. He founded “The Islamic Academy” in Cambridge, England. The aim of this organi-

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<sup>14</sup>This book was edited by C. H. Lai and is a collection of various writings of Abdus Salam.

<sup>15</sup>This book is also edited by other persons, in this case H.R. Dalafi and M.A. Hassan.

sation is to act as a central forum for Muslim intellectuals for the exchange of ideas, and to formulate Islamic concepts in teaching. As an educational organisation, the Academy also writes textbooks and revises and designs curricula. It cooperates with school authorities on national and local levels. The Academy also publishes *The Muslim Education Quarterly*. Ashraf has, together with Syed Sajjad Husain, published *Crisis in Muslim Education* (1979), and, together with H.H. Bilgrami, *The Concept of an Islamic University* (1985). He is an example of one exponent in the discourse that will not be studied in this thesis.<sup>16</sup>

All of the individuals mentioned above are, or were, active in an academic environment and at the same time represent a specific interpretation of Islam.

#### *Stipulative definitions of certain key terms*

In order to systematize the material that forms the foundation of the thesis, I have used the terms “discourse”, “position” and “exponent”. I am aware of the frequent use of “discourse” as a fashionable word within the academic community. I do, however, consider the term to be useful. “Discourse” often appears to be an ambiguous concept. Hence, I would like to emphasize that there is no clear cut, and generally accepted, definition.

The term is often linked to the work of Michel Foucault.<sup>17</sup> In his literary production the meaning of the word is elusive, and seems to develop as his thinking progresses.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, by reference to Foucault, “discourse” can and has been used in a number of different ways. In other fields, e.g. linguistics and critical theory, discussions concerning the precise denotation of the term have a long history. “Discourse” will, however, not be used here in a limited linguistic meaning, but in a more general way consonant with its use in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, history of religions and cultural studies. In the context of anthropology the term has been defined as “the situated social practices of people speaking, singing, orating, or writing to and about each other”.<sup>19</sup> In such an understanding of the term, it can be combined with those ideas previously presented as constituting the foundation for my outlook. In this respect the ideas of Berger and Luckmann can be combined with the thought of Foucault. All of them emphasize phenomena such as language and communication, systems of classification and symbolic expressions, and they all work with issues that con-

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<sup>16</sup>However, I will in a forthcoming article attempt to present “The Islamic Academy” as a concrete practice that has developed in Europe.

<sup>17</sup>There are many works which try to present the ideas of Foucault, e.g. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983; Rabinow (ed.) 1984; Sheridan 1980 and Wuthnow *et al.* 1987:13–15, 133–178.

<sup>18</sup>Foucault’s work has been characterized as “maddeningly obscure”, see Wuthnow *et al.* 1987:13.

<sup>19</sup>Abu Lughod & Lutz 1990:10. For another example that utilizes the concept of discourse in the same way, see Binder 1988:114.

cern peoples' interpretations and constructions of their lives.<sup>20</sup> Hence, an interpretative understanding of the concept of discourse implies seeing statements as being formed by individuals or by groups in order to create cultural and social patterns. In this way a "discourse" manifests a certain conception of the meaning and function of Islam.

In accordance with the general understanding of "discourse", I intend to use the term in a broad meaning in which a religious tradition – Islam – can be seen as passing through a number of discourses.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the debate concerning the Islamization of science is seen as a discursive practice. Following the ideas of Foucault, the term designates a practice which forms a certain type of statements.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, a Muslim can participate in various discourses in which he or she communicates with others. Further, "discourse" is here utilized in order to systematize and put forward a set of positions, and their exponents, in a broad discussion concerned with the Islamization of science. However, "discourse" is not to be equated with "discussion", "debate" or "conversation" in general.<sup>23</sup> The term implies that there are shared presuppositions, such as the One God and that Muhammad is his prophet, presuppositions which cannot be questioned. Accordingly, there are mechanisms within the discourse that include certain participants and exclude others that do not share this given set of presuppositions. This can be seen, for instance, in the shared critique of the phenomenon designated "fundamentalism" in the chapters on the ideas of Bucaille, al-Faruqi, Nasr and Sardar. One important aspect or component of a discourse is its concern with power. Various interpretations of Islam compete and, as has been stated above, the successful contender's ideas become the established tradition. But the discourse studied here is also connected with power in another way. Al-Faruqi, Bucaille, Nasr and Sardar have, in various ways, connections to regimes in Muslim countries – that is, countries that would like to establish their own understandings of Islam as *the* authentic form. The participants also face another kind of competition, namely from the forces of modernity. Therefore, in the current discourse the contenders express their claims in order to obtain an advantage, that is, to have their position accepted as the authentic interpretation not only of the religious tradition, but also of Islam as an ideology or world order challenging modernity. Seen in this light, statements within the discourse are guided by ideology, religious

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<sup>20</sup>Wuthnow *et al.* 1987:18.

<sup>21</sup>In Binder's *Islamic Liberalism* (1988) one chapter is entitled "Deconstructing Orientalism". In that chapter Binder (1988:114) discusses Foucault's ideas. In a commentary to Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) he states that "Islam" interpreted by Muslims is an example of a discourse.

<sup>22</sup>Foucault gives a reasonably short and clear explanation of "discourse" in an appendix to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) entitled "The Discourse on Language", see Foucault 1972:215–237.

<sup>23</sup>The British historian Quentin Skinner (1988) has developed an analytical method founded on the concept of discourse. One of his points is that "discourse" does not mean simply discussion.

affiliation, political interest and strategic considerations. Consequently, the discursive practice has social relevance. It takes in changes and events – economic and political – in order to formulate new statements. This is in a sense a dialectic relationship in which events and changes shape discourse and, to a certain degree, discourse shapes events.

In order to map out the discursive practice concerning the Islamization of knowledge, the formulated statements have been arranged in “positions”. Each “position” is centered around the ideas of an “exponent”. The term “exponent” in my study refers specifically to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Maurice Bucaille, Ziauddin Sardar and Ismail al-Faruqi. All four will be thoroughly presented in the chapters that deal with their ideas. As exponents of their respective “positions”, they are supported by people who share their views. The people presented as supporters of a given position, as well as the four exponents themselves, share ideas on a number of matters. The exponents’ assumptions are not completely different, and one aim is, as has been stated above, to analyse the specific presuppositions for the statements and the ideas that are held within a given position. In e.g. the position of which Seyyed Hossein Nasr is an exponent, I will show that it is important to see his leaning towards Sufism in order to understand his interpretation of Islam, that is, to connect his ideas to his social and ideological framework. In this thesis the different positions are defined according to a more or less fixed number of headings. Hence, the chapters presenting each position are in most cases systematically structured in the same manner in order to enable the reader to compare the ideas of the positions on a certain subject.

The chapter on each position starts with a presentation of the exponent and his adherents. It is followed by an introduction to the basic ideas of their position. The following parts of the chapter deal with various themes central to the discourse: One addresses the ideas expressed within the discourse about a supposed “malaise” of science and a crisis in the Western world. Another section treats the use of Islamic terminology and language. One part concentrates on the use of history in the statements made by the exponents and by those who support the position. The ideas expressed in the various positions concerning the function of religion are dealt with in one section. The final part aims to reveal the method used in trying to appropriate the meaning of Islam expressed by an exponent, and the adherents of a position. This is followed by a summary in which the kernel of the position’s standpoint is outlined – a kind of profile of the position’s characteristic ideas and premises is constructed. Thereafter, the following part deals with the exponents’ own portrayal of the discourse and their critique of views held by representatives of other positions. This part can be described as a presentation of the discourse in practice. Finally, an analysis of ideas within the four positions is given. It ends with sections discussing similarities and differences as

a basis for the discourse followed by some concluding remarks and suggestions for further studies.

In this thesis the term “Muslim world” is understood as a world of ideas and thoughts and should not be understood in a physical or geographical sense. “Muslim countries” are countries where the majority of the people are Muslims. The underlying reason for using such a definition of the Muslim world is to stress that ideas formulated by Muslims in North America and Europe can have a strong influence on Muslims all over the world. To put it simply, interpretations of the Quran that in the future may become important to large numbers of Muslims, do not have to be made in Mecca or Medina. “The Muslim world” is part of the so-called global village. The possibility of communicating and travelling makes it conceivable to think of it as a world of thoughts where Muslims exchange ideas about Islam. In a sense my understanding of the Muslim world is the converse of the terms “the West”, “Western” and the “Western world” by the participants in the debate. They use these terms as a negative and closed definition of a world of ideas which they oppose. In order to at least try to point at the diversity and complexity, I would here stress the problems in defining what actually constitutes the “West”. Such understandings of the Muslim world and the West are related to the discourse on the ideologies of modernity or postmodernity.

It seems impossible to propose any tenable definition of the terms “modernity”<sup>24</sup> and “postmodernity”.<sup>25</sup> Much of the fuss caused in the dispute on modernity versus postmodernity appears to concern how to periodize development in the cultural and social spheres of society, and how to make shifts in culture and society discernible.<sup>26</sup> The purpose of this thesis is not to contribute to this dispute. I will, however, use the term “modernity”. A number of themes regularly crop up in commonly held ideas of what specifically constitutes modernity. Modernity is understood as a disenchantment of the world affecting religion as well as science, and a separation of religion, science and politics in separate entities.<sup>27</sup> Modernity is here understood as a process where values and norms change in a world where global communication systems appear and capitalism is triumphant. However, this does not imply that pre-modern or traditional societies were closed or static. The point is that I see the “sheer pace of change” as the characteristic of

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<sup>24</sup>Nicholls states that modernity or modernization could be both a philosophical outlook, i.e. a set of ideas, and a social process, see Nicholls (ed.) 1987:1. However, I think the term “modernism” is more adequate to describe a philosophy rooted in the ideas developed after the Enlightenment. The point to stress here is the idea of modernity as a designation of a society in a continuous process where traditions are challenged and constantly undergo change. See also Giddens 1990:6.

<sup>25</sup>For studies that deal with the relationship between postmodernity and Islam, see Ahmed & Donnan (eds.) 1994 and Turner 1994.

<sup>26</sup>See Featherstone 1991.

<sup>27</sup>My understanding of modernity is influenced by Max Weber, especially the ideas he develops in the article “Science as a Vocation”. See Weber 1991 (1919).

modernity.<sup>28</sup> In accordance with Giddens' ideas on a "radicalised modernity", it is important to note that the contemporary world is not just a world of fragmentation and disintegration.<sup>29</sup> The globalization process also contains a tendency towards integration. The latter is enabled by global communication systems. In spite of choosing modernity as the term to designate certain contemporary phenomena, I consider Turner's understanding of the relation between Islamization of knowledge, globalization and postmodernity stimulating:

Beliefs are adopted or rejected because they are relevant or not relevant to everyday needs and concerns. What makes religious faith or religious commitment problematic in a globalized postmodern society is that everyday life has become part of a global system of exchange of commodities which are not easily influenced by political leaders, intellectuals or religious leaders. The corruption of pristine faith is going to be brought about by Tina Turner and Coca-Cola and not by rational arguments and rational inspection of presuppositions and the understanding of Western secularism.<sup>30</sup>

The quotation pinpoints the problem that the participants in the discourse wish to solve. In most cases, Muslim intellectuals presented in this study view modernity both as a philosophical outlook and as a social process. They see modernity as part of an ideology, and they are trying to avoid a Westernization of their Islamic culture. The latter idea is also stressed by Issa J. Boullata in a study concerned with trends in contemporary Arab thought.<sup>31</sup> Another aspect of modernity, relevant to the present study, is the existence of possibilities and opportunities for the individual to form his or her life. These aspects of modernity are perceived by the four Muslims studied here as a threat to their individual ways of life as well as to an "Islamic civilisation". Their view is the opposite of the opinion that today's pluralism and ambivalence within the humanities and social sciences is a strength.<sup>32</sup>

The term "science" is in the thesis understood in its broadest sense. Thus, the discourse on the Islamization of science includes disciplines within the humanities and the social sciences as well as natural sciences. In addition, science is not portrayed as a hypostatized force – an entity in itself. The realm of science is complex and deals not only with nature, but also with culture and society. The basic difference between my position and the ideas of the exponents is that I see

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<sup>28</sup>Giddens 1990:6.

<sup>29</sup>For Giddens ideas on radicalized modernity and its relation to postmodernity, see Giddens 1990:150.

<sup>30</sup>Turner 1994:10.

<sup>31</sup>Boullata 1990:9,163.

<sup>32</sup>To some extent the ambivalence arises in the encounter with other cultures and other understandings of the world – understandings that imply a critique of the modernity project. See Bauman 1990.

science as a constantly changing body of knowledge, subject to becoming outdated, while they search for *the* science. The various meanings given to science within the various specific positions will be discussed below.

The exponents of the positions hold different ideas on the meaning of “secularization” and “tradition”.<sup>33</sup> However, I will refer to a process where religion has become privatized, a circumstance which may be the first step towards differentiation of life into separate domains. That is a condition where religion has been individualized and is, to a large extent, a matter of personal choice. The meaning *of* religion seems to be diminished or sometimes lost. This is not to say that religion cannot have a social role or constitute a force in political life, but that in a secular society it is no longer the predominant feature in public life. It is important to note that for the believer, the meaning to be found *in* religion is not gone. In this thesis the process of secularization is related to modernization. In the statements made within the positions studied here, the process of secularization is often seen as dangerous. It is a process in opposition to their ideas on Islam. In the same sense “tradition” can represent a society in opposition to a European or North American society. According to the British anthropologist Gilsenan the idea that tradition is “that which we have always done and believed and from which we have derived our social forms” is contested and it is more likely that tradition appears as something which “is put together in all manner of different ways in contemporary conditions and crises; it is a term that is in fact highly variable and shifting in content”. In Gilsenans view “tradition” appears as “a language, a weapon against internal and external enemies, a refuge, an evasion, or part of the entitlement to domination and authority over others.”<sup>34</sup> However, the term “tradition” is a sensitive one in the discourse since it is often seen specifically as related to the ideas of Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Here, a religious tradition will be understood as a body of knowledge containing a supposed truth that is derived from authoritative sources. It is not a closed body; on the contrary it changes and develops in a dialectical relationship with society. One can note that the stress on parts of a religious tradition can vary. Which term or verse in the Quran that will be emphasized and interpreted in order to handle a specific situation is determined by the discursive practice, a specific tradition can incorporate beliefs, institutions and practices from other traditions. One important aspect of a “religious tradition” as used in this thesis is that it includes a certain conception of history. In the arguments of the exponents, Islam is often presented as a

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<sup>33</sup>“Secular” in this context does not mean “value-free” or “objective”. A secular university training is founded in a tradition and a society, expressing its norms and values. Berger (1967:107) has defined secularisation as “the process whereby sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols”, thus, religion becomes private and a matter for the individual and it has nothing to do with the level of belief. For a summary of Berger’s ideas on secularization, see Wuthnow *et al.* 1987:61.

<sup>34</sup>Gilsenan 1984:15.

source of stability and legitimacy, containing a unchangeable body of beliefs. *The Islamic tradition is seen as comprising a set of eternal values and norms.*

“Value” will be seen as a more abstract term denoting significant ideas shared by a group of individuals. The term “norm” designates principles derived from the values. They can be seen as a form of guidelines including a pattern for an expected behaviour.

#### *Notes on previous research*

In the field of Islamic studies, the relation between Islam and science in the broadest meaning of the term has been studied in a variety of ways. The research carried out has, however, been dominated by an approach founded on the history of ideas and historical philology. The Greek influence on Muslim culture and the translation and development of ideas of Greek origin have received considerable attention in these studies, as have the emergence of a specific Muslim or Arab science and the transmission of classical philosophy from the world of Islam to Europe. In the study of the history of ideas, philosophy, logics, metaphysics, ethics and religion can be included. Other disciplines frequently studied are medicine, astronomy, mathematics and technology.<sup>35</sup> Works with this profile will not be discussed at any length in this thesis. However, they will be used as references and authoritative sources when the exponents elaborate on science in early – “Muhammadan” – history of Islam and in the “Golden age of Islam”.

As for Islamist movements, the “Fundamentalism Project” in Chicago devoted one volume to the ideas developed in various movements within different religions on the role of knowledge, education, science and technology. It should be noted that the general assumptions on the standpoints expressed by Islamist movements do not differ from the ones made by those studied in the present thesis. For example, they are all critical of the idea that science has universal validity and believe that the solution to the predicaments of contemporary society can be found in Islam as an all-encompassing ideology.<sup>36</sup>

One discussion within the field of development studies has been concerned with the role of science and technology in Muslim countries. In the Arab world, universities established since the emergence of independent nation states have emphasized the development of applied science and technology in order to make them vehicles for the progress of these countries. Research on the development of

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<sup>35</sup>For a summary of the transmission and development of Greek science in the Muslim culture. See Anawati 1982:741–779. For some examples of research carried out in this field, see Qadir 1990; Davidson 1992; Montgomery Watt 1992; De Boer 1967 (1903); Montgomery Watt 1994; al-Hassan and Hill 1994.

<sup>36</sup>See Marty & Scott Appleby 1993. The Fundamentalism Project lead by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby at the University of Chicago is an ambitious undertaking that can be seen as the culmination of the studies of Islamism and other kinds of fundamentalism.

science and technology has focused on problems in planning of science, bureaucracy and the quality and quantity of education.<sup>37</sup> However, the place of Islam and of the Islamization of knowledge has played a minor role. The assumptions about the problems of science and technology can be seen as part of a larger discussion in which the function of science and technology in developing countries in general is brought to the fore.<sup>38</sup> This is also brought into focus by the involvement of various organizations belonging to the United Nations in hosting conferences and publishing books.<sup>39</sup> Research on the role of science and technology in Muslim countries will not play a major part in the present thesis. It will, however, constitute a frame of reference, because the problems that exist at the universities in Muslim countries form a background for many Muslims' ideas on science. Hence, the understanding of science which Muslims carry with them when they come to study or live in Europe or North America is important for this study.

Other disciplines that are related to my investigation are the fields of philosophy and sociology of science. In these disciplines, a hotly debated question is whether knowledge is culturally determined or not. Due to the variety of philosophical outlooks and emphases there are several views on the degree of influence that culture has on knowledge. The most recent work on the question why modern science took off in Europe and not in Muslim countries is Huff's *The Rise of Early modern Science: Islam, China and the West* (1993).<sup>40</sup> Huff does not discuss the contemporary situation, but the book gives an historical account of science in Muslim countries and contains many useful references. In an essay, *Cultural Components in the Scientific Attitude to Nature: Eastern and Western Modes?* (1981), Elzinga and Jamison describe various views on the influence of culture that have developed in "Science, Technology and Society" programs in the US and in Britain. In the end, they say, we end up with on the one hand a position which they designate "a neutrality thesis", and on the other hand a position which they term "cultural relativist".<sup>41</sup> On the possibility of an encounter between the science of the East and the science of the West, Elzinga and Jamison place Theodore Roszak and Seyyed Hossein Nasr in the anti-positivist camp. They point to Nasr's alchemical ideal of mystical philosophy as against the ideal

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<sup>37</sup>For an overview of the situation for intellectuals in the Arab world, see Sabour 1984 and Sabour 1988.

<sup>38</sup>See the works of Zahlan (ed.) 1978 and Zahlan 1980. Zahlan is a Lebanese Christian. He has been Professor of physics at the American University in Beirut. Zahlan has also served as a member of the UN advisory board on science and technology. In his early career Ziauddin Sardar took part in the discussion on the role of science and technology in Muslim countries, see Sardar 1977 and Sardar 1982.

<sup>39</sup>The first UN conference on the application science and technology for the benefit of the developing countries was held in 1963. Since that conference UN involvement on this matter has been steadily increasing. One example is the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTED) held in Vienna, Austria, 1979.

<sup>40</sup>Of course, the classical study on this subject is Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

<sup>41</sup>See Elzinga & Jamison 1981:1-4.

of positivism, and the fact that Nasr understands Islamic science as the work of revelation, since the Quran embodies the principles of science.<sup>42</sup> In a discussion on Needham's ideas on the relation between science in the West and the East they criticize the position of cultural relativism:

In their fatalism relativist formulations also do great disservice because they fail to point out any viable alternative. The only type of alternative left open seems to be that of an escape into a mystical landscape organized around a privatization of individual sensibilities in the attempt at an inner psychic revolution. Needham points out that even if Hossein Nasr speaks of a non-obscurantist mysticism, he still falls into elitism and an extremely anti-democratic interpretation of science. Nasr's approach is programmatic in its denial of the equality of forms of human experience. The same thing can be said of various other conceptions that play up the uniqueness of ethic-bound traditions in the history of science and technology.<sup>43</sup>

The quotation stresses the effects of Nasr's approach to science. A similar critique of Nasr's ideas appears in several works in a variety of academic disciplines.<sup>44</sup> The criticism points at some of the general problems involved in the establishment of a uniquely Islamic science. One should, however, note that not many of Nasr's critics have analysed his understanding of Islam and its relation to knowledge and science. The critique of the participants in the discourse comes from the theory of science or from the social sciences. Some other examples are the critique of Nasr's presentation of the history of various disciplines and of scholars in Muslim countries. David A. King strongly rejects Nasr's description of mathematics and astronomy in a review of *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study* (1976). He states that the chapters on mathematics and astronomy are full of distortions and exaggerations.<sup>45</sup> Dimitri Gutas sees Nasr's presentations of the thoughts of e.g. Avicenna as being too fanciful and problematic. Nasr and his supporters are creating "a scholarly hoax, or non-issue, of immense proportions that has consistently hampered research."<sup>46</sup> There are, however, also many positive responses to Nasr's ideas. These responses will be discussed below in the presentation of Nasr's thought. Ziauddin Sardar has been criticized by fellow

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<sup>42</sup>Elzinga & Jamison 1981:10f.

<sup>43</sup>Elzinga & Jamison 1981:17f. For Needham's critique of Nasr, see Needham 1980:xxxviii-xli.

<sup>44</sup>Texts where Nasr are discussed are not altogether critical. In her article "Seyyed Hossein Nasr: Defender of the Sacred and Islamic Traditionalism", Jane I. Smith has a positive attitude towards Nasr's view of the world. However, this article does not concern his ideas on science. See Smith 1991:80-95.

<sup>45</sup>See King 1978:339-342. In a conversation with Nasr 28th April 1994, he says that he dislikes the review of his work by King. The review is, according to Nasr, quoted again and again in writings on Nasr's ideas.

<sup>46</sup>Gutas 1988:3.

Muslims such as Eric Winkel and Akbar S. Ahmed.<sup>47</sup> However, in a review of three conference volumes edited by Sardar and his adherents, Christian W. Troll says that the volumes “provide a unique glimpse of the agenda for thought and action maintained by perhaps the most influential ‘class’ of Islamically concerned Muslim thinkers today, after the ‘*ulamā*’”.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, Troll is worried about the lack of depth in the knowledge of the traditions of Islam, and in a concluding remark he points out that the books fail to bridge the mental gap between the ‘*ulamā*’ and Muslim intellectuals. Due to his early interest in the transformation of science and technology in their transition from one society to another, Sardar figures prominently in studies concerned with development, often in the context of presenting the problems in modern society, and the transfer of technology to Muslim countries.<sup>49</sup>

The Arab-American scholar al-Faruqi’s ideas are commented on in much of the American literature on Islam, especially Islam in an American context. Yvonne Haddad and John Voll describe the “Islamization of knowledge” project headed by al-Faruqi in positive terms. They both characterize it as a reorientation of Islam founded on the Muslim experience of North America.<sup>50</sup> Larry Poston sees the “Islamic vision” outlined by al-Faruqi as a possibility to handle circumstances and solve situations that arise in the lives of Muslims living in a non-Muslim environment.<sup>51</sup> Poston criticizes the IIIT for its lack of political awareness. He says “nowhere in its [the IIIT’s] literature does the institute propose or anticipate the political changes that would be necessary at some point to create their ambience in its fullness”.<sup>52</sup> John L. Esposito gives a general overview of the life and works of al-Faruqi, stressing his view of the relation between Christians and Muslims.<sup>53</sup> Due to his large number of published works, al-Faruqi’s interest in the Islamization of knowledge is not often the focus of study. To some extent, Nasr as an American scholar is subject to the same treatment, but his reputation among Muslims and non-Muslims makes him appear in many contexts. Bucaille is rarely mentioned in scholarly works dealing with present-day Islam and knowledge. One reason, I believe, is that Bucaille’s work is seen as pseudo-science – a vulgarization both of science and of Islam.<sup>54</sup> However, I be-

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<sup>47</sup>For Winkel’s and Ahmed’s critique of Sardar and his adherents, see the part on the discourse in practice below. Akbar S. Ahmed also discusses the influence of al-Faruqi and the latter is seen as a “key Islamic player on the world stage”. See Ahmed 1992:41.

<sup>48</sup>Troll 1991:306.

<sup>49</sup>See Gottstein 1986:14 and Apostol 1986:27.

<sup>50</sup>Haddad 1991:12f. and Voll 1991b:28f.

<sup>51</sup>Poston 1992:43.

<sup>52</sup>Poston 1992:121.

<sup>53</sup>Esposito 1991:65–79. For a short presentation of the same theme. See Zebiri 1995:258–262.

<sup>54</sup>See Hoodbhoy 1991:67ff. Bucaille’s influence on young Muslims is also noted by Lewis (1994:193).

lieve brushing aside Bucaille's ideas is to avoid analysing the emotions aroused in the minds of many young Muslims after reading his books. It should be noted that the four exponents are treated somewhat differently.

To summarize, there are very few studies treating the contemporary discourse on the Islamization of science. The interest in Islam among young Muslim students and the wish to form a science founded on their cultural tradition – Islam – is briefly mentioned in various books on contemporary Islam. However, no thorough study has yet been carried out, especially not on Muslims' interpretations of Islam in relation to contemporary science. There is, however, a growing interest in studying the contemporary relationship between Islam and science. One of the most frequently cited books on today's relationship between Islam and science is Hoodbhoy's *Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality* (1991). The book contains a chapter that briefly examines the ideas of Bucaille, Nasr and Sardar.<sup>55</sup> Another example is the interest in the subject of Islamization of knowledge shown by the sociologist Bryan S. Turner.<sup>56</sup> Finally, the forthcoming issue of *Social Epistemology* (autumn, 1996) will be entirely devoted to discussing the contemporary discourse on Islam and science.

## A Back ground to this Discourse

The discourse on the Islamization of science among Muslims has deep historical roots. However, one starting point in a modern context of the "Islam and science genre" was the debate initiated by Ernest Renan (d.1892) in Paris in 1883.<sup>57</sup> In Renan's view, Islam and science are incompatible, since science is associated with a modern civilization.<sup>58</sup> According to Renan, science and philosophy in the "golden age of Islam" was the result of a revolt against religion. Science at that time was, Renan maintains, Arabic in language, but it was Greek-Persian in origin. He maintained that Islam and Arabs are by nature hostile to science. Science is based on the use of reason. His idea is that reason dominates human actions and the aim is human perfection. Reason also works toward a progressive civilization. A state that is founded on revelation is, according to Renan, opposed to reason and progress. The spread of modern science and of a rationalistic mode of thought throughout the Muslim countries would annihilate Islam. In his opin-

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<sup>55</sup>See Hoodbhoy 1991:65–76.

<sup>56</sup>See Turner 1994:7f.

<sup>57</sup>This is stated by Lewis 1994:238n. To support his statement he refers to Sardar's *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come* (1985). The following summary of Renan's and al-Afghānī's standpoints are from Hourani 1967; Keddie 1968 and Kedourie 1980.

<sup>58</sup>Edward Said frequently refers to the ideas of Ernest Renan in discussing Orientalism as a created body of theory and practice, see Said 1978.

ion, religion was only needed as a moral ideal. The belief in the transcendental revelation of a given truth restricts human thought. Therefore, Islam and science are incompatible. The answer from a Muslim position to Renan's ideas came from the founder of the *iṣlāḥ* movement, Djamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897).<sup>59</sup> In his response to Renan, he says that science developed in the Arab context, that Islam is in a state of evolution, and that it will continue to develop. However, he agrees with Renan in his criticism of the situation in the Arab countries. In the end, the aim of al-Afghānī's response was to show that Islam is an all-encompassing and perfect religion – a religion of reason that contains the same essence as modern rationalism. In the end, the early *iṣlāḥ* movement, and its leading personalities such as al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905), together with similar movements on the Indian subcontinent, can be seen as a forerunner to the modern Islamist movements.<sup>60</sup>

In the circumstances which arose after the colonial epoch, Islamist movements were transformed in various ways, especially when it came to the prime target of their propaganda. The early activities of these movements were primarily directed against the colonial powers and against the influence of the colonial European countries. In the 1950s and 1960s, Islamist movements had to deal with another challenge. The new regimes in the Muslim countries often implemented the policies of the earlier colonial powers, but used Islamic vocabulary in their propaganda in order to legitimate their ideology.<sup>61</sup> This new situation induced the Islamist movements to modify their aims and methods. In the aftermath of the six days war in 1967, the movements had finally shifted from confronting external to internal enemies.<sup>62</sup> One of the effects of this shift was the end of the

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<sup>59</sup>*Iṣlāḥ*, "reform", is a word denoting a reform movement initiated by al-Afghānī.

<sup>60</sup>According to Baljon (1961:2ff.), Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1763) was a precursor of modern interpretations of the Quran reacting positively to the Western influence. Another Indian scholar, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (d. 1898) tried to show the compatibility between the Quran and modern science. In 1875 Khān founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Indian Oriental Aligarh College, a secondary school in Aligarh. It was established in response to new modes of education arriving with the British colonial power. The aim was to combine modern education with Islam. The ideology behind the school was based on ideas concerning reforming Islam. Two well-known proponents were ʿAmir ʿAlī (d. 1928) and Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1938).

<sup>61</sup>This was a method utilized by Boumedienne in Algeria, Bourguiba in Tunisia, Nasser in Egypt and in the rhetoric of the *Baʿth* party in Syria and Iraq. Haim (1974) presents the ideas of the Syrian nationalist and founder of the *Baʿth*-party Michel Aflaq. She says that for him Islam was Arab nationalism. Therefore, there was no need to draw any distinction between nationalism and religion. Aflaq justified this standpoint, according to Haim (1974:64), by referring to the early Islamic tradition. In the same work, Haim (1974:229–232) quotes a speech by Nasser in which he frequently uses Islam and its rituals to bring forth his message. For another example, see Rosenthal's survey of constitutional issues in Tunisia (Rosenthal 1965:316–324).

<sup>62</sup>It goes without saying that this does not mean that the West suddenly became popular. The image of the West continued to be that of a hostile culture, whose "lifestyle" was to be rejected. In e.g. Turkey, the notion of the West as evil is still the main theme in the arguments presented by leading Islamic intellectuals such as Necip Fazıl

sometimes half-hearted support for Pan-Arabism. The arguments for their cause were also sharpened.

One example, and probably the most famous one, of an Islamist mass movement is *al-ikhwān al-muslimūn*, the Muslim Brotherhood. This movement, which is well organized, has since it was founded in the late 1920s strived towards increasing the influence of Islam on the whole of society.<sup>63</sup> It generally considers that every part of society should be shaped according to the *sharīʿa*, the Islamic law. The founder of the movement, Ḥasan al-Bannā (d. 1949), briefly expressed his views on Islam in a booklet called *al-maʿthūrāt*, “The Tracks to Follow (in the Tradition)”. It was reprinted and handed out in Cairo during Ramadan 1992. In this booklet, under the heading *Hādhihi sabīlī*, “This is my Path”, al-Bannā says: “I firmly believe that Islam is a complete code for the order of this world and the life hereafter.”<sup>64</sup> The views expressed by Ḥasan al-Bannā on the outline of an Islamic society was developed by the movement’s later ideologue Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966).<sup>65</sup> On the Indian subcontinent the ideas developed by the Muslim Brotherhood were paralleled by the ideas of Sayyid Abū al-ʿAlā Mawdūdī (d. 1979). The generally held opinion among various Islamist groups is that the religious law is the foundation on which an Islamic social order should rest.<sup>66</sup> One of the consequences of this way of propagating and seeing Islam as an ideology or social order is the *necessity of constructing theories and models on what the future Islamic society shall look like*. In a situation where the ideal Islamic society, as demanded by the movements, cannot be implemented and when a supposed Islamic outlook is challenged by other philosophies, their call

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Kısakürek, in their attempts to create a religiously inspired nationalism opposed to Kemalism. This view is shared by many of the later Muslim intellectuals in Turkey. See Özdalga 1992:83.

<sup>63</sup>For detailed studies on the history of the Muslim Brotherhood, see Mitchell 1969 and Kepel 1985. The ideas of the Muslim brotherhood are also extensively treated in various books and articles on current Islamist movements, see Dekmejian 1980; Hussain 1983; Haddad 1986; Eccel 1988; Burell (ed.) 1989; Lawrence 1989; Sivan 1990 and Esposito 1992.

<sup>64</sup>Al-Bannā 1992:27. Small booklets with the title *al-maʿthūrāt* can be bought everywhere in Muslim countries. Kepel (1985:36) refers to them as “epistles”. They are almost always for sale outside mosques after the Friday prayer at noon. The word *qānūn* is here translated with code. *Qānūn* is a loanword from Greek and has become the technical term for the secular laws, “state laws”, of non-Muslim origin, in many Muslim countries. See Schacht 1984:87 and the article by Y. Linant De Bellefonds in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (EI), IV:556f. It has been the name of applied administrative law. In the quoted sentence the term is used with a special purpose. *Al-Bannā* would like the distinction between “Secularists” and “Islamizationists” to disappear. In the ideal society there should be no other law than the *sharīʿa*.

<sup>65</sup>A well-defined ideology is not needed for many of the advocates of an Islamic society. Quṭb held that modern society is so complex that it is impossible to just use past models. Sivan (1990:69) points out that Quṭb would not let the norms of interpretation for the principle of *idjtiḥād* be of “exogenous criteria”. It is important here that the “reopening” of the gates of *idjtiḥād* would make him take a step further away from traditionally educated scholars, since the application of *idjtiḥād* is supposed to be made by a learned jurist. For the relationship between al-Bannā and Quṭb, and on Quṭb’s ideas in general, see Kepel 1985:26–30,36–67.

<sup>66</sup>Vatikiotis 1991:62ff. and Sivan 1990:84.

for change, and the fear of governments of being called un-Islamic, has given rise to the creation of ideal models or institutions. This radical form of Islam aims at creating “a counter-society that would lead the movement for the return to true Islam, undiluted and unpolluted by the virus of infidel modernity”.<sup>67</sup> This creation of models is also found among Muslims in a non-Muslim environment. In New Mexico an Islamic village has been created. One of the major concerns here is to give a better understanding of Islam to non-Muslims in the USA. Another important aim is to “bring Islam to America” and one of the best ways is, according to Tabibi, to demonstrate true Islamic living in a model Islamic village.<sup>68</sup> On the one hand, small communities are established by different Islamic movements, with their own small-scale businesses, bakeries, shops etc. In these communities the members are able to live the “true” life of Islam and they are sometimes “ordered to sever all relations with the outside world”.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, examples of models or institutions created by the state to counteract various Islamic groups are Islamic banks and Islamic universities.<sup>70</sup> The attempt to create exclusively Islamic universities in states such as Pakistan, Malaysia, India, Jordan and Saudi Arabia has been going on for many years now.<sup>71</sup> It is important to note that Islamic banks and Islamic universities are not only created by states, but by various organizations and movements as well, in order to promote a certain view of Islam.

In contemporary Muslim societies there are political implications of the debate on the Islamization of knowledge.<sup>72</sup> In e.g. Kuwait, the ruling élite has been criticized by various groups, who denounce the rulers as being un-Islamic. In the

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<sup>67</sup>Vatikiotis 1991:63. An example is the *djamā‘at takfīr wa ‘l-hidjra*, “The Society of Rejection and Exile”, a group who considers the society to be un-Islamic and in the state of *djāhiliyya*, in this case translated simply as “un-Islamic”. They regard themselves as the only true Muslims. This group is an offshoot of the more moderate and mainstream part of the Muslim Brotherhood and is more radical in its views on the process of Islamization (Vatikiotis 1991:63). According to Sivan (1990:86) these ideas led the members of the *at-takfīr wa ‘l-hidjra* to shun mosques, and the company of the “ignorant believers” became a distinguished mark of radical students in the 1970s.

<sup>68</sup>Tabibi (n.d.):30f.

<sup>69</sup>Ibrahim 1985:503f. Ibrahim also argues that the recruitment of members of *at-takfīr wa ‘l-hidjra* is made in the mosques. After observing young worshippers praying and attending activities in the mosque they invite them to take part in religious discussions after the prayers. See Ibrahim 1985:502 and Tabibi (n.d.).

<sup>70</sup>For a description of Islamic banks, see Kazarian 1991. For an overview of the literature on Islamic economics, see Nienhaus 1982. Islamic universities have been established in many Muslim countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, but a recent trend is to establish Islamically founded institutions for higher learning in Europe and North America.

<sup>71</sup>The above mentioned one in Aligarh is one example. Another example is the scientific institutions set up by the Hamdard Foundation in India and Pakistan.

<sup>72</sup>Regimes in Muslim countries sometimes question the possibility of the student to choose his or her education. In Saudi Arabia in 1985 the number of students in the humanities was about 15.000 and in medicine approximately 2.400. The government, therefore, discussed restricting the admission of students to certain courses and promoting the admission to others. See *Middle East Economic Digest* (1985:81).

field of education, a response from the élite has come forth. In order to demonstrate its links to Islamic traditions and the Arab culture, the rulers nominated a committee to form a philosophy for higher education. Kuwait's Minister of Higher Education, 'Alī A. *Shamlān*, explained:

A committee of competent specialists work on shaping a philosophy for the higher education in Kuwait, in order to realise aspirations of the society. It issues from the core of its culture and serves its needs. This philosophy is founded on Islam as an ideology and Arabism as a membership and knowledge as a curriculum and culture as a method.<sup>73</sup>

The quotation stresses a combination of culture, Arabism and Islam which is typical for statements of leaders in a country such as Kuwait. It can be politically necessary to legitimate the government in this way. However, the quotation also expresses the idea of a single philosophy for higher education, with the purpose of realizing the aspirations of society. The foundation for such a philosophy is Islam as an ideology. The conceptualization of Islam as an ideology constituting a base for society as well as for the life of the individual has been emphasized repeatedly during the 20th century. In this century, especially since the 1950s and the 1960s, parallel forces have developed stressing Arab ethnicity and language as a common denominator for unity in the Middle East. In relation to science the first attempt to manifest the Arab unity was a conference held in Rabat, Morocco, in 1961 dealing with the Arabization of terminology in modern science.<sup>74</sup>

#### *The European and North American context*

Islamic movements founded in Pakistan, Turkey or Egypt and many other Muslim countries are influential in a European context.<sup>75</sup> To the influence from ongoing discussions in a non-European environment, new approaches and new ideas developed in the West can be added. A reciprocity has thus developed. The interpretations of the religious traditions made and the positions taken by Muslims in a Western context are influenced by the European and North American environment.

Abu Laban, a lay preacher of Palestinian origin in Copenhagen, stated in a conversation with me that religious leaders from Muslim countries do not understand the situation and the specific needs of Muslims living in Denmark. Therefore the congregation had stopped inviting preachers from Muslim countries. The

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<sup>73</sup>The speech of the Minister was published in *Afāq* 1990:2. *Afāq* is the journal of the University of Kuwait.

<sup>74</sup>For a discussion on the problems of the translation of scientific terms into Arabic by one of the exponents of the discourse, see Sardar 1982:17.

<sup>75</sup>For an example where this is stressed, see Kepel 1985:22f.

views expressed by the Danish-Palestinian preacher reflect a general challenge by lay persons of the monopoly concerning the interpretation of Islam held by the *‘ulamā’*, “religious scholars”.<sup>76</sup> However, the religious scholars should not be regarded as a unified and closed collective. There are many varying, and opposing, interpretations of the Islamic traditions among them. In another discussion with Abu Laban he admitted that the social context of Muslims in Copenhagen makes it possible to say that there is a specific form of Danish Islam.<sup>77</sup> However, the latter statement does not imply that Islam is abandoned as an ideology or as a way of life. The conceptualization of the fundamental meaning of Islam is not much different in the lay preacher’s understanding than in the comprehension of Islam held by Muslims active in the Muslim Brotherhood.

In the European and North American context, well educated Muslim scholars have been in short supply. In such a vacant space men and women with secular education, such as engineers, teachers and medical doctors, have been the ones to fill the *minbars*. Due to their education, their social position in general, and their function as lay preachers with an experience of Western society, they may also be able to answer the questions posed by Muslims on how to live an Islamic life in Europe or North America. It is sometimes presumed that a conventional perception of Islam must be perceived as problematic to people with a secular university training.<sup>78</sup> Professionals may be aware of two different societies, one “international” and mainly based on secular values, the other “local”, based on Islam and tradition.<sup>79</sup> Those with this awareness or consciousness probably have to ask themselves how to legitimate themselves as scientists in the field of natural science in a Muslim environment, or how to legitimate an Islamic science in modern society. They can also face similar problems on a personal level when they have to convince parents and neighbours that they are not apostates.<sup>80</sup> Although I believe these questions are important, it is maybe more important to ask whether

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<sup>76</sup>On the challenge to the religious scholars by lay persons, see Haddad 1986:162f. and Werbner 1994:112f. The former states that the trend might be characterised as a “Protestantization” or “laicization” of the Islamic tradition. See Haddad 1986:162.

<sup>77</sup>The conversations were held with the Danish lay preacher at a mosque in Copenhagen on the 18th of December 1991 and at the University of Lund, Sweden the 12th December 1994.

<sup>78</sup>Such an experience can, according to van der Lans and Rooijackers (1992:57) be expressed as an “incompatibility between a religious construction of reality and a modern and a secular world-view”, van der Lans & Rooijackers 1992:57, see also Rooijackers 1992:66,71–73. Van der Lans and Rooijackers point at that experience in a study of Turkish immigrants in The Netherlands. However, I consider such an experience to be common throughout the 20th century.

<sup>79</sup>In general, the modern educational systems in Muslim countries have been developed during the last decades, and a large number of Muslims have been educated at universities in Europe and North America. For an example of the development of a university in a Muslim country. See Reid 1990.

<sup>80</sup>This can be a problem when Muslims working in Europe and North America return to visit their countries of origin.

there really is such an awareness among Muslim scientists in general. In many conversations I have found that this is the case, and discussions on the relationship between Islam and the practice of Muslim researchers indicate that the questions are there, although the answers vary. The answers are often related to various ideological strands within the Islamic traditions, and to the chosen identity of the person who formulates the answer.

In the debate, those who advocate an Islamization of science make use of Islamic models of categorization when they express their views on the predicaments of society. In statements such as “the Islamization of society will solve many of the problems in the Muslim community”, it is implied that Islamization is not only a religious order, but also a political ideology.<sup>81</sup> In such a perspective the concept of a specific “Islamic” natural science is understood as a subsystem within the all-embracing Islamic order of society or civilization. However, I consider it important to stress that the premises for Muslims’ questions concerning the status and function of their religious tradition in a modern society appear to rest on similar foundations irrespective of where they live.

Many of the politically turbulent societies in the Muslim countries do not allow any kind of “value-free” science which might imply a criticism of society. In a way it would be more difficult to legitimate oneself as a scientist in the field of social studies or in the humanities than in natural sciences.<sup>82</sup> In Europe and North America, Muslims have not been present at the universities as researchers and teachers until recently. Today, there is a growing number of Muslims of various backgrounds at universities in Europe.<sup>83</sup> On the one hand, one can assume that young Muslims arriving in Europe or North America in order to study at a university bring with them not only ideas on society, politics, knowledge and so forth, but also on science. In Muslim societies “science” often signifies natural science – an applied science in the service of the state. However, a recent trend is for newly established universities, at least in their first stage, to begin

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<sup>81</sup>Burrell (1989:27) describes as follows the most basic arguments supporting an Islamization in general: “We are Muslims and that is good enough. We do not believe that God would have revealed his eternal truth to the world through Muhammad if he had not intended us to follow it. Our faith has endured for over thirteen centuries. It is the basis of our identity and it provides our goal in life. Take it away and we are nothing”. The seven principles Esposito presents in *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (1992) as primary for the ideas of Mawdūdī and al-Bannā can also be treated as fundamental for many Islamic movements. The first three concern the idea of Islam as an all-embracing ideology, the Quran and *sunna* as the foundation for a Muslim’s life and *shari‘a* as “the sacred blueprint for Muslim life”. See Esposito 1992:122f.

<sup>82</sup>Many books have been written outlining the establishment of Islamic forms of the social sciences, most of them, it seems, by Muslims living in Europe and North America. This hypothesis is partly based on the idea that social sciences are fields of science which sometimes are critical to people who hold power, i.e., social science is perceived as dangerous to state authority.

<sup>83</sup>In a European context young Muslims of today are the first generation present at universities in larger numbers. See Schnapper 1994:159.

with the construction of faculties in various branches of natural science and technology combined with religious studies.<sup>84</sup> At the Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, every course in the university programme includes studying Islam, especially the Quran and the life of Muhammad.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, institutes of higher learning established by Muslim organisations in the West tend to focus on the humanities and social sciences.<sup>86</sup>

In the European and North American context, a Muslim intelligentsia has arisen. Some of them are able to be active in both a Muslim and a non-Muslim environment. For example, one of the Muslims studied in the present work, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, is a Professor in Islamic studies at the George Washington University in Washington DC, and at the same time an active exponent of a specific interpretation of Islam. Another example is the British-Pakistani Muslim Ziauddin Sardar, who has written extensively on the relationship between Islam and science for a Muslim audience, but also takes part in futurology conferences. A general idea in Nasr's as well as Sardar's works is their understanding of Islam as a comprehensive order for the individual and society. Within this all-embracing framework, they strive to achieve a foundation for the establishment of an Islamic science.

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<sup>84</sup>One example is the Al al-Bait University in Amman, Jordan. See *Jordan Times* Oct. 4 1992: 1,5.

<sup>85</sup>See *The Bulletin of al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University* (1993).

<sup>86</sup>The Institute of Islamic and Social Sciences established by the IIIT and scheduled to start in the fall of 1996 is one example.

## 2. Reinterpreting Islam – Sardar and the *Idjmālīs*

Muslims everywhere exist in a time warp; the interpretations of Islam that predominate pertain to the so-called ‘Golden Age of Islam’ and were first arrived at least a thousand years ago, Islam has been frozen in history, for centuries it has been denied the oxygen of new interpretation, its thought and traditions – from being dynamic and life enhancing – have been fossilized and preserved in stone. To be a conscious and conscientious Muslim today requires constant struggle against obscurantism, against chauvinistic interpretations, against legal opinions that have served their purpose in history, against traditional notions direly in need of transformation, against blind imitation, against the tyranny of out-of-context quotations and anecdotes. 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.<sup>1</sup>

The quotation exemplifies a repudiation of those positions defined by Sardar as “Islamist” and “traditional”. A fierce criticism of other positions on the function of Islam characterizes the rhetoric of adherents to the position that will be presented in this chapter.

Ziauddin Sardar is the most prominent exponent of the *idjmālī* ideas. In his view the root form *dj-m-l* denotes “beauty” and “wholeness”. *Idjmālī* “captures the substance of synthesis with the style of aesthetics”.<sup>2</sup> In the mid-1980s, Sardar and others introduced the term *idjmālī* not only to describe their views in the discourse about the Islamization of science, but also to describe their position on questions concerning Islam and Muslims on the whole.<sup>3</sup> Sardar recounts that he, Munawar Ahmed Anees, Meryll Wyn Davies and S. Parvez Manzoor (they will be presented below) travelled together on a British Airways flight from London to Chicago. On the flight they decided that their common approach deserved a name. The task to find a name was entrusted to Manzoor who suggested the word *idjmālī*.<sup>4</sup> It symbolizes their idea of Islam as a comprehensive solution to all predicaments in society. This approach is not bound to interpretations of Islam

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<sup>1</sup>Sardar 1996 (forthcoming). In the following I will refer to this article as Sardar 1996.

<sup>2</sup>Sardar 1989:112.

<sup>3</sup>For Sardar’s presentation of the *idjmālī* standpoint, see Sardar 1989:112f,154–172 and Sardar (ed.) 1989b:48–53.

<sup>4</sup>Sardar 1996 and personal conversation in London, 2 November 1994. The story was told to me in a slightly different form by Manzoor (personal conversation in Sollentuna, Sweden, 23 August 1993).

made in a specific place or time. Rather, it is the way Muslims used to solve problems in the past that Muslims should treasure.<sup>5</sup>

Sardar was born in 1951, is of Pakistani origin and arrived in England as a young boy in 1962. Sardar was brought up and educated in London, where he still lives. In his own narration, he describes himself as having been a young, committed Muslim in his youth. He was involved in various Islamic groups and circles. When he was in his teens, he met and became a disciple of Jafaar Shaikh Idris, a charismatic Sudanese scholar.<sup>6</sup> According to Sardar, Idris taught him and a few others in the Islamic traditions. Idris gave his students a “spark for thought and discussion”.<sup>7</sup> This way of teaching differs from what Sardar regards as the official and traditional Islamic education promoting *taqlid*.<sup>8</sup>

After completing his formal education, Sardar went to the City University in London, where he studied Physics and Information science. In a conversation with me he noted that he had never worked in any of these areas, although he has written books in the field of Information science. During his stay at the City University he became a member of various Muslim movements. He was, on a local level, active in the *Federation of Students' Islamic Societies* (FOSIS) in the United Kingdom and Eire. On a worldwide level, Sardar came into contact with movements such as *djamā'at-i islāmī* and *al-ikhwān al-muslimūn*, “the Muslim brotherhood”. During this period he studied the works of Mawdūdī and Sayyid Quṭb.<sup>9</sup> It was, according to Sardar, a more or less bizarre situation to be part of the era of flower power and the student revolt on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to spend time with Muslims “whose preoccupation was the antithesis of letting it all hang out. I belonged to both, but was an enigma in both spheres”.<sup>10</sup> To be a Muslim appeared as something inappropriate in student circles, and to be a left wing student was inimical to the Muslim view of things. In Sardar’s account of his time at the City University, this was a period of ambiguity. He is not only referring to his different roles, one at the University and another among Muslims, but also to various strands of ideas within the Muslim community. He refuses the “instrumentalism”<sup>11</sup> of what he characterizes as

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<sup>5</sup>Sardar 1996.

<sup>6</sup>According to Sardar, Idris was the “first scholar to attack the cultural bias of Western social sciences” which he did at the annual convention of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) in 1975. See Sardar 1989b:29. Idris has taken part in the discourse and he developed a scheme for an Islamization of science. See Idris 1987:201–208.

<sup>7</sup>Sardar 1996.

<sup>8</sup>Sardar 1996. *Taqlid* means, in Sardar’s view, to uncritically follow a stale and outdated form of Islam. The same ideas were also expressed by Sardar in a personal conversation in London, 2 November 1994.

<sup>9</sup>Sardar (1982:2) refers to Quṭb and his interpretation of a certain verse of the Quran.

<sup>10</sup>Sardar 1996.

<sup>11</sup>“Instrumentalism” is by Sardar used to describe an uncritical attitude to science and the introduction of science and technology without, for example, any ethical considerations.

“modernist Islam”, and the blind imitation, the ready-made and packaged form he denotes as “traditional Islam”.<sup>12</sup> In Sardar’s view, the societies where the interpretations of “traditionalist” or “modernist” Islam have succeeded, the establishment of Islamic injunctions have led to an increase in inequity and oppression.<sup>13</sup> To be at ease with his Muslim identity, Sardar decided that he had to go back to the primary source of Islam, the Quran. His interpretation of the Quranic text does not consist of a set of “do’s” and “dont’s”.<sup>14</sup>

During a personal conversation with me, Sardar repeatedly stated that he is not an scholar but a writer. In “British, Muslim, Writer” (1996) he says that writing is a biological necessity, in the same way as food, drink and sex. Writing is an activity which Sardar has carried out since his early youth. After graduating from the university he joined a group of Muslims described as “creative thinkers seeking fundamentally different, alternative social, economic, political and scientific systems for Muslim societies throughout the world”.<sup>15</sup> This group consisted of young, ardent Muslims who were looking for someone to guide them. They settled for Kalim Siddiqui whom Sardar labels as a Marxist Muslim with Trotskyite leanings.<sup>16</sup> This movement, lead by Siddiqui, formed the Muslim Institute in London. After a while, Sardar states, Siddiqui started to show his dictatorial tendencies.<sup>17</sup>

Very timely, Sardar received an invitation to join the newly established *Hajj Research Centre* in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The invitation was passed on to Sardar from Abdullah Naseef. He was a friend of Sardar since the days of FOSIS. Naseef studied in London and recieved a doctorate in geology. However, he returned to Saudi Arabia and made a career at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, and in 1974, when he invited Sardar, he was the Vice-Chancellor of the University. Currently, Naseef is the Secretary General of the Muslim World League. At the *Hajj Research Centre*, Sardar worked as an information consultant. It is not clear precisely what this means, but it appears to have been a post that pro-

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<sup>12</sup>Sardar (1996) states that Iran is an example of “traditional Islam” and Sudan an example of “modernist Islam”. The terms “traditional” and “modernist” is not explained, but both of them contain a ready-made form of Islam that in Sardar’s view is unjust.

<sup>13</sup>Sardar 1996.

<sup>14</sup>Sardar 1996. Sardar’s perception of what it means to be a Muslim will be discussed below.

<sup>15</sup>Sardar 1996.

<sup>16</sup>Sardar 1996 and Sardar & Wyn Davies 1990:199. In the latter, Siddiqui is said to be led by the Iranian government (Sardar & Wyn Davies 1990:197f.). In his early works, however, Sardar is positive toward the ideas of Siddiqui. See Sardar 1977:12n,56–59. Kalim Siddiqui died in 1996.

<sup>17</sup>Sardar 1996. Akbar S. Ahmed mentions Kalim Siddiqui in his *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise* (1992). Siddiqui is, Ahmed states, perhaps the most well-known radical Muslim in Britain. He demanded the establishment of an Islamic order – a Muslim parliament in United Kingdom – and he lead the campaign for the implementation of the *fatwā* condemning Salman Rushdie. Ahmed holds that Siddiqui’s Muslim Institute in London is backed financially by the Iranian government. See Ahmed 1992:160,168.

vided Sardar with the possibility to devote his time to writing books on subjects related to the Islamization of science, and on science and technology in general. The research produced by the Hajj Centre, for instance on the ecological and geological effects of the pilgrimage on environment, was, according to Sardar, not what the Saudi authorities wanted to hear.<sup>18</sup> Although Sardar was more or less protected by Naseef, he was dismissed from the Centre and left Jeddah in 1979.<sup>19</sup> The Centre itself was closed down in the beginning of the 1980s. From this point in his career, Ziauddin Sardar says, he was a full time writer.<sup>20</sup>

The first monograph by Sardar which attracted attention was *Science, Technology and Development in the Muslim World* (1977). This book “did much to shape the emerging face of Islamic science”.<sup>21</sup> In this work Sardar develops a Muslim view on development in the Muslim world. The concept of a specifically Islamic science does not play a major part in this book.

In 1979, Sardar published two monographs. One concerns a specific Islamic bibliographical classification system, tailor-made for works on Islam. The objective is to outline a classification system which reflects a Muslim worldview.<sup>22</sup> The other is entitled *The Future of Muslim Civilization* (1979).<sup>23</sup> According to Sardar, this book sealed his fate and

it also expressed something very important about my relationship to the future. My Muslim civilization is an oasis at a crossroads, an open civilization inviting to everyone and closed to no-one, after all the vision it records could not have been conceived without my Maimonides, and probably not without Hackney.<sup>24</sup>

The epithet “my Maimonides” refers to Jerome R. Ravetz. He was, at the time when *The Future of Muslim Civilization* was published, Reader in the History and Philosophy of Science at Leeds University.<sup>25</sup> Sardar states that he did not see that anyone in the Muslim countries had the qualifications needed to help him finish his work, so he contacted Ravetz, with whom he worked in a council concerned with the relationship between science and society.<sup>26</sup> Hackney is the area in

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<sup>18</sup>See Sardar 1985:280–304.

<sup>19</sup>Sardar (1977:150f.) describes The Hajj Research Centre in positive terms, and as an example of a new form of institute where the aim is to link universities with industries.

<sup>20</sup>Sardar 1996 and personal conversation in London, 2 November 1994.

<sup>21</sup>Anees & Wyn Davies 1988:252.

<sup>22</sup>Sardar 1979b:7. It is a specific subject classification scheme for books on Islam.

<sup>23</sup>A second and enlarged edition was published in 1987. I will refer to both versions.

<sup>24</sup>Sardar 1996.

<sup>25</sup>Director of the Research Methods Consultancy Ltd in London (Ravetz 1991:262).

<sup>26</sup>Sardar 1996.

London where Sardar grew up, and a significant place, according to him, in the formation of his British Muslimness.

Sardar points out that, despite a problematic relation to Saudi authorities, he was able to travel from Marocco to South East Asia. He states that during his trips he studied the status of contemporary science and scientists in Muslim countries. Finally, the information he collected was presented in *The Future of Muslim Civilization* (1979).<sup>27</sup>

In the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, Sardar played a significant role in a project initiated by the *International Federation of Institutes for Advance Study* (IFIAS). The aim of this project was “to advance the understanding of the global challenges and develop policy alternatives by interdisciplinary studies”.<sup>28</sup> The general title of the project was “Science and Technology in Islam and the West”.<sup>29</sup> The project resulted in a seminar series with participants from various countries and academic disciplines. Another outcome of the project was a book edited by Sardar, *The Touch of Midas: Science, Values and Environment in Islam and the West* (1984). In this collective volume, there are articles by, among others, James Steve Counelis, at that time professor of education at the University of San Francisco and Jerome R. Ravetz. This is probably Sardar’s best known work. It is, to my knowledge, the only work by Sardar which has been translated into Arabic.<sup>30</sup> With few exceptions, his books cannot be found in bookshops in Egypt, Jordan or Syria.<sup>31</sup>

In the early 1980s, Sardar held a part time position as Director at the *Center for Policy and Future Studies* at the East-West University in Chicago. At that time he edited *Building Information Systems in the Islamic World* (1988). This is a follow-up study of the work mentioned above on an Islamic classification system. During his time in Chicago, Sardar was the editor of the Mansell series *Islamic Futures and Policy Studies*. According to an advertising folder from Mansell, presenting the titles in this series, its aim is to “explore contemporary issues, new ideas and disciplines being hotly debated in the Muslim world and examine options for the future of the Ummah”.<sup>32</sup> Other authors who have published in the series are Merrylyn Wyn Davies, Munawar Ahmed Anees, Mohammad Ilyas and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas.

Sardar has participated in many conferences. A particularly prestigious one was the International Islamic Conference in Mecca in October 1987 on *Da‘wa*

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<sup>27</sup>See Sardar 1996.

<sup>28</sup>Nilsson 1984:ix. See also Sardar 1980:212f.

<sup>29</sup>For Sardar’s views on IFIAS and the outcome of the project, see Sardar 1989:3.

<sup>30</sup>It has recently been translated into Arabic in Jordan. A rumour says it was well recieved by the crown prince Hasan of Jordan, and that the prince personally encouraged the translation.

<sup>31</sup>Books by Sardar in English are available in the bookshop at the American University in Cairo.

<sup>32</sup>Advertising folder from Mansell concerning the series *Islamic Futures and Policy Studies*.

*and Development of the Muslim World*. This conference was arranged by the Muslim World League. The outcome of Sardar's attendance at the conference in Mecca was another collective work: *An Early Crescent: The Future of Knowledge and the Environment in Islam* (1989). This is the second of three volumes published as a result of the conference.<sup>33</sup> Another collective work edited by Sardar is *The Revenge of Athena: Science Exploitation and the Third World* (1988). It was the outcome of a seminar arranged by the Consumer Association of Penang (CAP) in Malaysia.<sup>34</sup>

In the 1980s he was the consulting editor and contributor to the British Muslim magazine *Inquiry*. He has also published articles in the Muslim magazine *Impact International* and he has been a former Middle East science consultant to the British *New Scientist*.<sup>35</sup> He has also worked for *Nature*, and he has published several articles on the Islamization of science in all of these periodicals. He is also a regular contributor to the literary pages of *The Independent*.

In the 1990s new themes appear in Sardar's production. He becomes a broadcaster. Sardar has worked for different British TV channels with programmes about Islam and the Muslim world. He has worked as a reporter for London Weekend Television's *Eastern Eye*, and presented a series named *Encounters with Islam* for BBC television. Sardar is, together with Merryl Wyn Davies, co-founder of ISF Productions, which is a television production company specialized in making programmes about Islam and Muslim issues.

One result of this role of Sardar's is a series of TV programs called *Faces of Islam*. These programs consist of conversations between Sardar and Muslims who are more or less involved in the discourse on the Islamization of science. The subjects that the participants discuss are keywords from Islamic terminology. These terms – with the individuals discussing their meaning placed in brackets – are *dīn*, “religion” (Syed Naquib al-Attas), *tawhīd*, “unity” (Jaafar Sheikh Idris), *al-kitāb*, “the Book” (Kamal Hasan), *sīra*, “biography of Muhammad” (Fadlullah Wilmot), *sharīʿa*, “Islamic law” (Ibrahim Sulaiman), *ʿadl*, “justice” (Khurshid Ahmad), *ʿibāda*, “worship” (Hussain Ateshin), *ʿilm*, “knowledge” (Anwar Ibrahim), *khilāfa* “vicarship” (Gulzar Haider), *daʿwa*, “call to Islam” (Ridzuan Abdullah Wu), *djihād*, “holy war” (Munawar Ahmad Anees) and *umma*, “Muslim community” (Abdullah Naseef). Sardar's partners in the conversations can be considered to be supporters of his ideological stance or closely linked to it. To be noted is that among the participants, non-Arab Muslims are in the majority. These programmes have also been published as a book: *Faces of Islam: Conversations on Contemporary Issues* (1989).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>The other two are Naseef (ed.) 1988 and Wyn Davies & Khalil Pasha (eds.) 1989.

<sup>34</sup>For example, Wyn Davies, Anees and Ravetz contribute in Sardar (ed.) 1988b.

<sup>35</sup>Sardar (ed.) 1984:vii. Sardar deals with his relation to *New Scientist* and *Nature* in Sardar 1996.

<sup>36</sup>Sardar & Wyn Davies 1989.

In *How We Know* (1991), Sardar is also presented as a futurologist. He has taken part in conferences concerning "future studies", and he was one of the participants and speakers at the XIII World Conference of World Futures Studies Federation in Turku, Finland, August 23-27, 1993: *Coherence and Chaos in our Uncommon Futures – Visions, Means, Actions*.<sup>37</sup> The field "future studies" appears to have appealed to Sardar at an early stage in his career, judging from the name of the series *Islamic Futures and Policy Studies*, which he edited when he was posted in Chicago, as well as from the titles of some of his books.<sup>38</sup> A result of Sardar's preoccupation with future studies is his association with the journal *Futures*. According to the editors' presentation of the journal, it is multidisciplinary and concerned with the methods and practice of long-term forecasting for decision and policy making on the future of mankind, culture and society.<sup>39</sup> Sardar has played a major role in two issues of this journal. Firstly, he was guest editor in a special issue entitled "Islam and the future".<sup>40</sup> Secondly, he was guest editor in cooperation with Jerome R. Ravetz of another special issue named "Complexity: Fad or future?".<sup>41</sup> Today he is also a consulting editor of the journal.

Although Sardar has stated several times that he is not an academic scholar, he is at present visiting professor of science and technology policy Middlesex University, England.<sup>42</sup> His work at Middlesex concerns science, science policy planning, and the relation between science and society in general.<sup>43</sup> In *Media, Culture and Society* (1993) he is presented as "cultural critic". The interest in future studies in the 1990s is combined with a more general participation in debates on modernity, postmodernism and "the other". One example is *Distorted Imagination: Lessons from the Rushdie Affair* (1990). Another is *Barbaric Others: A Manifesto on Western Racism* (1993). These books present a criticism of the manner in which the West has related to non-Western cultures. Finally, in the 1990s he has co-written and co-edited works concerning the relations between Muslims and Christians and the situation of Muslim minorities in Europe and North America.<sup>44</sup> Recently, he has also produced a text of educational

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<sup>37</sup>Sardar is a fellow of the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF). See the *Futures Bulletin*, 1996:7.

<sup>38</sup>*The Futures of Muslim Civilization* (1979). This is the first edition. A continuation of the discussions and ideas presented in it is found in *Islamic Futures: the Shape of Ideas to Come* (1985).

<sup>39</sup>See the presentation of the journal in *Futures*, no 6, 1994.

<sup>40</sup>See *Futures*, no 3, 1991.

<sup>41</sup>See *Futures*, no 6, 1994. See also Sardar 1992 and Sardar 1993c.

<sup>42</sup>Sometimes he is invited to become a guest professor at various universities. In a conversation with Sardar in London (2 February 1996) he showed me an invitation from a university in Bulgaria.

<sup>43</sup>Sardar 1996 and personal conversation in London, 2 November 1994.

<sup>44</sup>See Sardar 1991b; Abedin, Anees & Sardar 1991 and Abedin & Sardar 1994.

character entitled *Muhammad for Beginners* (1994).<sup>45</sup> The latter, Sardar says, is an entirely commercial project.<sup>46</sup>

*Other adherents to the idjmālī position*

Sardar's partner in the project called *Faces of Islam* was Meryll Wyn Davies. She is a journalist and anthropologist, and the author of *Knowing One Another: Shaping an Islamic Anthropology* (1988).<sup>47</sup> Meryll Wyn Davies is a Muslim and one of the few women who participate in the discourse concerning the Islamization of science. She is also the editor of a series at Grey Seal entitled "Contemporary Islam".

S. Parvez Manzoor is of Pakistani origin.<sup>48</sup> He is a natural scientist with a degree in geology. He has no education in Islamic studies, but he belongs to a family of scholars and writers with a formal religious education. In the beginning of the 1970s, at a time when he worked as a scientist, he felt that he lived in a spiritual vacuum. A spiritual experience made him turn to the humanities and he started to study Sanskrit. Manzoor felt that there was a lack of intellectual discussion among Muslims. He started to write articles and after a while came into contact with the journal *Inquiry* and began writing for it. Manzoor attained a position as a Muslim intellectual and started to take part in the discussion on the function of Islam in general. After some time he received invitations to participate in seminars and to hold lectures in Muslim countries, especially in Malaysia, where Manzoor has worked as a visiting professor.<sup>49</sup> In recent years Manzoor has been consulting editor of *The Muslim World Book Review*, which is published by The Islamic Foundation in collaboration with the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). Parvez Manzoor became acquainted with Sardar in 1981-1982. They planned to cooperate and, as has been stated above, the term *idjmālī* became a kind of heading for their common activities. In Manzoor's opinion, the *idjmālī* is a somewhat heterogenous group of old friends. Thus, their views and ideas are not uniform. In a translation of the word *idjmālī*, Manzoor says that it has to do with "wholeness" and "summary".<sup>50</sup> Using the term as a label for a set of notions Manzoor refers to it as "the Synoptics" or "the syntet-

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<sup>45</sup>Sardar & Malik 1994.

<sup>46</sup>Personal conversation in London, 2 November 1994.

<sup>47</sup>See Sardar (ed.) 1988b:ix. Wyn Davies is also co-editor (together with Adnan Khalil Pasha) of *Beyond Frontiers: Islam and Contemporary Needs* (1989).

<sup>48</sup>The following presentation of Manzoor is based on a conversation between the present author and Manzoor in Sollentuna, Sweden, 23 August 1993.

<sup>49</sup>Manzoor has never worked as a professor of Linguistics at the University of Stockholm, which is stated in some of the books edited by Sardar. See the cover-sleeves of Sardar (ed.) 1989b and Sardar (ed.) 1991. He has lived in Sweden since the 1970s and has participated actively in Muslim organizations in that country.

<sup>50</sup>Personal conversation with Manzoor in Sollentuna, Sweden, 23 August 1993.

ics”, but it is also possible to use the word “holism”. Moreover, the term *idjmālī* is easily associated with aesthetics. Manzoor says that both he and Sardar are influenced by the late Fazlur Rahman and that he himself is also inspired by the *ṣūfī* poet Djalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273). The word *idjmālī* is taken from *Dīwān-i Shams Tabrīzī* by Rūmī. Manzoor has published most of his articles in *Inquiry* and some longer articles in books edited by Sardar. He has also published one article in *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*<sup>51</sup> and one in *Futures*.<sup>52</sup>

Munawar Ahmed Anees is a biologist, concerned especially with the ethical aspects of contemporary biology.<sup>53</sup> He taught at Indiana University, Bloomington, USA and later became Director at the Noor Health Foundation in San Antonio, Texas, USA. In 1988 he was the director of research and development at the East-West university in Chicago. Anees was lecturing at the Mara Institute of Technology, Shah Alam, Malaysia in 1991. It can be noted that Sardar, Wyn Davies and Manzoor all have held – or still have – posts in Malaysia. Anees has written articles in several of Sardar’s collective volumes.<sup>54</sup> In the presentation of the authors in *An Early Crescent*, Anees is presented as a member of the *Intellectual Studies Foundation* based in London.<sup>55</sup> Today he is the editor-in-chief of *Periodica Islamica*, which is designated by its editors as “an international contents journal”, published by Berita publishing in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Berita publishing house, in cooperation with the London based publishing firm Grey Seal, has since the publication of *Distorted Imagination* (1989) published several other books produced by adherents of the *idjmālī* position. Anees, Manzoor and Wyn Davies have all contributed to works edited by Sardar and they sometimes co-edit publications with him. They also produce joint articles and review each others’ works. For example, Wyn Davies and Anees published “Islamic science: current thinking and future directions” in *Revenge of Athena: Science Exploitation & the Third World* (1988).<sup>56</sup> In the same way, Manzoor participated in the issue of *Future* edited by Sardar.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Manzoor 1990.

<sup>52</sup>Manzoor 1991b.

<sup>53</sup>The description of Anees is from the presentation of the author in Sardar (ed.) 1984; Sardar (ed.) 1988b and Sardar (ed.) 1991.

<sup>54</sup>See Sardar (ed.) 1984; Sardar (ed.) 1989b and Sardar (ed.) 1991. Anees is the editor of *Health Sciences in Early Islam: Collected Papers by Sami K. Hamarneh* (1984) and the author *Islam and Biological Futures: Ethics, Gender and Technology* (1989).

<sup>55</sup>This is also stated about Anees in a short presentation of him in *Faces of Islam* (1989). See Sardar & Wyn Davies 1989:98.

<sup>56</sup>See Anees & Wyn Davies 1988:249–260.

<sup>57</sup>Manzoor 1991b. Other individuals who conforming to ideas of the group and form part of – or are close to – the *idjmālī* tendency are Hussein Ateshin, Muhammad Iqbal Asaria, Gulzar Haider, Zafar Abbas Malik. Malik has worked together with Sardar illustrating *Muhammad for beginners* (1994), and he is consulting editor of *Periodica*

## An Introduction to the Ideas of the *Idjmālī* Position

In spite of the variety of publications produced by the *idjmālīs*, there are a number of common features. Firstly, Europe and the USA – earlier the former Soviet Union was also included – are perceived as having a problematic influence on Islam and on Muslims. This view is concerned not only with the economical, political and military power exercised, but also with the institutional and intellectual superiority of these countries.<sup>58</sup> According to the *idjmālīs*, the claim to universality of the ideas established by so-called Western civilization threatens religion in general and Islam in particular. Manzoor states that this coercive force can endanger the “Islamicness” of Muslims. Therefore, Manzoor says, the search for a synthesis is not an intellectual extravagance but a question of survival.<sup>59</sup> Secondly, in a search for solutions to the perceived problems, they criticize the manner in which science and technology are utilized in Europe and the U.S.<sup>60</sup> Sardar defines science very broadly, and includes scientific research and the application of its results. For Sardar, technology appears to be the application of science, e.g. techniques used in contemporary engineering or agriculture.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, his criticism of science contains a discussion of phenomena such as environmental pollution, waste matters, nuclear arms and problems in connection with chemical and biological industries. Hence, Sardar expresses the idea that the world is in a state of crisis, and so is its science.<sup>62</sup> Environmental pollution and the development of microprocessors which contribute to unemployment are mentioned as examples of this crisis.

From the *idjmālī* point of view, modernity is intimately related to the history and civilization of the West, and secularism is the ideology of modernity. The essential institutions connected with modernity and secularism – and the aspirations in Western societies towards an endless progress – are the secular nation state, science and technology. Both modernity and secularism are forces challenging non-Western civilizations. Sardar’s and Wyn Davies’ opinions are that for non-Western countries striving towards modernity, secularism is not a viable option. Hence, they state that modernity appears to be the bed-fellow of secular-

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*Islamica*. He is a designer and artist working at the Islamic Arts Foundation in London, and he is an example of an individual related to the *idjmālī* standpoint who is not a writer. A work inspired by Sardar is also Nasim Butt’s *Science and Muslim Societies* (1991). He refers to the works of Sardar, Manzoor and Anees. Although he is critical of Anees’ presentation of Islamic science, he is close to the *idjmālī* position.

<sup>58</sup>Manzoor 1984:233.

<sup>59</sup>Manzoor 1984:233.

<sup>60</sup>Sardar (ed.) 1984:1f.

<sup>61</sup>Sardar’s view on the status of technology is developed in Sardar 1985:179–197.

<sup>62</sup>Sardar 1982:20. See also Sardar (ed.) 1988b:2f.

ism.<sup>63</sup> They view the debate concerning post-modernism in the Western world as a sign of the crisis of modernity. Therefore, they argue that both non-Western and Western civilizations are in need of new or other ideological foundations.<sup>64</sup>

In Sardar's opinion, there is a growing body of literature produced by scientists who criticize the present forms of science.<sup>65</sup> The ideas concerning the crisis in contemporary science lead him to state that Muslim scientists use models, theories and paradigms which have been formed in Europe and the USA. In Sardar's view, such methods constructed in the West are not applicable to so-called Third world countries.<sup>66</sup> In the Introduction to *Explorations in Islamic Science* (1989), Sardar presents a summary of the development of his thoughts and of the discourse on the Islamization of science project.<sup>67</sup> Sardar holds that there has been a general change in attitude towards the notion of a specific Islamic science. "Even those who declared that 'science has no home, no religion, no particular bias' accepted that something needed to be done to give science indigenous roots in the Muslim societies".<sup>68</sup> This statement is directed against statements by Muslims such as Abdus Salam.<sup>69</sup> In the 1970s Muslim scientists, according to Sardar, avoided talking about problems concerning the relation between their religious ethics and their professional work as scientists. According to one of Sardar's sources, such talk was even dangerous. It could end a person's scientific career. The change took place in less than five years, Sardar says, and it is now respectable to talk about Islamic science. From his point of view, the problem in the relationship between science and Islam is not a shortcoming on the behalf of the religion: Islam always encourages Muslims, men and women, to seek knowledge as an act of worship and a sacred duty.<sup>70</sup> The problems become visible in the actual practice of science, which is perceived in various ways by different scientists. The change in attitude opened up a debate concerning the Islamic and secular approaches to science.

While science itself is neutral, it is the attitude by which we approach science that makes it secular or Islamic. The Islamic approach recog-

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<sup>63</sup>Sardar & Wyn Davies 1990:76.

<sup>64</sup>Sardar & Wyn Davies 1990:8ff.

<sup>65</sup>He quotes Everett Mendelsohn, see Sardar (ed.) 1984:2f. See also Sardar 1981:2.

<sup>66</sup>Sardar 1988:3ff. and Sardar 1982:4. Thus, this is not a distinctively "Islamic" problem. Various authors have stated that development assistance and international relations in general have not fulfilled their purposes because they are founded on models and theories which do not "understand" a local reality. See Hettne 1982.

<sup>67</sup>See Sardar 1989:1-8.

<sup>68</sup>Sardar 1989:2.

<sup>69</sup>See the presentation of Abdus Salam in Sardar 1989:5.

<sup>70</sup>Regarding this particular view, see also Sardar 1987:15.

nizes the limitations of the human mind and reason and acknowledges that all knowledge is the property of God.<sup>71</sup>

The idea of science as neutral and without relation to the scientist himself or herself is an idea that would be opposed by many scholars. In the discourse, Sardar refers to a small group having a perception of a specific Islamic science which he finds challenging. However, he does not identify a specific group or individual in this text. The group “spoke of Islamic science as a science based on entirely different assumptions from those of modern science about man and man, man and nature, universe, time and space”.<sup>72</sup> The conclusion he draws is that this form of science “can only be pursued by those goals which are permitted by Islam”.<sup>73</sup> It was this idea that aroused his curiosity, and he decided to examine the position of the group in detail. Their view on science was the reason why he decided to undertake his exploration of Islamic science. However, as early as 1977, Sardar published a work on the subject of creating a specifically Islamic classification scheme to be used in libraries.<sup>74</sup> In particular, he emphasizes the significance of one article and one collective work which he edited. The article “Why Islam needs Islamic Science” was published in *New Scientist*<sup>75</sup> while the book in question was *The Touch of Midas* (1984).<sup>76</sup> He states that he was surprised that

the discourse on Islamic science began to move in a strangely irrational direction, being squeezed by two strongholds. The first arose from our difficulty in defining what we actually mean by Islamic science: different groups give their own interpretations and take the discussion in their own eclectic directions. The second results from the conventional discussion on ‘Islam and science’ being woolly, confused and not infrequently intellectual shambolic. This legacy, dating back to the early 1950s, has introduced uniformed, emotional and rather irrational elements in the discourse.<sup>77</sup>

In the discourse, Sardar says, there were several opinions on the definition of Islamic science, and there were also “traditional” and negative views on the Islami- zation of science project. Sardar states that the discussion dates back to the 1950s

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<sup>71</sup>Sardar 1989:2.

<sup>72</sup>Sardar 1989:2.

<sup>73</sup>Sardar 1989:3.

<sup>74</sup>See Sardar 1979b.

<sup>75</sup>Sardar 1982:25–28.

<sup>76</sup>In Sardar 1996 he stresses the importance of *The Future of Muslim Civilization* (1979) for the development of his personal standpoint. Yet, Sardar regards the essays in *The Touch of Midas* and *New Scientist* as significant because they gave rise to a substantial discussion.

<sup>77</sup>Sardar 1989:3.

and that many Muslim scientists cannot free themselves from their colonial past. Consequently there is a split in different interpretations of the meaning of the term “Islamic science”.

As a result [of the debate] we now have, on the one hand, a growing body of apologetic literature attempting to prove the divine origins of the Quran by reading science into it, and, on the other hand, a growing movement of intellectuals retreating into mysticism and equating Islamic science with gnosis.<sup>78</sup>

Sardar criticizes the tendency of projecting science into the Quran. His criticism is especially directed towards the positions represented by Maurice Bucaille and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Bucaille’s and Nasr’s interpretations of the Quran are not accepted by Sardar or by any other supporter of the *idjmālī* position.<sup>79</sup>

The outline of the Islamic science presented by the *idjmālīs* is founded on a conceptualization of a set of Islamic terms. The word *‘ilm*, “knowledge”, is one of the most significant of these fundamental terms. Sardar outlines his understanding of the term *‘ilm*:

The all-embracing concept of *ilm* shaped the outlook of the Muslim people right from the beginning of Islam. Islam actually made the pursuit of knowledge a religious obligation: by definition, to be a Muslim is to be deeply entrenched in generation, production, processing and dissemination of knowledge. Moreover, the concept of *ilm* is not a limiting or elitist notion. *Ilm* is distributive knowledge: it is not a monopoly of individual, class, group or sex; it is not an obligation only for a few, freeing the vast majority of the society; it is not limited to a particular field of inquiry or discipline but covers all dimensions of human awareness and the entire spectrum of natural phenomena.<sup>80</sup>

Sardar makes his interpretation of the place and status of *‘ilm* in Muslim history very clear. In Sardar’s view, *‘ilm* appears to be one of the key concepts in the attempts to establish a specifically Islamic science. In Munawar Ahmed Anees’ portrayal of the history of the term *‘ilm* it is stated that the worst problem caused by *sūfī* teachings was a form of “conceptual dichotomies” which “emphasized religious knowledge at the expense of all other branches of knowledge”.<sup>81</sup> Out of this the boundaries between science and religion developed. The boundaries caused a secularization of knowledge. In this context, the word secularism has negative

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<sup>78</sup>Sardar 1989:4.

<sup>79</sup>For example, see Butt 1991:38f.

<sup>80</sup>Sardar 1988:21. For another example of his use of *‘ilm*, see Sardar 1993b.

<sup>81</sup>Anees 1991:16.

connotations and seems to be equal to atheism. The term secularism also carries with it connotations of a morally corrupt society. Anees sees the process of secularization as the main reason for the downfall of Muslim civilization. This opinion is also shared by Sardar who argues: "Islam has never agreed to this great divide, insisting that everything can and must fit together in a unitary worldview".<sup>82</sup> Anees seems to view the secularization of knowledge in Muslim countries as something which has indeed happened, and that this secularism is a reason for the downfall of Muslim civilization. Sardar, on the other hand, seems to be of the opinion that there never has been any "great war between science and religion." However, even if there appears to be a contradiction in the statements made by Sardar and Anees, both writers share the presupposition that, according to the authentic Islamic order, there should not exist any division between science and religion.

As has been stated above, Sardar and the supporters of the *idjmālī* position, develop a set of terms which is the very foundation of their Islamization of science project. They thus add to the already vast number of meanings given to these terms.<sup>83</sup> One example is Sardar's concept of *sharī'a*

Sharia, the dictionary tells us, literally means the way to a watering hole, it is therefore a source of unchanging moral and ethical principles that must be regularly revisited, an absolute reference frame to which questions must be subjected for analysis time and time again. By arrogating the monopoly of interpretation largely to classical scholars and partly to contemporary obscurantist, traditional leaders, the Muslim community has been cut off from the basic source that shapes identity. To be comfortable with my Muslim identity, I had to go back to the source: Qur'an.<sup>84</sup>

In Sardar's opinion, the challenge of *his* Islam is to "keep making the walk to the waterhole and constantly drink deep of its refreshment".<sup>85</sup> Sardar here plays

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<sup>82</sup>Sardar 1991:88.

<sup>83</sup>In *Science and Technology in the Middle East* (1982), the terms are *tawhīd* (unity), *khilāfa* (trusteeship), *'ibāda* (worship), *'ilm* (knowledge), *halāl* (praiseworthy sic!), *ḥarām* (blameworthy) (sic!), *'adl* (justice), *zulm* (tyranny), *istiṣlāḥ* (public interest) and *ḍayā'* (waste). The translations of "praiseworthy" and "blameworthy" are an addition to the many meanings given to the words, especially in a legal sense. The terms are here referring to a categorisation of acts stipulated by the *sharī'a*. The terms usually utilized in traditional *fiqh*, jurisprudence, are *Mustaḥabb* or *ma'arūf* for "praiseworthy" and *Makrūh* for "blameworthy". The first denotes a meritorious and commendable act, but it is not punishable to abstain from it. The latter is an act which should be avoided, but it is not punishable. In traditional jurisprudence, *halāl* is interpreted as including *mustaḥabb* or *ma'arūf* and *makrūh* and the term *ḥarām* denotes forbidden acts stipulated as sins, and are, therefore, punishable. For an introduction to the terms, see Coulson 1978 (1964) and Schacht 1984 (1964).

<sup>84</sup>Sardar 1996.

<sup>85</sup>Sardar 1996. See SEI:524.

with words. Muslims should continue to adhere to the *sharīʿa*, but the door to *idjtiḥād* is not closed. Thus, it is possible for a lay person to interpret the most sacred source – the Quran.<sup>86</sup>

In Sardar’s interpretation, many Islamic terms are related to science and technology. He elaborates on the meaning of *tawḥīd*. This is understood as a concept expressing an all-embracing value which encompasses all of humanity. The term symbolizes the unity between human beings and nature, as well as between knowledge and values. The term *khilāfa* is ideologically related to *tawḥīd*. The latter term in Sardar’s view means that human beings are not independent of God, but responsible to God for their acts, also in the field of science and technology. The term *khilāfa* incorporates the idea that humans have no sole right to anything, and that people are responsible for the maintenance and preservation of “the integrity of the abode on his terrestrial journey”.<sup>87</sup>

In Sardar’s view, people are obliged to search for knowledge in a way which does not dominate and exploit nature. By practising *ʿibāda* (worship) humankind will attain a consciousness of *tawḥīd* (unity) and *khilāfa* (trusteeship). It is the interpretation of these key terms which links the entire system of Islamic values to scientific activity. *ʿIbāda* in Sardar’s opinion, is to witness God’s unity. Worship can be manifested in many ways, but the search for *ʿilm* (knowledge) is its foremost manifestation.<sup>88</sup> In this manner, Islamic terms are given a meaning which link them to the realm of science.<sup>89</sup>

Another *idjmālī* voice expresses a significant aspect of their mission: “To re-educate the youth of Islam and its intellectuals from hermits to *mujāhids* is the most challenging task of Islamic education today”.<sup>90</sup> The term *mudjāhid*<sup>91</sup> can be translated “one who strives for Islam”, but often more popularly translated as “freedom fighter”. Thus, it has become a technical term denoting “Islamic freedom fighters”. However, it is in modern Arabic unusual to link *mudjāhid* to intellectuals in the sense of scientists fighting for their right to practice Islamic science. This mode of using Islamic vocabulary in a new context and sometimes with new interpretations is often practised by supporters of this position. In the quotation above the word “hermit” is also of interest. If it is translated to Arabic, the word *zāhid* can be used. *Zāhid* also means “ascetic” or “pious man”. The meaning of *zahada* is to live a devout or ascetic life. The noun *zuhd* is also a tech-

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<sup>86</sup>In this context *idjtiḥād* means “reinterpretation”, i.e., to exert oneself to form an opinion based on the sources of Islam, primarily the Quran. In the *idjmālī* opinion this is the right of every Muslim, not only the religious scholars.

<sup>87</sup>Sardar (ed.) 1984:7.

<sup>88</sup>Sardar 1982:21.

<sup>89</sup>See Sardar 1982:21f. and Sardar (ed.) 1984:7f.

<sup>90</sup>Manzoor 1991:128.

<sup>91</sup>*Mudjāhid* is a third form participle of the root *djahada*, “to endeavour, to strive, to labor”. From the same root is *djihād*, “to strive for the religion as a religious duty”.

nical term in Muslim mysticism meaning “abstinence”, “renunciation” or “asceticism”. For Muslims with a knowledge of Arabic, the sentence quoted above can evoke a mental association of re-educating the pious men working in the field of science, practising science in a secular framework, making them conscious of the scientific possibilities of Islam. Another and more likely, interpretation is that “hermit”, the adjective applied to Islamic youth, creates associations to the term *rahbānīya*, “monasticism”, and to the *ḥadīth* saying “no *rahbānīya* in Islam”. This is a form of criticism that has been directed against the mystics since the early time of Sufism. To exclude oneself from the obligations of society is considered wrong and is said to stem from an incorrect interpretation of the meaning of Islam. Furthermore, “hermit” can evoke associations to the term *murābiṭ*, “one who is attached” in the meaning of being attached to God as a pious individual. Traditionally, the *murābiṭ* lived in a *ribāṭ*, a fortified religious community and garrison. The *murābiṭ* is seen as a person spending his time performing military exercises and devotional practices, preparing for martyrdom.<sup>92</sup> The term *murābiṭ* has in North and West Africa come to denote a *ṣūfī* saint who in his piety and sanctity withdraws from the worldly things in life.

The point here is not to judge which of the possible interpretations is the accurate one, but to demonstrate how the ambiguity of the English and Arabic languages are used in order to formulate the position. The aim seems to be to evoke “Islamic” associations related to a specific Islamic terminology.

Finally, Sardar’s interpretation of being a Muslim “means engaging with the world, understanding it, changing it, reforming it; not living in a distant past or some artificially bought over, bussed in ‘modernity’”.<sup>93</sup> This view, related to the opinion that the Quran can be interpreted by laypersons, and the statement that the interpretations of the Quran can vary over time lead Sardar to state that various other positions in the perception of the function of Islam are static in their approach to the Quran and to the religious tradition in general.<sup>94</sup> The tendency to emphasise this approach to Islam is taken even further by Manzoor. He has stated recently that it is possible to combine Islam with the West. This is to be done through a common foundation of hermeneutics and epistemology. Islam must be a part of a secular order; that, Manzoor says, is a reasonable platform for dialogue. The legitimacy for such a development must come from within the Muslim tradition. In Manzoor’s conception of Islam, civil law is superior to religious

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<sup>92</sup>See the article on *ribāṭ* in SEI:473ff.

<sup>93</sup>Sardar 1996.

<sup>94</sup>Sardar 1996. This argument is further stressed when Sardar (1996) argues that the emphasis on external manifestations of the Islamic tradition such as *ḥidjāb*, beards for men, unconditional obedience to leaders, “Biblical” punishments and to cast abuse and venom at the West are false interpretations of what it means to be a Muslim.

law.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, he states that he prefers a secular world order, and that Islam must find a way to secularism.<sup>96</sup> In Manzoor's vocabulary the word secularism does not designate unmitigated evil. On the contrary, it is used to describe a democratic society in which religious faith is a matter for the individual.

## The Malaise of Science in the Western World

There is a growing concern that science is facing an acute crisis. Whenever we look, among the interactions of our science and technology with its natural environment, we find problems.<sup>97</sup>

Science as it is carried out in Europe and North America is, in the *idjmālī* view, in a situation of crisis.<sup>98</sup> In their assumption this crisis is exacerbated when modern science is at work in Muslim countries. Western science promotes a fragmentation and occidentalization of the *umma*.<sup>99</sup> This alleged crisis in science and technology is by Sardar connected with the environmental problems in the world.<sup>100</sup> It is important that science should be based on what the *idjmālīs* define as Islamic values and not on national, such as "Arab" or "Turkish", values and norms. The *idjmālī* group stresses the idea of unity in their perception of the *umma*. The majority of the *idjmālīs* are of non-Arab origin. Most of them come from Iran, Pakistan, India and Muslim countries in South-East Asia.

Sardar attempts to develop a Muslim view on questions concerning development. In this undertaking Sardar defines the nature of science.

In fact, science can be considered to be a set of human activities although many will disagree with this definition. For some science is simply a method, an objective methodology for establishing verifiable facts. For others, science is the coherent, growing body of public knowledge that has resulted from cumulative application of this methodology. We consider science to be a complex combination of all three partial views. But more than that: we consider all aspects of science to

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<sup>95</sup>It should be noted that this statement by Manzoor is in opposition to Anees' view on the status of the *sharī'a* outlined above.

<sup>96</sup>Manzoor's views were expressed at a seminar entitled "Religions and Confessions in contemporary Europe" held in Hässleby, Sweden, 1–2 November 1994.

<sup>97</sup>Sardar 1981:2.

<sup>98</sup>For the general ideas in Sardar's critique of science, see Sardar 1977:21–36 and Sardar (ed.) 1984:1.

<sup>99</sup>Sardar 1977:18,40f,55ff. *Umma* denotes an ideal idea of all Muslims as one community.

<sup>100</sup>Sardar 1983:2.

be value-oriented and science as a whole to be a cultural activity, an activity that is shaped by the world-view of the actor.<sup>101</sup>

Here, Sardar criticizes the view of science as an objective phenomenon or activity. A conclusion of his definition of science is that the creation of a specifically Islamic science conforms with the conception of science as a cultural activity, an activity shaped by the general values and ideas held by a scientist. By seeing science as a cultural activity, Sardar can conclude that Muslims must have an Islamic science. In Sardar's argument, the threat appears to be that if an Islamic science is not constructed, Islam will cease to be a culture. In other words, Islam will be privatized and differentiated in a way which probably reminds Sardar of a tendency within Christianity – a destiny Islam must not share.<sup>102</sup>

The quotation above is also another example of how Sardar uses the ideas he has acquired through his reading of the contemporary discussion on the status of science – and role of science in society – in general.<sup>103</sup> Sardar points out that science is a “product of the occidental civilization, an embodiment of its culture and values.”<sup>104</sup> He continues by saying that the roots of modern science are not only found in the industrial revolution, but also in the Enlightenment. In order to find the premises of modern science, Sardar refers to Lynn White Jr.<sup>105</sup> She states that the premises of modern science are to be found in medieval Christianity. White appears in Sardar's argumentation as a useful instrument, and her statement makes it possible for him to develop the opinion that science is a cultural phenomenon. Hence, he says that every culture incorporates a particular view of nature, of society and of knowledge.<sup>106</sup> Sardar maintains that science embodies occidental actions and culture. Therefore, a science – an Islamic method of knowing – based on Islamic assumptions about the relationship between humans and nature would yield a completely different approach, a form of science based on Islam's “holistic concept of knowledge”,<sup>107</sup> a science that is performed in accordance with nature, the revelation and the needs of human beings.<sup>108</sup>

Positivism is in the *idjmāli* vocabulary a negative term. The supporters of the *idjmāli* view are opposed to the idea of science as universal and value-free.

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<sup>101</sup>Sardar 1977:21.

<sup>102</sup>A tendency towards this way of discussing can be traced in Sardar 1977:25f. “Comprehensive” and “all-encompassing” are often used to describe the nature of Islam among adherents to the *idjmāli* position.

<sup>103</sup>In the quoted work *Science, Technology and Development in the Muslim World* (1977) the names presented in various parts of the book to substantiate statements are many. See Sardar 1977:23f.

<sup>104</sup>Sardar 1977:28.

<sup>105</sup>Sardar refers to White's article “Historical roads of our ecological crisis” in *Science* 155, 10 March 1967. See Sardar 1977:28,36.

<sup>106</sup>Sardar 1977:28.

<sup>107</sup>Sardar 1977:29.

<sup>108</sup>See Sardar 1977:29–32.

They consider the positivistic support for a universal and value-free science to be without sense, but this does not mean that the *idjmālīs* would like to abolish reason and rationality.

Should we throw reason and rationality completely overboard and descend into magic and myth – as is the want of so many Western critics of science? This would clearly be an un-Islamic stand, considering the emphasis that the Quran places on reason.<sup>109</sup>

In what way reason is emphasized in the Quran is not explained. If reason is meant to be equivalent to the Arabic word <sup>ʿ</sup>*aql*, forms of that root are in fact not very common in the Quranic text. However, possibly it is the word of God itself which is seen as rational and as an expression of reason.

Sardar and other of the *idjmālī* position comment on several other approaches to science, such as views of science influenced by Marxism. Sardar argues that the *idjmālīs* support the Marxist analysis in part, particularly when it illuminates the ideological biases of science.<sup>110</sup> The *idjmālī* objection to Marxism is based on the understanding that Marxists see science in terms of politics, and that in their analyses Marxists have a positivistic approach.<sup>111</sup> Sardar also comments in a negative manner on epistemological ideas found in the works of Fritjof Capra and David Bohm and others.<sup>112</sup>

#### *The utilization of Western scientists*

Sardar states that modern science and technology have achieved valuable results. In the formation of an Islamic science, and an Islamic society in general, the results of modern science can be used.<sup>113</sup> However, several products of science and technology – in combination with their ideological impact – are condemned by Sardar. Hence, in his presentation of the *idjmālīs*, he criticizes the ideas of Thomas S. Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend.<sup>114</sup> Sardar dismisses their views of science. But, at the same time, Kuhn, Feyerabend, Karl Popper and Michel Foucault are referred to by the *idjmālīs* as prestigious names used to substantiate their own position.<sup>115</sup> Sardar maintains that, despite of a criticism of science heard in

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<sup>109</sup>Sardar 1989:157.

<sup>110</sup>Sardar 1989:159. A discussion on contemporary social structures appears to be influenced by a Marxist critique, although Sardar also criticises the Marxist perspective. See Sardar 1977:56–62.

<sup>111</sup>Sardar 1989:159.

<sup>112</sup>See Sardar 1989:160–164.

<sup>113</sup>See the general tendency in Sardar 1977.

<sup>114</sup>Sardar 1989:163.

<sup>115</sup>See Sardar (ed.) 1989b:34,52 and Sardar 1985:91. In the latter Sardar describes the ideas of Kuhn and Feyerabend and links them to a criticism of the “scientific community” presented by Rozak, Nasr and Illich.

Europe and North America, scientists would like to maintain the status quo and side with the establishment. Sardar argues that both Popper and Kuhn have positive views of science and conceive of science as basically true and good.<sup>116</sup>

Nasim Butt is one of the few writers, besides Sardar, who discusses the premises for Feyerabend's ideas.

He [Paul Feyerabend] views science as nothing more than an ideology playing a role akin to that which Christianity played in Western society a few hundred years ago and from which we need to be liberated. There is a separation between state and Church, but no separation between state and science. Therefore, writes Feyerabend, we need to 'free society from the strangling hold of an ideologically petrified science just as our ancestors freed us from the strangling hold of the One True Religion' (Feyerabend, *Against Method*).<sup>117</sup>

In a comment to this quotation Butt states:

Science, in other words, should not be given preference over the other forms of knowledge or traditions. Modern science does not possess features that render it distinct from and superior to voodoo or astrology. In fact, Feyerabend finds it curious that while an American can now choose the religion he likes, he is still not permitted to demand that his children learn magic rather than science at school. Although *Feyerabend's anarchistic theory of knowledge* leads him to the absurd belief that a state should be ideologically neutral, he nevertheless convincingly argues against the idea of a universal scientific method.<sup>118</sup>

The latter quotation has an urging character and can be interpreted as an attempt to induce the reader to accept the possibility of a development of a specifically Islamic science. To a certain extent the quotation also shows a way in which philosophers of European or North American origin, and their criticism of science, are used by the *idjmālīs* to make Western science appear obsolete. A necessary premise for such a statement is that science is culturally biased. They – the *idjmālīs* – also think that Western science is destructive and in a state of dissolution. In general, sentences quoted by *idjmālīs* seem to be picked out of context, and are used mainly as “prestigious words”, in order to persuade the reader to believe that the era of the Western science is over. The conclusion that the adherents of the *idjmālī* position want the reader of their texts to draw, seems to be that it is time for a normative science. In a situation when objective science is

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<sup>116</sup>Sardar 1989:163.

<sup>117</sup>Butt 1991:24.

<sup>118</sup>Butt 1991:24f. *Italics* added by me.

impossible, the solution is a normative science. Feyerabend and Popper cannot be said to draw such a conclusion – particularly Popper would have strongly rejected a science based on religious dogma. However, Popper and Feyerabend are quoted in the hope that their prestigious names will convince the readers and substantiate the *idjmālī* standpoint in the discourse.

#### *Defining culture and development*

In the *idjmālī* position the terms “culture” and “development” are significant. Sardar defines culture in the following way:

Culture in Islam is not a mere sum total of actions, reactions and behaviours or a complex of art, literature and sciences or even fashions of life or modes of existence. These in fact are the end products and manifestations of culture, but not culture itself. In Islam, culture is an attitude of mind, a mental outlook, a world-view. Islamic culture is a manifestation of being in a state of Islam. It incorporates a tradition as well as a historical experience. When one drops this tradition, or loses this experience, or blocks out both with the Coca-Cola mentality or when this tradition and experience are only in the unconscious, the opportunity to build a solid society in the contemporary setting is wasted. To insist on the preservation of a culture, to practice a tradition does not mean the worship of the past; on the contrary, a tradition is alive only when it is flowering. As far as Muslims are concerned, this requires developing the mental outlook that is the culture of Islam. What is the basis of this outlook? It lies in the fundamental concepts and beliefs which are the foundation of Islam – namely, the belief in the unity of God, the Prophethood of Mohammed, the life after death, the dignity of man, and the unity of mankind. The central belief here is the belief in God; once this is accepted the rest fall in place. But belief in God presupposes an understanding of His true nature and attributes. Without this understanding it is not possible to have a clear concept and a meaningful belief in God.<sup>119</sup>

This quotation reveals Sardar’s understanding of culture, and his idea of the existence of a specific Islamic culture. Islamic culture is understood as the manifestation of a situation in which human beings are in a condition of Islam. What this means is, however, not further developed in the text. The incorporation of “tradition” and “history” in the conceptualisation of culture shows Sardar’s understanding of Muslimhood. It appears to mean that Islam can not loose contact with the

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<sup>119</sup>Sardar 1977:51f.

foundation of its own tradition. When tradition and history are lost, the prospect of a solid – and Islamic – society is lost.

In Sardar’s view of how to practice a tradition, a fundamental idea is the view that a living tradition is a constantly developing phenomenon. Such statements can be interpreted in a way in which development will include forms of *idjtiḥād*. Sardar’s statement can also be interpreted as implying a critique of traditionally educated religious scholars. In the latter part of the quotation above, Sardar elucidates the content of the “mental outlook that is the culture of Islam”. This is not an original view, since his statement that if the belief in God is accepted the rest will fall into place reminds one of a rhetorical phrase used by Sayyid Quṭb and others.<sup>120</sup> He also states that the belief in God presupposes an understanding of God’s genuine nature and attributes, without which a meaningful belief is impossible. In Sardar’s perception of a belief in God, there objectively exist a true divine nature and true divine attributes. The problem is to reveal them. Therefore, *idjtiḥād* must be performed. Otherwise being a Muslim would be an unrealisable goal, because the contemporary understanding of Islam has not revealed the authentic nature and attributes of God.

The *idjmālī* perception of the term “development” is expressed in the form of a critique of competing notions of what the term development means.<sup>121</sup> In his definition of development, Sardar stresses the problems involved in defining the term, and points out that development cannot only – or even primarily – signify a cultural process leading to occidentalization. He is not opposed to the idea that influences from one culture causes development in another, but does state that the danger lies in the force he designates occidentalism.<sup>122</sup>

### The *Idjmālīs* Use of Terminology and Language

Those who belong to the *idjmālī* position often stress their comprehensive perspective, and their perception of Islam as all-embracing.<sup>123</sup> Sardar has described the *idjmālī* viewpoint in the following way:

The Ijmali position is similar to that of al-Ghazzali. The propagandists for science, just like the propagandists for Greek philosophers, have attributed to science things which are beyond its abilities and scope. While we do not, indeed cannot, deny the solid achievements of modern science, we emphasize the ‘repulsive facade’ of its methaphysical

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<sup>120</sup>See Quṭb 1989.

<sup>121</sup>See Sardar 1977:38f.

<sup>122</sup>Sardar 1977:39.

<sup>123</sup>See the meaning given to the term within the position above.

trappings, the arrogance and violence inherent in its methodology, and the ideology of domination and control which has become its hallmark. However, it would be wrong to assume from this that the Ijmalis are simply Kuhnian; we neither sanction the extreme relativism of Kuhn, nor the anarchistic epistemology of Feyerabend; neither do we support the class-based science of radical Marxists, or a science based on ‘evolutionary epistemologies’ of the new schools – we do, however, appreciate the positive contribution of each and learn from their expositions, just as we have learned from the positivist interpretation of science. But we do, even though we have only just begun, have a unique position of our own which is derived solely from the ethical, value and conceptual parameters of Islam. The essence of Ijmalī thought is *reconstruction*, *complexity* and *interconnection*, or what Riaz Kirmani has called complementarity. Just as we have argued that the Muslim civilization itself has to be reconstructed,<sup>102</sup> and have made efforts to reconstruct a contemporary Islamic theory of environment<sup>103</sup> and areas of knowledge such as Islamic anthropology,<sup>104</sup> so a contemporary Islamic science must be reconstructed. The basic tools for this reconstruction are the eternal concepts of the Quran and Shariah at our disposal, what is genuinely Islamic in our tradition and history, and what we can synthesize and creatively assimilate<sup>105</sup> from the fruitful products of Western science and technology. In this sense, the Ijmalis are neither willing to write off Islamic history and tradition nor to reinvent the wheel.<sup>124</sup>

In its terminology and use of language, the quotation reveals the foundation for Sardar’s – and the *idjmālī’s* – way of putting their message. In the first part a historical example – al-Ghazzālī – is utilized.<sup>125</sup> The statements are closely linked to the Muslim history of ideas. The next step is a use of portraits of Western individuals who express views on science. Then, the *idjmālīs* demonstrate what they reject in the ideas of Kuhn and others, but also discuss in what way they can benefit from them. In the last part of the quotation, ideas and suggestions for the future are formulated. One presupposition is that Islam has to be utilized in its genuine form. The method appears to be based on an understanding

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<sup>124</sup>Sardar 1989:155. The notes in the text are all references to *idjmālīs*. Note 102 refers to Ziauddin Sardar’s own work *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come* (1985). Note 103 refers to Gulzar Haider’s “Habitat and values in Islam: a conceptual formulation of an Islamic city” in Sardar’s *The Touch of Midas* (1984). Note 104 refers to Meryl Wyn Davies’ *Knowing One Another: Shaping an Islamic Anthropology* (1988). In note 105 Sardar makes the remark: “But synthesis and assimilation can only take place between two scientific cultures of equal status; at present the Muslim world is too weak to exercise synthesis”.

<sup>125</sup>Al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) philosopher and theologian, often described as the most prolific of all Muslim thinkers. His “conversion” from being an orthodox canonist to a devout *ṣūfī* is much discussed in Muslim as well as in Western scholarly discourse. However, the immense influence of al-Ghazzālī on Muslim theology, and the various ideas on his thought, seems to play a role in the present discourse.

of Islam in which results of modern science and technology are not rejected, as long as they are in accordance with the *idjmālī* understanding of the content of the Quran.

A conceptual realism is explicitly expressed in the quotation above, where Sardar says that the tools for reconstruction of Islamic science are the eternal concepts of the Quran and the *sharīʿa*. In accordance with this view, he points out that what is genuinely Islamic in the tradition and history of Muslims will also be a part of the reconstruction. What is “genuinely Islam” will give society, and especially its policies on science, its norms and its values.

A key-word in the *idjmālī* usage of Islamic terminology is, as has been stated above, *ʿilm*, “knowledge”.

One of the most sophisticated, all-comprehensive and profound notions to be found in the Quran is the concept of *ilm*. Indeed, in its significance it is second only to *tawheed* (affirmation of unity), which is the central theme and fundamental concept of the Quran. Its importance is manifest in the fact that the Quran mentions the root word and its derivatives some eight hundred times. The idea of *ilm* distinguishes the worldview of Islam from all other outlooks and ideologies: no other worldview makes the pursuit of knowledge an individual and social obligation and gives enquiry the same moral and religious significance as worship. *Ilm*, therefore, serves as the hallmark of Muslim culture and civilization. In the history of Muslim civilization, the concept of *ilm* permeated deep into all strata of society and manifested itself in all intellectual endeavours. No other civilization in history has embraced the notion of ‘knowledge’ with such passion and pursued it with such vigour.<sup>126</sup>

In this quotation Anees relies heavily on the term *ʿilm*.<sup>127</sup> Anees strives to convince the reader about the correctness – and authenticity – of his interpretations on the meaning and status of *ʿilm*.

The statements in the quotation above, that the pursuit of knowledge is an individual and social obligation, is old in the traditions of Islam.<sup>128</sup> Both Ibn Khaldūn and al-Ghazzālī have expressed the view that science can be divided into

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<sup>126</sup>Anees 1991:10.

<sup>127</sup>For other views on the position of *ʿilm* within the *idjmālī* standpoint, see also Sardar 1979b:11f.; Ford 1984:36f.; Sardar (ed.) 1984:7; Sardar 1985:73,86f.,91,102ff.,226f.; Sardar (ed.) 1989b:44,50; Wyn Davies 1988:161 and Sardar 1991:1f.

<sup>128</sup>Individual and social obligation refers to the terms *farḍ al-ʿayn* (individual duty) and *farḍ al-kifāya* (collective duty). Traditionally, the term *farḍ* means in Islamic law that which is prescribed and obligatory. Thus, there are differences between the various schools of law of what acts should be regarded as obligatory.

praiseworthy and blameworthy forms.<sup>129</sup> Science is blameworthy when it is not useful either in this world or in the world to come. A foundation for Ibn Khaldūn's and al-Ghazzālī's view is the tradition that "it is of the beauty of a man's Islam that he leaves alone what does not concern him".<sup>130</sup> Hence, the Muslim should avoid sciences which are not useful in his life and for his eternal salvation (see below). In Anees' view these statements make it possible for him to say that *ilm* is "the hallmark of Muslim culture and civilization". Further, he underlines that statement by saying that the concept of *ilm* infused the whole of society, and showed itself in all intellectual efforts. To translate *ilm* with "knowledge" is, according to Anees, to do violence to the many possibilities, components and elements that the term contains. One component is described as wisdom. The proper understanding of *ilm* is grasped if the term is linked to Quranic terms such as *ibāda*, "worship": it is a form of worship. *Ilm* is also related to *khilāfa*, "trusteeship of man". Men and women seek *ilm* as trustees of God. Anees warns his readers that the pursuit of *ilm* outside this framework violates the Islamic idea of *tawhīd*. The way *ilm* is acquired by an individual or a society is subject to accountability on the day of judgement. This gives the term a moral and social bearing.<sup>131</sup> He continues by stating that the "synthesis of a whole array of principles into a single, unified concept of *ilm* is one of the basic features of the outlook of Islam".<sup>132</sup> The historical relevance of *ilm* is once more emphasized and Anees says that the unreal boundaries between a secular and a religious knowledge were dissolved by the universal synthesis in the form of *ilm*. Another consequence of the universal character of the term was that it ensured the quality of knowledge to Muslims. The latter statement appears to reflect the modern critique of science in which the Muslim thinkers in the historical past are idealized and presented as the antithesis to the modern – and problematic – situation.<sup>133</sup>

The structure of the above quoted paragraph is typical for the *idjmālī* technique of presenting its arguments.<sup>134</sup> In some cases this structure underlies en-

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<sup>129</sup>Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) was descendant from Muslims in Spain, but lived the larger part of his life in North Africa. He is famous for his work, *al-Muqaddima* (The Introduction to a universal history). Ibn Khaldūn is often described as the first historian or sociologist (Anawati 1970:820). Yet, Turner (1994:7) points out that he may be interesting, but his works does not offer much in an attempt to analyze contemporary civilizations.

<sup>130</sup>The tradition is referred to in the article *ilm* in SEI:164.

<sup>131</sup>Anees 1991:11.

<sup>132</sup>Anees 1991:11.

<sup>133</sup>This will be further discussed under the heading "Examples of the *Idjmālī* Use of History".

<sup>134</sup>This strategy is common in works of Sardar and Anees. One example is the introductory chapter in *Islam and Biological Futures* (1989) in which Anees appears to legitimate his statements by referring to the problems involved in the various tendencies within the field of modern biology. Consequently, he presents a large amount of names as examples of biologists presenting theories which have not solved the problems in contemporary society. In such a discussion he lays the foundation for his own standpoint.

tire chapters. However, the pattern sometimes does vary. One example is a section in *Islamic Futures* (1985) entitled “Islamic science: Reclaiming a heritage”.<sup>135</sup> In this chapter Sardar starts by defining science. Then, he displays a critique of Western science. In his criticism he supports his views by quoting Popper, Kuhn and others. In the following part Sardar critically examines Muslim views on science. The result is that contemporary science is defined as a specific product of the culture and intellectual tradition in Europe and North America.<sup>136</sup> Sardar’s conclusion is that a similarly culturally based Islamic science is the natural product of an Islamic tradition.

The idea to emphasize a set of words or axioms picked out of the Islamic terminology to compose a foundation for an Islamic science was presented in an article by Sardar published in *New Scientist* (1982).<sup>137</sup> The idea is repeated and developed in several articles and monographs by adherents of the *idjmālī* standpoint. It is sometimes paralleled by a complementary set of words introduced as a foundation for an Islamic life or an Islamic civilization.<sup>138</sup> Sardar describes the distribution of knowledge, and especially information, in the ideal Muslim society. In that society the concepts of the Islamic outlook will be an integrated part.

At least five Islamic concepts have a direct bearing on the distribution of information: *adl* (justice), *ilm* (knowledge), *ibadah* (worship), *khalifa* [sic!] (trusteeship) and *waqf* (pious endowment; charitable trust). (...) Indeed, Islam places *ilm* at par with *adl*: the pursuit of knowledge is as important as the pursuit of justice. Just as *adl* is essentially distributive justice, so is *ilm* distributive knowledge. One is an instrument for achieving the other. The ideal goal of the world-view of Islam, establishment of a just and equitable society cannot be achieved without the instrument of distributive knowledge. Only when knowledge is widely and easily available to all segments of society can justice be established in its Islamic manifestations.<sup>139</sup>

To give his statement legitimacy, Sardar states that the terms in the quotation occupied an important place in early Islamic history. In that historical setting, he maintains, they were all utilized in the process of distributing information.<sup>140</sup> On the basis of these terms an advanced infrastructure for distribution of information

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<sup>135</sup>See Sardar 1985:157–178.

<sup>136</sup>Sardar 1985:157.

<sup>137</sup>See Sardar 1982b.

<sup>138</sup>See Sardar 1985:70–79,112f., but also Ford 1984:36f.; Davies 1988:82–112; Sardar 1989:62–67; Sardar (ed.) 1989b:44ff.; Anees 1991:10–23 and Sardar (ed.) 1991:24,86–96.

<sup>139</sup>Sardar 1988:21f.

<sup>140</sup>Sardar 1988:21.

and knowledge developed. The meaning of the terms in the early history of Islam and their meaning to present-day Muslims are thus described by Sardar.

Another example of the usage of Islamic terms in *idjmālī* thought is their understanding of *idjmāʿ*, “consensus”. In traditional sources *idjmāʿ* is described as an agreement among Muslims within the *umma*, and in a technical sense as a consensus among the recognized leading specialists in Islamic law. In this understanding it is the third principle of four of the *sharīʿa*.<sup>141</sup> However, in Sardar’s view *idjmāʿ* is interpreted as a consensus involving not only religious scholars but laypersons as well – a “societal consensus”. The aim of *idjmāʿ* is to promote accepted – and carefully chosen – Islamic values combined with the best of the modern world in order to shape a science and society in harmony and balance.<sup>142</sup>

### *Conceptualizing the West and the Occident*

The endeavour to conceptualize words and terms is not focused merely on terms and axioms picked out of Islam. Ziauddin Sardar aims at conceptualizing words such as the Occident and the West. In his description, the West seems to consist primarily of North America and Europe. The West denotes a geographical area whereas the Occident appears to refer to an ideological condition. This ideological condition embodies the lifestyles of Europe and North America – a set of ideas and notions which can be exported to any part of the world.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, Sardar does not define the Muslim world or the *umma* as a geographical entity, but as an “ideological community”, an “international brotherhood of Islam”, or a “supranational community”.<sup>144</sup>

In his later writings Sardar’s use of the West and Occident becomes more complex. In *The Touch of Midas* (1984), he describes the West as a geographical as well as an ideological entity. The ideological aspect is present in his narration of the development of a crisis in Western science. The term “Islamic science” is here treated as a viable alternative, a positive force, that could solve the dilemmas of Western science.<sup>145</sup> In *Islamic Futures* (1985) the West appears to cease to be a term designating a geographical area, and Sardar uses the West in a conceptualized form which includes Western ideas and notions.<sup>146</sup> Western is presented in a negative manner. It is displayed as an antithesis to everything Is-

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<sup>141</sup>See Schacht 1984:30 and 60f. For an overview of *idjmāʿ* see Bernard 1960:1023–1026.

<sup>142</sup>See the development of the meaning of *idjmāʿ* in Sardar (ed.) 1989b:21.

<sup>143</sup>Sardar 1977:14–17.

<sup>144</sup>Sardar 1977:17. For the use of the term “brotherhood”, see also Sardar 1977:95f.

<sup>145</sup>Sardar 1984 (ed.):1–12.

<sup>146</sup>See Sardar 1985:104.

lamic. The latter term symbolises Islam interpreted as an ideology. However, both the portrayal of the West and the Islamic can be seen as stereotypes.<sup>147</sup>

The use of the West mainly as an ideological concept can also be traced in Sardar's later writings, such as *Distorted Imaginations* (1990) and *Barbaric Others* (1993). In these two works, the West seems to be a label for an ideological method developed in Europe and North America to control the non-Western part of the world.<sup>148</sup> The foundation of the ideology of the West is secularism. In Sardar's and Wyn Davies' view, secularism is a force in opposition to Islam and other religions.<sup>149</sup> It should be noted that this is a view somewhat in opposition to the ideas on secularism expressed by Manzoor above. In the case of *Barbaric Others* (1993) the relationship between the West and "the other" is the theme of the book. The relationship between the West and Islam – and images of this relationship – is central to contemporary works of the *idjmālīs*.

#### *The idjmālī understanding of science and technology*

Other significant terms in texts of the *idjmālī* position are "science", "scientist" and "technology". Science is basically understood as a cultural activity. A technique of fixing the limits of a phenomenon by stating it *via negationis*, is typical for Sardar.<sup>150</sup> In *Islamic Futures* (1985) science is seen as "the basic problem-solving tool of any civilization. Without science a civilization cannot maintain its political and social structures or meet the basic needs of its people and culture".<sup>151</sup> In such a view of science the values of the performer – the scientist<sup>152</sup> – are intimately related to the choice of method and field of study. The examples of devastating effects of modern science relate to the fields of natural sciences, mostly in their applied forms.<sup>153</sup> Consequently, Sardar says that Muslims criticize Western social sciences for being culturally biased.<sup>154</sup> In various works by the *idjmālīs* a commonly expressed position is that the predominant form of

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<sup>147</sup>For Sardar's use of the West and the Islamic, see Sardar 1985:85–106.

<sup>148</sup>This statement refers to the treatment of the West and Western in general. For examples, see Sardar & Wyn Davies 1990:4–14 and Sardar, Nandy & Wyn Davies 1993:1–3,83–95.

<sup>149</sup>See the description of the rise of "secular hegemony" in Sardar & Wyn Davies 1990:14–26 and for Sardar's and Wyn Davies' usage of "secularism" in Sardar & Wyn Davies 1990:142.

<sup>150</sup>See Sardar 1985:165 and Sardar 1977:21.

<sup>151</sup>Sardar 1985:157 and Sardar 1977:21,28.

<sup>152</sup>According to Sardar the scientist has three responsibilities: "(1) to himself, for making the best of his life; (2) to the society and the environment; and (3) he has a responsibility to those inner feelings that determine for him that certain things are inherently important and valuable": See Sardar 1977:32.

<sup>153</sup>See Sardar 1984:1ff.

<sup>154</sup>For a development of Sardar's ideas concerning the status of social sciences and Muslims ideas of an "Islamic social science", see Sardar (ed.) 1989b:29–36.

science is deeply rooted in a European and North American environment. It is closely linked to the ideology, religion and needs of that particular milieu.<sup>155</sup> Sardar emphasizes that Islamic science is not an alternative science. In his view, the idea of alternative science acknowledges Western science as normative. Non-Western science can be just as “objective, rational and universal as the western mode of doing science”.<sup>156</sup> Islamic science is in this sense an science in its own right and it is based on Islam.

Sardar is well aware of the variety of possible definitions of technology, and in his view of the term it is a social phenomenon.<sup>157</sup> According to Sardar, the closer you get to the phenomenon named technology, the more difficult it is to give the word any precise meaning. Sardar is critical of ideas on technology among Muslims. He says that there is a general understanding of technology as essentially good,<sup>158</sup> and the disastrous outcome of various projects to transfer technology to Muslim societies have not disturbed that notion.<sup>159</sup> Secular philosophies can easily adopt Western technology.<sup>160</sup> This capability does not exist in societies oriented towards the sacred.<sup>161</sup> The result is that Western technology never grows social roots in a non-secular environment.<sup>162</sup> Therefore, technology is not at all neutral, value-free or universal.<sup>163</sup> Sardar criticizes a technology which he designates as Western and praises a technology he defines as indigenous. The latter is then in accordance with the Islamic tradition.<sup>164</sup> Sardar’s ideas on the development of a specifically Muslim technology is founded on *‘adl* (“all pervasive justice”), *istiṣlāḥ* (“public interest”), *khilāfa* (“trusteeship”) and *iqtisād* (“moderation”) (sic!). Sardar does not develop a concrete model for the use of these terms in relation to technology, but he says that values, concepts and dictates of the *sharī‘a* have to be understood in a broader and contemporary sense.

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<sup>155</sup>See, for example, Sardar 1985:157. The fierce critique of Western science can be expressed as follows: “That Western science is a theology of violence – with its own belief system, priesthood and temples – was announced as its inception; Francis Bacon’s dictum that nature gives up her secrets under torture has been its motto”. See Sardar (ed.) 1988b:2.

<sup>156</sup>Sardar (ed.) 1988b:9f.

<sup>157</sup>Sardar 1977:122.

<sup>158</sup>Sardar 1985:179f. Here Sardar criticizes what he considers to be a naive approach to technology and as an example he quotes from Waqar Ahmed Husaini’s *Islamic Environmental Systems Engineering* (1980).

<sup>159</sup>Sardar 1985:179.

<sup>160</sup>Sardar 1985:184.

<sup>161</sup>Sardar 1985:184. Sardar has borrowed the term “sacred-oriented” and his ideas on this matter from Darling’s *The Westernisation of Asia* (1979).

<sup>162</sup>Sardar 1985:184. Notably, Sardar states that there is nothing wrong with Western technology, but one has to accept that it is a “product of a deeply secular world-view and culture”. See Sardar 1985:185.

<sup>163</sup>Sardar 1985:185.

<sup>164</sup>For Sardar’s view on the term “technology”, see Sardar 1977:122–138 and Sardar 1985:179–197.

However, he also points out that they have to be given a tangible form, and they have to be incorporated in the actual technological activity.<sup>165</sup>

### Examples of the *Idjmālī* Use of History

In one of his first works, Sardar's references to the history of the Islamic tradition are rather marginal. There is, however, a reference to al-Ghazzālī. He appears as the leading Islamic scholar who has best articulated an Islamic epistemology.<sup>166</sup> This concept is by Sardar understood as a "holistic concept of knowledge".<sup>167</sup>

There is in this work also a critique of the term *‘aṣabīya*.<sup>168</sup> Usually the term is associated with the ideas of Ibn Khaldūn.<sup>169</sup> In Sardar's translation, it means blind group solidarity, racism and nationalism. According to Sardar, *‘aṣabīya* is condemned in Islam.<sup>170</sup> In his view it must be subordinated to the understanding of Islam as all-encompassing. One reason for the scant references to the history of Islam may be the general aim of the book. Sardar's objective is to discuss development policies in Muslim societies.<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, references to a history of ideas familiar in Europe and North America are more frequent. Sardar uses the terms neo-Apollonian and neo-Dionysian.<sup>172</sup> The first designates an approach to science defined by Sardar as positivism, a position that defends science as objective truth.<sup>173</sup> The second is a position advocating a form of understanding of science that Sardar labels scientific mysticism. In that case, the point of departure is the understanding that "scientific rationality is the pri-

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<sup>165</sup>Sardar 1985:193.

<sup>166</sup>Sardar 1977:30.

<sup>167</sup>Sardar 1977:29.

<sup>168</sup>Thus, *‘aṣabīya* is utilized in a positive meaning, and Ibn Khaldūn's ideas are treated as if they could be employed to solve problems for contemporary Muslims. Sardar (1979:169) states that Ibn Khaldūn's ideas on the philosophy of history "is frightfully close to the reality of the contemporary world". Wyn Davies also criticizes the term *‘aṣabīya*. She says "It [our sense of Muslim identity] should also condemn all racial, national or tribal prejudice, *asabīyah*, which denies the dignity and right of others" (Wyn Davies 1988:106).

<sup>169</sup>In references to Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima* Hodgson defines *‘aṣabīya* as "solidarity of the esprit de corps in political formations" (Hodgson 1977 (1974), vol. II:55n.). Further on in the text Hodgson defines *‘aṣabīya* as "group solidarity" or "party spirit" (Hodgson 1977 (1974), vol II:481).

<sup>170</sup>Sardar 1977:60.

<sup>171</sup>Sardar 1977:19.

<sup>172</sup>Sardar has borrowed the terms "neo-Apollonian" and "neo-Dionysian" from "On being caught between Dionysius and Apollonius" by Gerald Holton published in *Daedalus*, summer 1974. See Sardar 1979:34. The modern use of the terms can, however, be traced back to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*.

<sup>173</sup>Sardar 1977:21ff.

mary dehumanizing influence in the contemporary society”.<sup>174</sup> Contemporary history is present in the text, since he frequently refers to the history of ideas in his critique of contemporary science.<sup>175</sup> Supplementary to these references is Sardar’s use of prominent figures in the discussions concerning the future of Islam, such as Sayyid Qutb and Mawdūdī.<sup>176</sup>

In contrast, Islamic history is more present in his later works, such as *Faces of Islam* (1989). In Sardar’s own works, or in works edited by him certain aspects of Islamic history are emphasized:

What would the visions of alternative Muslim futures be based upon? We think that such visions should try to capture the dynamic of the Medina State established by the Prophet after his migration from Mecca. There are two particular aspects of the Medina State civilization that should be thoroughly realized. First, the Medina State was built on certain spiritual, moral and cultural values. These, of course, form the immutable value system of Islam. To emphasise their permanent character, we shall refer to them as the ‘fact’ of the Medina State. Second, there was an underlying dynamic which gave the Medina State its vigorous character and vibrant energy. This is the expression of Islamic ideals and norms, in their own particular way, by the members of the Medina State. We shall call this latent dynamic the ‘style’ of the Medina State.<sup>177</sup>

This quotation and the following discussion concerning the meaning of the terms “fact” and “style” are included in a chapter entitled “Project *‘umrān*: Regenerating the Muslim system”. The term *‘umrān* as well as several ideas presented in the chapter are borrowed by Sardar from Ibn Khaldūn.<sup>178</sup> The “factual” aspect in the quotation represents, in Sardar’s description, the eternal character of the spiritual realm and of the value system of Islam. The “fact” aspect has eternal validity. The “stylistic” aspect has to do with the actual practice evolving in the “Medina state”. He exemplifies by saying that technology and modes of production became more “sophisticated” in the “Medina state”.<sup>179</sup> “Style” is intimately related to “change”, and can vary over time and space in order to meet new realities,<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>174</sup>Sardar 1977:26. Sardar refers to Everett Mendelsohn, Jerome R. Ravetz, Theodore Rozak and Charles Reich as examples of the neo-Dionysian position.

<sup>175</sup>See, for example, Sardar 1977:21–36.

<sup>176</sup>I will return to how Qutb and Mawdūdī are applied in the end of this section.

<sup>177</sup>Sardar 1979:117.

<sup>178</sup>Sardar 1979:116–129.

<sup>179</sup>Sardar 1979:118f.

<sup>180</sup>To “change things” has almost become a slogan for the adherents of the *idjmālī* position. Sardar refers to Muhammad as a person who changed things. He also refers to the Quranic verses 53:39–41, 40:82 and 13:11 to underli-

as an expression or practice of the perfect form of Islam. The point is to establish a contemporary society that is as close as possible in structure to the “Medina state”.<sup>181</sup>

The idea that Muhammad’s time in Medina constitutes the ideal model for the construction of a society is put into practice when Sardar refers to Muhammad’s ideas concerning the status of natural resources and wildlife.<sup>182</sup> Muhammad is said to have protected the natural surroundings of Medina. He also declared individuals’ private use of reserves to be *ḥarām*. Sardar emphasises that regulations concerning the use of land and conservation of wildlife and forests are among the few ecological principles codified in the *sharī‘a*. The point is that the actions of Muhammad serve for the Muslims as an ethical norm, but also as a legal corpus. The model of Muhammad and the *sharī‘a* can, together with Quranic concepts, meet new challenges and form a model for contemporary societies of how to relate towards the environment.<sup>183</sup>

#### *Classical scholars and the idjmālī standpoint*

The ideal state – the time of Muhammad in Medina – is not the only historical pattern utilized in the rhetorics of the *idjmālīs*. Other frequent adduced historical examples worthy of imitation are various “classical” scholars, scientists and theologians, such as al-Bīrūnī (d. 1050), al-Ghazzālī, Ibn Khaldūn and al-Khuwārisīmī (d. 976).<sup>184</sup> The most frequently mentioned individual in *idjmālī* texts is al-Ghazzālī, in some contexts criticized for having influenced science and philosophy in the Muslim world in a negative sense.<sup>185</sup>

Sardar refers to al-Ghazzālī’s categorization of knowledge on the basis of three criteria: firstly, the source: revealed knowledge and non-revealed knowledge; sec-

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ne Muslims’ ability and possibility to change things. The change, in Sardar’s understanding, does not refer to Islam’s eternal value system, but to a change towards an Islamic life for Muslims. See Sardar (ed.) 1989b:19f. In an article entitled “From ‘things change’ to changing things” by Anwar Ibrahim, minister of education in Malaysia, it is stated that Muslims should not accept the idea that things just change in general, but try to change things in accordance with the Islamic value system. The change is to be performed in an environment of consensus of values (Ibrahim 1987:3–5).

<sup>181</sup>Sardar 1979:119f.

<sup>182</sup>Sardar refers to the Medina state saying that “the Prophet is a model for all individual Muslims, the Medina State is a model for all Muslim societies to adopt and follow. We have to study the dynamics of the society of the Medina State to discover the factors that made it an operational Islamic society”. See Sardar 1979:178.

<sup>183</sup>See Sardar 1985:231–233.

<sup>184</sup>For a general outline of these scholars’ relation to science, see Anawati 1982 (1970):741–779.

<sup>185</sup>For the use of al-Ghazzālī, see Sardar 1984:3 and Anees 1989:95. In *Science, Technology and Development in the Muslim World* (1977) al-Ghazzālī is mentioned once to exemplify an Islamic view of epistemology. A part from *The Book Knowledge* by al-Ghazzālī is quoted. Sardar does, however, not provide any specific information from where the quotation is taken, more than a vague reference to *The Book of Knowledge* as the source (Sardar 1977:30,36n.).

only, the level of obligatoriness: individually requisite knowledge and socially requisite knowledge; and thirdly, the social function: praiseworthy sciences and blameworthy sciences.<sup>186</sup> In a commentary, Sardar points out that al-Ghazzālī's framework reveals a situation where the sciences and the humanities are not separate entities, but "two pillars which derive their vital solidarity from the continuum of total human culture".<sup>187</sup> In this perspective, knowledge is both dynamic and static. That is, al-Ghazzālī's notion of knowledge appears to be founded on a combination of revealed knowledge and knowledge emanating from human activities within various scientific disciplines. Sardar interprets this to mean that the body of knowledge is on one hand developing, but is at the same time grounded in the eternal postulates of knowledge derived from revelation. Therefore, it is important that Muslims understand that revealed knowledge provides the foundation for all human sciences.<sup>188</sup> The idea is to establish a foundation for a number of statements where he describes science for the sake of science as an impossibility. Science should always be carried out in relation to society – i.e. be socially relevant. Thus, the authority of the word of al-Ghazzālī – and in this particular case his criteria for analyzing knowledge – is used to stress one of Sardar's often repeated points: that knowledge and science must be connected to society and that science must have a higher goal. The latter statement means that science can be blameworthy if it does not take its ultimate goal into consideration. According to one criterion, science becomes blameworthy when it does harm to society. It is typical for Sardar's way of constructing his statements, that the reference to al-Ghazzālī opens up a paragraph. A reference to statements attributed to a historical example leads Sardar to conclusions on the status of science. These conclusions, however, are dependent on contemporary conditions. He points back at historical ideals such as al-Ghazzālī's to find legitimate reasons for his own concept of the real nature of science.

Further illustrations can be taken from *Islamic Futures* (1985) and from *How We Know* (1991). In the former work, Sardar describes al-Ghazzālī as a Muslim who manifested "the Islamic principle of the unity of all knowledge".<sup>189</sup> In his *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, he made, he says, an effort to reconstruct Muslim civilization<sup>190</sup> in accordance with an idea of the correct spiritual and moral foundation of Islam. Sardar regards al-Ghazzālī and his works as a source of inspiration. He mentions Muḥammad Iqbal as one prominent individual who derived inspiration from al-Ghazzālī. Sardar states that al-Ghazzālī has provided Muslims with a foundation on which to base a specifically Islamic epistemol-

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<sup>186</sup>See Sardar 1977:30.

<sup>187</sup>Sardar 1977:30.

<sup>188</sup>Sardar 1977:30f.

<sup>189</sup>Sardar 1985:14.

<sup>190</sup>Sardar 1985:34.

ogy,<sup>191</sup> especially in the shape of a “healthy scepticism”. Al-Ghazzālī is said to have argued against “a framework of knowledge that sacrifices social and cultural values at the altar of scepticism”<sup>192</sup>. In this context he operationalizes al-Ghazzālī as a source of inspiration for Muslims who will take part in the discussion concerning the future of Islam. In *How We Know* (1991) there are frequent references to al-Ghazzālī. In the introduction Sardar underlines the seriousness in the attempt to establish a society founded on *‘ilm*:

An ilm-based society must both nurture knowledge and cherish those who pursue knowledge in its numerous dimensions. The alternative to revitalizing ilm in contemporary Muslim societies was spelled out by al-Ghazali some nine hundred years ago. ‘Would not the sick die if he is given no food or drink or medicine?’ one of his wise men inquires. ‘Yes’, says the assembled gathering, to which the wise man replies, ‘similarly the heart will perish if it is cut off from wisdom and knowledge for three days’. And al-Ghazali adds, ‘whosoever lacks the love of knowledge has an ailing heart and his death is certain’.<sup>193</sup>

In this process Muslims have to energize their devotion for knowledge. In Sardar’s outline al-Ghazzālī functions as a key person. He legitimates Sardar’s desire to change the situation for Muslims in relation to modern science. The statement of al-Ghazzālī is also used in the end of the introduction to stress the significance of Sardar’s own message. The ideas attributed to al-Ghazzālī are operationalized in a more elaborate way when Sardar discusses plans for the establishment of Islamic universities.

Various classifications of knowledge produced by scholars such as al-Kindi, al-Farabi and al-Ghazali are not based on epistemological divisions as such modern Muslim scholars as al-Attas, Bilgrami and Ashraf project them to be. There is no such thing as religious knowledge and secular knowledge: all knowledge that promotes the goals of Islam – the ideas of tawheed and khilafa, justice and equality, understanding and brotherhood – is Islamic.<sup>194</sup>

The quotation includes a critique of other participants in the discourse concerning the Islamization of science, although the matter at stake here is the notion of

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<sup>191</sup>Sardar 1985:74.

<sup>192</sup>Sardar 1985:93.

<sup>193</sup>Sardar 1991:9.

<sup>194</sup>Sardar 1991:77f.

knowledge.<sup>195</sup> In Sardar's opinion, scholars such as al-Ghazzālī maintained a wholeness in their epistemological perspective. This leads Sardar to state that there are not different forms of knowledge, there is just knowledge. He defines Islamic knowledge as a mode of knowledge which promotes his understanding of Islam. The possibility of various and arbitrary interpretations of terms such as "equality" and "understanding" are not discussed. To strengthen his view that there is only one form of knowledge, Sardar refers to a saying by Muhammad. In the wish to stress his point, it appears that the target of Sardar's critique shifts towards those who proclaim a view where religious knowledge is superior to secular knowledge, i.e. not only al-Attas, Bilgrami and Ashraf, but also religious scholars in general. Thus, according to Sardar, a religious scholar is no more righteous than a great scientist. This view is probably not shared by religious scholars educated at institutions such as al-Azhar in Cairo – the main centre of learning in conventional *sunni* Islam. Sardar justifies the right of his own position to interpret Islam. Scientists are those who can interpret Islam and relate it to modern society, e.g. to the establishment of Islamic universities.

#### *A Critique of 20th Century modern Muslim thinkers*

To substantiate a given point of view, *idjmālīs* usually refer to other *idjmālīs*. Sardar and Manzoor are, as has been stated above, influenced by Fazlur Rahman,<sup>196</sup> but also by Sayyid Quṭb and Mawḍūdī.<sup>197</sup> Yet, in Sardar's *Islamic Futures* (1985), Mawḍūdī and Quṭb are categorized as belonging to a post-independence scholarship which is "conservative and preservative".<sup>198</sup> In Sardar's view they are not relevant to the contemporary or future situation for Muslims. This is explained by Sardar, who states that Mawḍūdī and Quṭb have "failed to motivate their readers to think"<sup>199</sup> and that "they fear adventurous thinking and show no intellectual joy of being a Muslim".<sup>200</sup> However, both Mawḍūdī and

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<sup>195</sup>Sardar 1989:1. Al-Attas is the founder and director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Al-Attas' most widely known work is probably *Islam and Secularism* (1978). Al-Attas has been active in different discussions concerning the function of Islam since the beginning of the 1970s. He was visiting Professor at Temple University in 1976-1977 (al-Attas 1978). Sardar (1985:63) states that al-Attas represents "the traditional sufi outlook".

<sup>196</sup>See Manzoor 1991:114. Wyn Davies (1988:120f.) is also positive towards ideas presented by Rahman on an Islamic methodology of history. A general point causing agreement is that Rahman and the *idjmālīs* are united in a critique of those whom they categorize as traditional religious scholars. See Manzoor 1991:114. In the case of the same criticism expressed by Rahman (1982:71,89f.,102-104).

<sup>197</sup>Sardar 1996.

<sup>198</sup>Sardar 1985:56.

<sup>199</sup>Sardar 1985:57.

<sup>200</sup>Sardar 1985:57. He (1985:62) sees Mawḍūdī's and Quṭb's ideas and work as antiquated. However, he is positive to Quṭb in one respect concerning "Islamic political structures and social organization". It is a passage where

Qutb figure in more positive contexts as well. For example, Sayyid Qutb is mentioned to substantiate Sardar's idea concerning the need for a change within the Muslim community at large, but especially in the field of science and technology.<sup>201</sup> The somewhat ambiguous attitude towards Qutb can also be exemplified by a passage where Sardar discusses a Muslim mode of writing history. Sardar says that Qutb was a "prolific writer" who saw the need to develop new approaches and a different methodology in the writing of history.<sup>202</sup> Sardar stresses that Qutb proposes a practice which is in opposition to a biased and materialistic approach towards history.<sup>203</sup> Sardar supports Qutb's image of the historian as an individual working from a "holistic" perspective, especially when the perspective integrates spiritual and ideological aspects and the activities of human life. Sardar points out that they belong to a group of traditional scholars ranging from al-Ghazzālī to Muḥammad Iqbāl and Ḥasan al-Bannā. They were not to be blamed for the decay of Muslim civilization.<sup>204</sup> Thus, Qutb's and Sardar's outline of the study of history is an alternative to modes of studying history in Europe and North America. This new mode of study is for the benefit not only of the Muslim *umma*, but for the benefit of human society in general.<sup>205</sup>

#### *How to handle history*

In *The Future of Muslim Civilization* (1979) Sardar entitles a chapter "The Future is in the Past".<sup>206</sup> In this chapter, he states that he is concerned with Muslim historiography and defines the term as the "manner in which Muslims study history".<sup>207</sup> He continues "the development of a sense of history or historical-mindedness is crucial to the type of future that we envisage and work towards".<sup>208</sup> He maintains that there is support for the study of history in verses

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Sardar (1985:77) states that Qutb appears to be "have realized that social exploitation is a dominant theme in Muslim society". See also Manzoor 1991:114. For a critique of Mawdūdī based on his restrictive interpretation of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), see Wyn Davies 1988:78f.

<sup>201</sup>Sardar 1989:2.

<sup>202</sup>Sardar 1979:170.

<sup>203</sup>Sardar 1979:171. Sardar (1979:186n.) refers to Qutb's *Fī tarikh fikra wa manhadj*, "On history – idea and method".

<sup>204</sup>Sardar 1979:58. Here Mawdūdī and Qutb are characterized as religious scholars.

<sup>205</sup>Sardar 1979:171.

<sup>206</sup>See Sardar 1979:167–188.

<sup>207</sup>Sardar 1979:167.

<sup>208</sup>Sardar 1979:167. Sardar continues this statement by saying: "There is indeed a great incentive for the study of history in Islam. The very idea of a judgement applies to the evaluation of the actions of the present. Since all one's actions and the motives underlying them play some part in one's future, including one's future after death, whatever one did yesterday cannot be forgotten today, nor can today's actions be forgotten tomorrow. This applies not just to individuals but also to societies. All our actions, individual and collective, perforce have some permanent value", see Sardar 1979:167. See also the discussion concerning human or societal actions and their relation to the *sharī'a*.

12:111 and 30:9 of the Quran. The interpretation of 12:111 is an example of Sardar's use of the Quranic text, that reminds one of Anees. In Sardar's view, the first sentence of the verse says: "In their history verily, there is a lesson [*ibra*] for men of understanding".<sup>209</sup> "History", in Sardar's interpretation, is to be understood as the discipline of history. The word in the Quranic text is in its singular form *qiṣṣa*.<sup>210</sup>

Sardar stresses the importance of Ibn Khaldūn:<sup>211</sup> it is correct to regard Ibn Khaldūn as a turning point in the development of Muslim historiography.<sup>212</sup> The shift led from a chronological documentation of history to a perspective that attempted to "see history as 'verification and insight', the accurate discovery of origins and causes of events",<sup>213</sup> and "Ibn Khaldūn defines the subject of history as human society, and all that occurs in it of material and intellectual culture".<sup>214</sup> This is a starting point for Sardar's discussion on how the discipline of history has been practised in Muslim societies and in the West.

### *The idjmālīs and the purpose of history*

Sardar maintains that history has a purpose, linked to three objectives. Firstly, "the need of the future is an analytical framework that illustrates how certain Islamic concepts were operationalized by the Muslims of the past".<sup>215</sup> Sardar underlines this point by saying that "facts" play a part in shaping history, but it is concepts and theories that form world views. The aim is to operationalize concepts and theories. In its operationalized form, a theory will affect not only the mind, but also the practice of an individual. Secondly, the operationalization of the Islamic ideal is to reconstruct an organic model of the early Muslim community in Medīna. The aim is to construct a model where all parts of the Medīna society, politics, economy and administration, have a "defined organic relation to all the components of parts. Only an organic historical model can tell us what made the Medīna State thrive and reveal the underlying dynamic that made the

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<sup>209</sup>Sardar 1979:168.

<sup>210</sup>In Arberry's and Yusuf Ali's interpretations of the Quran the term *qiṣṣa* is rendered as "story". In M. H. Shakir's interpretation, *qiṣṣa* is translated "history", but in the sense of "story". The meaning of the word may be ambiguous, but Montgomery Watt states in *Companion to the Qur'ān* (1967), that *ṣūra* 12, entitled "Yūsuf", is a coherent account of his life. Therefore, *qiṣṣa*, "story/history", refers to the narrative in the life of Yūsuf. That is also the interpretation made in the various editions of the Quran referred to here.

<sup>211</sup>Sardar 1979:169ff.

<sup>212</sup>Sardar 1979:168f.

<sup>213</sup>Sardar 1979:168.

<sup>214</sup>Sardar 1979:169. Ibn Khaldūn's definition of history appears to be in accordance with the understanding of history presented by Sardar. See Sardar 1979:174,179.

<sup>215</sup>Sardar 1979:179.

state what it was”.<sup>216</sup> Sardar’s point is that there is no need to search for further details of the structure of the Medīna society, but that there is a need for a new analytical framework within which one can study the events of early Islamic history. This framework will reveal crucial concepts, notions and theories. It should be noted that Sardar does not suggest which ideas, theories or concepts will be brought to light. Thirdly, the construction of the organic model is urgent, because the rewriting of Muslim history forms a part of the foundation for the forming of Muslim futures. The loss of a historical perspective and thus the state of being “alienated from the past and the future”<sup>217</sup> is one of the reasons for contemporary Muslims’ disorientation in the world. Parenthetically, history is a subject for the Islamic anthropologist due to the fact that communities have a history. In the outline of an Islamic anthropological study of history, Wyn Davies stresses the importance for any community of studying their history. There can be no community without a history.<sup>218</sup>

Therefore, Muslims need to reflect on the purpose of contemporary actions and their consequences in history.<sup>219</sup> This statement can be interpreted as an exhortation directed to Muslims to take an active interest in the function of Islam in the contemporary world and the role of Islam in the future.

### The *Idjmālī* Idea on Islam and Islamic Science in Practice

In one of our conversations Sardar said that, at the moment, he has no immediate desire to get involved in the praxis of Islamic science. He conceives of himself as a participant in the discourse concerning the Islamization of science, but he does not wish to take part in any practical attempt to implement these ideas in e.g. the work of a specific academic institution. His task is, he says, to provide those who will carry out the implementation with general outlines for the formation of a specifically Islamic science.<sup>220</sup>

#### *The basis*

One of the consequences of declaring that the use of science is culturally biased – and claiming that science is not a universal phenomenon – is that the *idjmālīs* have to elucidate their interpretation of what the term “science” means.

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<sup>216</sup>Sardar 1979:180.

<sup>217</sup>Sardar 1979:185.

<sup>218</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:135,139. Wyn Davies’ outline of an Islamic anthropology will be presented below.

<sup>219</sup>Sardar 1979:186.

<sup>220</sup>Personal conversation with Sardar in London, 2 November 1994. Sardar has attempted, to a certain extent, to outline an Islamic practice in some of his texts. See Sardar 1979 and Sardar 1988.

Science is an objective, systematic way of studying nature. Its results are universally applicable and reproducible. Two scientists from two different cultures studying a phenomenon and taking readings on a metre would not come up with the different readings. The difference lies elsewhere and not in the objective and systematic observations of phenomena. Second, science is a human activity and despite all the efforts to be objective and detached, subjectivity and value criteria do creep into its practice, indeed, into its theory as well. Values, for example, play an important role in deciding the objectives of research, how this research should be founded, what areas should be investigated, how these investigations should be carried out (for example, can experiments be done on animals) and so on. Moreover, as a human activity, science, ideally, is open to all humans. While in today's world science requires a great deal of education and training, it is an activity that is, properly speaking, limited to a select few.<sup>221</sup>

It is of interest to note that Sardar discusses the question of ethically problematic areas, such as experiments on animals. He states that parts of the positivistic approach are also part of an Islamic science. "Sardarian" Islamic science comprises observation and sense-perception, empirical work and experimentation. He says that there is not one form of rationality or that only one type of reason exists. The idea of rationality is intimately related to a specific conception of the world.<sup>222</sup> Hence, the critique of the *idjmālī* position towards the positivistic approach of science is directed towards the basic notions of science. Sardar states:

On the one hand it accepts the relativistic nature of man-made knowledge; on the other it transcends moral relativism by making science accountable to moral conceptual categories and objective social consensus. Subjectivity is therefore demystified by an objective *ijma*.<sup>223</sup>

This opposition is based on the opinion that "the subjectivity inherent in knowledge is itself an objective, socially necessary expression of social forces."<sup>224</sup> Subjectivity is not to be mystified or presented as something which leads to arbitrariness in the scientific work. His assumption is that *idjmā*<sup>c</sup>, interpreted by him as "social or societal consensus", is a driving force in shaping reality and nature.

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<sup>221</sup>Sardar 1991:87f.

<sup>222</sup>Sardar 1989:157.

<sup>223</sup>Sardar 1989:159.

<sup>224</sup>Sardar 1989:158.

This consensus is an objective phenomenon because it arises from the basic values of the worldview and from the physical needs and requirements of a society. Social consensus or *ijma* therefore is an essential part of Ijmali thought. The notion of truth is univocal, for it applies equally to the judgement of lawyers, anthropologists, physicists, philologists, and literary criticism, as well as scientists and technologists. (...) But the presence or emergence of unforced agreement, a social consensus, an *ijma*, gives us everything in the way of objective truth which a society may need.<sup>225</sup>

Sardar refers to the *idjmālī* idea of an Islamic science as the ideological framework of Islam.

Islamic science is a subjectively objective enterprise: it is based on a circumspect rationality which connects human rationality to the conceptual matrix of Islam and hence synthesizes pure knowledge with moral knowledge. The subjectivity of Islamic science is itself objective, since it is based on such Islamic conceptual categories as *khilafah*, *adl*, *halal*, *haram*, *istislah*, *taqwa* and numerous other concepts of the Quran and the Shariah – in which it has its epistemological being – and on social consensus, the *ijma*, of the Muslim community and civilization, the *ummah*. It uses methods in conformity with the questions it raises, the problems it seeks to solve, the needs it wishes to fulfil. It is universal not just because Islam itself is universal, but because it is grounded in a rationality and a methodology, empirical and experimental work that is objective and can be duplicated and repeated by people of all cultures. Its nature and contents reflects its metaphysical and epistemological foundations, as well as needs, requirements and concerns of Muslim people. It seeks not to discover absolute truths but to delineate their exposition and highlight the complex and interconnected nature of reality – thus, it is ultimately a form of worship, *ibadah*, a way towards the glorification of God and elevation of man, as well as a systematic and organized way of solving the physical problems and fulfilling the needs of individuals and society.<sup>226</sup>

Islamic science will combine ideational, social, cultural and behavioural processes.<sup>227</sup> The aim is to construct a consensus in society and give scientific work

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<sup>225</sup>Sardar 1989:158.

<sup>226</sup>Sardar 1989:163f.

<sup>227</sup>Sardar 1989:164.

social significance. This will be the basis of a science that has cultural value and is linked to other areas in the Muslim society.<sup>228</sup>

Sardar, who is a Beatles fan, has given the paragraph on the reestablishment of Islamic science in his book *Explorations in Islamic Science* (1989) the title “We Can Work It Out”. Under this heading he briefly outlines a work schedule for this reconstruction.<sup>229</sup> Sardar argues that a preliminary research programme for the reconstruction of Islamic science<sup>230</sup> would include eight levels. In summary they are as follows:

- *Epistemology*. Muslims need an Islamic contemporary epistemology. The construction of such an epistemology up to now has not gone beyond the depth and scope of *al-Ghazzālī*. Every discipline will need to be examined in order to identify a common ground as well as areas of conflict.
- *Methodology*. Muslims have to find a workable method if Islamic science is to become a reality. Muslims need to study the current methods of modern science and to produce alternative methods. A typical question Muslims have to ask themselves is: How do we recapture and operate *sharīʿa* as a problem-solving methodology and as a basis for ethical choices?
- *History*. In Sardar’s opinion, history is a neglected field, in spite of the fact that many answers to problems which Muslims face today can be found in history. The history of Islamic science and technology should be reclaimed. We need to discover, he maintains, what was genuinely “Islamic” in Islamic science and to identify the ethical criteria and motivation that shaped the work of Muslim scientists. How did the *sharīʿa* shape connections between science and ethics? In his argumentation no criteria for this “genuineness” are formulated, but Sardar states that the “scientific past” in the Muslim civilization should be examined by means of the “eternal conceptual categories” of the Quran and the *sharīʿa*.
- *Policy*. Policies for an Islamic science should be formed with the help of the conceptual matrix of Islam. There are several levels of policies. Individual countries should have their own level, there should be a wider regional level as well as a level for the *umma*.
- *Empirical work*. Empirical work is a central component of science. The point is that every Muslim country has to build up an environment where empirical research is carried out. The assumption that science and technology can be imported is totally wrong. Science should be localized and be an instrument applied to solve the individual problems of a country. Therefore, the

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<sup>228</sup>Sardar 1989:164.

<sup>229</sup>Sardar 1989:164–172.

<sup>230</sup>Sardar 1989:165.

research policies of a country should match the cultural values and the specific predicaments of that country.

- *Institutions.* Sardar states that there is a need for ideal models of institutions. Planning bodies should be constructed in order to develop an Islamic science. The institutions are needed on several levels. The Centre in Aligarh studies theoretical and ethical problems in the area of science, but there is also a need for laboratories which could carry out Islamic science within a given discipline.
- *Education.* The reconstruction of an Islamic science must be integrated in the educational system. As a consequence textbooks in natural science must present a more accurate picture of science. Sardar maintains that there is an aspiration to introduce the Islamic epistemology already in the beginning of science courses. The student should be aware of the ethical dimension right from the start. This step should be taken in all disciplines. This would also be a continuous process, as ideas concerning the shape of Islamic science develop.
- *Science consciousness.* A “social consensus”, *idjmāʿ*<sup>c</sup>, is a significant part of the reconstruction of Islamic science. In this perspective it is essential to develop a consciousness among common people of science and of issues related to science. People should stop merely believing in experts in different fields and take an interest themselves in scientific matters. Muslims should be involved, and take an active part in the issues of science.<sup>231</sup>

This is as close as we can come to a description of an Islamic science in Ziauddin Sardar’s texts, and, as stated above, he has no intention of being more specific. The exception is perhaps the classification scheme he developed for books on Islam. Sardar holds that Islamic science can serve as a foundation for the formation of academic institutions establishing an Islamic science.

#### *The Islamization of biology – architecture – anthropology*

This section will contain two presentations of ideas on biology and architecture as well as a longer one on anthropology. The reason for this choice is not only my own interest in anthropology, but also that Meryll Wyn Davies’ ideas on anthropology are more concrete than most of the other presentations of ideas on the Islamization of various disciplines. Ideas on biology have also been touched upon above. The reason for choosing these three examples is simply that these are the most explicit presentations of how *idjmālī* ideas should be linked to a scientific practice. Accordingly, the objective is to show some outlines that aim at Islamizing specific scientific fields.

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<sup>231</sup>This is a summary of the eight articles Sardar presents, see Sardar 1989:164–172.

## Biology

Munawar Ahmed Anees' *Islam and Biological Futures* (1989) is one example of an endeavour to relate general notions about Islamic science to a specific field of study. The intention, he says, is to show "how a biological construct acts to give way to certain cultural stereotypes".<sup>232</sup> According to Anees, the importance of biology is growing in the contemporary world.

Muslim individuals must not remain prisoners to their biology that is defined only through Western technology. Thus, when it comes to human biology, Islamic ethical and moral order, as expounded by the Qur'an and the *sunnah* of the blessed Prophet, must replace the defining technology. The Islamic view of human nature does not consider biology an inevitability. This single most important distinction between reductive, deterministic, exploitative biology and the universal worldview of Islam is crucial in the total elimination of sexism, racism and socioeconomic inequities. We must confront the biological ideology with the Islamic worldview.<sup>233</sup>

The definite character of Anees' statements underlines the idea that Islam should be a comprehensive system. Islam must form an overall system, which also comprises thoughts on what constitutes a correct form of biology. Consequently, when a form of biology that Anees considers to be Islamic is practiced, the worldview adopted – i.e. Islam – will solve the problems mentioned in the quotation. A characteristic trait of the book is its critique of various approaches in biology. In general, the chapters include a criticism of practices within the field of biology on an ethical and moral level. The actual practice of biology is then compared with an Islamic ideal, underlined by quotations from the Quran and/or references to sayings and/or actions of Muhammad and his companions. It is stated throughout the book that several of the practices within current biology are not in accordance with the *sharī'a*. The quotations are interpreted in a way that fits a discussion concerned with specific biological matters. The result is a text that tells us which forms of biology must be interpreted as being prohibited by the Islamic tradition. Anees pronounces ethical and moral judgments, and to some extent he develops a contrasting Islamic framework of biology. Yet, mostly he states what he is against but does not actually set up an Islamic alternative.<sup>234</sup> For Anees, it appears to be difficult to construct a specific Islamic biology out of the critique of contemporary biology.

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<sup>232</sup>Anees 1989:15.

<sup>233</sup>Anees 1989:15.

<sup>234</sup>See the references to Anees above. For Anees' style of discussion concerning a Muslim view on artificial insemination, see Anees 1989:224–229 and for a predecessor to *Islam and Biological Futures* (1989), see Anees 1984.

When Anees discusses the possibility of sex determination, and discusses an Islamic stance towards both the research on and practice of sex determination,<sup>235</sup> he emphasizes that he regards the birth of a female or a male child as the gift of God. In order to support this view he refers to 42: 49-50 in the Quran.<sup>236</sup> Further on in the text, he outlines the relationship between parents and children. Anees aims at establishing a view where the bond between parent and child is equally strong regardless of gender. In order to support his opinion he says:

The blessed Prophet's love and kindness for children, particularly for girls, was proverbial. Whenever his own daughter, Seyyedah Fatima, came to see him, he rose from his seat, kissed her on the forehead and allowed her to sit in his own place. The bond of love and affection between parents and children deeply touched his heart.<sup>237</sup>

Anees further strengthens his case by citing a narrative from *ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: ‘Ā’isha recalls a saying by Muhammad that stresses the importance of helping one’s daughters. Such actions will function as “a shield against hellfire”. The Quranic imperative for an upright and morally good relation towards the parents and the mother is exemplified with the verses 2:83, 31:34 and 17:24. The dignified status of the mother is recorded in several sayings of Muhammad.<sup>238</sup> These examples are viewed as establishing an “archetype of the Muslim family where parent-child relationship is gender-neutral, amiable, affectionate, harmonious and mutually beneficial”.<sup>239</sup> Thus, Anees is able to state that the practice of sex pre-selection is not in conformity with the teachings of Islam. This opinion is primarily based on the belief that ideally Islam is gender neutral. However, the study of sex pre-selection technologies would be legitimate activities in a Muslim society. He takes the discussion further by pointing at the moral implications of

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<sup>235</sup>The part on sex determination and sex selection is from Anees 1989:188–217. In general the outline of the book is to confront different forms of “biological ideology” with the “Islamic worldview” (Anees 1989:15). Therefore, as to the structure of the text, *Islam and Biological Futures* (1989) can be described as a “classical” *idjmālī* work. As described above, the introduction is a presentation and a critique of various ideas within biology. Here Anees presents a number of names to show his familiarity with discussions on method within the field of biology. In the following chapters Anees discusses various practices within biology and their relation to the tradition of Islam and the life of Muslims. One aim is to present a Muslim response to what Anees characterizes as “the worldview of contemporary biology” (Anees 1989:15). Subjects such as abortion, birth control and contraception, circumcision, menstruation, genetics and sex determination are discussed. Anees stresses the importance for Muslims to discuss these questions and to present Islamic solutions to the ethical problems involved. See Anees 1989:214,239f.

<sup>236</sup>Another example of how Anees (1989:180ff.) quotes verses from the Quran to underline his – and in his perception the Islamic – standpoint is on the discussion on abortion.

<sup>237</sup>Anees 1989:212.

<sup>238</sup>Anees 1989:212f.

<sup>239</sup>Anees 1989:213.

the use of sex pre-selection technologies. The Quran is clear on this point. Anees refers to verse 13:8:

God knows what any female bears [in her womb], and by how much the wombs may fall short [in gestation], and by how much they may increase [the average period]: for with him everything is [created] in accordance with its scope and purpose.<sup>240</sup>

Anees then states that the knowledge concerning the unborn rests with God. The influence of Anees' background as a biologist is clearly seen if his translation is compared with other translations of the same verse, such as those by Arberry and Yusuf Ali. In Arberry's version the verse is translated as follows: "God knows what every female bears, and the wombs' shrinking and swelling; everything with him has its measure".<sup>241</sup> Anees' translation and usage of the verse could be characterized as a biologist's way of reading the Quran. The passages in bracket function as elucidations of the Quranic text, influenced by his role as a biologist. Finally, Anees states that the elimination or pre-selection of the sex of a foetus would be against Islamic law. For Anees, it is important that Muslims are aware of the problems caused by technology, and also that Muslims establish a code of medical ethics founded on Islamic values.<sup>242</sup>

To summarize, in *Islam and Biological Futures* (1989) Anees picks out a set of Quranic passages and sayings of Muhammad to substantiate his statements. Islam is interpreted to fit into a modern discussion concerning controversial issues within the field of biology. This appears to affect the interpretation and translation of the Quranic text, but, on the other hand, the Quran also affects Anees understanding of biology. The references to sayings of Muhammad function not only as supporting statements, but also as models for action. From the utterings of Muhammad, Anees draws conclusions on what Islam is and how a Muslim should act. He does not suggest new Islamic methods in the field of biology, but he states that it is necessary to formulate an Islamic position in response to the methods in biology and the use made of the results provided by this discipline. The Quranic text and the sayings of Muhammad have normative

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<sup>240</sup>Anees 1989:213.

<sup>241</sup>The translation is from Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted*.

<sup>242</sup>Anees 1989:214. A similar strategy is used by Anees in *An Early Crescent* (1989). In his article Anees ends up pointing at the challenges that Muslims face. He states that there has been much discussion on the implementation of the *shari'a* and the possibility to operationalize the city-state model of Medina, but fewer results. The challenges Muslims face according to Anees, concern how to handle the technological superiority of the West and the spreading epistemological transformation. Anees does not suggest any solutions, but it appears to be understood that the problems must be solved with the help of Islam (Anees 1989b:119f.). In a recent article Anees discusses what the Quran says on clones. In the same manner as above, he states that Muslims – and not only Muslims – need to take the ethical and moral implications of a practice such as cloning under serious consideration (Anees 1994).

status. To underline a statement with a quotation from the Quran and/or a saying of Muhammad makes it a definitive truth.

### *Architecture*

In *An Early Crescent* (1989) Hussein Mehmet Ateshin includes an article entitled “Urbanization and the Environment: An Islamic perspective”,<sup>243</sup> where he discusses strategies for the future in architecture. A general critique of city planning is presented, and is complemented by an aspiration to point out the possibilities of Islam to solve problems concerning the urban environment. The character of the statements reminds one of Anees, but on two points Ateshin differs. Firstly, a glossary forms an appendix to the article which, according to Ateshin, is a compilation of “epistemological terms”.<sup>244</sup> He claims that these terms can be used to formulate an epistemological foundation. Words of Arabic origin replace Western terms. Secondly, he presents in brief the “discipline of *al-‘imāra*”.<sup>245</sup> The latter means to reconstruct and shape the environment. In Arabic *‘imāra* usually means “building”, “edifice” or “structure”.<sup>246</sup> In Ateshin’s interpretation the term means “the act of reconstructing and shaping the surface of earth (the built environment) in order to make it more suitable than before for the sustenance and well-being of human life, and facilitating man’s *ibadah*”.<sup>247</sup> Moreover, he states that research on the structure of the most appropriate “setting for the sustenance of an Islamic way of life” is a necessity.<sup>248</sup> Ateshin refers to an institution in Saudi Arabia as an example of research conducted on these matters, namely the School of *al-‘imāra* of Umm al-Qura University in Mecca. There, a programme along these lines is said to have been developed, but Ateshin does not describe the specific content of this programme. He also states that the programme deteriorated because of the increasing influence of “traditional” schools on teaching materials and methodologies.<sup>249</sup> Ateshin also states that the *al-‘imāra* school lacked the necessary cooperation with other institutions, such as the Hajj Research Centre located at the same university.

From Ateshin’s ideas, it is difficult to draw any conclusions on how a specifically Islamic architecture would be constituted. Nevertheless, the main concern in his text seems to be to formulate a general ethics for building Islamic

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<sup>243</sup> Ateshin 1989:163–194.

<sup>244</sup> Ateshin 1989:183n.

<sup>245</sup> Ateshin 1989:182.

<sup>246</sup> *Fann al-‘imāra* means “architecture” or more literally “the art of building”.

<sup>247</sup> Ateshin 1989:191.

<sup>248</sup> Ateshin 1989:182.

<sup>249</sup> Ateshin 1989:188n.

environments, not to develop an Islamic method tailor-made for the discipline of architecture.

### *Anthropology*

Merryl Wyn Davies' undertaking to Islamize anthropology is presented in *Knowing One Another: Shaping an Islamic Anthropology* (1988). In a typical *idjmālī* manner Davies throughout her book criticizes works and individuals which represent a Western form of anthropology.<sup>250</sup> She states that her project is located within a more general enterprise where the aim is the Islamization of knowledge in general, and she also says that the basis for such an enterprise is to base the search of knowledge on the everlasting principles of Islam.<sup>251</sup> Davies gives Islamic anthropology a double purpose: to understand what it means to be a Muslim, and to understand the positions of non-Muslims.<sup>252</sup> The Islamization process should be active and not isolated or "purist". Davies' idea, although not expressed clearly in her book, appears to be to permit the principle of *idjtihād*. The subject matter of anthropology is in Davies' view twofold. The first is related to the definition of the fundamental nature of human beings, the second has to do with questions that arise from the variety of human societies and cultures. In this context the title "Knowing One Another" is stressed because these words are part of the Quranic verse 49:13.<sup>253</sup> In Davies' interpretation of the verse it expresses "a mutual process, a dialogue".<sup>254</sup> It is also understood as a foundation for an anthropology which does not belong to the established Western tradition of the dis-

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<sup>250</sup>See the "Introduction", Wyn Davies 1988:1–10. See also Wyn Davies 1988:49f. Davies uses the existence of other forms of anthropology such as functionalist anthropology, structuralist anthropology, economic anthropology and Marxist anthropology to legitimize a specific Islamic anthropology. The idea of an Islamic anthropology is also substantiated by references to the studies of the structure of science carried out by Kuhn and Foucault. The latter underline that science cannot be separated from its social environment, and that science therefore is a product of a certain culture and society. See Wyn Davies 1988:11–27. Davies defines anthropology as follows: "Anthropology is an accumulation of information, theories and techniques of study relating to the diverse practices and ideas of mankind in society. It is a mental construct dependent upon the system of knowledge of the anthropologists who have pursued their studies in this particular field". See Wyn Davies 1988:11.

<sup>251</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:ix. Davies appears to see discussions on "Islamic revolution and revival" as a context for the project concerned with the Islamization of science. The latter is a response to that discussion, but is in Wyn Davies' perspective (1988:53) also a search for the meaning of Islam in the contemporary world. Hence, in the establishment of a particular Islamic anthropology it is, she states, the eternal values and principles of Islam that will form the foundation for the discipline. Davies also refers to Sardar and his view that if Muslims cannot "think Islamically" about their situation and find an Islamic methodology they will always be dependent (Wyn Davies 1988:77).

<sup>252</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:x.

<sup>253</sup>In Yusuf Ali's version the verse is rendered "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)."

<sup>254</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:6.

cipline. Davies criticizes anthropology by reviewing authorities within the anthropological tradition such as Desmond Morris and Sir Edmund Leach. They are then compared to a utopian form of anthropology based on a couple of words from a Quranic verse. One element in Davies' view is her idea of a hidden agenda within European and North American anthropology. According to Davies, anthropologists educated in a Western environment implicitly follow a model where other cultures are presented in terms of the presupposition that Western culture is superior, and that relativism shapes an anthropology where "whatever is, is right in cultural terms".<sup>255</sup> In her perspective it is important for a dynamic form of anthropology to involve the awareness of ourselves in the work.<sup>256</sup> Probably, the result would be a change in the knowledge of other people. The anthropologist will not just be a witness to the "otherness" of "other" people. In the end, such a relationship between the observer and the observed will bring into light what we share or do not share. Davies states that recent discussions within the field confirm the correctness of her ideas on anthropology.<sup>257</sup> Davies holds a position where God – the religion of Islam – is superior to phenomena such as culture and society. Anthropology must be subordinated to, and in accordance with, the word of God. This leads her to state that the dynamic of the Quranic verse (49:13) is "that culture and society are not ends in themselves, but rather the mechanisms for establishing right conduct related to the eternal values of cultural and social performance".<sup>258</sup> For Davies, culture and society are "fallible mechanisms".<sup>259</sup> They can fail in their endeavour to create a "collective well being". Hence, the aim of Islamic anthropology is to study why societies and cultures fail and the consequences of such failures. To balance the idea of Islam as a superior order, Davies states that relativism will remain in an Islamic anthropology.<sup>260</sup> The ideas on relativism seem to be founded on the idea that mankind desires an ordered system, including a system of knowledge. In that system the morals and values of the Islamic tradition can turn into an anthropological practice. Relativism is not defined, but is related to Islamic values. The point is to construct a morally correct form of relativism.

To substantiate the soundness of her concept of an Islamic anthropology, Davies reviews recent discussions of the function of science, and its relation to

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<sup>255</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:6. For her statements on presuppositions underlying Western anthropology, see Wyn Davies 1988:5–10.

<sup>256</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:8.

<sup>257</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:8. The statement is substantiated by a reference to Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). She says that her idea appears in Geertz "argument for a new conception of man in western anthropology". See Wyn Davies 1988:10n.

<sup>258</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:8. It should be noted that the superiority of Western science is supposed to be exchanged for a superior Islamic science.

<sup>259</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:8.

<sup>260</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:8f.

society in general. She gives an account of a number of ideas culled from the writings of Thomas S. Kuhn and Michel Foucault.<sup>261</sup> Names such as Peter L. Berger, C. P. Snow, Fernand Braudel, Hobbes, Spencer, Darwin, Locke and Rousseau are also mentioned, in order to validate her notions. The idea is primarily to state that contemporary anthropology is a social construction. She supports this statement by referring to Kuhn and Foucault, saying that they have showed that science is “a reflection and reflexion of particular themes of epistemology, philosophy, ideology and religion within a particular social setting”.<sup>262</sup> Reflection means to think things over and reflexion means that science mirrors society.<sup>263</sup> Finally, this leads her to state that science as a neutral, objective or value-free enquiry is an illusion.<sup>264</sup> The Islamic anthropology proposed by Davies, is a discourse on the diversity among human beings “whose conceptual fabric is the world view of Islam”.<sup>265</sup> It should be noted that Wyn Davies’ Islamic anthropology is presented as an alternative to the position of Akbar S. Ahmed. According to Davies, Ahmed suggests that Western anthropology can be used, and that he justifies his position by referring to the “tolerance and openness to other people” that characterizes the representatives of the discipline.<sup>266</sup>

The Islamic anthropology stems from the Quran and the *sunna*, and in Davies’ perspective, the eternal principles in the Quran are not to be understood as having an unchanging meaning, but as the foundation for an conceptual framework.<sup>267</sup> The *sunna* is the instrument for understanding the meaning of the Quran. The *sunna*, she says, forms the paradigm through which Muslim civilization was shaped.<sup>268</sup> She quotes several verses to show that there is an unquestionable relationship between these entities: “The Quran makes it abundantly clear that the founding premise for Islamic anthropology should be that mankind

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<sup>261</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:11–27.

<sup>262</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:13.

<sup>263</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:18f., 22ff. See also Davies’ references to a study carried out by Lynn White Jr. According to Davies, she has “taken the Christian concept of dominion as central to an understanding of the growth of western science as a culturally constructed domination of nature, both intellectually and physically”. See Wyn Davies 1988:33. It should be noted that Sardar also refers to the article by Lynn White Jr. (see above). This article was published in *Science* 155, 1967.

<sup>264</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:22.

<sup>265</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:26.

<sup>266</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:49.

<sup>267</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:59.

<sup>268</sup>To translate *sunna* with “paradigm” is not made arbitrarily. In the foregoing chapters, Davies referred frequently to Kuhn (see above). One example in Wyn Davies’ argument that the way in which *sunna* works as a paradigm can be seen in the example of *hadith*. It is, she states, a “uniquely Muslim science” and has a “critical methodology of sound historiography” which became institutionalized as a science in Muslim civilization. See Wyn Davies 1988:60.

is a unitary creation”.<sup>269</sup> In addition to the Quranic verse 4:1, Davies refers to 30:21, 9:71, 15:26, 23:12 and 32:6 in order to show the Quranic idea on humankind and on the relationship between man and woman, quoting verses concerning the creation. “Creation entails more than mankind’s possession of a common origin, common biological form and common nature; it requires that all knowledge, enquiry and speculation be structured by a relationship with God”.<sup>270</sup> In this quotation Davies says – more or less – that everything in creation has to have a relationship to God. Thus, the practice of a discipline of Islamic anthropology has to take this “fact” into consideration. She emphasizes that in order to understand creation we have to utilize a set of Islamic concepts which constitute a conceptual framework of Islam.<sup>271</sup> The nature of the system derived from the Quran is clear: “All the concepts we deploy must be seen as integrative agents in search of Unity”.<sup>272</sup> She refers to *tawhīd* as the most central term in the conceptual fabric of Islam.<sup>273</sup> Another example is the term *dīn*. In Davies’ interpretation the term is presented in the following way:

The prime definitional connotation of *dīn* is as an operational process of social and cultural life, a total way of life. It is the term denoting the system where the capacities of the *fitrah* are given particular expression and the status and rights of the *khilāfah* are incorporated and institutionalized as the routine practice of human relationships. The foundation of *dīn* arises out of mankind’s enduring relationship with the Creator, as we have seen in Surah 3:19. This relates to indebtedness and submission as is made clear in Surah al An’am 6:61.<sup>274</sup>

The terms *fitra* and *khilāfa* are intimately connected to the term *dīn*.<sup>275</sup> They are part of the web of the conceptual Islamic framework that Davies attempts to create. In her perception every culture has its *dīn*, interpreted as a total way of life. The context of the Quran makes references to *dīn* in connection with “guidance”

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<sup>269</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:82. The Quranic verse Davies quotes to support this statement is 4:1.

<sup>270</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:87.

<sup>271</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:87. According to Davies “the best Muslim scholarship pays particular attention to words and their meanings and the significance that stems from their roots” (Wyn Davies 1988:82).

<sup>272</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:58.

<sup>273</sup>In Davies’ (1988:58) understanding, *tawhīd* “is the circumference wherein the other concepts and categories exist as balanced, multidimensional, interactive, integrative elements”.

<sup>274</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:97.

<sup>275</sup>Wyn Davies (1988:88) discusses the terms *fitra* and *khilāfa* at length. She defines *fitra* as “the inherent nature or natural disposition of mankind we see as the dimension of capacities and endowments,” and *khilāfa* “human trusteeship as God’s vice-regent on earth we see as the dimension defining human status and rights”.

and “messages”.<sup>276</sup> Consequently, Davies has a notion of *dīn* as a concept with the objective and the potential to achieve a natural and universal ideal society.<sup>277</sup>

The subject matter of anthropological study is, according to Davies, human organization. This is probably one of the reasons for stressing the relationship between various verses in the Quran and the actual life of human beings. The aim is to prove “the fact” that the word of God can guide a social science. Davies mentions that *sharī‘a* contextualises Islam for Muslims.<sup>278</sup> Thus, the system allows diversity, but at the same time, the purpose of Islam is seen as essentially and axiomatically to display an ideal pattern of life. The field of study of Islamic anthropology must, therefore, be the way in which societies organise themselves.<sup>279</sup> This can come into conflict with ideas that do not fit in the form of Islamic anthropology outlined by Davies, if the researcher does not share the ideas on the nature of Islam, or if he or she would wish to study a field – or use methods – defined as *haram*. However, she often refers to verse 2:256 where the first line states: “Let there be no compulsion in religion”. In her interpretation of the verse, Davies stresses the free will of mankind.<sup>280</sup>

Davies develops her form of Islamic anthropology, here understood as the study of “consonance”.<sup>281</sup> Her objective is to develop society through an understanding of how human and communal action works.<sup>282</sup> Another objective is to reveal the universal principles of Islam. The idea is to understand – in its Islamic meaning – the creation of God.<sup>283</sup> The predicaments of Western anthropology will not exist in the Islamic version. One of the main reasons for this is that the latter will rest on a “tawhidic paradigm”. It is a “paradigm” formed out of the conceptualised Quranic terms.<sup>284</sup> To this must be added a holistic approach. The concepts cannot be isolated from each other, but must express a notion of unity and balance.<sup>285</sup> In a study of similarities and differences in human action the concepts will refine our understanding of society, “the entry point for Islamic anthropological enquiry is the study of a community’s *dīn* and its contextual

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<sup>276</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:98.

<sup>277</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:100f.

<sup>278</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:110.

<sup>279</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:111.

<sup>280</sup>See, e.g., Wyn Davies 1988:91f.,133.

<sup>281</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:113f.

<sup>282</sup>See, e.g., Wyn Davies 1988:114,123,125.

<sup>283</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:115.

<sup>284</sup>Davies refers to Sardar stating “The best available source is the list of some ninety concepts cited as requiring urgent intellectual attention by Sardar in *Islamic Futures*”, see Wyn Davies 1988:126. Davies (1988:127) expresses a critique of contemporary Muslim thinkers saying that they outline a few key concepts and “rely upon dominant western disciplines to complete the conceptual gaps”.

<sup>285</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:122.

elements of *shariah* and *minhaj*".<sup>286</sup> Studying the *sharī'a* in Davies' perspective means to study the bodies of normative rules which govern societies. *Min-hadj* is, in Davies' view, the life of a community. These are the overall fields of study of Islamic anthropology. The aim of the Islamic anthropologist is not to understand how the development of communities – through human action – are organized, but to understand the "moral purpose common to all human existence".<sup>287</sup>

Islamic anthropology accumulates knowledge with the objective of collecting information for policy making in practice.<sup>288</sup> This can be interpreted as a situation where the Islamic anthropologist has the objective of finding the authentic moral order, that is, the Islamic moral order.<sup>289</sup> This discovery will be used by policy makers and will constitute a part in the building of an Islamic society.

Davies' aim is to establish Islamic anthropology as the superior paradigm. Davies' presentation seems to form a starting point for a further development of a view on social science. One question is whether science as carried out at a secular university will be allowed in an environment dominated by Islamic social science. Davies emphasis on the Quranic verse 2:256 indicates that a secular approach, if given an "Islamic" aim, may be possible in her model. The discussion concerning the meaning of the term *dīn* also points at the possibility of allowing secular science in an Islamic context.

## Summary

Sardar and his adherents have produced a vast corpus of texts as well as a large number of TV programmes in which they present their position. They have had their ideological as well as economical interest directed, firstly, towards Saudi Arabia and, secondly, towards Malaysia. The shift appears to be influenced not only by Sardar's and his adherents' possibilities of doing research, but also by economical and ideological considerations. In many cases, the *idjmālīs* work on a free-lance basis and thus need financial support for their projects. Currently, Malaysia seems to be the market where projects concerning the Islamization of various academic disciplines best can be funded. Therefore, this country attracts the

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<sup>286</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:132. The study of community is a keyword in her outline of an Islamic anthropology. All communities can be studied, she says, and they are subject to the same set of conceptual principles. Therefore, the Islamic anthropologist can carry out cross-cultural comparisons. See Wyn Davies 1988:138,140.

<sup>287</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:130.

<sup>288</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:139.

<sup>289</sup>Wyn Davies 1988:130.

attention of supporters of the *idjmālī* position. The *idjmālīs* thus appear to be conscious of the possible markets where they are able to proclaim their views. In their literature they have, since the end of the 1970s, begun to promote a specifically Islamic science. This has been combined with a growing interest in Islam and in the function of Islam in general. From the early 1980s there has been a shift in emphasis in Sardar's position. Notions of a possible integration and synthesis of science from the East and the West have been abandoned, and in the end of that decade he definitely started to move towards a concept of a uniquely Islamic science. In the texts written by Sardar and the other supporters of the *idjmālī* position, the idea of the layperson's possibility – and ability – to interpret religious texts is developed throughout the 1980s. The *idjmālī* position is open in terms of ideas, and since the beginning of the 1990s Sardar and his advocates have been part of a discourse on phenomena such as postmodernism, racism and the relation between Muslims and Christians. There is also a clear tendency to take part in discussions within the field of future studies. Sardar states that he has left the discourse concerning the Islamization of science for the time being, but that he intends to return to it in due time. He will do so, he claims, when the actors in the discourse have refined their models of Islamic science.<sup>290</sup> The article "British, Muslim, Writer" (1996) retrospectively presents the way in which he began to form his standpoint. This article seems to be an attempt to write the history of the discourse.

In the *idjmālī* standpoint, Islam appears as an epistemological option – or alternative – which implies, among other things, that Islamic concepts should not be used to make Western science Islamic, but to develop Islamic science as a unique, independent and self-governed entity, based on a set of values different from what the *idjmālīs* understand as Western values. Thus, the supporters of this position wish to construct an Islamic science based on a framework of conceptualized Islamic terms, such as *tawhīd* or *‘ilm*, which are objectified, i.e., perceived as having definite, universal and eternal meanings. It is to be noted that this tendency is not only evident in their interpretation of Islamic terms, but also in their understanding of general concepts such as "science" and "technology". This can be characterized as a cornerstone in the ideas developed by the adherents of the *idjmālī* position. In addition, their ideas on the function of religion are founded on the idea that Islam is a comprehensive system for the acts of the individual as well as for society as a whole. In Sardar's view, religion cannot be allowed to be marginalized and relegated to a position where it is concerned with certain rituals only. Therefore, it is a religious duty for Muslim scientists to establish a science which can be characterized as specifically Islamic. The general purpose of the *idjmālīs* appears to be to find the *authentic* meaning of the con-

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<sup>290</sup>Sardar's ideas on his participation in the discourse was expressed in a conversation with me in London, 2 November 1994.

cepts used. The *idjmālī* criticism and their idea of Western society and its science is used to point out that the concept of a science in general is not only biased, but also obsolete. The results of modern science will – in spite of the criticism directed at it – nevertheless be used as a tool in the creation of an Islamic society. Feyerabend, Kuhn, Popper and Foucault are some of the prestigious names referred to in texts produced by the *idjmālīs*, primarily because of their criticism of phenomena, especially science, in European and North American societies. The *idjmālīs* rarely ask why Feyerabend and the other authorities criticize the status quo of science, or what the underlying presuppositions of their statements are. In stead, the criticisms formulated by Feyerabend, Kuhn, Popper and Foucault are lumped together, and certain of their statements are selected to support the ideas of the *idjmālīs*. In this way the negative role of science is demonstrated. The *idjmālīs* thus show little interest in the actual ideas of Feyerabend and others or in the differences between their points of view. Moreover, science is sweepingly perceived as negative in its present form. One reason is that science is said to be a cultural phenomenon. The actual practice of science is then compared to an idealized – and Islamic – image of science.

There are some common structures in the *idjmālī* literature. In order to bring out their interpretation of an Islamic term, they start by declaring the meaning, or the importance, of a term, an individual or an historical event. This is then supported by statements supporting the correctness of this meaning, in the form of references to other sources, which are often works produced by other *idjmālīs*. Another common structure or theme is their view of history. In early works presented by the adherents of the *idjmālī* position the history of Islam is less present than in later works. Significant periods in history appear to be, firstly, the early history of Islam, especially Muhammad's time in Medina. This period is by Sardar named "the Medina state" or sometimes "the Medina model". Secondly, the "golden period", that is, the time of individuals such as al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Khaldūn. Thirdly, Quṭb and Mawḍūfī appear to be the figures in the 20th century discussion about the function of Islam in general whom Sardar and others have to relate to in their outlook. To be noted is that their presentation of history is not primarily linked to events and eras, but rather to significant individuals. The *idjmālīs* select individuals in order to quote and interpret their sayings and actions. The interpretations support their own standpoint, and aim at mobilizing Muslims for their position. In addition, the interpretations reveal a way of relating to history where they project present-day problems into history. Within the position, Sardar seems to have established a pattern accepted by other *idjmālīs*. The *idjmālīs* bring out an idealized image of history where the almost utopian notion of Muhammad's period in Medina is connected to a modern – and organic – framework. Adherents of the *idjmālī* position compose ideal alternatives or solutions to problems that they face in the modern world.

In the end of the chapter three disciplines were presented in which ideas on an Islamic science were sketched. However, we saw that no clear-cut methods for the fields of anthropology, architecture or biology are expounded in the texts. In those texts which are concerned with the disciplines of architecture and biology, the discussion centers more around a critique of what is designated as Western architecture and biology. Anees appears to formulate an Islamic ethics of biology rather than creating the outlines of an Islamic discipline of biology. Ateshin suggests concrete action. He proposes to exchange the terminology within the field of architecture for an Islamic terminology. Davies, however, does point out some guidelines for a methodological approach and gives examples of possible questions that the anthropologist may ask in the field. The balance between theory and practice makes her book one of the most elaborate attempts to shape an Islamic discipline of science.



### 3. The Quest for a Sacred Science – the Position of Seyyed Hossein Nasr

The foremost exponent of the position presented in this chapter is Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933). He is probably one of the best known Muslim writers on Islamic subjects to a non-Muslim audience in Europe and the USA.<sup>1</sup> Nasr is the author and editor of over twenty books in English and many others in Persian. Many of his works have been reprinted several times, occasionally with different titles. For example, *Science & Civilization in Islam*, originally published in 1966, has been printed in local editions in Pakistan and Malaysia and has been translated into Italian, French, Turkish, Urdu and Persian (but not into Arabic). Almost all of Nasr's works written in English have been translated into Turkish and many into Persian.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr was born in Tehran where he received his basic education. Thereafter, he studied in the USA and received his B.S. in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). At Harvard, Nasr started to study geology and geophysics, but decided to switch over to History of Science and Learning with emphasis on Islamic science and philosophy. He obtained his M.S. as well as his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1958.

He returned to Iran in 1958, and became Professor of the History of Science and Philosophy at Tehran University and later the founder and president of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy. During this period, Nasr took part in a project, conducted by the Institut Franco-Iranien in Tehran and the Imperial Academy, to edit the texts of Shihābuddīn Suhrawardī. The edition was published in *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica I-III*.<sup>2</sup> The first and second parts were edited by Henry Corbin and the third part by Nasr.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>According to Nasr, he is also one of the most well known Muslims to Muslims themselves. This was stated as a commentary to the present text in 1995.

<sup>2</sup>The first volume was published in Istanbul 1945, the second in Tehran and Paris 1952 and the third in Tehran and Paris 1970. All three volumes were reprinted by the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy in 1976–1977. See Nasr 1987c:276,290.

<sup>3</sup>For an overview of Nasr's literary production see his *Annotated Bibliography of Islamic Science*, 1975 and, especially, Aminrazavi & Moris *The Complete Bibliography of the Works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr from 1958 through April 1993* (1994). The bibliography on Islamic science was written in collaboration with William C. Chittick. According to Nasr, he had to leave all his notes and preparations in general for the last volumes of this series when he left Iran. The first volume was printed 1975, but the Cultural Studies and Research Institute in Tehran resumed the publication of the series and published volume 3 in 1991 and hopes to bring out the last four volumes in the future. This supports Nasr's claim that his work still has a prominent position in Iran. The information was given in a conversation with Nasr in Washington DC, on the 25th of April 1994.

In 1962 Nasr was visiting lecturer at Harvard University, where he also taught during the summer of 1965. Seyyed Hossein Nasr was also the first holder of the Aga Khan Chair of Islamic Studies at the American University of Beirut in 1964-1965. In the 1960s he was invited to give the Rockefeller Series lectures at the University of Chicago which appeared in book form as *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (1990).<sup>4</sup> In the mid-seventies he was the Chancellor of the Arya-Mehr University of Technology in Iran. He also served as Dean and Vice-Chancellor of Tehran University. The revolution in Iran 1979 brought Nasr back to the USA where he was offered a position as Professor at Temple University in Philadelphia and, finally, his current position as University Professor of Islamic Studies at the George Washington University, Washington DC. He is considered to be an authority in the academic world, and he is the general editor of a series on Islam published by the State University of New York Press (SUNY).

At the World of Islam Festival in London 1976, Nasr played an important role in presenting Islam in general and Islamic science in particular. In connection with the festival, he published *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study* (1976) The publication was supported by the World of Islam Festival Trust. The volume was prepared in conjunction with the exhibition "Science and Technology in Islam".

In 1981 Nasr delivered the Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh University, which were published as *Knowledge and the Sacred* in 1981. This is one of Nasr's most significant works. Nasr himself often refers to it in books published after 1981. Nasr's role at the World of Islam Festival, and his holding of the Gifford lectures, can be seen as two major events in his career. Even before the World of Islam Festival he had lectured throughout the world and had for instance received an honorary doctorate in Theology at the University of Uppsala in Sweden 1977. The doctorate was primarily awarded to Nasr because of his editions of classical texts. Other principal works of Nasr's concerned with Islamic science are *Science and Civilization in Islam* (1987)<sup>5</sup> and *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (1978).<sup>6</sup> His *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (1979) can serve as a general account of Nasr's outlook. This book, Nasr says, is written "from within the tradition" and "for the Western reader interested in Islam and also to the Muslim who has received a Western education".<sup>7</sup> A very similar purpose is expressed in the introduction to *Islamic Spirituality* (1987), where Nasr's aim is to make Is-

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<sup>4</sup>First published under the title *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (1968), by Allen & Unwin 1968 and reprinted 1976 and 1988.

<sup>5</sup>First published by Harvard University Press in 1968.

<sup>6</sup>Reprinted in 1993.

<sup>7</sup>Nasr 1979. From a short text presenting the book and placed prior to the introduction. *Ideals and Realities of Islam* was first published 1966.

lamic spirituality understandable to a Western audience from a position that is Islamically authentic.<sup>8</sup> The same objective is also stated in the preface of *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (1987).<sup>9</sup>

Many of Nasr's works were written in the period between 1965 and 1975. This period was a time of criticism and discussion in many fields, and science was not excluded from a social critique. In Nasr's case, he shows an early interest in environmental and ecological issues. The principal example of this is *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crises in Modern Man*, first published in 1968. Here Nasr uses statements on a newly awakened interest in ecology to elaborate on a general crisis in Western civilization. The solution is a return to a society based on Islamic and Traditionalist values. The latter is the starting point in his formulation of an alternative Islamic science. The works from this period contain what can be described as an anti-imperialist critique. In more recent works, a critique of Western civilization is still a significant element, but Nasr has in the late 1980s and the 1990s been influenced by discourses in development studies. In some sense this has influenced the choice of subject for his books.

Today Nasr holds an influential position due to his work as a professor at Temple University and at the George Washington University. He is the advisor of several Ph.D. theses on topics related to themes close to his interpretation of Islam.<sup>10</sup> In conversations with the present author, Nasr was anxious to point out his influence in Iran and Malaysia. In the latter country, Nasr has influenced the writings of Osman Bakar.<sup>11</sup> According to Eric Winkel, Bakar's books have found a large audience in Malaysia.<sup>12</sup> Nasr also wrote the foreword to Bakar's *Classification of Knowledge in Islam: A Study in Islamic Philosophies in Science* (1992). In this work, Bakar has chosen to deal with the classifications of science made by three classical Muslim scholars, al-Fārābī, al-Ghazzālī and Quṭb ad-Dīn ash-Shīrāzī. The choice of the latter, and ash-Shīrāzī's affiliation with Suhrawardī, indicates an influence from Nasr. Winkel states that the influence of Bakar (and Nasr) has resulted in a situation where two universities in Malaysia

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<sup>8</sup>See Nasr 1987:xxiii.

<sup>9</sup>Nasr 1987c:vii-x.

<sup>10</sup>See, for example, Aminrazavi 1986. As a former doctoral student of Nasr, Aminrazavi was one of the two individuals who prepared the bibliography on Nasr.

<sup>11</sup>Bakar is active at the Faculty of Science at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. His field of interest appears to be philosophy and science. In a conversation with Nasr he mentions Bakar as a person sharing his standpoint. (Personal conversation with Nasr in Birmingham, 26th October 1994).

<sup>12</sup>Winkel 1993:329. Winkel's text is a review of Bakar's *Tawhid and Science: Essays on the History and Philosophy of Islamic Science* (1991). In the review Winkel describes Bakar as a well-known figure in Malaysia and beyond, and he also states that the popularity of Bakar's work may be caused by his aim to reconcile Islam with a modern world. Winkel describes Nasr and Bakar as representatives of a "school of thought, which can be called perennialist". According to Winkel, the "perennialists" include Ananda Coomaraswamy, René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, Marco Pallis, Huston Smith and Gai Eaton. See Winkel 1993:329,332.

are implementing a syllabus created by Bakar and founded on his “vision of a sapiential tradition”.<sup>13</sup>

Nasr has written the forewords to several other books and inspired authors to study different aspects of the *ṣūfī* tradition from a traditional perspective.<sup>14</sup> The many works on Islamic science and related subjects published by Nasr also force others who take part in this discourse to take Nasr’s position into account.

The opinion of the traditionalists is also expressed in journals such as the *Riwāyāt*, “the Reports”, published in Lahore, the French *Connaissance des religions* and the English *Studies in Comparative Religion*. The latter work is dominated by material written by adherents to the traditional standpoint.<sup>15</sup> It is, according to the historian of religions Eric Sharpe, dedicated to “Metaphysics, Cosmology, Tradition and Symbolism”.<sup>16</sup> In Nasr’s view, *Studies in Comparative Religion* has been replaced by *Sophia* as the leading journal on Tradition in English.<sup>17</sup>

### A guide to the reader - certain premises of Nasr’s standpoint

Traditional civilisation, that is to say one based upon a Divine revelation, depends upon the metaphysical and religious bases of that civilisation, the Islamic sciences, as already mentioned, have always echoed and reflected the central Islamic doctrine of unity (*tawḥīd*). Just as the Islamic religious and moral sciences have originated from Divine Unity and aim to return man to it, the natural sciences have tried to discover the interrelation of all created beings and the unity which underlies the world of multiplicity. We have already shown that it is a general feature of all medieval cosmological sciences that they seek to express the ‘unicity of all that exists’. This is especially true in the Islamic natural sciences, such as natural history, where this goal has been central, and the idea of the unicity of nature and the interrelatedness of all parts of the Universe has remained complementary to and a necessary consequence of the Oneness of the Creator.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Winkel 1993:334.

<sup>14</sup>See Ardalan & Bakhtiar 1973. Here Nasr writes the foreword and in the “Acknowledgements” the authors thank, among others, Nasr, Chittick and Corbin.

<sup>15</sup>Nasr 1981:110 and Nasr 1987c:23.

<sup>16</sup>Sharpe further states that the journal is rooted in a belief in the *philosophia perennis*. Here comparative religion is “the process by which the individual attains to this particular form of intellectual enlightenment.” See Sharpe 1986:265.

<sup>17</sup>This was stated by Nasr in a commentary in 1994 to a draft of this text.

<sup>18</sup>Nasr 1981b:124.

The foundation for his thought is the relation between the divine and the world formed into a unity of all that exists. This is, according to Nasr, a precondition for all forms of scientific work.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr regards himself as a representative of what he designates the *Traditionalist school*.<sup>19</sup> In *Traditional Islam and the Modern World* (1987) and in *Islam and the Plight of the Modern Man* (1975) Nasr presents Traditionalist Islam. Tradition signifies all that is sacred and revealed to man through revelation, and that what he characterizes as the unfolding and development of the sacred message for a specific part of humanity. This is a part of a horizontal or this-worldly continuity which is paralleled with a vertical connection to the divine. The latter functions as a metaphysical bond integrating the affairs of the world, e.g. relations between human beings and society – the horizontal – with the sacred. Hence, the function of the vertical connection is to embrace all activities of the tradition and relate it to a “meta-historical Transcendent Reality”.<sup>20</sup> Tradition is, according to him, *ad-dīn* (the religion). This term comprises all aspects of religion and that what he describes as its sacred models or “ramifications”, *as-sunna*. All fields of the traditional world is attached to the origin by the chain (*as-silsila*) which is clearly seen in Sufism.<sup>21</sup>

Nasr sees Islam as *ad-dīn al-ḥanīf* (the primordial religion). He claims that this conclusion is founded on Islam’s doctrine of unity, which every religion was ultimately based on. There exists only one primordial doctrine of unity, and Islam reaffirmed that which always has existed, but which other religions have deviated from. Islam made religion return to its original and primordial form – the eternal *sophia*, the *religio perennis*. Nasr holds that God did not send different messages concerning unity to his prophets. The revelation of Islam is a return to the one original truth.<sup>22</sup>

Phenomena such as “wisdom”, “knowledge” or “science” can never be placed outside the organic totality. The significance of science is to reveal the sacred.<sup>23</sup> The purpose of natural sciences is thus to establish and outline the relationship between nature and the sacred – to give science a metaphysical significance and norm. In Nasr’s perspective, arts and sciences in Islam aim at revealing the unity

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<sup>19</sup>The term “Tradition” is central to Nasr’s position and will be dealt with thoroughly under the heading “The Terminology and Language of Nasr” below. For an outline of the views of the Traditionalist school, see Nasr 1987c:11–26 and Nasr 1993: 53–68.

<sup>20</sup>Nasr 1987c:13; Nasr 1987b:38, and Nasr 1976:4.

<sup>21</sup>Nasr 1987c:13.

<sup>22</sup>Nasr 1979:33f. and Nasr 1993b:179.

<sup>23</sup>Islam differs from Christianity because it is not based on love, but on knowledge. The intellect (*al-‘aql*), Nasr maintains, plays a positive role in leading human beings to the divine. This is the reason why Muslims in Islamic civilization set out to master learning from the Greeks and the Indians without military, political or economic motives. See Nasr 1979:32f. and Nasr 1981b:56.

and interrelatedness of all that exists.<sup>24</sup> In the definition of the Traditionalist school, therefore, science can be characterized as a search for the purpose of the universe. Islamic cosmology aims at providing an understanding of the cosmos which will make it possible for humans to penetrate the visible world and reach the higher states of existence in order to create a science for the cosmos.<sup>25</sup> In *The Need for a Sacred Science* (1993) Nasr states that traditional cosmology is an utilization of metaphysical principles in the domain of the cosmos.<sup>26</sup>

It should be stressed already at this point that one of the school's key concepts is the one of "perennial wisdom" or, as Nasr often prefers to call it, *philosophia perennis*. In relation to the study of religion he states:

The *philosophia perennis* possesses branches and ramifications pertaining to cosmology, anthropology, art and other disciplines, but at its heart lies pure metaphysics, if this latter term is understood, as already mentioned, as the science of Ultimate Reality, as a *scientia sacra* not to be confused with the subject bearing the name metaphysics in postmedieval Western philosophy. Metaphysics understood in the perspective of the *philosophia perennis* is a veritable 'divine science' and not a purely mental construct which would change with every alteration in the cultural fashions of the day or with new discoveries of a science of a material world.<sup>27</sup>

*Philosophia perennis* is a kind of knowledge which has always existed and will always exist. This implies that it is valid for all peoples at all times and that it deals with universal principles. The knowledge contained in what Nasr understands as the *philosophia perennis* is embodied by all religions and traditions. It is, in the study of religion, through the methods of tradition, rites, symbols and images, that authentic knowledge can be realised and achieved.

In Nasr's opinion, modern sciences studying nature have developed into sciences studying the quantitative aspects of things in the material world. Consequently, modern science has become identified with technology and its applications. Nasr views Islamic science as a science that seeks to obtain knowledge which will attach a "spiritual perfection" to the one who studies it.<sup>28</sup> Western science, he says, studies phenomena of the human world in disciplines isolated from each other and without any relation to the sacred or to metaphysics. Western science is compartmentalized – a fragmentation of science. Islamic science, on

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<sup>24</sup>Nasr 1987b:22.

<sup>25</sup>Nasr 1976:28,235,237.

<sup>26</sup>Nasr 1993:99. For further aspects of Nasr's perspective on and characterization of cosmology, see Nasr 1976:31,36 and Nasr 1990:22f.

<sup>27</sup>Nasr 1993:54.

<sup>28</sup>Nasr 1987b:39. For a short definition of the nature of Islamic science, see Nasr 1976:xiii.

the contrary, emphasizes the relationship between the human world and the sacred and studies different phenomena in the world from an outlook where everything is part of the organic totality.<sup>29</sup>

Not all sciences have equal value. In Muslim civilization and especially in Islamic science, mathematics has a privileged standing. To support this statement, Nasr refers to the geometric aspects of Islamic art and architecture. He also refers to arithmetics and the symbolism of numbers, to poetry and music, and says that the love for mathematics has to do with the term unity (*tawhīd*). God is one and, therefore, the number one is the symbol of the source of religion. In the case of numerical symbolism, Nasr also refers to the letters of the Arabic alphabet, which are linked to an esoteric and sacred science. This kind of connection between numerals an esoteric science originates with ʿAlī ibn Abū Ṭālib.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Mathematics is related to the sacred. Medicine is also a privileged science, due to the Prophetic sayings (*aḥādīth*) on medical matters.<sup>31</sup>

In many works, Nasr is explicitly critical towards the forms of science pursued at secular universities primarily in Europe and the USA, as well as in Muslim countries.<sup>32</sup> He does not present any clear definitions of expressions such as Western science. His portrayal of the sciences in the Western world help him by contrast to define the righteous and morally correct Islamic society. The latter stands in opposition to the corrupt and evil Western civilization. Nasr himself, however, rejects my interpretation and states that he only criticizes the Western practice of science because it excludes higher spiritual levels of reality. It has, he says, nothing to do with moral decadence, which is a separate issue.<sup>33</sup> Scientific work as actually carried out in Europe and the USA is compared to an idealized Islamic model formed out of Nasr's interpretation of Islam. The supposed conflict is between a de-idealized Western science and an idealized Islamic science. In a way, Edward Said's definition of the Oriental as the other in Western literature could be used, but inversely so that the Occidental becomes the other. On the other hand, Nasr does refer to and support a phenomenon he designates as Traditional Western philosophy and science.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Nasr 1987b:39.

<sup>30</sup>Nasr 1976:75–77.

<sup>31</sup>Nasr 1976:75,88,174. For a presentation of *tibb an-nabawī*, (Prophetic medicine), see Perho 1995.

<sup>32</sup>See Nasr 1987b:21–40 and Nasr 1987c:97–113.

<sup>33</sup>This was stated in a comment in 1995 to an earlier version of this text.

<sup>34</sup>Personal conversation in Washington DC, 28th April 1994. This will be dealt with below.

## Sources of Inspiration and Adherents to Nasr's Ideas

In his writings Nasr uses a group of authors, mostly writers on Islamic subjects, whom he quotes and refers to frequently. They are present in the texts as well as in footnotes as references in his books. Among the most significant of those writers are René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, Louis Massignon, Henry Corbin, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Titus Burckhardt. They can all be characterised as mystics of different backgrounds.<sup>35</sup> In the rhetorics in the exponent of a rival position, Ziauddin Sardar, they are called "Hermetics".<sup>36</sup>

### *René Guénon*

René Guénon (d. 1951) was the editor of the French publication *La Gnose* which was the official organ of L'Eglise Gnostique Universelle. It was published from 1909 to 1912.<sup>37</sup> In *La Gnose*, Guénon wrote under the pen-name of Palingenius. Guénon converted to Islam, and was introduced to a *ṣūfī* order. He was initiated into an order by *shaykh* °Abd ar-Raḥmān °Ilyash al-Kabīr, and took the name °Abd al-Wāḥid. In 1930 he moved to Egypt where he was known under the name *shaykh* °Abd al-Wāḥid Yahyā.<sup>38</sup>

Nasr describes Guénon as the one who presented the Traditional doctrines of the Orient to modern Western society. Nasr characterises Guénon's *Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues* (1921)<sup>39</sup> as the first complete demonstration of the principal aspects of the Traditionalist ideas.<sup>40</sup> Guénon criticized modern science. The main theme in the "Guénonian" critique was not based on a criticism of the results that science had accomplished, but on its lack of metaphysical principles and its self-presentation as *the* science or *the* way of knowing.<sup>41</sup> In one of his presentations of Guénon's view of science, Nasr concludes by stating that René Guénon "never tired of pointing out that the science of any domain would be legitimate provided it were not cut off from principles of a higher order and the traditional world view".<sup>42</sup> In Guénon's view, science has lost

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<sup>35</sup>In his commentaries to a draft of this text in 1994, Nasr prefers to use the designation metaphysicians instead of mystics.

<sup>36</sup>For a development of Sardar's critique of Nasr, see the chapter on communication and interaction between the participants in the discourse below.

<sup>37</sup>Before Guénon became a Muslim, he was affiliated with the Theosophical Society. See Miers 1982:178.

<sup>38</sup>For a presentation of René Guénon's life and works, see Nasr 1987e:136–138. For an overview of his works, see also Almqvist 1977:133f.

<sup>39</sup>This work was translated into English by M. Pallis under the title *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, 1945.

<sup>40</sup>Nasr 1981:101.

<sup>41</sup>For Nasr's view on Guénon, see Nasr 1981:100–105.

<sup>42</sup>Nasr 1981:103.

its stability. He means that the various disciplines of science are limited by their study of specific fields of society. In Nasr's words, Guénon sees science as concerned with a limited domain of reality.<sup>43</sup>

### *Frithjof Schuon*

Despite Nasr's appreciation of Guénon's work, the foremost representative of the Traditionalist standpoint is, according to Nasr, Frithjof Schuon. Schuon was born in Switzerland, but was raised in France. He worked for a while as a designer in Paris, but later pursued his interest in the Arabic language and Islam. He travelled to North Africa on several occasions, as well as to India. In Cairo he met René Guénon in 1938. From the Second World War until the 1980s he lived in Switzerland. In recent years his main interest has been the spirituality of the Sioux [sic!] and Crow tribes in the USA.<sup>44</sup> Schuon was a collaborator of Guénon and has written extensively on spiritual matters.<sup>45</sup> In all of Nasr's books he refers to the work of Schuon and in most of his publications Nasr also frequently quotes him, especially Schuon's *Understanding Islam* (1963). In a characterization of this book, Nasr describes it as the most eminent publication written in a European language on why Muslims believe in Islam and in what sense the faith provides man with all that he needs religiously and spiritually.<sup>46</sup> He also refers to Schuon as a source of inspiration in several of the forewords and introductions to his books.<sup>47</sup>

In *Knowledge and the Sacred* (1981), Nasr outlines the significance of Schuon's work and states that his writings are the most important works of contemporary traditional philosophy.<sup>48</sup>

Schuon seems like the cosmic intellect itself impregnated by the energy of divine grace surveying the whole of the reality surrounding man and elucidating all the concerns of human existence in the light of sacred knowledge.<sup>49</sup>

The purpose of this statement is, in my interpretation, that in Nasr's work there is a deliberate wish to establish Schuon as the foremost exponent of traditional writings. The description of Schuon's qualities resembles the portraits often re-

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<sup>43</sup>Nasr 1981:103.

<sup>44</sup>For a description of Schuon, see Nasr (ed.) 1986:50–53.

<sup>45</sup>For an overview of the works of Frithjof Schuon, see Nasr 1981:124n.

<sup>46</sup>Nasr 1979:10.

<sup>47</sup>See Nasr 1979:10; Nasr 1981:ix and Nasr 1991:15.

<sup>48</sup>Frithjof Schuon is presented in Nasr 1981:107–109. For a description of Schuon as the leading exponent of the traditional opinion, see Nasr 1993:63.

<sup>49</sup>Nasr 1981:107.

served for *ṣūfī* shaykhs. The characterization of Schuon as the “master” means that he is the principal example to follow and the teacher from whom knowledge should be gained. It is difficult to find out from Nasr’s own works what makes Schuon such a paragon of Traditionalist writers. One reason stated by Nasr is, however, that Schuon explained Traditional metaphysics to the modern West and criticized what Nasr calls philosophy in the West.<sup>50</sup>

#### *Henry Corbin and Louis Massignon*

Nasr states that the views presented by Schuon have had an influence on well-known people working in various academic disciplines. The primary example Nasr refers to in this matter is Henry Corbin (d. 1978).<sup>51</sup> He describes Corbin as a philosopher in the traditional sense, a master of the major Islamic languages (Arabic and Persian), and of the sources written in these languages. This knowledge made Corbin, according to Nasr, the leading exponent of Islamic philosophy and a principal hermeneutic interpreter of the contemporary world of the Persian Islamic tradition.<sup>52</sup> Nasr’s admiration for Henry Corbin’s scholarly work is based on the view that Corbin’s work is grounded in a Traditionalist metaphysical environment.<sup>53</sup> In his early years Corbin was, according to Nasr, influenced by René Guénon and Louis Massignon (d. 1962).<sup>54</sup> The French scholar Massignon was Corbin’s teacher and Nasr states that Massignon introduced Corbin to the study of Sufism and *Shī‘a*, especially to the study of Shihāb ad-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhrawardī (d. 1191).<sup>55</sup> Later in life, Corbin also studied Ṣadrā ad-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī (d. 1640/41), known as Mullā Ṣadrā, who was characterized by Corbin as a combination of Thomas Aquinas and Jakob Böhme, and the author of texts that remind the reader of the works of Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240).<sup>56</sup> Corbin himself regarded Mullā Ṣadrā as a profound commentator of the works of Suhrawardī.<sup>57</sup> Corbin later succeeded Massignon as director of Islamic studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes at Sorbonne, Paris. From 1954 onwards, Corbin spent the fall semesters in Tehran. During what Nasr calls Corbin’s annual pilgrimages to Iran, he lectured from 1974 at the Iranian Academy of Philosophy and at Tehran University. He led

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<sup>50</sup>Nasr 1987c:275.

<sup>51</sup>See Nasr 1979:10,66,145,149,158 and Nasr 1990:78,79,110.

<sup>52</sup>Nasr 1987c:273. Nasr presents Corbin, Titus Burckhardt and Massignon under the heading “Western Interpreters of the Islamic Tradition”, see Nasr 1987c:253–296.

<sup>53</sup>Nasr 1987c:274.

<sup>54</sup>For an outline of Nasr’s views on Massignon, see Nasr 1987c:253–272.

<sup>55</sup>Nasr 1987c:275f. For an overview of Suhrawardī’s work and life, see *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi* translated by Thackston Jr in 1982. Julian Baldick describes *Suhrawardī* as one who attempted to integrate Sufism with neo-Platonism. See Baldick 1989:73.

<sup>56</sup>Nasr 1987b:335f. and Nasr 1976:138f.

<sup>57</sup>Corbin 1990:112. For an outline of Corbin’s view on Mullā Ṣadrā, see Corbin 1990:164–170.

seminars together with Nasr. In Tehran, Corbin became acquainted with *sūfi* masters, Traditionalist scholars and especially “theosophers and gnostics” such as ḥAllama Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Tabātabāʿī and Sayyid Muḥammad Kāzīm ḥAṣṣār.<sup>58</sup> In a personal communication Nasr described his function as a translator/interpreter in discussions between the Persian religious scholars and Corbin.

In Nasr’s outline of Corbin’s works and career, he describes Corbin as a master who delivered lectures in circles of friends and students.<sup>59</sup> The Eranos meetings at Ascona in Switzerland played an important role in Corbin’s intellectual life. The Eranos conference takes place every year in Ascona, Switzerland.<sup>60</sup> Nasr says that Eliade was a close friend of Corbin, and in his characterisation of Corbin’s work he points out that there is a concern with the intellectual as well as spiritual malaise of the modern West.<sup>61</sup> In the portrait, Nasr emphasizes the importance of Corbin’s works on *Shīʿa*. He states that, when referring to Shi’ism, Corbin spoke of “us” and that he considered himself to be part of Shi’ism in spirit as well as in mind.

Corbin even interpreted his own philosophical position from the Shi’ite perspective. Corbin called himself a phenomenologist. Yet when I once asked him how he would translate ‘phenomenology’ into Persian, he told me that ‘phenomenology’ means *kashf-al-mahjūb*, the ‘casting aside of the veil,’ which is a fundamental method of expounding the truth in Sufism (...) For Corbin, the fundamental distinction made in Islamic esotericism in general and Shi’ism in particular between the outward (*al-zāhir*) and the inward (*al-bāṭin*), and the process of relating the outward to the inward (*taʿwīl*) which, with an eye to the original sense of the word, he translated as ‘hermeneutics’, is the *only* correct method of reaching the truth and the real meaning of phenomenology. He called himself by this epithet, ignoring the fact that there are other philosophers in the West who call themselves phenomenologists but who do not even accept the reality of the noumenal, the outward and the inward.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Nasr 1987c:277.

<sup>59</sup>Nasr 1987c:278.

<sup>60</sup>On the Eranos conferences, see *Eranos Yearbook* published annually since 1933. For e.g. Eliade’s personal experience of the Eranos gatherings in Ascona, see Eliade 1988:139,146f.,154f.,162,166f.,206f. In an article by Göran Dahl, Eliade is connected to a stream of anti-modernism where Guénon and the Italian philosopher Julius Evola are the main exponents. See Dahl 1995:133–138. Nasr says that Evola collaborated with Guénon and wrote works in a similar spirit. See Nasr 1981:109.

<sup>61</sup>Nasr 1987c:279.

<sup>62</sup>Nasr 1987c:280.

The quotation reveals some of the premises of Nasr's position. One underlying presupposition for his description of Corbin is a view of the world as an organic totality. Therefore, in Corbin's meaning of phenomenology, Nasr says, it should study the relation, or establish the relation, between fields in this supposed totality. In the quotation above, the term phenomenology means the study of phenomena of religion in order to find their *true* or *inner* meaning. This kind of statement is often supported by stressing that the aim is to reveal the *authentic* meaning of words, or simply to establish "facts". *Ta'wīl* is by Nasr translated as "hermeneutics" or "spiritual hermeneutics".<sup>63</sup> The importance of hermeneutics in Corbin's interpretation was his intention to revive spirituality in the West and in the understanding of Islamic texts.<sup>64</sup> Corbin's definition of philosophy implied, in one of Nasr's favourite terms, "traditional wisdom" (*sophia*). This concept, he says, stands in opposition to Western definitions of philosophy. This implies revealing Islamic philosophy as a phenomenon far more extensive than the usual outlines that start with al-Kindī and end with Ibn Rushd.<sup>65</sup> Nasr also points out that Corbin criticized "historicism", a phenomenon Corbin considered as a deadly disease from which Western thought suffers.<sup>66</sup>

#### *Ananda K. Coomaraswamy*

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (d. 1947) was a Sinhalese Hindu. After his graduation, he worked as a geologist in Sri Lanka and India. He emigrated to England and later to the USA where he changed his profession, and worked as a curator of Oriental art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.<sup>67</sup> He thus switched from the natural sciences to aesthetics. Coomaraswamy is portrayed by Nasr as an authority on the understanding of sacred art or the philosophy of art from a Traditionalist standpoint.<sup>68</sup> Coomaraswamy was a metaphysician and a master of Oriental

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<sup>63</sup>Nasr 1987c:287. In Wehr's *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, *ta'wīl* is translated as interpretation or explanation (Wehr 1976:35). In a classical dictionary such as Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon* the word is said to signify the rendering or interpretation in a manner not according to the letter or to the obvious meaning. In Lane's work the meaning of the word is further elucidated by describing it as having the meaning of reducing possible interpretations of a word to "that which suits the apparent meaning", and explaining that which is ambiguous, see Lane 1863:126f. As a technical term, *ta'wīl* came to mean an exposition of the subject matter of the Quran. Later, in *ṣūfi*, *shī'a* and *ikhwān aṣ-ṣafā'* texts the term became an instrument for bringing their views into harmony with the Quranic text, i.e., various groups developed a form of allegorical exposition of the Quran. For an introduction to the technical term for allegorical interpretation, *ta'wīl*, see FEI VIII:704f.

<sup>64</sup>Nasr 1987c:287.

<sup>65</sup>Nasr 1987c:282f.

<sup>66</sup>Nasr 1987c:287.

<sup>67</sup>Nasr 1981:105.

<sup>68</sup>Nasr 1987d:ix,14. Eliade (1986:105,117,133) also refers to Coomaraswamy's research to support his own ideas on sacred art and symbolism.

art who began his presentation of metaphysics through “recourse to the language of artistic forms”.<sup>69</sup> In spite of all the quotations and references to Coomaraswamy’s works and to his genius as an exponent of the Traditional school, Nasr never presents his ideas comprehensively.<sup>70</sup> Typical for Nasr’s description of Coomaraswamy is that Nasr makes statements about his status as a leading exponent of the Traditional school, but unfortunately gives no explanation or examples why he should be considered to have held such a position.<sup>71</sup>

#### *Titus Burckhardt*

Another Traditionalist scholar is Titus Burckhardt (d. 1984). He was born in Switzerland and of Protestant background. In his description of Burckhardt, Nasr points out that he as a young man left academic circles and converted to Islam.<sup>72</sup> Titus Burckhardt was not a scholar working in the field of Islamic studies, but, Nasr states, travelled to the Islamic world

to master the Islamic disciplines from within at the feet of masters of both the exoteric and esoteric sciences. He was providentially chosen to express the truths of the Islamic tradition, and in fact tradition in its universal sense, to the modern world and in a language comprehensible to contemporary man. His writings in fact represent one of the major formulations and statements of traditional Islam in the modern world.<sup>73</sup>

The influence of *ṣūfī* terminology is explicit in this quotation. There is a hint of elitism when he describes Burckhardt as “providentially chosen” to present Islam. Burckhardt’s major contribution is his work as “master interpreter” of sacred art, especially Islamic art.<sup>74</sup> He also regards Burckhardt as a major figure in the pres-

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<sup>69</sup>Nasr 1981:107.

<sup>70</sup>Nasr (1981:124n.) refers to several works on the life and writings of Coomaraswamy. Sharpe (1986:262f.) describes different perspectives in the use of the term “comparative religion”. He characterizes the *philosophia perennis* movement as a mystical tradition influenced by neo-Hinduism. Its most active adherents were Coomaraswamy and his followers Schuon and Guénon. Sharpe states that a widely read text of the school was Huxley’s *The Perennial Philosophy* (1946) Sharpe also mentions two scholars – the buddhologist Edward Conze and R. C. Zaehner – who privately confessed allegiance to the perennial philosophy. In a conversation with Nasr in Washington DC, 28th April 1994 and in commentaries in 1995 on earlier versions of this text he says that Sharpe’s historical account is false, and in this respect Nasr is probably right. However, an influence from Huxley is possible in Nasr’s outline of the perennial philosophy.

<sup>71</sup>See the portrait of Coomaraswamy in Nasr 1981:105. See also the critique of Nasr in King 1978:340.

<sup>72</sup>Nasr 1987c:291.

<sup>73</sup>Nasr 1987c:291f.

<sup>74</sup>Nasr 1987c:293 and Nasr 1981:109.

entation of Sufism in a European language.<sup>75</sup> This assumption is justified by stating that Burckhardt's studies are made from within the *ṣūfī* tradition.<sup>76</sup> Burckhardt represents a traditional position linking art to cosmology and the sacred – filling a gap in a supposedly organic totality. Nasr considers contemporary science to be inadequate in the study of nature. In Nasr's view, there are other forms of science or knowledge which are not granted the status of science and are considered by many to be mere superstition. In Nasr's view, reality should be comprehended as an organic totality.<sup>77</sup>

*Nasr – sharing the views with others*

If Nasr, Guénon, Schuon, Corbin, Massignon, Coomaraswamy and Burckhardt constitute an inner circle of the traditional position, there is also an outer circle. The division in an inner and outer circle is based on Nasr's treatment of the people who share his position. The division also alludes to Nasr's leanings toward Sufism. In the inner circle, at least three individuals, Nasr, Schuon and Burckhardt, were close friends. The influence of these three proponents of Traditionalism is extensive. Nasr not only enumerates authors and scholars who belong to the traditional school, but also names several figures, mostly from academic circles, who have been influenced by the views presented by the Traditionalist position. The outer circle is designated as "those whose hearts have been penetrated by the truth".<sup>78</sup> Among those often referred to by Nasr are two English figures, Marco Pallis and Martin Lings.<sup>79</sup> Pallis has been a student of Buddhist wisdom and Lings of Islamic esoterism.<sup>80</sup> There is also Leo Schaya who applied Traditional principles to the study of Kabbala. Others who are influenced in a more general way by the position are, Nasr says, scholars of religion such as Mircea Eliade, at least in his early works, and Victor Danner, professor in Near Eastern studies at the University of Indiana, USA. In a review of Danner's *The Islamic Tradition: An Introduction* he is named Abd al-Jabbar Danner and presented as an American-Muslim scholar.<sup>81</sup> The Indologist Heinrich Zimmer is another such scholar.<sup>82</sup> It should be noted that Nasr's son, Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr has joined

<sup>75</sup>In a commentary in 1995 to a draft of this text Nasr stressed the importance of translations by Burckhardt.

<sup>76</sup>Nasr 1979:91,145. On this matter Nasr often refers to Burckhardt 1960 and Burckhardt 1976.

<sup>77</sup>Nasr 1990:22.

<sup>78</sup>Nasr 1981:109.

<sup>79</sup>Nasr's *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (1990) is dedicated to Marco Pallis. In a commentary to an earlier version of this work, Nasr stated that Lings belongs to the heart of the traditional school. However, due to the less frequent references made to his works I place him in the outer circle.

<sup>80</sup>Lings' Muslim name is Abu Bakr Sirādj ad-Dīn. He has published *Muhammad, His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (1983).

<sup>81</sup>See *The Islamic Quarterly* No. 1 1993:73–76.

<sup>82</sup>See Nasr 1981:109f. for an account of figures influenced by the Traditional school. Moreover, Nasr has co-

the inner circle. He is currently assistant professor of political science at the University of San Diego, California. He holds a Ph.D. in political science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge.<sup>83</sup>

Nasr claims that the Traditionalist school, by its revival in Europe and North America, and because it is based on authentic oriental doctrines, has influenced the Orient. In short, Nasr views the Orient as a part of the world which has deteriorated as a result of the assault of modernism.<sup>84</sup> The echo of the Traditionalist school in the Orient is represented by Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Javād Nourbakhsh, a master of the *Ni' matallāhī* order, but also of such figures as Shaykh 'Abd al-Halīm Maḥmūd, former rector of al-Azhar University in Cairo. There are several other individuals enumerated by Nasr, for example, the Pakistanis A. K. Brohi and Muhammad Ajmal. The former has, according to Nasr, developed some complex aspects of Islamic thought from a *ṣūfī* point of view and the latter has sought to develop "a science of the soul" based on Islam and not on Western theories of psychology.<sup>85</sup>

Nasr also states that in the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent, Traditional science has survived in the Hamdard institutes in Delhi and Karachi. According to Nasr, these institutes were established by two of the leading *ḥakīms* in the Muslim countries, the brothers Hakim Abd al-Hamid and Hakim Muhammad Said. In Nasr's vocabulary, *ḥakīm* is the word for "traditional physician".<sup>86</sup>

Another example of contact between Nasr and the Orient is the publication of the Turkish *ṣūfī shaykh* Muzaffer Ozak's *Irshad: Wisdom of a Sufi Master* (1988).<sup>87</sup> Nasr wrote the foreword to this work. Books on the Halveti-Cerrahi order's tradition have been translated and published in the USA. According to the

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operated with the late professor of Islamic Thought at the University of Chicago, Fazlur Rahman. Nasr (1976:138n.) refers to two forthcoming works on Mullā Ṣadrā, and Rahman (1975) has published a work on the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā. In a commentary in 1995 to an earlier version of the present text, Nasr stated that his thought influenced and inspired the work of Rahman, especially on Mullā Ṣadrā. In *Islam* (1979) Rahman also deals with the philosophical history of Islam. In a paragraph he gives Shihāb ad-Dīn as-Suhrawardī and Ibn 'Arabī considerable space and the outline and character of the chapter in general resembles a part of a work by Nasr. See Rahman 1979:117–127.

<sup>83</sup>Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr has written an article critical of the Islamization of knowledge project outlined by IIIT. Nevertheless, it was published in the occasional papers series of IIIT. I will comment on this in the first part of the chapter dedicated to the position of the IIIT. He has also published an article entitled "Islam and the Social Sciences" in *Hamdard Islamicus*. It is a critique of contemporary social science and he argues that the field of social science has not been able to explain phenomena in the Muslim countries such the resurgence of Islamic ideas. Therefore, he continues, Muslims must be more active and take part in the formulation of the social sciences. See S.V.R. Nasr 1990.

<sup>84</sup>Nasr 1981:110f.

<sup>85</sup>See Nasr 1981:111f.,126n and Nasr 1987c:23,196,277f.

<sup>86</sup>Nasr 1976:20. However, in this study, Brohi is placed in the position of the IIIT.

<sup>87</sup>Ozak 1988. Nasr also has a strong link to Persian scholars, especially Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Āshtiyānī. This was stressed by Nasr in a personal conversation in Washington DC, 28th April 1994.

back cover of *Adornment of Hearts* (1991) *shaykh* Muzaffer Ozak in “deep love for the American people” set up several branches of the order in America.<sup>88</sup> Nasr certainly shares the idea that there is a spiritual need in the USA that can be resolved by Islam, especially Sufism.<sup>89</sup> William C. Chittick, who belongs to the outer circle, wrote the foreword to Ozak’s *Adornment of Hearts*. In the foreword to *Irshad: Wisdom of a Sufi Master*, Nasr states that the book addresses people in the contemporary world in search for the “Sacred amidst the flood of profanation and meaninglessness” and not only those who belong to a “traditional audience of such works”.<sup>90</sup> The book is an addition to the body of writings on Sufism which have appeared in European languages during the last decades, written in French and English by persons well versed in Sufism.<sup>91</sup>

## The Supposed Malaise of Science in the Western World

Nasr’s narration of the history of science in the Western world concludes that there has been a process of secularization since the Renaissance. It was during this period in history that people in the West became secular beings, divorced from their “celestial and immutable archetype”.<sup>92</sup> Secularism is in Nasr’s portrayal an evil force, which forced science and knowledge to be desacralized, i.e. science and knowledge were separated from the earlier homogeneous form of Traditional knowledge and reduced to a dialectic form.<sup>93</sup>

A form of science without any notion of the sacred was established. This new science was concerned with changes in the material world only.<sup>94</sup> One example of the process of desacralization of knowledge is that logics and mathematics have been separated from the sacred. In the contemporary world they have been utilized, he says, as the primary tools of secularization and profanation of the process of knowing.<sup>95</sup> A consequence of this draining knowledge and intelligence of their sacred character is that a profane science is established, which is applied in studies of even the most sacred doctrines.<sup>96</sup> One apparent effect is that the “natural theol-

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<sup>88</sup>Ozak 1991.

<sup>89</sup>See the chapter “The Spiritual Needs of Western Man and the Message of Sufism”, in Nasr 1975b:47–66.

<sup>90</sup>Nasr 1988:vii.

<sup>91</sup>Nasr 1988:ix.

<sup>92</sup>Nasr 1991:85.

<sup>93</sup>A decisive step in the general process of secularization was taken by Hegel who reduced “the process of knowledge to a dialectic inseparable from change and becoming”. The response to Hegel’s standpoint was the existential theology and existential philosophy of Kierkegaard (Nasr 1981:48 and Nasr 1993b:167–169).

<sup>94</sup>Nasr 1991:84f. and Nasr 1990:21f.

<sup>95</sup>Nasr 1981:5 and Nasr 1991:85.

<sup>96</sup>Nasr 1981:6.

ogy” in religions lost their “sapiental dimension” and reason was reduced to “a purely human and this-worldly instrument of perception”.<sup>97</sup> Reason has arrived at its terminal point with the latest development of modern Western philosophy.<sup>98</sup> Nasr maintains that contemporary science, especially as it tries to study nature causes imbalance and disorder. Science lacks the wisdom or “sapienta” needed in order to create a complete science.<sup>99</sup>

The critique of modern science in the Western world is put in somewhat milder terms in Nasr’s latest work, *The Need for a Sacred Science* (1993). There he states that even if he is critical of the state of modern science, it is legitimate “if kept within the boundaries defined by the limitations of its own philosophical premises”.<sup>100</sup> Nasr says that modern science views the laws of nature as mechanical or biological. It cannot detect the spiritual importance of the laws and modern human beings are not able to see the symbols of the divine in nature. For traditional individuals, by contrast, symbols are visible.<sup>101</sup> In other words, modern science is useful, but is limited in terms of its possibility to explore reality.

To do research in an all-encompassing manner the scientist has to clear the way for a sacred science – a science that is not positivistic or of a monopolistic character.<sup>102</sup> This is often stressed by Nasr. The outcome is that all sciences which are incompatible with the officially recognized sciences are turned into “pseudo-sciences”, which pop up e.g. in Europe as “occult sciences”.<sup>103</sup>

In Nasr’s framework the modern and Western (natural) sciences are occupied with subjects which separate them from Traditional cosmologies. His standpoint can be exemplified by the following statement on the ignorance of a “symbolic significance” of scientific discoveries:

These discoveries, to the extent that they have some connection with the reality of things, do possess a symbolic significance. For example the fact that order respects itself in all planes of material reality from the galaxy to the atom, or the fact that whatever unit science deals with, whether it be the biological cell or the atom, there is a harmony of parts within a whole, represent permanent features of any science of

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<sup>97</sup>Nasr 1981:4f.

<sup>98</sup>Nasr 1981:4f. For a shorter presentation of Nasr’s view of Muslim philosophy, see Nasr 1981c.

<sup>99</sup>Nasr 1990:120.

<sup>100</sup>Nasr 1993:4. In a commentary in 1994 to an earlier version of the present text, Nasr says that this has always been his position.

<sup>101</sup>Nasr 1993:120,122f. For Nasr’s description of the destruction of nature in modern times, see Nasr 1976:237.

<sup>102</sup>Nasr 1993:1,4.

<sup>103</sup>Nasr 1991:155, Nasr 1976:95. According to Nasr, Guénon has stated that “there is no occult science only occulted sciences”. See Nasr 1976:193.

nature irrespective of whether one bothers to take them into consideration or not.<sup>104</sup>

A science is formed which is not concerned with – and even ignores – the spiritual, metaphysical or symbolic significance of things in the universe. Mankind is primarily interested in conquering nature.<sup>105</sup> A science which aims at dominating the earth and heavens was never created in Muslim societies. The reason was, he states, not a lack of knowledge, but because the Muslim perspective did not deify human beings. This perspective also excluded any secularization of nature.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, Nasr's solution to the present situation is to turn to the "Oriental tradition" or "eastern science" for help. These Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Islamic traditions share principles of wisdom forgotten in the application of modern Western science. Eastern sciences study nature as part of a greater totality.<sup>107</sup> In Nasr's view, eastern sciences are realistic and not idealized.<sup>108</sup> It is through religious symbols that human beings are able to find a purpose in the surrounding cosmic environment. In Nasr's opinion, "symbolism" is concerned with a process where the aim is to sacralize the cosmos. To understand symbolism in all its aspects is to see God in everything and is a way of making everything sacred.<sup>109</sup>

Nasr's thoughts can perhaps be more clearly understood if one studies his ideas concerning one specific field of science. In *Knowledge and the Sacred* (1981) he discusses the status of contemporary physics. Nasr says that most discoveries in physics, since Einstein's theory of relativity, have not been the product of empirical observations or induction but, rather, a result of "aesthetic factors". This means that an appeal for unity, symmetry and harmony among scientists has preceded their discoveries. In Nasr's interpretation, scientists' attraction to aesthetic factors in physics substantiates his position, namely that "principles of a metaphysical and cosmological order" which do not belong to science *per se* operate.<sup>110</sup> Traditional principles and metaphysics can provide modern physics with a new dimension. The result could make physics a legitimate science, a science raised to a superior form of knowledge. Whether or not this will take place

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<sup>104</sup>Nasr 1991:9.

<sup>105</sup>Nasr 1991:31,89,92,153ff.; Nasr 1993:135 and Nasr 1990:6f.

<sup>106</sup>Nasr 1993:136.

<sup>107</sup> This constitutes an idealized outlook which in Nasr's view stops science from destroying its object of study and creating such things as, for example, ecological crises (Nasr 1991:153–155). For a short comparison between modern science and traditional science, see Nasr 1976:27n. On modern science versus traditional doctrine, see Nasr 1990:4. For the case of medicine, see Nasr 1993:109,133.

<sup>108</sup> This was stated in a commentary in 1995 to an earlier version of this text.

<sup>109</sup>Nasr 1990:131.

<sup>110</sup>Nasr 1981:114.

depends, however, on the ability of modern science to understand the restrictions inherent in its presuppositions and assumptions.<sup>111</sup>

In order to establish the legitimacy of the Traditional principles Nasr holds a view based on an all-encompassing cosmology. Real cosmology has disappeared in the West because metaphysics has been overlooked.<sup>112</sup> Newtonian physics, which supposedly has created an existential vacuum in modern life, and is grounded in a merely mechanical study of objects, is today challenged by a variety of writers. On this point Nasr refers to the work of New Age writers such as Fritjof Capra and David Bohm but also to physicists such as Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker and Eugene Wigner.<sup>113</sup> Hence, Nasr sees a possibility for the sacred to play a part in the formation of science – a science not founded on a desacralized view of nature, and not employing reductionism or/and quantitative methods. Nasr describes Traditional science as having a qualitative character in opposition to modern science which he designates as quantitative.<sup>114</sup>

The challenge and development of a sacred science can, Nasr says, be seen in the contemporary interest in ecology.<sup>115</sup> There are several “serious scientists” who realize that the world is an inseparable whole and not made up of a vast number of separate parts. Researchers have understood that “the quest for wholeness is inseparable from the quest for holiness”.<sup>116</sup> Nasr’s ideas follow similar lines when he discusses the situation in other fields of science, such as the study of religion, neurology, psychoanalysis, psychology or philosophy.<sup>117</sup>

Nasr views the introduction in Muslim countries of Western science, Western educational systems and different “-isms”, such as Marxism or modernism, as destructive. This thought is emphasized in many of his works, especially when he discusses the situation of the educational system in contemporary Muslim countries.<sup>118</sup> The effect has been the introduction of secularism and a loss of knowledge of “Islamic metaphysics”. Cosmological doctrine and its effect on society, namely a spiritual equilibrium, have lost their position.<sup>119</sup> One example of

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<sup>111</sup>Nasr 1981:115.

<sup>112</sup>Nasr 1990:23.

<sup>113</sup>Nasr 1981:115f. Bohm was a physicist at London university and a disciple of Jiddu Krishnamurti. The latter was an important figure first in the Theosophical Society, later in the Californian counterculture movement. Bohm belongs to the same tradition of ideas as Capra. See Christiansen 1995:100 and for the ideas of Bohm, Capra and others, see Wilber (ed.) 1982.

<sup>114</sup>Nasr 1981b:83f.

<sup>115</sup>See Nasr 1990:3ff.

<sup>116</sup>Nasr 1981:116f., for the case of medicine and pharmacology, see Nasr 1976:191.

<sup>117</sup>Nasr 1981:117–119 and Nasr 1993:53. The discipline designated by Nasr as Islamic medicine, he states is said to be alive in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, and is making a comeback on all levels in Muslim countries. See Nasr 1976:192.

<sup>118</sup>Nasr 1976:15; Nasr 1979:8; Nasr 1981b:12f.,14 and Nasr 1991:14.

<sup>119</sup>Nasr 1991:14; Nasr 1981b:31 and Nasr 1979:8.

the latter is the younger generation of Muslims who lack knowledge of many aspects of Islam, and who feel more at ease discussing intellectual matters in foreign languages such as English or French.<sup>120</sup> The greatest obstacle to understand Traditional cosmologies and sciences is for Nasr the theory of evolution. In his opinion, the theory of evolution introduced an intellectual climate governed by 19th century secularism.<sup>121</sup> Modern science and secularism have caused a lack of understanding of the symbolic nature of the universe. Today the universe is understood only at a material level. Nasr holds that in modern science the universe is treated as “outwardly infinite” and “inwardly finite”.<sup>122</sup> In Traditional science, the conditions should be the reverse. For example, human beings try to conquer space in a literal, physical manner, which is the only way they know of. Consequently, the situation of human beings in the contemporary world has caused them to live in a state of disequilibrium. In order to change their circumstances in a positive direction, they have to reestablish peace and equilibrium within themselves and vis-à-vis the divine norm.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, Nasr states that the solution to the present predicaments of the human race is to establish the Traditional perspective on science.<sup>124</sup>

### The Terminology and Language of Nasr

It is not easy to understand Nasr’s language and terminology.<sup>125</sup> In several of his books he uses a combination of expressions in Latin or Greek, Islamic concepts mostly in Arabic, but also in Persian, as well as more common words such as *tradition*, which he interprets and defines in a somewhat unusual, and sometimes startling, manner. Nasr’s use of terminology and language can be exemplified with the following quotation from *Science & Civilization in Islam* (1987). The citation concerns the “alchemical tradition”. In Nasr’s view there are three forms of alchemy. The first has to do with the physical realm of nature. The second deals with the inner transformation of human beings and is characterized as a “spiritual alchemy”. The third is a combination of the first and the second where the alchemist “uses external operations as a support for the inner transformations of the soul”. In his conclusion, Nasr states that alchemy is a science dealing with

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<sup>120</sup>Nasr 1979:8; Nasr 1981b:14 and Nasr 1991: 4.

<sup>121</sup>Nasr 1993:97f.

<sup>122</sup>Nasr 1991:31.

<sup>123</sup>Nasr 1993:47,50.

<sup>124</sup>Nasr 1991:7,31 and Nasr 1991:89f.,152.

<sup>125</sup>This is also stated by Chittick in his preface to a work dedicated to Nasr on his fortieth birthday. See *The Works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr Through His Fortieth Birthday* (1975:7).

the soul as well as with the mineral world.<sup>126</sup> Thus, on the character of the alchemical work, he states:

The alchemical work of which the texts speak so often may be regarded, both microcosmically and macrocosmically, as the effort to emulate Nature and to overcome those obstacles which negative cyclic conditions have placed in the way of that work. ‘Horizontally,’ it deals with the tension of the contraries, the attraction and repulsion, the ‘love’ and ‘hate’ which characterize both the human and the cosmic domains; ‘vertically,’ it integrates cosmic manifestation into its Divine Principle. Microcosmically, the alchemical work reestablishes the soul in its primordial condition, the state (in Arabic called *al-fiṭra*) in which the soul is like gold, in perfect equilibrium, pure and incorruptible. This work, whether it be inward or outward, is achieved by dissolving things into the *materia* and then ‘regenerating’ them, according to the order of the formal world—that is, first reducing things to the *materia prima* which symbolizes the inferior or substantial pole of the cosmos, and then transforming them into higher and more perfect states.<sup>127</sup>

My purpose is not to discuss the factual content of the quoted paragraph, but its use of language and terminology. Nasr uses capital letters when emphasizing words such as nature and expressions such as divine principle, in order to single them out as concepts with a specific quality. The Arabic term *al-fiṭra* is used to support Nasr’s view of the alchemical work. The interpretation of the meaning of the Arabic word *al-fiṭra* (“a state in which the soul is like gold, in perfect equilibrium, pure and incorruptible”) exemplifies Nasr’s way of stretching the interpretations of the term usually made by more traditional *sunni* Muslim scholars.<sup>128</sup> In addition, human beings are a “microcosmos” – representations of the universe – responsible for their actions in the “macrocosmos”.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, the relation be-

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<sup>126</sup>Nasr 1987b:242. He makes a distinction between alchemy as a “science of the soul” and alchemy as a premodern science prelude to chemistry (Nasr 1987:242f.). Despite this, in *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study* (1976), Nasr says on the status of alchemy that it is not simply a “proto chemistry”, though he regards the history of chemistry as inseparable from alchemy. According to Nasr, alchemy is not a psychological science as, he says, Jung interpreted it. Alchemy is a science “embracing at once the cosmos and the soul, based on the view of nature as a sacred domain whose processes of giving birth to precious metals and minerals are accelerated by the alchemist through the power of the spirit.” For a complete definition of alchemy, see Nasr 1976:194,206. For Jung’s view on alchemy, see Jung 1989 (1953).

<sup>127</sup>Nasr 1987b:253. For a characterization of Nasr’s view on alchemy, see Nasr 1976:193–208 and Nasr 1993:106f. See also Nasr’s remark on The New Alchemy Institute of Cape Cod in the USA as an alternative form of technology (Nasr 1990:4).

<sup>128</sup>On Nasr’s view on *al-fiṭra*, see also Nasr 1976:3f. His interpretation of *al-fiṭra* is close to the ideas on the term outlined by Ibn ‘Arabī above. For a survey of interpretations of *al-fiṭra*, see Macdonald 1960:931f.

<sup>129</sup>On the role of “macrocosmos” and “microcosmos”, see Nasr’s description of man as the object of medicine

tween humankind and its environment should ideally be characterized by harmony. If the balance between the two is lost, human beings as well as nature will be brought into a condition of disorder.

In the above quotation we find the Latin word *materia* (in Greek *hylé*) and the expression *materia prima* (*prote hylé*). The *materia prima* is in this usage not only the “substance” of alchemy, but also of the soul. Nasr regards *materia prima* as a foundation upon which Islam “imposed a new intellectual and spiritual form, creating through this wedding the Islamic sciences”.<sup>130</sup> The term *materia prima* is an Aristotelian term.<sup>131</sup> In Aristotle’s use of the expression, it is a kind of primordial substance, which never exists in a clean state. It is to be found in the elements – water, earth, air and fire – or connected to those elements. Both form and *materia* are considered to be causes that form the world of concrete objects. Aristotle’s idea is that in situations where an order exists, the form of the *materia* coincides with the purpose inherent in the *materia*. According to Aristotle, this correspondence is found everywhere where there is order in the cosmos. In this view, which is shared by Nasr, God is seen as the ultimate cause (*prima causa*) for nature as well as for things created by humans, and all existing *materia* is part of a cosmos characterized by an inherent and given purpose.<sup>132</sup> In his theological understanding, God is eternal and the universe is created, but also eternal, although Nasr stresses a use of the term *materia* in an “alchemical” rather than Aristotelian sense.<sup>133</sup> The *prima materia* is in Nasr’s view best described as the “substance of the soul”.<sup>134</sup> This substance is hidden and must be found. Otherwise, human beings will not be able to be enlightened by the “light of the Intellect”.<sup>135</sup> In his description of alchemy Nasr’s idea of the *prima materia* as the pole of the cosmos gives the notion of a hidden *materia* in the soul of man a significant role.<sup>136</sup> It has to do not only with physical, but also with spiritual matters.<sup>137</sup> This kind of alchemy belongs to the Hermetic tradition.<sup>138</sup>

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(Nasr 1976:159).

<sup>130</sup>Nasr 1976:12,160.

<sup>131</sup>See Aristotle, *Phys. II*, 1p. 193a 29f. and 193a 9–30.

<sup>132</sup>On the matter of substance in the philosophy of Aristotle in general, see Kerferd 1967:159f. For the influence of Aristotle in Muslim philosophy, see Davidson 1992 and Netton 1994.

<sup>133</sup>Such a use of the term was emphasized in a commentary in 1995 to an earlier version of the text.

<sup>134</sup>It is not clear whether the term “soul” is a reference to *nafs* (*psychē*) or to *rūh* (*pneuma*).

<sup>135</sup>The term “intellect” can be a reference to the term *‘aql* (*nous*). In the case above the terms “soul” and “intellect” are used in an imprecise way and it is difficult to follow Nasr’s ideas. In an earlier comment on the present text, Nasr stated that he uses the terms in a precise way and follows their meaning. However, I have had difficulties in following his interpretation of the meaning of the terms.

<sup>136</sup>The term “*materia*” also relates, in Nasr’s outline, to the Arabic *hayūlā*, i.e. the Greek *hylé*, “matter/materia”.

<sup>137</sup>Nasr 1987b:253f. and Nasr 1987b:258.

<sup>138</sup>For a description of Nasr’s relationship to Hermeticism, see “Sages and the Chosen History” below.

In general, all Nasr's works have a mystical inclination. In the above quotation, the text seems inspired by *shī'ca* and *sūfī* notions and terminology, as evidenced by concepts such as "the pole" (*al-quṭb*), "the inward" (*al-bāṭin*) and "the outward" (*al-zāhir*).<sup>139</sup> Together with Islamic mystical terminology, Nasr uses a language founded on gnostic and hermetic concepts. In the quotation, a dualistic view appears in which, for example, the reestablishment of the soul's primordial – or natural – condition is of importance. In that process, humans must gain insight or knowledge (*gnosis/mā'rifa*) about the right and natural condition in order to have the possibility of reaching salvation.<sup>140</sup>

In most of his works, Nasr uses numerous Arabic terms. Several of them are interpreted in a manner which is clearly influenced by *sūfī* conceptions. Typical examples are *al-bāṭin*, which Nasr renders "the esoteric dimension",<sup>141</sup> *al-mā'rifa* or *al-irfān*, which he translates as "the highest form of knowledge",<sup>142</sup> and *ta'wīl*, a "hermeneutical interpretation, which is applied by the Shi'ah and also in Sufism to the Holy Quran in order to discover its inner meaning".<sup>143</sup> The meaning of the word *ta'wīl* is expounded further in the following manner:

Applied to nature, *ta'wīl* means penetrating the phenomena of nature to discover the noumena which they veil. It means a transformation of fact into symbol and a vision of nature not as that which veils the spiritual world but as that which reveals it.<sup>144</sup>

Words such as *phenomena* and *noumena* seem to be inspired by a Platonic or neoplatonic terminology. *Noumena* designates ideas that are comprehensible to reason (reality), and the concept *phenomena* designates that which is experienced through the senses.<sup>145</sup> In the above quotation, Nasr extends the meaning of the word *ta'wīl*. It is qualified with the word hermeneutical and is defined as expressing the idea of interpretation. Thus, *ta'wīl* means a framework for action or a method which can be applied in the study of nature, and will make the world as a whole known. It seems that Nasr's interpretation is in accordance with a *shī'ī* or *sūfī* style of giving terms allegorical and/or symbolic meanings. Nevertheless, *ta'wīl* is interpreted to fit Nasr's own specific position, and the term is placed in

<sup>139</sup>The terms are also utilized in Nasr 1976:195.

<sup>140</sup>For an overview of gnosticism (and gnosis) in general, see Jonas 1967 and Rudolph 1980. For Nasr's view on the relation between Islam and gnosticism, see Nasr 1976:4,12.

<sup>141</sup>Nasr 1987:xvii.

<sup>142</sup>Nasr 1981:12.

<sup>143</sup>Nasr 1981b:122.

<sup>144</sup>Nasr 1981b:122.

<sup>145</sup>For an introduction to the ideas of Plato, see Ryle 1967:314–333. For an introduction to Platonism and the Platonic tradition, see Rees 1967: 333–341.

a context which manifests a *ṣūfī* inspired understanding. This means that *taʿwīl* is not always related to the study of nature, but there is a tradition within Sufism to use this concept as a method to expose the inner meaning of the Quran as well as of nature.<sup>146</sup>

In Nasr's use of Islamic terms, he refers not only to a specifically *ṣūfī* terminology, but also to Quranic verses and terminology. In *The Need for a Sacred Science* (1993), Nasr discusses the relationship between sacred science and the environmental crisis:

It can be claimed that according to the Islamic perspective God Himself *is* the ultimate environment which surrounds and encompasses man. It is of the outmost significance that in the Quran God is said to be the All-Encompassing (*Muḥīṭ*), as in the verse, 'But to God belong all things in the heavens and on the earth: And He it is who encompasseth (*Muḥīṭ*) all things' [Quran 4:126], and that the term *muḥīṭ* also means environment. In reality, man is immersed in the Divine *Muḥīṭ* and is only unaware of it because of his own forgetfulness and negligence (*ghaflah*), which is the underlying sin of the soul, only to be overcome by remembrance (*dhikr*). To remember God is to see Him everywhere and to experience His reality as *al-Muḥīṭ*. The environmental crisis may in fact be said to have been caused by man's refusal to see God as the real 'environment' which surrounds man and nourishes his life. The destruction of the environment is the result of modern man's attempt to view the natural environment as an ontologically independent order of reality, divorced from the Divine Environment without whose liberating grace it becomes stifled and dies. To remember God as *al-Muḥīṭ* is to remain aware of the sacred quality of nature, the reality of natural phenomena as signs (*āyāt*) of God and the presence of the natural environment as an ambience permeated by the Divine Presence of that Reality which alone is the ultimate 'environment' from which we issue and to which we return.<sup>147</sup>

In terms of its structure, this quotation is typical for Nasr's literary style. He often starts a paragraph with a statement. The statement is supported by a reference or references to the Quran. The contemporary situation constitutes the framework from which Nasr starts when he looks into the religious tradition to find support for his opinion.<sup>148</sup> If there is a footnote in relation to the statement, it is often a reference to a work by someone who shares his ideas.<sup>149</sup> The following part of

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<sup>146</sup>See also Nasr 1993:161. In the commentaries to the present text in 1995, Nasr stressed the long tradition within Sufism of using *taʿwīl* as a means to understand nature.

<sup>147</sup>Nasr 1993:131.

<sup>148</sup>For more examples of this method, see Nasr 1976:164,166,227,233.

<sup>149</sup>In the quotation above Nasr refers in a general footnote to Chittick 1986.

the paragraph is devoted to substantiating the statement. In an attempt to associate God, “the all-encompassing”, with the environment, the Quranic term *muḥīṭ*, “encompassing” or “surrounding”, is interpreted in a concrete manner to mean the physical environment.<sup>150</sup> Nasr concludes the paragraph by stating that the negligence of the real meaning of God as the physical environment and the compartmentalization of reality is the cause of the environmental crisis. Nasr’s use of words, slogans and axioms from Islamic terminology may convince the reader, and evoke a kind of “Islamic associations”. This is combined with an attempt to define the word *muḥīṭ* and to appropriate what can be characterized as the real or true meaning of the word. Nasr mentions a work on geography from the Ottoman period named *al-muḥīṭ*, and he translates it “the Circumference”.<sup>151</sup> In his commentaries to my text he states that the word can have both meanings.<sup>152</sup>

Another Arabic word treated in the same manner is <sup>ʿ</sup>*aql*. In Nasr’s terminology, <sup>ʿ</sup>*aql* means both intellect and reason. The Greek word is *nous*.

The Arabic word for intellect *al-ʿaql* is related to the word ‘to bind’, for it is that which binds man to his Origin; etymologically it could be compared to religion itself, for in the case religion is also what binds and relates man to God. Even the Arabic word for poetry (*al-shiʿr*) is related to the root meaning consciousness and knowledge rather than making as is the case with *poiḥīs*.<sup>153</sup>

Intellect or reason are common translations of <sup>ʿ</sup>*aql*. It is correct that the root form of <sup>ʿ</sup>*aql* can also mean “to hobble with the <sup>ʿ</sup>*iqāl*”,<sup>154</sup> and Nasr defines <sup>ʿ</sup>*aql* as that which binds man to his origin. Such an interpretation of the word prepares the way for the statement that the meaning of <sup>ʿ</sup>*aql* can etymologically be compared with the word religion.<sup>155</sup> To strengthen the alleged etymological relationship between <sup>ʿ</sup>*aql* and *religion*, Nasr demonstrates that the word for poetry in Arabic is connected to “knowledge” instead of “making”, which he claims is the case with the Greek word *poiḥīs*. In *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (1979) he states that <sup>ʿ</sup>*aql* used to have the meaning of binding man to God. In the same paragraph he declares that in the Quran those who have gone astray from the belief are people who cannot use their intelligence correctly. Nasr says that it is very significant that in the Quranic language, the loss of faith is not equated with

<sup>150</sup>“Environment” is a possible translation, but in the Quran *muḥīṭ* refers to God as all-encompassing. See, for example, the verse 2:19, 3:120, 11:84 and 11:92.

<sup>151</sup>Nasr 1976:45.

<sup>152</sup>This was stated in a written commentary to an earlier version of the present text in 1995.

<sup>153</sup>Nasr 1981:12 and Nasr 1979:21.

<sup>154</sup>In modern dictionaries <sup>ʿ</sup>*iqāl* refers to the cord used to hobble the feet of a camel. See Wehr 1976:630.

<sup>155</sup>The usage of the terms *re-ligare*, “to bind”, and *re-ligere*, “to reconsider”, alludes to Cicero’s use of the terms. See *De Natura Deorum* II 28.

the loss of determination or desire but with the incorrect functioning of intelligence.<sup>156</sup> One possible purpose of these elaborations on the meaning of *‘aql* is to show all possible links between the term and the Quran, and its usage in the Quranic terminology. Such links would make the word more significant in the eyes of his target audience – Muslim readers – and evoke Islamic associations which support his position. One function of the elaborations on *‘aql* is, as was the case with Nasr’s use of *al-muḥīf*, to appropriate a definition of the authentic meaning of the word. Nasr’s definition also has a somewhat apologetic effect, and my interpretation is that the underlying cause is Nasr’s wish to show that Islam is a rational religion. This is, however, an interpretation that Nasr opposes in his commentaries to the present text.

Connected to Nasr’s aim of appropriating meanings of various words, is his endeavour to make English translations of words in Islamic terminology, with a new meaning which fits his own ideas. The weight he gives English translations of Islamic terms is emphasized by the use of capital letters and Nasr’s effort to establish such words as specific concepts. One example of a set of immutable concepts is the Greek *hylé*, the Sanskrit *prakṛiti*, the Arabic *mādda* and the Latin *materia*. They are present in a discussion where Nasr states – correctly – that those words do not mean “matter” in the modern sense. Nasr’s conclusion is that modern human beings invented the modern meanings of “matter” and “materialism”.<sup>157</sup> Interpretations of Arabic words from the Quranic terminology – and an attempt to establish them as concepts – is part of Nasr’s position. He tries to show the function Islam can have in the modern world. Again, in Nasr’s comments on the present thesis, Nasr states that this is not his purpose.

One expression characteristic of Nasr’s linguistic usage is “traditional wisdom”. Nasr says that it is the equivalent to the Quranic *al-ḥikmah*.<sup>158</sup> *Al-ḥikma* is defined as “theosophy”, referring to a particular Islamic school of thought.<sup>159</sup> For Nasr, Traditional wisdom is the wisdom that exists in the centre of every Tradition that has retained its sapiential dimension. Nasr writes that such Traditions are e.g. to be found in Vedanta, Buddhism, the Kabbala and in the metaphysics of Christianity.<sup>160</sup> On the position of Traditional wisdom in Islam he argues:

It is also expressed with great clarity in traditional Islamic metaphysics. Furthermore, Islam is a religion which is based completely on the doctrine of the oneness of God, and is a religion in which God is seen as both Reality and Truth, the Arabic term *al-ḥaqīqah* meaning both.

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<sup>156</sup>Nasr 1979:21. See also how Nasr utilizes the Latin terms *ratio* and *intellectus* in Nasr 1990:20.

<sup>157</sup>See Nasr 1993:155.

<sup>158</sup>Nasr 1993:12.

<sup>159</sup>Nasr 1981b:63.

<sup>160</sup>Nasr 1993:12. They are also important in Nasr’s portrait of Traditional sciences. See Nasr 1993:100ff.

In fact the word *al-Haqq* (The Truth) which is related to *ḥaqīqah*, is a Name of God. Therefore, Islamic wisdom can play an important role in enabling modern man to rediscover that plenary doctrine of the nature of God as Reality, a doctrine whose loss has led to the unprecedented scepticism and relativism which characterize the modern world.<sup>161</sup>

The use of capital letters in the quotation extends to the Arabic words. In a conversation with me, Nasr states that he uses capital letters in references to God.<sup>162</sup> For instance, the function of the expression “In fact”, which begins a passage where *ḥaqq* (truth) is being related to wisdom, is noteworthy. This expression is used to support Nasr’s concept of the authentic meaning of *al-ḥaqq* and how this meaning can be used in a modern context.<sup>163</sup> This wisdom is both traditional and Islamic. Nasr’s conclusion is that Islamic wisdom and “the truth” can help humankind to establish order in the world. The opposite, a disordered and confused world, is a world where scepticism and relativism exist. These words have a negative connotation. The expression traditional wisdom – sometimes Nasr uses the expression *sophia perennis* instead<sup>164</sup> – is closely related to perennial wisdom and *philosophia perennis*. It is difficult to detect any difference in meaning between these terms.<sup>165</sup> The use of Greek or Latin terms is common. For example, the title *ash-Shaykh al-akbar* given to Ibn ‘Arabī is translated *Doctor Maximus*.<sup>166</sup>

Another example of Nasr’s use of Arabic and Persian terminology is his choice among several possible words to designate a notion or to establish his own interpretation of the word. One example is Nasr’s elaboration on the word ‘*ilm*. In *Sufi Essays* (1991) he states that knowledge or science (*al-‘ilm*) in the language of the Quran and the *ḥadīth* means knowledge which makes human beings aware of God, of the eternal truths, of the world to come and the return to God.<sup>167</sup> This is an “undeniable truth” and the attempt by contemporary Muslim apologetics to equate the term with modern science is troublesome. In order to support his statement, he argues that traditions from Muhammad have equated ‘*ilm* with knowledge of *al-akhīra*, the other world.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>161</sup>Nasr 1993:12.

<sup>162</sup>Conversation in Washington DC, 28th April 1994.

<sup>163</sup>See also the use of “in fact” when Nasr stresses his interpretation of tradition in Nasr 1987c:291f.

<sup>164</sup>Nasr 1993:12.

<sup>165</sup>See, for example, Nasr 1993:53.

<sup>166</sup>Nasr 1964:92. In a comment on an earlier version of the present text, Nasr states that the term “Doctor Maximus” was used before him by Corbin, Ann-Marie Schimmel and others. He also said that the term “utopia” is not his term alone.

<sup>167</sup>Nasr 1991:54.

<sup>168</sup>Nasr 1991:54.

The relationship between English and Arabic words can be further elucidated by Nasr's definition of secularism. In *Islamic Life and Thought* (1981) he says that there is no term in classical Arabic or Persian which is exactly synonymous to secularism.<sup>169</sup> In a note referring to the statement on synonyms of secularism, Nasr says that, although there are no synonyms, the words *'urfī*, referring to "law", *dunyawī* in the meaning of "this-worldly" and *zamānī*, translated with "temporal" are used to designate the phenomenon of secularism.<sup>170</sup> He does not make a reference to *'ālamī* (often translated worldly or secular) or to *'ālmānī*, "layperson". The terms referred to by Nasr are not chosen arbitrarily, and they are translated into English so that they fit his terminology in general. In other words, they have a persuasive function.<sup>171</sup> Nasr's translation of *'urafā'* with "sufis" or "gnostics" can be understood in the same manner.<sup>172</sup> I thus consider it important to stress that terms are not chosen arbitrarily, and Nasr often points out that he is rooted in a specific Islamic tradition.<sup>173</sup> Moreover, Nasr's use of reductionism can illustrate his way of interpreting words and giving them a somewhat different meaning.<sup>174</sup> He states that modern science does not take alternative philosophies into consideration. To deny ideas founded on Traditional doctrines is to deny the existence a relation between "the physical nature" and "the real of the Spirit". This rejection is defined by Nasr as reductionism.<sup>175</sup>

In Nasr's works, the use of terms is combined with various discussions not primarily concerned with religious matters. Thus, he can substantiate his position with references to discussions on the history and philosophy of science. He describes the relationship between philosophy and science and considers philosophy to have lost its independence as a critical judge of scientific methods and results. Philosophy has become a representation of science.<sup>176</sup> In his commentaries on the positions of philosophical schools such as "existentialism", "phenome-

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<sup>169</sup>Nasr 1981b:7.

<sup>170</sup>Nasr 1981b:14n.

<sup>171</sup>In a commentary to an earlier version of the text in 1994, Nasr stated that he has the right to develop his vocabulary and re-define terms. I agree with Nasr on that point, but in my opinion there has to be a certain ethics in the use of terms and concepts. The line between stipulating a definition to appropriating the concepts developed by others at time seems hair thin.

<sup>172</sup>Nasr 1981b:96. Nasr says that in the study of Islamic thought the views of the "Hermeticists" and "Illuminationists" (*ishrāqīs*) are neglected (Nasr 1981b:96). The schools of *'irfān* (gnosis or esoteric knowledge) and *ishrāq* are philosophical schools of Sufism. The words are used in the *shī'ā* tradition and the form of Sufism the schools represent is not in opposition to the more established and authoritative *shī'ā* tradition.

<sup>173</sup>Commenting on the present text, Nasr stressed that this was one major criticism of the draft. He suggested that I should emphasise to a higher degree his affiliation to the Persian Islamic tradition (conversation with Nasr in Washington DC, 28th April 1994).

<sup>174</sup>In his commentaries to the text in 1995 Nasr states that this is what every thinker does and he posed the question: Does "Geist" mean the same thing to Hegel as to St. Albert?

<sup>175</sup>Nasr 1990:4.

<sup>176</sup>Nasr 1990:30.

nology” or “positivism”, he refers to European or North American authors who take part in discussions concerning the role of science. Nasr uses the idea that philosophy has come to an end as a support for his standpoint.<sup>177</sup> In a summary of the discussion Nasr concludes that philosophy of science lacks a perspective in which metaphysical knowledge – a *scientia sacra* – is present. His critique is founded on a position where he regards science as related to or subordinated to a higher order, a perspective he sees as forgotten.<sup>178</sup>

In Nasr’s view there are “sacred languages”. Sacred language is placed at the centre of the traditional sciences.<sup>179</sup> This means that the sounds, utterances and esoteric meaning of its alphabet are the mother and wellspring of those sciences.<sup>180</sup> For Nasr, the Arabic language, and its alphabet, is connected to “esoteric sciences”.<sup>181</sup> Arabic is also the sacred language of Islam. The Quran was revealed in Arabic and the disciplines which develop our understanding of the Arabic language are therefore keys in our understanding of the word of God. Thus, a better comprehension of the Quran will make us grasp the meaning of the cosmos.<sup>182</sup>

## Sages and the Chosen History

There are many historical references in Nasr’s works. He refers to historical persons, schools of thought or epochs as essential for the scientific development in Muslim societies. This is clearly demonstrated when he stresses the significance of a number of central figures of Islamic science.<sup>183</sup> In several books he describes the development of a traditional form of Islamic science and its roots, and how influences were transferred from other sacred Traditions to Islam.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>177</sup>Nasr’s references to the end of philosophy discussion are Jaques Derrida and Richard Rorty, references that show that Nasr follows the contemporary debate within the field of philosophy. See Nasr 1993b:178.

<sup>178</sup>Nasr 1990:24–31. For the summary, see Nasr 1990:30f.

<sup>179</sup>Nasr’s use of a number of words such as *the sacred* and *the profane* reminds one of how these words are used by Eliade. See Eliade 1986.

<sup>180</sup>Nasr 1993:100,122.

<sup>181</sup>Nasr 1993:101.

<sup>182</sup>Nasr’s idea of sacred languages at the core of religions is not only linked to Islam. He also gives examples from the Hindu and Jewish traditions. Intimately related to his understanding of traditional sciences and languages is the idea of mathematics as a branch of science with inner and outer meanings. Mathematics, to Nasr, expresses an idea of harmony, a symbolic word expressed through numbers revealing spiritual qualities and the harmony of cosmos. See Nasr 1993:100–102.

<sup>183</sup>See Nasr 1987b:41–58. See also Nasr’s description of the transferring of knowledge within the discipline of medicine in Nasr 1976:154.

<sup>184</sup>See, for instance, Nasr 1976:3–24. See also the chapters on mathematics or medicine and pharmacology in Nasr 1976:75–90,153–192.

In Nasr's opinion the historical background of science, as well as of Greek and Christian philosophy and theology, is important for contemporary discussions. He states that professional historians of science have overlooked the "symbolic meaning of the ancient and medieval sciences", especially in works published before the 1950s.<sup>185</sup> One example is the interpretation of Greek philosophy. The interpretations dominating the mainstream of Western ideas in modern times caused the West to overlook some of the sapiential qualities of the Greek intellectual heritage. Hence, the significant nature of the content and purpose of the message of Christian and Jewish "sages" was lost. They were designated as neoplatonic and thereby disapproved of.<sup>186</sup>

Nasr further states that in the classification of sciences made by classical scholars there were two ways available for a person to acquire formal knowledge.<sup>187</sup> The first was the path of revealed truth, a science designated as "transmitted science" (*al-<sup>c</sup>ulūm al-naqlīya*), because it was transmitted from generation to generation. The second means of acquiring knowledge was that acquired through intelligence given by God to humans. The latter works on both the level of intelligence and the level of reason, and is therefore named "intellectual sciences" (*al-<sup>c</sup>ulūm al-<sup>c</sup>aqlīya*). Nasr states that those forms of knowledge usually are referred to as "acquired knowledge" (*al-<sup>c</sup>ilm al-ḥuṣūlī*). To those forms of science he adds the "sapiential wisdom", which is a result of "vision" (*kashf*) and a "tasting of the truth" (*dhawq*).<sup>188</sup> The Muslims, he states, have called this "pre-sential knowledge" (*al-<sup>c</sup>ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*).<sup>189</sup>

The Traditional science is a knowledge – related to metaphysical principles – and as a science "in the sense of organized knowledge of a particular domain of reality, it is not divorced from the immutability which characterizes the principal order".<sup>190</sup> However, Nasr remarks that not every written text by Pliny or al-Bīrūnī is sacred science, but at the core of a science in a Traditionalist civilization

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<sup>185</sup>Nasr 1990:52f.

<sup>186</sup>Nasr 1981:13

<sup>187</sup>Nasr (1976:14) says that "Islamic science and the intellectual perspectives in Islam have always been seen in a hierarchy". To support his statement he refers to his *Three Muslim Sages* (1964). In his perspective, Muslim intellectuals sought to integrate science not cultivated in a Muslim environment "into the Islamic scheme of the hierarchy of knowledge". Nasr says that this is the reason why scholars such as al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazzālī, Naṣīr ad-Dīn at-Ṭūsī and Mullā Ṣadrā were all concerned with the classification of sciences.

<sup>188</sup>The terms *kashf* and *dhawq* are related to *shī'a* and *ṣūfī* terminology. In general *kashf* has to do with the unveiling of the mystic, and a situation in which the mystic realises the realities behind the veil. In a sense it is understood as a mode of knowledge (EI vol. IV:696–698). *Dhawq*, "taste" is in a mystic terminology seen as an illumination, and is used to denote the quality of the mystical experience. It is commonly used to designate an intuitive possibility to grasp situations on the basis of previous experience. For example, an engineer may solve a problem intuitively, based on his or her previous experience. See EI vol. II:221. *Dhawq* is an important term in the works of Ibn <sup>c</sup>Arabī.

<sup>189</sup>Nasr 1976:14.

<sup>190</sup>Nasr 1993:95.

there exists a link to the sacred. Therefore, science in historical societies was founded on Traditional values, which must be contrasted with contemporary scientific work, based on speculation and observation carried out by human beings.<sup>191</sup> In Nasr's view, this picture of history conforms with his overall idea of the world as an organic entity, where science is linked to Islamic civilization, and where the purpose is to study the nature from a spiritual perspective.<sup>192</sup>

The history of Islamic science, Nasr maintains, begins with sciences as they existed in the pre-Islamic traditions, e.g. the Greek, Indian and Roman traditions.<sup>193</sup> One example is the scientific heritage of pre-Islamic Alexandria. In his historical account, Muslims accepted portions of this heritage. Muslims took it as their own because the "cosmological sciences" in Alexandria strived to reveal the unity of nature and the interconnection between all that exists. They acquired the elements of "inspired origin" and disposed of "the secular and naturalistic aspects of the Graeco-Roman heritage". The latter was the final reason for the fall of the Greek and Roman civilizations.<sup>194</sup> The aim of the classical Muslim scientists even in mathematical sciences was to discover an aspect of the divine reality.<sup>195</sup> The outcome of the Greek and Egyptian contacts was the emergence of a school of wisdom in Alexandria.<sup>196</sup> This school is known as Hermeticism.<sup>197</sup> Nasr describes its influence as follows:

In the Muslim world Hermeticism must be considered one of the most important factors in the construction of the Islamic view of the Universe. Its mark on both Islamic philosophy and science was a permanent one; it even entered into religious and metaphysical speculation as well as into Arabic and Persian poetry and prose. The figure of Hermes came to be regarded as that of the first teacher in science and philosophy, and through him it became possible for Muslims to integrate Greek science and philosophy into their world view without feeling that they were going anyway outside the Abrahamic prophetic tradition.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>Nasr 1993:96.

<sup>192</sup>Nasr 1976:9.

<sup>193</sup>Nasr 1976:3–24,159; Nasr 1981b:10f.,136f. and Nasr 1990:24f.

<sup>194</sup>Nasr 1981b:10f,136f. and Nasr 1987c:131.

<sup>195</sup>Nasr 1990:25.

<sup>196</sup>Nasr 1981b:102 and Nasr 1976:11.

<sup>197</sup>For a description of Nasr's view on Hermeticism, see Nasr 1981b:102–119 and Nasr 1976:198f. The philosophical traditions of Islam are, according to Nasr, also heirs to Pythagoreanism, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Neopythagoreanism, Neoplatonism, Stoicism and Hellenistic thought. See Nasr 1987c:131.

<sup>198</sup>Nasr 1981b:111f.

Nasr makes an exposé of Muslim and European thinkers during the Middle Ages who have been influenced by Hermeticism. Among those are Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Raymond Lull and Roger Bacon. Hermeticism, as Nasr correctly notes, played a significant role during the Renaissance, and even during the seventeenth century. In England and Germany the hermetic influence lasted until the eighteenth century. In the introductory part of a chapter on Hermes and Hermeticism in *Islamic Life and Thought* (1981), Nasr concludes that research on the origin and the doctrines of Hermeticism is crucial to discover the nature of a significant strand in the fabric of the intellectual life of both Christianity and Islam.<sup>199</sup> As for the effect of Hermetic science and philosophy, Nasr states that the school was integrated into *ṣūfī* gnosis by Ibn ʿArabī and his followers.<sup>200</sup>

Hermetic science was also influential on the school of Illumination (*al-ishrāq*): The prime exponent of the ideas of the illuminationists is the “sage” Shihāb ad-Dīn Yahyā as-Suhrawardī (d. 1191).<sup>201</sup> Nasr claims that the illuminationist school grew out of the criticism of Ibn Sīnā’s philosophy developed by Muslim scholars during the 12th century.<sup>202</sup> This school is often presented in Nasr’s works as important in the history of Traditional science and Islamic science.<sup>203</sup> As for the Islamic philosophical tradition Nasr stresses the relation between philosophy and a religious universe.<sup>204</sup> Therefore it is a prophetic philosophy and a philosophy concerned with “providing keys for the understanding of the manifold in relation to the One. It is therefore rich, not only in religious and ethical philosophy, but also in philosophies of nature and mathematics as well as of art”.<sup>205</sup> Islamic sciences were cultivated by men who were not only scientists, but also philosophers. Nasr’s view is related to his concept of a Traditional philosophy, i.e. a philosophy “based upon the supra-individual intellect rather than upon individualistic opinion”.<sup>206</sup> In addition, the quotation above and the following account of Nasr’s position reveals a view of the world as an organic entity. A postulate is his interpretation of the Arabic word *tawhīd*. This Islamic term is defined as “the principle of unity”. The concept of unity, for Nasr, is a central guiding principle which must underlie all modes of knowledge and all forms of being.<sup>207</sup> The conception of the term makes it possible for him

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<sup>199</sup>Nasr 1981b:102f.

<sup>200</sup>Nasr 1981b:108f.

<sup>201</sup>For an outline of Nasr’s view on the “illuminationists” and Suhrawardī, see Nasr 1964:52–82; Nasr 1976:138 and Nasr 1987b:328–336.

<sup>202</sup>Nasr 1987c:132.

<sup>203</sup>Nasr 1981b:109.

<sup>204</sup>Nasr 1987c:133.

<sup>205</sup>Nasr 1987c:133.

<sup>206</sup>Nasr 1987c:131.

<sup>207</sup>Nasr 1990:102.

to state that Muslims did not see the crucial difference as one between revealed religion (*ahl al-kitāb*) and paganism, but rather as between those who accepted unity and those who denied it.<sup>208</sup> As a result, Pythagoras and Plato are described as “unitarians” (*muwaḥḥidūn*).<sup>209</sup> They were both exponents of the truth which lies at the core of all religions and, therefore, they belonged to the Islamic universe.<sup>210</sup> Hence, Nasr’s notion of *tawḥīd* and *waḥdat al-wudjūd* are pivotal to his ideas.<sup>211</sup> In this manner pre-Islamic figures can be incorporated in Nasr’s Islamic framework.

Another important tradition, according to Nasr, in the history of the development of science was *taṣawwuf*, “Sufism”. He states that especially in the fields of arts and sciences the influence of Sufism was enormous, and particularly after the invasion of the Mongols during the 13th century, the *ṣūfī* orders became centres of learning.<sup>212</sup> Until the 16th century the Islamic sciences were related to Western science as well as to science in India and China. In Nasr’s view, science in the West could not have developed without the contact with Islamic sciences.<sup>213</sup> He comments on the decline of Traditions by stating that the mundane life of a tradition can come to an end and that Traditional civilizations can decay. Nevertheless, ideas and values of a Traditional kind survive and exist within the framework of schools of thought which preserve their ideas and values.<sup>214</sup>

The period of decline for Islamic science, the carrier of Traditional values, Nasr says, starts with the Renaissance and continues with the scientific revolution. Nevertheless, he argues that science in Europe after the Renaissance used the results of Islamic science, but did so in opposition to Islam.<sup>215</sup> A new form of science was established, without any link to superior patterns of knowledge. Another outcome is the position of Islamic science as opposed to Western sci-

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<sup>208</sup>Nasr 1981:72.

<sup>209</sup>Here Nasr plays with the meanings of words. In the mystical ideas of Pythagoras and Plato and in their ritual life the unitarian idea plays a significant role. For introductions to the religious life of Pythagoras and Plato, see Ramsey 1987:113–115 and Norris 1987:358f. In modern Muslim history the *muwaḥḥidūn* is associated with the *wahhābī* movement in Saudi Arabia. However, it seems that Nasr intends to appropriate the term and giving it another meaning.

<sup>210</sup>Nasr 1981:72. In Nasr (1979:129) he makes a reservation to such a statement.

<sup>211</sup>In his comment to the present text in 1995, Nasr stated that “*tawḥīd* is identified with *waḥdat al-wudjūd* by thousands of Islamic thinkers”. This is a correct statement, but there are also many Muslim scholars who oppose the idea of *waḥdat al-wudjūd*. One school, the *waḥdat ash-shuhūd* (unity of consciousness) was established in the 10th century and criticized Sufism based on the idea that Muslims should be active members of their society, and not drift into a search for the divine only. This discussion has continued, and today Sufism is often criticized by Islamic movements for leading Muslims away from shouldering their responsibility in society.

<sup>212</sup>Nasr 1976:23; Nasr 1990:19 and Nasr 1987b:90f. For a development of one discipline – medicine – after Ibn Sīnā, see Nasr 1976:179ff.

<sup>213</sup>Nasr 1991:160. For an overview of the history of science in Muslim and Chinese contexts, see Huff 1995.

<sup>214</sup>Nasr 1987c:13f.

<sup>215</sup>Nasr 1987c:138.

ence, reminding contemporary mankind of the existence of a science that is able to reveal dimensions and aspects of nature that humans are unable to experience at present. The “perennial values” and the “doctrinal truths” are embedded in the educational institutions of Islam and the Traditional form of Islamic science must be conveyed to human beings, because they alone can help today’s Muslims in maintaining their Islamicity.<sup>216</sup> These assertions reveal Nasr’s view that Islam is the carrier of the Traditional and perennial wisdom and a sacred science. Traditional science does not conceive of time as progressing in a linear fashion. In opposition to the West, he says, time moves as the rhythm of a series of cycles commanded by laws as strict as those ruling space.<sup>217</sup> He outlines a cyclic understanding of time in opposition to linear time.

### *Three Muslim sages*

Nasr’s view of the development of Islamic science, and the making of science in general, is concentrated around a set of mostly historical, but also living persons.<sup>218</sup> This is apparent in the way several of his works are constructed, e.g. *Three Muslim Sages* (1964), *Science and Civilization in Islam* (1987) and *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study* (1976). There are many Islamic personalities present in Nasr’s texts, and it is an impossible task to discuss them all. In *Three Muslim Sages* (1964) he introduces Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī. These three “sages” represents important epochs and specific ideas in history. The word “sage” here designates not only a wise man, but also a man who serves as a model for other Muslims. The sage can also be described as a man who has a complete and universal knowledge.<sup>219</sup>

Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) is depicted as a prime exponent of the Greek heritage. More explicitly, Nasr states that Ibn Sīnā develops the legacy of Aristotle and the Islamic philosophy of al-Kindī and al-Fārābī.<sup>220</sup> Nasr emphasises the richness of Ibn Sīnā’s literary output. Ibn Sīnā was not only a prolific writer, he also treated a large variety of subjects in his production. He wrote treatises on psychology, physics, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, religious subjects and meteorology, as well as poetry.<sup>221</sup> Nasr says that he was almost as great a scientist and physi-

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<sup>216</sup>Nasr 1987c:138f.

<sup>217</sup>Nasr 1993:97. On “time”, see the cycles of prophecy in Islam in Nasr 1993:153.

<sup>218</sup>In his comment to the present text Nasr points out that he uses persons as representations of ideas and schools of thought. In my opinion, however, they are deliberately chosen to support his standpoint.

<sup>219</sup>Nasr 1987b:41f.; Nasr 1993:130f. and Nasr 1976:31.

<sup>220</sup>On Nasr’s view on Ibn Sīnā and his ideas, see Nasr 1964:9–51; Nasr 1978:177–274; Nasr 1981b:83–95; Nasr 1987b:48f.; Nasr 1990:61f. and Nasr 1991:157f.

<sup>221</sup>Nasr 1964:23f.

cian as he was a philosopher.<sup>222</sup> The passages on Ibn Sīnā often stress his significance for the development of the Peripatetic philosophy. Avicenna is the master of Peripatetics, which in Nasr's Arabic is rendered as *mashshā' iyūn*.<sup>223</sup> In Nasr's view, Peripatetics emphasized the search for the indisputable truth.<sup>224</sup> In other words, the function of sciences such as physics, mathematics or biology is to discover an aspect of the authentic or the real, in order to understand the universe.<sup>225</sup> The legacy of Ibn Sīnā was not lost, even though it was criticized during the Middle Ages, primarily by al-Ghazzālī.<sup>226</sup> Avicenna's ideas were further elaborated on and interpreted by the school of Illuminationists.<sup>227</sup> The ideas of Peripatetic philosophy was held in trust by personalities such as Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā. However, although they transformed Peripatetic philosophy, they were not themselves Peripatetics.<sup>228</sup> The ideas of this philosophy survived until the present day in the form of Illuminationism, especially in Persia.<sup>229</sup>

Shihāb ad-Dīn Yaḥyā as-Suhrawardī (d. 1191) is, according to Nasr, the sage who established the doctrines which came to succeed Peripatetic philosophy, especially in Persia.<sup>230</sup> His works were not translated into Latin during the Middle Ages and, Nasr argues, remained until recently almost completely unknown to the Western world. It is because of the work of scholars such as Henry Corbin that as-Suhrawardī now is better known.<sup>231</sup> In a recent study, Ziai has criticized Nasr's presentation of Suhrawardī's works. Ziai holds that the framework of Suhrawardī's ideas constitutes neither a theology, a theosophy nor a *sagesse orientale*.<sup>232</sup> Ziai's statement can be interpreted as a critique of Nasr's description of the Illuminationist school as theosophical, and of his use of the word sage.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>222</sup>Nasr 1964:31.

<sup>223</sup>Nasr 1964:43–45 and Nasr 1981b:128.

<sup>224</sup>Nasr 1990:25. In Nasr's understanding of the peripatetics the search for the indisputable has to do with the search for the Divine truth. In descriptions of the peripatetics they were mostly concerned with empirical questions and discouraged speculation. See Kerferd 1967:92.

<sup>225</sup>Nasr 1990:25; For Nasr's view on "the school of Peripatetics", see Nasr 1976:136.

<sup>226</sup>For Nasr's account of the medieval discussion, see Nasr 1964:46f.; Nasr 1981b:92f. and Nasr 1987c:131f.

<sup>227</sup>Nasr 1964:45.

<sup>228</sup>This was stated by Nasr in a comment in 1994 on an earlier version of the present text.

<sup>229</sup>Nasr 1964:46f.,50f.,55 and Nasr 1981:38f.

<sup>230</sup>Nasr 1964:55 and Nasr 1981:81.

<sup>231</sup>Nasr 1964:55. For a description of Nasr's ideas on Suhrawardī and the Illuminationist school, see Nasr 1964:55–82 and Nasr 1987b:328–336.

<sup>232</sup>Ziai 1990:2. For a more explicit critique of Nasr's work on Suhrawardī, see Ziai 1990:7f.,58f. In his commentaries to the present text Nasr states that he speaks on the basis of a 700 year old tradition while Ziai speaks as a follower of Western views of Islamic philosophy. Nasr also criticizes the references to Ziai and Thackston Jr in this paragraph and asks why I am referring to all those scholars who have supported his views and the views of Corbin. My aim is to balance Nasr's views with those of others studying the same subjects.

<sup>233</sup>Nasr 1964:45,56 and Nasr 1987b:294.

Ziai's descriptions, and the one made by Thackston on the life of and work of Suhrawardī, can also serve as comparisons to Nasr's portrayal of this philosopher.<sup>234</sup> They both agree on the lack of sources of information on Suhrawardī's life.<sup>235</sup> According to Nasr, the Illuminationists criticized and elaborated the thoughts of the Peripatetics. In Suhrawardī's doctrines several influences were integrated. The peripatetic ideas were synthesized with ideas borrowed from Platonists, Persians, the Islamic revelation and from the gnostic doctrines of Ibn ʿArabī. In spite of these influences, "the Universe is a Muslim one on whose horizons certain pre-Islamic symbols are contemplated".<sup>236</sup> Another fundamental principle in Suhrawardī's thoughts is that he believed that the ancient wisdom is perennial and universal.<sup>237</sup> Wisdom was revealed by God to human beings. God revealed one branch of wisdom to Egypt, a branch which later came to Greece. Another was revealed to Persia. From the two sources it entered into Muslim civilization and, according to Nasr, Suhrawardī considered himself to be the focal point where the two forms of wisdom were once more unified.<sup>238</sup>

Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) is in Nasr's perspective an exponent of Sufism as a tradition representing the heart or inner dimension of Islam. A tradition which gives the Muslim the possibility to reach sanctity and gnosis.<sup>239</sup> On the history of Sufism, Nasr states that it is difficult to discuss a history of Sufism because in its essence Sufism has no history.<sup>240</sup> Nasr explains his opinion by saying that, in spite of the fact that Sufism takes up an esoteric dimension of the teachings of Muhammad, it has responded to the general mental and psychological circumstances of different epochs. It has also been affected by interpretations made at various times. When Ibn ʿArabī appeared as a sage, Sufism was already a well-established tradition.<sup>241</sup> On the significance of Ibn ʿArabī, Nasr says that with him "we suddenly encounter a complete metaphysical and cosmological, as well as psychological and anthropological, doctrine of monumental dimensions".<sup>242</sup> The doctrines of Sufism were explicitly formulated, and Ibn ʿArabī became the best-known exponent of *gnosis* in Islam. The roads were now open for those with adequate intelligence to contemplate and to perceive the metaphysical theories and formulate a practice based on these. Significant terms in the vocabulary

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<sup>234</sup>See Ziai 1990 and Thackston Jr 1982:1–20.

<sup>235</sup>Thackston Jr 1982:1–4 and Ziai 1990:15.

<sup>236</sup>Nasr 1964:59,56,60; Nasr 1981:39 and Nasr 1987b:294.

<sup>237</sup>Nasr 1964:61.

<sup>238</sup>Nasr 1964:61f.

<sup>239</sup>Nasr 1964:83 and Nasr 1975b:58. For Nasr's view on Ibn ʿArabī and his ideas, see Nasr 1964:83–121; Nasr 1975b:40–42; Nasr 1976:31,178f; Nasr 1987b:338–340,344 and Nasr 1987c:291–296.

<sup>240</sup>Nasr 1964:85.

<sup>241</sup>Nasr 1964:89.

<sup>242</sup>Nasr 1964:90.

of Ibn ʿArabī are “the (transcendent) unity of being” (*waḥdat al-wudjūd*)<sup>243</sup> and “the Universal Man” (*al-insān al-kāmil*).<sup>244</sup> The meanings given to those terms by Ibn ʿArabī have been influential.<sup>245</sup> In short, in the concept of *waḥdat al-wudjūd*, Ibn ʿArabī presents God as a divine self. The self emanates into the multiplicity of beings. God or the self is often described as the absolute or the real.<sup>246</sup> The identity of God is hidden. Humans can dispel the illusion that there is a division between human beings and God. The way to return to God, to be absorbed into the one again goes through revelation. This return to Godhead requires a purification of the believer, that is, a following of the divine norm.<sup>247</sup> For Nasr, Ibn ʿArabī’s significance lies not only in his formulation of doctrines, but also in his position as a keeper of the doctrines of Islamic esotericism, who preserved and guaranteed the tradition.<sup>248</sup> In his account of the works and sources of Ibn ʿArabī, Nasr states that it is not possible to discuss the works and sources of Ibn ʿArabī in an “ordinary historical sense”. One who follows the path obtains inspiration vertically, from “Divine theophanies” to his heart, directly and without the need for any horizontal influences.<sup>249</sup> Ibn ʿArabī is a Gnostic and a saint.<sup>250</sup> The Gnostic views everything as “manifestations of the Supreme Divine Principle, which transcends all determinations – even Being, its first determination”.<sup>251</sup> The doctrines of Ibn ʿArabī are used to stress the idea of the unity of all religions and the belief that there is a universal aspect of revelation.<sup>252</sup> This idea should be the foundation for Muslims in their relationship with other religions.<sup>253</sup> Parenthetically, Nasr suggests that for a better understanding among Westerners of Islam and among Muslims of the West, studies of the relation between Meister Eckhardt and Ibn ʿArabī should be carried out. Such a study would give more insight into the structure of Islam and Christianity than any attempts to discover paths of historical influence.<sup>254</sup> It would reveal the essence of the religions.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>243</sup>For a description of Nasr’s ideas of the term and his portrayal of Ibn ʿArabī’s view of it, see Nasr 1964:104–108; Nasr 1979:137 and Nasr 1981b:99. Nasr sometimes discusses “the chain of being” without naming the term *waḥdat al-wudjūd*. See Nasr 1993:97.

<sup>244</sup>For Nasr’s description of the term as well as Ibn ʿArabī’s position, see Nasr 1964:110f. and Nasr 1979:137f.

<sup>245</sup>Nasr 1964:91.

<sup>246</sup>Descriptions of God as the absolute or the real are frequent in Nasr’s texts.

<sup>247</sup>For an introduction to one of the central texts and the ideas of Ibn ʿArabī, see Austin 1980.

<sup>248</sup>Nasr 1964:91.

<sup>249</sup>Nasr 1964:100.

<sup>250</sup>Nasr 1987c:293.

<sup>251</sup>Nasr 1987b:335,337.

<sup>252</sup>Nasr 1964:116f.

<sup>253</sup>Nasr 1964:117.

<sup>254</sup>For other suggestions of other fields of study considered important, see Nasr 1975:41.

<sup>255</sup>In Nasr’s perspective, Ibn ʿArabī is the prime exponent of a position that reveals the unity of religions: “Ibn

The sage Ibn ʿArabī and the *ṣūfī* traditions are bearers of a genuine Tradition. The essence of the Tradition has been transmitted from Hermeticism to the Illuminationists and, finally, to Sufism. The exponents of each Tradition are the sages serving as links between them. The sages are in a position to develop, refine and synthesize the content of the genuine Tradition, and to elaborate on the concept of sacred science, Traditional wisdom and on the meaning of words in Islamic terminology. It is important, in Nasr’s opinion, for *ṣūfī* traditions to be the bearer of Tradition and the way to sancticity and *gnosis*.

People are by Nasr ranked in order of preference according to their spiritual abilities.<sup>256</sup> In this perspective the sage *par excellence* is Muhammad, the “Universal Man” (*al-insān al-kāmil*).<sup>257</sup> He is also the symbol of all positive things in the cosmos.<sup>258</sup> Nasr’s outline of the function of a sage contains an elitistic aspect.<sup>259</sup> In *Science and Civilization in Islam* (1987) he outlines the universal personage of Islamic science.<sup>260</sup> Nasr exposes his view of a genealogical approach towards history<sup>261</sup>

Throughout Islamic History, the central figure in the transmission of the sciences has been the wise man, or *ḥakīm*. He has usually been a physician, a writer and a poet, an astronomer and mathematician, and above all, a sage. In the figure of the *ḥakīm*, one can see the unity of the sciences as so many branches of a tree whose trunk is the wisdom embodied in the sage. (...) The Islamic teaching system as a whole and the classification of the sciences, which forms its matrix, are themselves dependent upon this figure of the *ḥakīm*, or sage.<sup>262</sup>

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ʿArabī spent much of his life in praying the traditional Islamic prayers, in repenting before God for his sins, in reading the Quran, in invoking the Divine Name, and it was by means of these practices and not in spite of them that he came to realize that the divinely revealed paths lead to the same summit and that to have lived one religion fully is to have lived them all” (Nasr 1964:117f.).

<sup>256</sup>Nasr 1987b:41f.

<sup>257</sup>Nasr 1964:83; Nasr 1979:88 and Nasr 1993:16,99.

<sup>258</sup>Nasr 1976:31,36.

<sup>259</sup>In his comment on the present text in 1995, Nasr says that this is the Islamic distinction between *khāṣṣa* and *ʿamma*. They are two opposed terms. The first denotes the notables or the aristocracy and the second the masses. In many interpretations of the terms the *khāṣṣa* is also given higher moral qualities than the *ʿamma*. *Khawāṣṣ* (plural of *khāṣṣa*) denotes an unaccountable esoteric force in nature. See EI vol. IV:1097–1100. In Nasr’s mystical interpretation, the meaning of the plural and the singular forms melt together and a he makes a distinction between people based on their spiritual qualities.

<sup>260</sup>Nasr 1987b:41–58.

<sup>261</sup>The term genealogical is here used to designate an understanding of history founded on individuals. For example, Nasr’s view of the development of religious traditions such as the Traditional school is centred around a set of Muslim personalities.

<sup>262</sup>Nasr 1987b:41.

In general, Nasr's view of a sage is that of a historical prototype. The sage serves as an example worthy of imitation. Sages are chosen, i.e. they are selected from a set of sages, present in the Islamic history. The description of the sages is often idealized and their life histories are all narrated in similar fashion. Nasr usually picks sages from the history of Islam. However, he sometimes also takes figures from Christian traditions,<sup>263</sup> or even from pre-Islamic traditions or other religious traditions. The sages presented above are not always included. In one of Nasr's latest works, *The Need for a Sacred Science* (1993), the tendency is towards emphasizing the unity of all religions and, especially, the Traditional wisdom present in all world religions. Therefore, the sages and the terminology selected in this work are a variety of Islamic, Hindu, Christian or Buddhist individuals and terms. This is, in my interpretation, a clear tendency in the authorship of Nasr. Nasr's choice seems always to be related to the purpose of a book. For example, the word *ḥakīm* is in the quotation above given the meaning sage.<sup>264</sup> This word is generally translated "physician". In Nasr's works, sage is used as a synonym of master (*shaykh*). In general, the descriptions of sages are linked to presentations of historical figures. However, Muslims of European background such as Guénon and Schuon are in Nasr's works also treated as sages or masters.<sup>265</sup> Others have depicted Nasr himself a sage. A.R.H Kellas says that Nasr is "no oriental bigot but a devout and tolerant sage."<sup>266</sup>

A term used by Nasr in his presentation of the status of history is the expression "natural history". In his definition, natural history is a discipline of the natural sciences because it attaches the phenomena in the environment – God's creation – to the history of the Traditions. One example of "natural history" is "sacred geography". The latter is defined as a science connecting the study of the earth as a symbol in various religions and as a "vertical hierarchy" of reality. One aim of sacred geography is to maximise the presence of *baraka* (God's blessing) and to change a natural environment into a reflection of paradise, a form of natural philosophy intended to establish a relation between nature and the transcendent world.<sup>267</sup>

Nasr's conception of history is related to his understanding of the character, content and meaning of the Quran and can be exemplified with the following statement:

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<sup>263</sup>Nasr 1981:16. In a comment on an earlier version of the text in 1994, Nasr states that in the context of Islam he speaks of Islamic sages, but he has never said that other religions and Traditions are without sages. However, my point is that Nasr's use of Muslim sages and sages from a variety of religions, can be criticized by Muslims who do not accept the use of sages from other religions than Islam.

<sup>264</sup>For Nasr's opinion of the function of a *ḥakīm*, see Nasr 1976:154,173.

<sup>265</sup>See, for instance, Nasr's presentation of Massignon, Corbin and, especially, Burckhardt in Nasr 1987c:253–296.

<sup>266</sup>Kellas 1993:348.

<sup>267</sup>Nasr 1993:109f.

What the Quran does contain is the principle of all knowledge including cosmology and the sciences of nature. (...) The Quran is then the source of knowledge in Islam not only metaphysically and religiously but even in the domain of particular fields of knowledge.<sup>268</sup>

The Quran embodies history. When Nasr elucidates the content of the Quran, he says that it includes in essence three types of messages for humanity. Firstly, there is the doctrinal message, secondly, a book of history and thirdly, it contains a quality which Nasr characterizes as “divine magic” – he emphasizes that this expression should be understood metaphysically and not literally.<sup>269</sup> He clarifies his ideas on the Quran as a book of history by stating that its strength is not manifested in statements acknowledged as historical facts.<sup>270</sup> Rather, for Nasr the Quran is a symbol, and the meaning of the symbol is valid because it is not explicitly concerned with a specific fact in a fixed time, but with truths which Nasr describes as perennial.

The basic idea in Nasr’s understanding of history is that it gives mankind guidance in the modern society. The ideal times and individuals can be studied in order to find the authentic meaning of events in the world. Nasr therefore, describes the rise and fall of civilizations with the purpose of showing that there is an eternal tradition. In relation to science, history is important because a study of a chosen history – individuals as well as periods in time – will lead people to understand the authentic values of science.

## Islam and the Sacred in Relation to Knowledge and Science

In Nasr’s interpretation, the fundamental function of religion is to bring order into the life of human beings. This means establishing a form of harmony in life as a foundation, and from a condition of harmony humans can return to their inner origin. This is, in Nasr’s terminology, a “universal function” of religions or revelations, and is especially true of Islam although such knowledge is significant also in the sacred texts of other religions.<sup>271</sup> The harmony and balance within the individual and in the world in general as a basic Islamic doctrine is

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<sup>268</sup>Nasr 1979:50.

<sup>269</sup>Nasr 1979:51.

<sup>270</sup>Nasr 1979:49.

<sup>271</sup>Nasr 1981b:191; Nasr 1981:6–8 and Nasr 1993:13. In Nasr’s perspective (1979:9) there are profound similarities between all religions, but also differences e.g. regarding their structure.

stressed by Nasr. He states that this doctrine made it possible for Islam to integrate pre-Islamic traditions.<sup>272</sup>

In several of his works, Nasr deals with the relationship between religion, “sacred” science and nature, especially in *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (1990), and *The Need for a Sacred Science* (1993). In the latter work, Nasr states that in the Islamic perspective God is the ultimate environment which encompasses human beings.<sup>273</sup> He says, speaking of the relationship between mankind and nature, that Muslim scientists in classical times studied nature with the goal of finding spiritual and moral instructions.<sup>274</sup> Hence, the connection between cosmos – the entire environment – nature and human beings plays a significant role in Nasr’s view.

For Nasr, the metaphysical principles of Islam and the sciences concerned with the supreme – *scientia sacra* – are derived directly from revelation and based on the principle of unity (*tawhīd*).<sup>275</sup> However, in elaborating the meaning of the term “religion” in Islam, he states that it signifies first of all the Islamic revelation and all the truths revealed in the Quran, both exoteric and esoteric. The latter are interpreted by Muhammad in sayings and traditions. In *shī‘a* Islam, the sayings of the *Imāms* are complementary to Muhammad’s sayings. Secondly, religion means all teachings and institutions of divine origin as revealed by earlier prophets.<sup>276</sup> Nasr continues by saying that the universality and synthetic power is the *raison d’être* of Islam and that these two qualities made it possible to integrate earlier messages into the Islamic perspective. In Nasr’s opinion, the revelation pronounced in the Quran is eternally valid, and God’s word has an ability to take the future development of the Islamic civilization into consideration.<sup>277</sup> Therefore, it is not accidental that the “verses of the Quran, as well as phenomena in nature and events within the soul of man are called signs or portents (*āyāt*)”.<sup>278</sup> In Nasr’s understanding of the nature of these signs, God places them in the cosmos and in the world of nature as well as in the soul of humans. Thus, the signs in the cosmos are the signs of the Quran. “Signs” can in Nasr’s use of the word be interpreted as synonymous with miracles. The correspondence between the signs in cosmos and the signs in nature are the reason for the Muslim notion of nature, and for the idea of an Islamic science. This statement leads him to conclude that when a Muslim studies natural phenomena, he or she

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<sup>272</sup>Nasr 1976:153f.,161f.,227,234.

<sup>273</sup>Nasr 1993:31.

<sup>274</sup>Nasr 1976:59.

<sup>275</sup>Nasr 1976:3f.

<sup>276</sup>Nasr 1981b:8.

<sup>277</sup>See Nasr’s discussion on the ban of intercalation of the lunar year into a solar one in Nasr 1976:95f.

<sup>278</sup>Nasr 1979:54f.

should be reminded of God and of his power and wisdom.<sup>279</sup> The Quran has a “sacred language”, and Nasr points out that every word bears within itself a world of meaning.<sup>280</sup> This means that a complete “horizontal” explanation of the content of words can never be accomplished. If human beings would like to understand the inner meaning of the Quranic text, this must be done through “spiritual travail”, that is, “symbolic and hermeneutic interpretation” (*taʾwīl*). The latter is supposed to be separated from the “external aspect of the Book” (*tafsīr*).<sup>281</sup> In relation to other sources of Islamic traditions, Nasr holds that the Traditional school recognizes the six *Ṣiḥāḥ* of the *sunnī* and the “four Books” of *shīʿa*.<sup>282</sup> He is critical of the development of certain movements. Nasr remarks that the Traditional school reflects thoughts and ideas that were present in movements prior to the appearance of various brands of Muslim movements in the 18th century.<sup>283</sup> He points out that many scientists in the history of Islamic science belonged to the *ṣūfī* tradition. In his perspective, Sufism played a significant part in the early days of Islamic natural science and mathematics.<sup>284</sup>

In *Knowledge and the Sacred* (1981) and elsewhere, Nasr emphasizes the link between Islam – the sacred – and knowledge.<sup>285</sup> This relationship is displayed in the names used to designate the sacred scripture of Islam. They are all connected to knowledge. He gives the following examples – *al-qurʾān* (recitation), *al-furqān* (discernment) and *umm al-kitāb* (the mother of books).<sup>286</sup> In the same manner, he holds that the relationship between Islam and knowledge is exposed in the content of the Quran. The importance of mental activity and knowledge is manifested in almost every chapter of the Quran. He refers to *sūra* 96:1–5 to substantiate his statement. It relates to “recitation” (*iqraʾ*) which, according to Nasr, implies knowledge. The verses are also connected to science, a view he shares with many Muslims. Nasr refers to *ʿilm* and other Arabic words of the same root, such as *taʿlīm*, “to teach” and *ʿallama*, “thought”.<sup>287</sup> He points at a passage in the first verse of *sūra* 96, believed to be the first chapter revealed to Muhammad, where the word *ʿallama* is used.<sup>288</sup> Quranic verses are referred to in this context, and Nasr remarks that the attitude of Islam towards knowledge can

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<sup>279</sup>Nasr 1979:55.

<sup>280</sup>Nasr 1979:48.

<sup>281</sup>Nasr 1979:58f.

<sup>282</sup>Nasr 1987c:14.

<sup>283</sup>Nasr 1987c:15.

<sup>284</sup>Nasr 1991:46.

<sup>285</sup>Nasr 1981:1,2,11.

<sup>286</sup>Nasr 1981:11.

<sup>287</sup>Nasr (1976:13) says that *ʿilm* is something sacred because in the end all knowledge deals with aspects of “God’s theophanies”.

<sup>288</sup>Nasr 1981:11.

best be understood from studying verse 59 in *sūra* 6.<sup>289</sup> The connection between the Quran and knowledge is also stressed in *Islamic Spirituality* (1987), and two more epithets on the Quran are added. They are “the guidance” (*al-hudā*) and “remembrance of God” (*dhikr Allāh*).<sup>290</sup> The latter is a sign that the Quran is a recollection of God’s “Truth” and “Presence”. Therefore, recitation is to remember God.<sup>291</sup> The establishment of a link between knowledge and Islam is important to Nasr, who views Islam as essentially a way of knowledge – a mode of gnosis (*maʿrifa*).<sup>292</sup> In the ideal Islamic society knowledge and being are united, but with the modernization of society, he states, knowledge has been almost completely externalized and desacralized for most people.<sup>293</sup> The instrument of knowledge is the intellect and the intelligence of man, and they can be “luciferian forces” if divorced from revelation, the absolute and the reality.<sup>294</sup> The latter are attributes of God and the last is in Nasr’s outline crucial. He states that in the understanding of God as reality it is acknowledged that there are levels of reality. He continues that the reality of the world is only visible “to the extent it reveals God who alone is Real. But the world is also unreal to the extent that it hides and veils God as Reality.”<sup>295</sup>

Moreover, a particular object cannot be said to be real or unreal in only one sense of these terms, but it partakes of levels of reality, or one might say unreality, from being an opaque object, an “it” or “fact” as understood in modern science which is its face as *māyā* in the sense of illusion, to its being a transparent symbol, a theophany, a reflection of the Divine Presence and a witness to the Divine *māyā* which is none other than the Divine Creativity. (...) To reinstate the doctrine of God as Reality is, needless to say, impossible without a change in the way we envisage the question and possibility of knowledge. As long as the prevalent empiricism or its complementary rationalism continue to reign or are replaced by that irrationalism which erupted in the nineteenth-century Europe from below, there is no possibility to grasp the validity of that traditional wisdom, or that *sophia perennis*, which has always seen God as Reality and the world as a dream from which the sage awakens through realization and remembrance and the ordinary

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<sup>289</sup>Nasr 1981b:92.

<sup>290</sup>Nasr 1987:6,7. For Nasr’s positive view on the relationship between science and religion in the Quran, see Nasr 1976:5.

<sup>291</sup>Nasr 1987:7.

<sup>292</sup>Nasr 1979:22 and Nasr 1981b:57. On Islam and knowledge see also Nasr 1976:13f.

<sup>293</sup>Nasr 1981:1f. See also the discussion on the terms *khalīfat Allāh* and *ʿabd Allāh* and how man is destroying nature in Nasr 1993:135f.

<sup>294</sup>Nasr 1981:1–4. Nasr (1979:22) also says that intelligence “is not a Luciferian faculty but a Godgiven instrument whose ultimate object is God Himself”.

<sup>295</sup>Nasr 1993:11.

man through death. To grasp this doctrine, the traditional sapiental perspective based on the possibility of principal knowledge from the twin sources of the intellect and revelation must be reinstated along with the metaphysics which is the fruit of this way of knowing.<sup>296</sup>

*Māyā* is a Hindu term used by Nasr as a synonym of the Arabic *ḥidjāb*. In a context of “oriental” metaphysics the terms symbolize a veil which hides, but also manifests, God as a reality. This is a concept that makes it possible to see the order in the world. In Nasr’s view, the consequence of denying God’s attribute as reality is to fall short of seeing the material world as only one part of reality. Modern science lacks the capacity and knowledge to view the world in that manner. In the quotation above, the doctrine of God as the ultimate reality appears to be the essence of Traditional wisdom. In relation to modern science and knowledge in general Nasr repudiates the contemporary use of empirically based methods. Science should study the world in its entirety. In Nasr’s view, the contemporary world cultivates a science of partial reality which he therefore considers to be an incomplete science. Hence, the modern quantitative character of science, especially in the fields concerned with nature, lacks the capability of studying the “total Universe of meaning in which man lives and dies”.<sup>297</sup>

### The Return to Traditionalist Islam and the Sacred Science

Putting aside the preservation of the Islamic religion itself, no task is more crucial in the present context of Islamic society than this reassertion of the immutable principles of Islam and their application to methods and fields of knowledge claimed by modern, Western education and learning. The degree of success of this task will decide the extent to which Islamic society and civilization will continue to be Islamic in reality as well as in name.<sup>298</sup>

The quotation shows what Nasr regards as the primary goal in the present age for Muslims. The aim is to reinstate the immutable principles of Islam, specifically in the fields of knowledge. Muslim scientists were capable of understanding the heliocentric philosophy and certain forms of technology, but they did not want to deprive the world of its state of equilibrium. In Nasr’s perspective, theology cannot surrender to modern science. It is modern science that should be studied from

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<sup>296</sup>Nasr 1993:11f.

<sup>297</sup>For a development of this position, see Nasr 1990:21ff.

<sup>298</sup>Nasr 1981b:36. In a paragraph Nasr outlines five aims and goals for the Islamic community and its future, see Nasr 1981b:32–36.

a metaphysical and a theological point of view. The duty of science is to explain the world of God.<sup>299</sup>

In the introduction to *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (1987), Nasr briefly characterizes the aims of this book. He states that the objective is to continue the presentation of Traditional Islam which he began in *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (1975). He underlines this by saying that his goal is to clarify the differences between Traditional Islam and its fundamentalist manifestations and to make the differences more visible.<sup>300</sup> His intention is to find a fresh affirmation of the beliefs of the Islamic revelation and to re-establish the teachings of various Muslim traditions based on the Quranic revelation.<sup>301</sup> The declared purposes are in Nasr's works presented as solutions to the condition of contemporary mankind.<sup>302</sup> Nasr argues that the use of the term "tradition" as it is understood in contemporary society was established in Western civilization. The term originated when both knowledge and the world of the modern humans were desacralized. There was no need in the languages of pre-modern times for a word designating Tradition, as man was so deeply involved in a world created by it. This truth which constituted the basis for human life over the ages, has now to be renewed and recultivated in the name of Tradition.<sup>303</sup> In this context the statement that Traditional languages do not have any term corresponding to "Tradition" is further developed. Nasr says that fundamental terms created by authentic religions, such as the Hindu and Buddhist term *dharma*, the Islamic *ad-dīn* and the Taoist *Tao* are related to the term "tradition", but they are not identical to it. However, Nasr does not explain the relationship between such terms and the concept of Tradition, although Tradition is etymologically related to transmission and has connotations such as "transmission of knowledge, practice, techniques, laws, forms etc."<sup>304</sup> After making those statements, Nasr is ready to make an extensive definition. Tradition in its technical sense

means truths or principles of a divine origin revealed or unveiled to mankind and, in fact, a whole cosmic sector through various figures envisaged as messengers, prophets, *avatāras*, the Logos or other transmitting agencies, along with all the ramifications and applications of these principles indifferent realms including law and social structure, art, symbolism, the sciences, and embracing of course Supreme Knowledge along with the means for its attainment. In its more

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<sup>299</sup>Nasr 1976:111,33f.,147 and Nasr 1993:163.

<sup>300</sup>Nasr 1987c:viii.

<sup>301</sup>Nasr 1975:xi.

<sup>302</sup>For a general idea of the condition of humans in the contemporary Western world and the Muslim countries, see Nasr 1975:3–24.

<sup>303</sup>Nasr 1981:65f.

<sup>304</sup>Nasr 1981:67.

universal sense tradition can be considered to include the principles which bind man to Heaven, and therefore religion, while from another point of view religion can be considered in its essential sense as those principles which are revealed by Heaven and which bind man to his Origin. In this case, tradition can be considered in a more restricted sense as the application of these principles.<sup>305</sup>

In this lengthy definition, Tradition as a technical term includes the revealed messages delivered by a set of messengers and its applications in all fields of society. The idea of Tradition as all-embracing is discussed further on in the text and here Nasr maintains that nothing lies outside the sphere of Tradition. All facets of reality should be subsumed by the Traditionalist principles.<sup>306</sup> Thus, tradition dominates science as well as art. The adherents to the Traditionalist school are in the context of science mostly concerned with the principal knowledge or supreme science, i.e. metaphysics, which in the West often is confused with philosophy. Nasr is concerned with knowledge in relation to the sacred. Except for various cosmological sciences, the fields of knowledge in a Traditional civilization are philosophy, theology and gnosis. He contrasts this with the two modes of knowledge which he maintains exist in the modern world, namely philosophy and theology.<sup>307</sup> The last part of the quotation above reveals an fuzzyness which can cause confusion. The expression “in fact” is, once again, utilized to mark the start of a definition or a statement which tends to have a mainly persuasive character.

The purpose of Traditionalism is to counteract modernity and reestablish the correct order of things, where the humanity of mankind is restored.<sup>308</sup> A more detailed description of the content of the Traditionalist school can be found in *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (1987). Traditionalist Islam, of course, accepts the Quran as the word of God. It is “the earthly embodiment of God’s Eternal Word uncreated and without temporal origin”.<sup>309</sup>

Exposing the view of Traditionalist Islam on the *sharī‘a*, Nasr states that it is understood as the divine law. It recognizes the interpretations of the *sharī‘a* as carried out by the classical schools of law (*madhāhib*). Moreover, he says, Traditional Islam is positive toward the use of the legal principle of *idjtihād*, as well as of other means of applying the *sharī‘a*. The point is to form a structure of the law which is applicable to new situations. It is important that legal decisions

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<sup>305</sup>Nasr 1981:68. For a description and definition of the term “tradition” where Nasr’s *ṣūfī* perspective is stressed, see Nasr 1987c:13f.

<sup>306</sup>Nasr 1981:80f.

<sup>307</sup>Nasr 1981:81.

<sup>308</sup>Nasr 1981:4,85.

<sup>309</sup>Nasr 1987c:14.

should be shaped in accordance with new situations in society, but the decisions must be based on classical legal principles such as *qiyās*, *idjmāʿ*<sup>c</sup> and *istiḥsān*. Nasr continues by saying that all morality is derived from the Quran and *ḥadīth*, and in an explicit way from the *sharīʿa*.<sup>310</sup>

Linked to the descriptions of the objectives of the Traditional school, and of the content of Traditional Islam, are often discussions on science and more specifically sacred science.

There is first of all the Supreme Science or metaphysics, as understood traditionally, which deals with the Divine Principle and Its manifestations in the light of that Principle. It is what one might call *scientia sacra* in the highest meaning of the term. (...) This principal knowledge is by nature rooted in the sacred, for it issues from that Reality which constitutes the Sacred as such. (...) The term sacred science is of course nothing other than the English translation of the Latin *scientia sacra*; yet it is used in this and certain other works not as metaphysical knowledge itself but as the application of metaphysical principles to the macrocosm as well as the microcosm, to the natural as well as the human worlds. Sacred science is science as the term is used today to the extent that it too deals with various domains of nature in addition to the psyche of man, his art and thought and human society. But it differs drastically from science as currently understood in that it has its roots and principles in metaphysics or *scientia sacra* and never leaves the world of the sacred in contrast to modern science whose very premises, immersed in empiricism and rationalism, have their nexus severed from any knowledge of a higher order, despite the fact that the findings of modern science, to the extent that they correspond to an aspect of reality, cannot but possess a meaning beyond the phenomenal. But those meanings cannot themselves be understood and interpreted save in the light of metaphysical principles and the sacred sciences, including the science of symbolism, derive from the Supreme Science.<sup>311</sup>

The quotation can be summarized as follows. Sacred science is a science founded on metaphysical principles applicable to all fields of science. It is a science with a positive relationship to God, which marks it as different from modern science. The latter is not able to discover the true nature of reality. Traditional mathematics or astronomy are for instance forms of mathematics and astronomy, but not in the limited, modern sense of these terms.<sup>312</sup> Sacred sciences are similar to Traditional sciences as found in Traditional civilizations.<sup>313</sup> Nasr makes the reserva-

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<sup>310</sup>Nasr 1987c:15.

<sup>311</sup>Nasr 1993:1f.

<sup>312</sup>Nasr 1993:98.

<sup>313</sup>Nasr motivates the plural form by stating that the "truth" is one, but its expressions are many; a statement

tion that they are to be understood from their cosmological and metaphysical significance and not simply as a foundation for the rise of modern sciences. Instead, the voice of Traditional Islam is a challenge to the claims to exclusivity inherent in modern science.<sup>314</sup> Nevertheless, Traditional sciences also existed in Europe and North America, but today they are degenerated. The reason for this degeneracy is that only one science of nature is considered legitimate in the mainstream of modern Western thought. However, the very existence of sacred sciences in a number of fields ranging from medicine to geomancy, although today reduced in scope, show the contemporary necessity for a sacred science.<sup>315</sup> Accordingly, to use a sacred science in the study of nature inevitably leads to an understanding of the spiritual importance of nature. The use of sacred science is always related to a use of the spiritual message which nature embodies.<sup>316</sup>

Nasr uses the term *scientia sacra* in the quotation above, and renders it as “true metaphysics”. To establish “scientia sacra” means to integrate scientific research into a framework which would embrace forms of knowledge ranging from the metaphysical to those coming from the Traditional schools of psychology and cosmology. In a description of the methods used in contemporary sciences, he states that it is possible to relate those fields in science that are grounded on observation of human action or the human psyche to the Traditional schools of psychology such as those found in Sufism, Yoga or Zen. There is no logical contradiction in such a link. However, Nasr makes an important reservation: in order to establish a link between them, a great deal of pseudo-science or simply erroneous theories prevalent in the modern sciences, such as anthropology and psychology, must be discarded.<sup>317</sup> Nasr’s position on the status of psychology is supported by Muhammad Ajmal.<sup>318</sup> Nasr describes Ajmal as an important person in the fields of education and psychology. According to Nasr, Ajmal is among the first individuals in a Muslim countries to have tried to establish a science of the soul based on *ṣūfī* teachings, rather than to copy psychoanalytical techniques and theories current in the West.<sup>319</sup> Thus, in order to form a Traditional science Nasr suggests that in actual scientific work modern people must be trained in Traditional metaphysics. The major contrast with Western science in terms of training is the moral and spiritual aspects involved. It will not be expected that

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which, according to Nasr, is denied by “secularized man”. See Nasr 1993:45 and Nasr 1993:95f.

<sup>314</sup>Nasr 1993:140.

<sup>315</sup>Nasr 1993:2,173. For a description of Nasr’s view on the aim and function of Traditional science, see Nasr 1993:110f.

<sup>316</sup>Nasr 1993:119. For Nasr’s solution to the “environmental crisis”, see Nasr 1993:143.

<sup>317</sup>Nasr 1975:11,29 and 49. Nasr states that Sufism contains a comprehensive method for curing “the illness of the soul”. The method is, according to Nasr (1991:46f.), more successful than the many modern psychiatric and psychoanalytical methods.

<sup>318</sup>See Ajmal 1987:294,305.

<sup>319</sup>Nasr 1987c:196.

modern human beings will comprehend metaphysics at once and without any intellectual or spiritual education.<sup>320</sup> His *scientia sacra* is not a science accessible to everyone, but “hidden” to those not qualified to study it.<sup>321</sup>

Traditional Islamic metaphysics designates a science related to the symbolic systems of religions. He holds that the superior science of the real is pure metaphysics.<sup>322</sup> Metaphysics is also described as the “science of the Real” and Nasr continues by saying that metaphysics is “the knowledge by means of which man is able to distinguish between the Real and the illusory and to know things in their essence or as they are, which means ultimately to know them *in divinis*”,<sup>323</sup> Metaphysics studies phenomena of nature and can be described by means of Heidegger’s term ontotheology, which is a combination of a theory or doctrine of the existence of being and a theory or doctrine of God.<sup>324</sup> According to Nasr, there has recently been an interest in the ideas formulated by Heidegger, which have been compared with traditional Islamic thought.<sup>325</sup> Although Nasr is critical of Heidegger’s thoughts on existentialism, Nasr’s writings may have been influenced by him. However, in a commentary to an earlier version of the present text, Nasr rejects such an interpretation. In *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (1987) Nasr tells the story of how Henry Corbin studied Heidegger and the German *Existenz-Philosophie*, but these ideas did not satisfy Corbin. One day, when he attended a lecture as a young student, the lecturer, Louis Massignon, gave him a book and said: “That is what you are looking for.” The book was *ḥikmat al-ishrāq* by Suhrawardī, and since that day Corbin put Heidegger aside and became interested in Suhrawardī’s philosophy.<sup>326</sup>

Traditional Islamic metaphysics uses a comprehensive approach. This specific approach is in opposition to science as carried out by the so-called “promethean man” in the West, which is blind to transcendent realities and a slave under his materialistic desires.<sup>327</sup> To solve the ecological crisis of the world and the ethical problems in modern science, there is a need for a sacred science dealing with the order in cosmos. In *Knowledge and the Sacred* (1981) he states on the nature of “*scientia sacra*” that in the rehabilitation of man it “is inseparable from the very substance and root of intelligence and which constitutes the foundation of tradi-

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<sup>320</sup>Nasr 1993:9.

<sup>321</sup>Nasr 1993:96.

<sup>322</sup>Nasr 1993:84.

<sup>323</sup>Nasr 1981:133.

<sup>324</sup>For an introduction to Heidegger’s philosophy, see Grene 1967: 459–456. For Nasr’s description of metaphysics in relation to ontology, see also Nasr 1981:136ff.

<sup>325</sup>Nasr 1987c:193.

<sup>326</sup>Nasr 1987c:265f. and Nasr 1993:199,125.

<sup>327</sup>Nasr 1981:161ff. Nasr developed the term in *The Need for a Sacred Science* (1993) where he designates the “Promethean man” as a “Titanic man”. See Nasr 1993:136.

tion, the ‘sacred science’ whose attainment is the *raison d’être* of human existence’.<sup>328</sup> One can understand the quotation as meaning that a sacred science is an absolute necessity and that without it mankind will always be in a state of disorder.

Nasr holds that there has been a quest for “the sacred”, especially in certain sectors of modern science.<sup>329</sup> He argues that scientific philosophers concerned with science are of a more dogmatic nature than the scientists themselves. The scientific philosophers deny the metaphysical significance of the discoveries of science. By contrast, Nasr claims, physicists have often denied scientism and even scientific methods. He adds that the most serious theological discussions in recent years have come from scientists and not from philosophers, and especially not from theologians.<sup>330</sup> This does not mean that physicists should go into their laboratory and study subatomic particles from a theological point of view. Still, it is possible for them to draw theological conclusions from their studies in physics. He calls for a critical dialogue between theology, philosophy and natural science, and he supports the statement that religion and rationality belong together.<sup>331</sup>

The solution Nasr proposes in the case of the West is a rediscovery of the sacred and a revival of Tradition. This means a revival of the sapiential dimensions which exist at the centre of Tradition. Currently, the sapiential dimensions are too weak to enable a revival of Tradition without a genuine connection to the oriental Traditions. The latter supposedly have preserved their inner teachings both in terms of doctrine and practice. Here, Islam acts as the mediating link between the East and the West.<sup>332</sup> Nasr declares that the doctrines of Sufism, although they cannot clarify specific details of physics or chemistry, do contain a complete science of the cosmos. The *ṣūfī* form of science guides man through the cosmic reality. The goal is to travel through cosmos. Ultimately the trip will go beyond the cosmos, and *ṣūfī* cosmology provides a map for the journey. The latter means that *ṣūfī* cosmology deals with qualitative and symbolic aspects of things. This is in contrast to the quantitative aspect of modern science.<sup>333</sup>

The return to Traditional Islam means to answer the immediate call of God to human beings. A return to God – the Absolute – will end the incessant drifting of mankind through a world ruled by relativity. The call is directed to every human being and to all worlds, because it appeals to that which is steadfast and

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<sup>328</sup>Nasr 1981:121.

<sup>329</sup>Nasr 1981:94,113.

<sup>330</sup>Nasr 1981:113f. and Nasr 1993:174.

<sup>331</sup>Nasr 1993:166. For a further discussion on Nasr’s opinion on physics and for his definition of this discipline, see Nasr 1976:135f.;135–150.

<sup>332</sup>Nasr 1981:94 and Nasr 1991:160.

<sup>333</sup>Nasr 1991:46.

immutable in humans. The importance of the call is supported by referring to scientists and scholars in the West who are beginning to rediscover and verify the eternal nature of human beings and their desires. Here Nasr refers to and quotes Elémire Zolla and David Homburg, stating that they focus on the eternal elements, and that those are the elements which the Islamic message address directly. For Islam and Islamic science, he says, the notion of unity (*at-tawhīd*) is the central axis, but Islamic scholars also have the duty to provide a Muslim answer founded on Islamic traditions.<sup>334</sup>

## Summary

The presuppositions for Seyyed Hossein Nasr's ideas have their roots in mainly two settings. On the one hand he is part of a mystical movement centered in Europe and North America. Several of the participants are scholars, such as Nasr, Corbin and Massignon, but also mystics like Guénon and Shuon are part of this trend. They all seem to share the philosophical outlook that there is one primordial religion. On the other hand, Nasr is connected to ideas within Persian Sufism – and a specific interpretation of Islam founded on an adherence to the *shī'ī* branch of Islam. The two settings influence his writings and the outcome for this discourse is the quest for a sacred science.

Nasr's characterization of contemporary science includes the following elements. Science of the modern world is a Western product and it serves the Western interests of modernism. It is a monolithic force which strives for monopoly, but knowledge is compartmentalized. Different fields of science are not only separated from each other, but also from the sacred. Therefore, contemporary science is not concerned with the whole of reality and science does not deal with the authentic order of reality. The situation implies that the existence of mankind as well as nature is challenged. The solution is to reestablish a Traditional perspective, to form a sacred science which is supposed to take all aspects of reality into consideration. This means reestablishing a science of perennial value and permanent importance and character, a form of science which existed before the process of secularization began during the Renaissance.<sup>335</sup> This science will create equilibrium in the relation of mankind to the cosmos. In Nasr's view the term "knowledge" has a more general meaning, and "science" is more narrowly related to "scientific" work. Nevertheless, knowledge and science are in that perspective intimately related to religion. Knowledge and science that do not take into consideration God's reality do not study the world as a totality. Such a science can

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<sup>334</sup>Nasr 1991:159,165 and Nasr 1981b:35.

<sup>335</sup>Nasr 1991:89.

never grasp the true nature of phenomena in the world. A physicist studying a phenomenon with empirical methods grounded in modern science will only study the specific phenomenon from one aspect. In Nasr's reality, such a phenomenon can be studied at least from two aspects. In his understanding of the nature of science, Nasr appears to be of the opinion that there is a hierarchy of sciences. A situation where several sciences, or methodological approaches, compete on equal terms with each other is nefarious.

History is an important concept in Nasr's writings. He says that history consists of a series of cycles of decline and rejuvenation.<sup>336</sup> Although his view of history or time is ideally cyclic, the actual descriptions of the historical development of sciences can be characterized as linear. History has, of course, its ups and downs. However, Nasr's historiography is linear when he describes how schools succeed each other. In Nasr's conception of history, idealized events, epochs and individuals participate in an ongoing process which carries the world forward. Nasr explains that when decline occurs, this is caused by mankind estranging itself from spiritual forces and moving away from the divine source. Ideally, rejuvenation comes from heaven. It is through the revelations brought by Prophets that the religious and spiritual life of humans is renewed. History evolves around "a series of cycles of prophecy".<sup>337</sup> This is Nasr's idea of the Islamic conception of history.

Nasr's appropriates an authentic description of the biographies and ideas of important historical figures. In the process of constructing history, Nasr is also aware of ongoing discussions in the field of the history of science. To support his statements, he frequently borrows from a terminology not usually concerned with the relation between science and religion. Traditional wisdom is perceived as a static force that exists in every epoch. The values identified by Nasr as Traditional are conveyed and developed from one epoch to another by schools of different kinds. In accordance with this concept of history, the principal bearers of Traditional wisdom are the sages. Thus, it is not events, but central and idealized historical prototypes who constitute the bulk of his narration of history, although in a commentary to an earlier version of the present text Nasr stated that his treatment of history of Islamic science is founded on historical facts. These facts are chosen out of the historical mass of Islamic – and other sacred – Traditions. He chooses the most suitable historical prototype that can substantiate a proposed statement, or form a supportive frame for a given narration of the history of Islamic science. This prototype then acts as an ideal model for behaviour among Muslims today. The choice of historical prototypes can change over time. Nasr's stressing of historical figures, instead of events, makes it possible to de-

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<sup>336</sup>Nasr 1979:33. In his comment to the present text in 1995, Nasr says that this portrait of history must not be confused with the history of philosophy or the history of science.

<sup>337</sup>Nasr 1979:33.

scribe his usage of history as a “genealogical” approach where the sages act as historical prototypes for contemporary Muslims. Muhammad serves as the ultimate example of a historical prototype. Another interpretation would be to regard Nasr’s emphasis on schools and historical prototypes as a form of historical escapism. His aim is to revive the past. Nasr’s presentation of history can thus be characterized as a presentation of a normative and idealized cyclical conception of history. Still, when dealing with the narration of a specific history, he constructs a perspective on history which can be characterized as linear. In both perspectives Nasr’s presupposition of history, and his account of it, reveal the view that history has a meaning – and can function as a response to a modern world. In Nasr’s own conception, he presents a Tradition which has manifested itself in the past.<sup>338</sup>

Nasr’s language and terminology can be characterized as a combination of terms and words from different religions. A language, especially if it is sacred, has in Nasr’s conception a higher meaning. The ultimate message of the language is to make the revelation visible – a deeper understanding of language will make our interpretations of the Quran more reliable. Thus, as a reader one suspects that terminologies of different languages and religions are utilized to strengthen Nasr’s own position. Words from Islamic terminology are given a status of objectivity. Nasr constructs a form of religious etymology and the historical interpretation always has a rhetorical meaning. Words from other religions and languages are in the same manner given a status of objectivity, that is, their meaning does not change over time and space. The term “science” itself is an example of how he treats a term as objective. In Nasr’s view, there is a true and correct form of science. Thus, terms are experienced as carriers of a true meaning. On the other hand, Nasr adopts terminologies used in specific discussions such as discussions on environmental issues and ecology, and carries them over them into an Islamic context. For example, a contemporary term such as “hermeneutics” is rendered by the Islamic term *ta’wīl*. In Nasr’s religiously coloured form of etymology the word *ta’wīl* is also related and interpreted in a sense that supports his interpretation of Islam. Hence, the meaning of the latter word shifts into what fits into Nasr’s outlook, and he has thus appropriated the word by defining it. It is characterized by the use of rhetorical definitions and translations of words.

The central term *Traditional* has a number of meanings.<sup>339</sup> It is sometimes close to the meaning of revelation. The knowledge and science produced by the individual will in Nasr’s perspective be the result of an inner and intuitive experience (*batinī*). People experience the whole only when they can see the whole.

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<sup>338</sup> This was stated in a comment in 1994 to an earlier version of the present text.

<sup>339</sup> In his commentaries to an earlier version of this text in 1995 Nasr stresses that his understanding of Tradition has never changed.

The Traditional school, as well as the form of Traditional Islam it represents, can be regarded as in opposition to what Nasr defines as “modernism” and “fundamentalism”. The purpose is to situate the views of the Traditional school in the ongoing discourse concerning the function of Islam in modern society. The position of the Traditional school and its sacred science have been emphasized since the mid-1980s. The reason is, probably, the discussion of the phenomenon often labelled “fundamentalism”. Therefore, Nasr’s reaction to the phenomenon has not only influenced, but also remodelled his line of reasoning. Nasr himself states that “fundamentalism” has not influenced his theory in any way. In my opinion, however, the mere fact that he discusses phenomena such as Islamism and modernity reveals such an influence.

In Nasr’s view, the ideal world appears as an organic totality which is in a state of order and harmony. In such a world only *one* form of science is needed. The study of nature cannot be divorced from revelation. A study of nature uncovers laws of nature which are ordained by God. Therefore, it gives birth to an interest in the trusteeship<sup>340</sup> of nature, and an interest in ecology. Moreover, the religious sphere of authority includes scientific work as well as nature itself. In other words, laws of nature, and nature in general, have a religious meaning. A problem in Nasr’s perception of religion is the nature of the sources available for the formulation of a unitive science. The sources of Islam do not express views on all possible aspects of modern science. That makes them open to interpretation of what a science compatible with God’s reality may look like. Nasr claims that the sources cannot contain all aspects of modern science, though they do provide its principles.

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<sup>340</sup>This idea is obviously influenced by the general understanding in the Islamic traditions of *khilāfa*. It refers to man’s trusteeship of the creation.





## 4. Implementing the Islamic Vision – the Position of al-Faruqi and the IIT

Ismail Radji al-Faruqi was born in Yaffa in 1921.<sup>1</sup> Al-Faruqi's early education took place at the College des Frères (St. Joseph) and he earned a B.A. in philosophy at the American University in Beirut.<sup>2</sup>

After a time in the civil service in the British Mandate of Palestine, he was appointed governor of Galilee. The Israeli occupation in 1948 took al-Faruqi to the United States. Within three years after his arrival in the U.S. he had earned two M.A. degrees, one from Indiana University and the other from Harvard, both in the field of philosophy. In 1952 he received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Indiana University. The title of his dissertation was *On Justifying the Good: Metaphysics and Epistemology of Value*.<sup>3</sup> He spent the next four years, 1954-1958, at al-Azhar in Cairo doing post-doctoral research in Islamic studies.<sup>4</sup> Between 1959-1961 al-Faruqi was affiliated with McGill University in Montreal, Canada, where he studied Judaism and Christianity at the Faculty of Divinity.<sup>5</sup> At McGill he held a teaching post, and he was a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow. Next stop in al-Faruqi's career was in 1961 at the Central Institute for Islamic Research in Karachi.<sup>6</sup> The years in Pakistan gave al-Faruqi "ample opportunity to apply his philosophy to religion or, more appropriately, to apply his religion to modern secular philosophy".<sup>7</sup> Ba-Yunus continues by stating that this opportunity gave "the wounded Palestinian a new weapon with which to start on a course

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<sup>1</sup>The birth date of al-Faruqi seems uncertain. For example, Ba-Yunus states that it is 1922. See Ba-Yunus 1988:13. The reference to Ba-Yunus 1988 is to an edited text of the al-Faruqi Memorial Lecture which Ba-Yunus delivered at the 15th Annual Conference of the association of Muslim Social Scientists in 1986. Ba-Yunus is a Professor of Sociology at the State University of New York, Cortland, NY (Ba-Yunus 1988:13).

<sup>2</sup>*Islamic Horizons*, August/September 1986:21 (*Islamic Horizons* is the official mouthpiece of The Islamic Society of North America. (ISNA)). Quraishi 1986:32; Quraishi 1986b:5 and Ba-Yunus 1988:13. Quraishi are published in the special issue of *Islamic Horizons*, August/September 1986. Quraishi 1986b is a boklet published by the Muslim Student Association (MSA). The article Tariq Quraishi published in *Islamic Horizons* is a front runner to the boklet. Quraishi is in the latter presented as an associate to al-Faruqi, and as one of the early supporters of MSA.

<sup>3</sup>Esposito 1991:66 and *Islamic Horizons*, August/September 1986:21,69.

<sup>4</sup>The stay at al-Azhar was, according to Quraishi, important for al-Faruqi's return to Islam. Al-Faruqi had realized that Islam "had to be protected and validated", but al-Faruqi knew that he did not have the ability to carry out this task. Therefore, al-Faruqi "retreated to the quarters of al-Azhar" for three years of studying Islam. See Quraishi 1986b:8.

<sup>5</sup>At McGill, al-Faruqi functioned as a research associate under Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith (Quraishi 1986b:17). Zebiri (1995:258) holds that al-Faruqi was invited to McGill by Wilfred Cantwell Smith.

<sup>6</sup>Esposito 1991:66 and Zebiri 1995:258.

<sup>7</sup>Ba-Yunus 1988:13. The head of the institute in Pakistan was Fazlur Rahman. See Denny 1991:97.

of an intellectual encounter with the West”.<sup>8</sup> After the Pakistani experience, al-Faruqi returned to the U.S. and a position as visiting professor at the University of Chicago Divinity school. He later accepted a post as associate professor at the Department of Religion at Syracuse University and he initiated the Islamic studies program there. In 1968 al-Faruqi went to the Department of Religion at Temple University in Philadelphia. At Temple he held the position as professor of history of religion and Islamic studies.<sup>9</sup> He stayed there until he was murdered on the 27th of May in 1986. In addition, al-Faruqi held teaching positions, functioned as advisor to, and designer of, Islamic studies programs in several countries, among others Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Egypt, Iran, Libya and Saudi Arabia.<sup>10</sup>

In the descriptions of al-Faruqi’s life, his shift from being influenced by Arab nationalism, and European and American philosophy, to becoming a devoted Muslim promoting his faith is emphasized.<sup>11</sup> According to Ba-Yunus, the significant step in al-Faruqi’s change was his move from Syracuse to Temple University in Philadelphia. It was the contact with the Muslim Students Association (MSA)<sup>12</sup> that influenced him: “It brought a drastic change in Ismā’il’s self concept.”<sup>13</sup> Ba-Yunus also refers to a personal meeting with al-Faruqi when the latter was a patient at a hospital in the spring of 1968. According to Ba-Yunus, al-Faruqi stated: “Until a few months ago, I was a Palestinian, an Arab and a Muslim. Now I am a Muslim who happens to be an Arab from Palestine.”<sup>14</sup>

After arriving in America, al-Faruqi was one of the first Muslim scholar to dedicate himself to the field of Islamic studies.<sup>15</sup> Al-Faruqi was involved in founding the Islamic Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion, where

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<sup>8</sup>Ba-Yunus 1988:13.

<sup>9</sup>Al-Faruqi & Naseef (eds.) 1981:8; Esposito 1991:66 and *Islamic Horizons*, August/September, 1986:21.

<sup>10</sup>Al-Faruqi & Naseef 1981:8 and *Islamic Horizons*, August/September 1986:21.

<sup>11</sup>See, for example, Nasr 1986:26 and Ba-Yunus 1988:13f. In a conversation with Ghulam Haider Aasi, associate professor of Islamic studies at the American Islamic College and a former student of al-Faruqi, he commented on the life of al-Faruqi and said that he went from Arab nationalism to be an Islamic activist. Conversation with Ghulam Haider Aasi in Chicago, 20th April 1994.

<sup>12</sup>According to Poston, the MSA was formed in 1963 by some 75 students at the University of Illinois. In 1983 the number of members was estimated to 45.000. See Poston 1992:101f. Ba-Yunus states that the MSA has now mostly been taken over by the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). See Ba-Yunus 1988:15.

<sup>13</sup>Ba-Yunus 1988:14.

<sup>14</sup>Ba-Yunus 1988:14. In a conversation with Yusuf DeLorenzo in Herndon, 18th October 1995, he laughed seeing this quotation in the text and said that it is probably one of the most common descriptions of al-Faruqi’s change. DeLorenzo is a researcher at the IIIT. Earlier he was an advisor to the former president of Pakistan, Zia al-Haq, in questions concerning the *shari’ah*, Islamic law. He was also one of the organizers of the IIIT conference held in Pakistan 1982, and at that time al-Faruqi encouraged him to come to Herndon and work at the IIIT.

<sup>15</sup>According to Nasr (1986:26) al-Faruqi was the first Muslim scholar in Islamic studies in the U.S. Nasr seems to forget Fazlur Rahman. For an overview of the life and works of Rahman, see Denny 1991:96–108 and Zebiri 1995:262–264.

he was chairman. He was vice president of the Inter-Religious Peace Colloquium and the Muslim-Jewish-Christian Conference.<sup>16</sup> During the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, al-Faruqi wrote several works. Probably, the most well-known among his books not concerned with the “Islamization of Knowledge” project are: *Urubah and Religion* (1962); *Christian Ethics* (1967); *The Historical Atlas of Religions of the World* (1974); and *Triologue of Abrahamic Faiths* (1988) (2nd ed., editor).<sup>17</sup> A theme in al-Faruqi’s early writings is the emergence of an “ecumenical paradigm”.<sup>18</sup>

For the purpose of the present discussion, al-Faruqi’s works and activities after he became an ardent Muslim are more important. On Faruqi’s new role, Ba-Yunus states:

Ismā‘īl’s presence among the student population gave a much needed enhancement to the image of the Muslim Students Association on this continent and overseas. Soon he became an advocate for the Muslim Students Association (MSA) and one of the most sought after speakers in its ranks. With his training in philosophy, his experience as a professor, and with his newly acquired commitment to Islam, Ismā‘īl was almost irresistible. He spoke with poise, confidence, knowledge and with a mastery of rhetoric. He could articulate the principles of Islam in terms of Western thought and Western vocabulary so that his audience could see the relevance and the applicability of Islam to modern times as a universal “ideology”. There is little doubt that he became instrumental in changing the image of the MSA from that of being rigidly conservative to an organization with very knowledgeable and rational practitioners and advocates of Islam. His association with the MSA also brought about a fundamental change in his character. Whereas his adversaries, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, were quickly overawed with the force of his eloquence and argument, he would be as a “student” all over again while in the company of the MSA rank and file.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>IIIT: *Catalog of Publications* (1994:9). For an introduction to al-Faruqi’s views on Christian-Muslim relations, see Esposito 1991:68–78. The part of al-Faruqi’s work that concerns missionary work among native Americans and African Americans will not be discussed here.

<sup>17</sup>For a bibliography containing the publications of al-Faruqi, see Shafiq 1994:117–124.

<sup>18</sup>The label “ecumenical paradigm”, was formulated by Larry Poston. See Poston 1992:53f. Poston is presented on the cover as Chairman of the Department of Missiology at Nyack College in Nyack, New York. Thus, Poston is working in a Christian research milieu which may have influenced his choice of terminology. Poston (1992:129) is critical against the work of the IIIT and states that no academically oriented books have yet been produced by this institute.

<sup>19</sup>Ba-Yunus 1988:14.

Ba-Yunus considers the change in al-Faruqi's personal character significant. In the quotation above, one can trace an emergent concept of how Muslim academics should act, especially those not yet committed to the Islamic cause. Thus, al-Faruqi can be presented as a prototype for Muslim individuals to follow.

From the beginning of the 1970s al-Faruqi was engaged in the establishment of several Muslim institutions in North America. He was the first president of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS). This body was formed in 1971/72 and al-Faruqi remained the president of the association until 1976.<sup>20</sup> According to Ba-Yunus, there were many intellectuals in the MSA, "who, after finishing their education from very reputable universities in the United States and Canada, were settling down as professionals and needed some professional outlet for their ideological orientations".<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Ba-Yunus continues, other organisations were established, which presumably had the blessing of al-Faruqi. One of these was the Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers (AMSE).<sup>22</sup> Another, founded somewhat earlier, was the Islamic Medical Association (IMA). In the beginning of the 1980s al-Faruqi played a role in founding the American Islamic College (AIC), established in Chicago in 1983. He designed the curriculum<sup>23</sup> and was the first president of the College. However, Poston states that it was Ahmad Sakr, former director of the Muslim World League Office to the United Nations and North America, who founded the AIC. As a result of the establishment of the different organisations, there was need for an umbrella organisation. Therefore, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) was established in 1983.<sup>24</sup> ISNA is divided into several branches of which some distribute a wide range of literature. Copies of the Quran, books, brochures and booklets are spread not only throughout North America, but all over the world. One example is a division called the American Trust Publication, located in Indianapolis, Indiana. Their publications are distributed in the Middle East and Asia by the Interna-

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<sup>20</sup>In *Islamic Horizons*, al-Faruqi is said to have been the president of the AMSS from its founding 1972 until 1978. See *Islamic Horizons*, August/September 1986:21.

<sup>21</sup>Ba-Yunus 1988:15.

<sup>22</sup>The association publishes a journal entitled *The Muslim Scientist*. In, for example, *The Muslim Scientist*, 1981, part I entitled "Applied Science for Muslim World Development" which contains proceedings from the 7th annual conference of the association, it is stated in the editorial part that the participants in the conference can be arranged in three trends: a) The realization that the ultimate goal of our scientific and technical endeavours is to seek Allah's pleasure, and that it shapes the nature of our concerns and efforts; b) A desire to study the Muslim world – its resources, its potential, its limitations; and c) An urge to apply scientific knowledge to betterment of the human condition in the Muslim world. See *The Muslim Scientist*, 1981, part I under the heading "Editorial" (the page is not paginated).

<sup>23</sup>*Islamic Horizons* August/September 1986:21.

<sup>24</sup>On ISNA, see Haddad & Lummis 1987:5f. and Poston 1992:29,79,104–108.

tional Islamic Publishing House in Riyadh.<sup>25</sup> This may be an indication that Saudi Arabia supports the ISNA. A significant number of recent Muslim immigrants to the U.S. have been “trained in a specific interpretation of Islam (...) advocated and supported by the Islamic society of North America”.<sup>26</sup> Yvonne Haddad also states that ISNA is affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood of the Arab world and the *djamā‘at-i Islāmī*.<sup>27</sup>

Beside these activities, the most significant activity in which al-Faruqi was involved was the establishment of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). He provided the idea and the vision, but others have gone on to lend their own interpretations.<sup>28</sup>

#### *The founding of the IIIT and a presentation of the Institute*

IIIT was founded in 1981. According to various sources connected to the IIIT, this organization was set up as a result of a conference held in Lugano, Switzerland, in 1977.<sup>29</sup> The following is a brief description of how the IIIT was founded. The conference in Lugano was arranged at the initiative of the Association for Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS). The AMSS had since its start addressed itself to problems facing Islamic thought and Muslim intellectuals. Taha Jabir Al-Alwani has stated that the crisis of the Muslim *umma* is a crisis of thought rooted in the social sciences.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the association contacted several contemporary Muslim scholars and reformers to discuss the ideas, concepts and conclusions of their work on the situation of science and intellectuals in the Muslim world. Present at this conference was Ismail al-Faruqi, but also Seyyed Hossein Nasr.<sup>31</sup> Thirty leaders of “Islamic movements and Muslim scholars in various fields of specialization from all over the Muslim world attended this meeting”.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>One example, is a leaflet from the American Trust Publication on how to perform the Friday Prayer, issued by the Ministry of Information in Saudi Arabia.

<sup>26</sup>Haddad & Lummis 1987:5f. The conclusion of Haddad & Lummis is that ISNA is dedicated to providing Muslims with a guide on how to live a life in accordance with Islam in a secular context and at the same time strive towards an Islamic state.

<sup>27</sup>Haddad *et al.* 1991:13.

<sup>28</sup>The influence of al-Faruqi can be seen in many texts. One example is the somewhat hagiographic presentation in Quraishi 1986b:1–4 and 28f.

<sup>29</sup>Ba-Yunus 1988:15ff. and al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:xii–xv, *The International Institute of Islamic Thought* (1992) (leaflet presenting the institute) and *IIIT: Catalog of Publications* (1994).

<sup>30</sup>Al-Alwani continues: “the fact remains that any attempt at a solution to the problems that beset the Ummah must include the ways and means to uplift the material needs of Muslim society and its citizens”. Thus, while by definition the Islamization of Knowledge includes all the academic disciplines, it must be emphasized that the natural and applied sciences certainly fall within the legitimate ambit of the Islamization process, see al-Alwani 1989:8.

<sup>31</sup>Personal conversation with Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Washington DC, 25th April 1994.

<sup>32</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:xiii.

Ba-Yunus states that al-Faruqi was “instrumental” in the founding of the institute, and in *Islamic Horizons* he “helped” the AMSS to establish the institute.<sup>33</sup>

In al-Faruqi’s and AbuSulayman’s *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan* (1989) they state, concerning the result of the conference that

the participants unanimously agreed that the contemporary crisis of the Ummah was intellectual - a crisis of thought - and that the remedy was to be sought within that framework. The seminar participants also concluded that the Muslim thought process and methodology needed to be given priority in the effort to achieve reform and that a specialized body needed to be established to conduct research into these areas.<sup>34</sup>

This wish was fulfilled, and the IIIT was established in Herndon, Virginia, in 1981. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan* functioned more or less as a blueprint in the formation of the ideas and positions held by the institute. The first edition of this book was, according to al-Faruqi and AbuSulayman, a result of the Second International Conference on the Islamization of Knowledge held in Islamabad, Pakistan, in 1982, based on papers presented at various conferences by al-Faruqi and AbuSulayman. The conference was organized in cooperation between the IIIT and the Islamic University of Islamabad. Following the meeting in Pakistan, individuals at the institute “decided to publish a detailed plan to serve as a guide to Muslim intellectuals and students in the field of Islamization of knowledge”.<sup>35</sup> The revised second edition published in 1989 seems to continue to have a position as a plan of action.<sup>36</sup> In the introduction to the “Workplan” it is emphasized that the plan is based on a presupposition. This presupposition concerns what is described as a “crisis of thought” and encompasses two dimensions.<sup>37</sup> The first affects the intellectual thought process and the second has to do with the *Umma* and its legacy. The problems of these dimensions – and what they imply – are developed. The following is a statement on the perceived “crisis of thought”, and what is seen as an intellectual assault in general:

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<sup>33</sup>*Islamic Horizons*, August/September 1986:21 and Ba-Yunus 1988:16.

<sup>34</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:xiii.

<sup>35</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:xiv. The 2nd edition also includes the working agenda of the conference in Islamabad as an appendix. See al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:105–107. In the following I will refer to it as *Islamization of Knowledge* (1989).

<sup>36</sup>See the commentaries concerning the significance of the text in *Toward Islamization of Disciplines* (1989:1f.). In texts written by adherents of the present position there are frequent references to al-Faruqi. See Ma’ruf 1981:132, Ba-Yunus 1988:277; Syed 1989:120 and al-Zarqa 1989:317.

<sup>37</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:xiii.

Consequently, Muslim scholars and intellectuals sought to fulfil their needs in the Western social sciences, not realizing that the West had established these sciences in accordance with its own circumstances and goals and rooted in its ideological world vision. As a result, these sciences now tend to reflect the West's values, concepts, and beliefs, upon which all Western aspects of behaviour, activity, and social institutions are established. While these disciplines are acceptable and compatible with Western objectives, they tend to clash with Islamic values and guidelines (...) the plan draws attention to the current estrangement between the Ummah and its legacy – a rift that has turned Islam's great achievements into merely historical ones – mere fossils of a bygone age, recalled, if at all, to muster nostalgic feelings or an intellectual sense of pride. The legacy of Islam, to many, no longer presents the basis for dynamic creativity.<sup>38</sup>

These two presuppositions form a common ground for the aims of the IIIT. In different presentations of these aims, the institute stresses the significance of providing *the Islamic vision* which will make it possible to Islamize knowledge and contemporary academic disciplines. Yusuf DeLorenzo states that today the IIIT is mature enough to fulfil the intentions of al-Faruqi, that is, to establish a higher education in Islamic social science. The preliminary name is “the Institute of Islamic and Social Sciences”.<sup>39</sup> According to DeLorenzo, al-Faruqi was somewhat dissatisfied with the development of the IIIT, but the idea of a center for higher education would probably have pleased him. The plan is to find a new place for the IIIT in order to establish a kind of campus-like environment. DeLorenzo says that the aim is to enter into the mainstream of the academic landscape and not be an institution at the fringe. His idea is that the IIIT should be accepted in American society and that such a position can be achieved due to the wide range of methodological possibilities within the field of social studies.<sup>40</sup> Another aim which is stressed is to reinstitute the true nature (cultural, intellectual and civilizational) of the *umma* through the Islamization of the humanities and social sciences. In addition to those aims, it is often stated that if these goals are fulfilled, a rectified methodology of Islamic thought can contribute to the progress of human civilization in general and guide it towards Islamic values and norms. To achieve these objectives, the institute must promote academic workshops, conferences and seminars in different disciplines; support and publish the works of scholars; facilitate access to the Islamic intellectual and cultural legacy by classifying and cataloguing it; cooperate with other individuals and institu-

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<sup>38</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:xiv.

<sup>39</sup>In a brochure the institute announces a program in Islamic studies which will offer Master of Arts programs beginning in the fall of 1996.

<sup>40</sup>Conversation with Yusuf DeLorenzo in Herndon, 18th October 1995.

tions seeking to revive Islamic thought and make it possible to meet the requirements of contemporary thought; and to direct research projects on issues of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

Since the start in 1981 the institute has extended its activities.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the conference in Islamabad 1982, the IIIT has held two other major conferences. The first was held in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia in 1984, in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Culture, and the second in Khartoum, Sudan, in 1987. The latter was organized in cooperation with the University of Khartoum.<sup>43</sup> In the former the prime minister of Malaysia Mahathir Muhammad took part and held a lecture, declaring his support for the ideas on Islamization presented by the IIIT.<sup>44</sup> The connection to Malaysia is strong and DeLorenzo stated that for a while, primarily during 1993 and 1994, the IIIT board of trustees had plans to move the headquarters of the institute from Herndon to Malaysia.<sup>45</sup> He emphasizes that the IIIT is very active in Malaysia and that its efforts have caused a development of the institute's work in Singapore and Indonesia.<sup>46</sup> IIIT's success in Malaysia has also led to the establishment of the International Institute of Islamic Thought Malaysia (IIITM). Today, liaisons have been established with various organisations and universities in the USA, but also in the United Kingdom. IIIT has a network of distributors and local offices all over the world, especially in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. According to Muhyiddin Atiyah, academic advisor at the IIIT in Washington D.C., there have not been any problems involved in starting new offices for the IIIT in countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Mauritania and the Gulf states.<sup>47</sup> Several of the new distributors and local offices which have set up are located in Muslim countries, especially in the Middle East. Many of the institute's projects are carried out at universities in Egypt at the Cairo and al-Azhar universities.<sup>48</sup> Thus, one specific project in which the IIIT has been involved is the development of the Emir Abd al-Qadir

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<sup>41</sup>*The International Institute of Islamic Thought* (1992:3–5) and *IIIT: Catalog of Publications* (1994). For a presentation of the objectives in a more detailed form, see Ba-Yunus 1988:17–27; Brohi 1988:5–12 and al-Faruqi 1988:15–63.

<sup>42</sup>For a short characterization of the development of IIIT's activities, see *Toward Islamization of Disciplines* (1989:1f.).

<sup>43</sup>The agendas for these two conferences are published in al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:109–126.

<sup>44</sup>*Toward Islamization of Disciplines* (1989:4). The speech delivered by the prime minister is also published in the same work (Muhammad 1989:19–24).

<sup>45</sup>DeLorenzo said, however, that he was glad that the plans to move the IIIT had been cancelled. The reason for his joy was, that the IIIT can exist in USA without any fear of being shut down because of a shift of government. In countries like Malaysia, DeLorenzo says, a governmental shift can force the IIIT to close their activities. Conversation with DeLorenzo in Herndon, 18th October 1995.

<sup>46</sup>Conversation with Yusuf DeLorenzo in Herndon, 18th October 1995.

<sup>47</sup>Personal conversation with Muhyiddin Atiyah at IIIT in Herndon, 26th April 1994.

<sup>48</sup>*International Institute of Islamic Thought* (1992:6).

Islamic University in Constantine, Algeria, founded in 1984. Kate Zebiri states that the University has developed links with the IIIT in Virginia. The IIIT acts, according to Zebiri, as a consulting capacity to the University. In addition, she continues, “prominent thinkers” – representing an intellectual élite – all over the Muslim world have connections to the IIIT, and Zebiri sees the activities at the IIIT as an intellectual effort to overcome the gap between tradition and modernity for today’s Muslims. Moreover, the prospectus of the University acknowledges contributions of the Egyptian scholars Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī,<sup>49</sup> Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī and the Syrian scholar Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī.<sup>50</sup>

The major part of the publications of the institute are in English and in Arabic. Books and monographs are more often translated from English to Arabic than in the opposite direction. The publications considered most substantial by the institute are also available in Urdu, Malay, Turkish, French and German.<sup>51</sup> One reason for a possible increase in the number of publications written in Arabic is that the President of the IIIT since 1987, Taha Jabir al-Alwani, is more fluent in Arabic than in English. It is also possible that this fact, and al-Alwani’s position as President, have influenced the IIIT in its current orientation towards the Middle Eastern states.<sup>52</sup> The institute also publishes *al-Fikr al-Islāmī* (The Islamic Thought). According to a copy published in April 1993, which I received during a visit to the IIIT in Herndon, this is a non-periodical publication. The IIIT publishes the Arabic journal *al-Muslim al-Mu‘āṣir* (The Contemporary Muslim) together with the *al-Muslim al-Mu‘āṣir* Foundation.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī was the head of *al-madjlis al-‘ilmī*, the scientific council, at the Emir Abd al-Qadir university in 1985. For a short summary of the professional life of al-Ghazzālī, see *Miṣr bayna ad-dawla al-islāmīya wa ad-dawla al-‘almāniya* (1992:14).

<sup>50</sup>Zebiri 1993:221f. In my conversation with the Syrian scholar al-Būṭī he stated that he was offered a post at the Emir Abd al-Qadir Islamic University, but he turned the offer down because of personal commitments in Syria. He also stated that he has no relation at all with the IIIT. (Personal conversation with al-Būṭī at the Faculty of *Shari‘a*, University of Damascus, 22 April 1995.) Al-Alwani wrote an introduction to Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī’s *Kayfa nata‘āmal ma‘a as-sunna an-nabawiya* (How do we deal with the Prophets’ *sunna*) and al-Qaradāwī’s text was published in *AJISS*, vol. 8, no. 1, March 1991. This indicates that there is some form of cooperation between Muslim scholars like al-Qaradāwī and the IIIT. See al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:1.

<sup>51</sup>*The International Institute of Islamic Thought* (1992:8f) and *IIIT: Catalog of Publications* (1994:80–83).

<sup>52</sup>During a visit to Syria in January and February 1990, publications by the IIIT were not available in any of the bookshops I visited in Damascus. In a visit to Syria in April and May 1995 IIIT publications, often co-published with the International Islamic Publishing House, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, were found in well-stocked bookshops. DeLorenzo was surprised and stated that this was probably because books from the Jordanian branch of the IIIT which, he stressed, is well-organized were pouring into Syria (conversation with DeLorenzo in Herndon, 18th October 1995).

<sup>53</sup>This journal can be found in bookshops on streets outside the Cairo University. At least this was possible during three personal visits to Cairo in May and September 1992 and April 1993. One of the copies of the journal I obtained in Cairo was printed by the Dar al-Kutub printing house in Cairo.

In addition, the IIIT publishes the quarterly *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (AJISS) together with the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS). The aim of this journal is “to serve as a bridge between Muslim intellectuals and scholars all over the world to effect the development of a scholarly approach in the field of Islamic social sciences and human studies”.<sup>54</sup> Since 1994 the *AJISS* has been published simultaneously in Washington DC., Kuala Lumpur and Islamabad. A Turkish version is published in Istanbul. In association with the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, U.K., the institute publishes *The Muslim World Book Review*. A supplement to *The Muslim World Book Review* is the *Index of Islamic Literature*. The latter is also published in cooperation with the Islamic Foundation. Finally, the books and pamphlets produced by the IIIT, sometimes in cooperation with the Islamic Foundation, have certainly captured an audience. The IIIT has an extensive distribution net and the organisation has been very active in terms of distributing and propagating their message among Muslims.<sup>55</sup> In order to be successful the IIIT cooperates, not only with the Islamic Foundation, but also with other organisations, individuals and universities all over the world.<sup>56</sup>

A short – and general – characterization of the literature published by the institute between 1981 and 1994 is that the subjects treated in the books stress the Islamization of knowledge in general, and of the social sciences in particular. Some articles and a few monographs are regularly published which include discussions on the Islamization of the natural sciences. The Islamization of economics has been a significant topic, but since the late 1980s two other themes have come to the fore: the Islamization of political science and ethics. Another increasingly important theme treats the perspectives of Islamization in a global perspective – Islam as a cultural strategy. In the recently published *IIIT: Catalog of Publications* (1994), the following themes can be traced: Books dealing with the Islamization of different academic disciplines, both in general and concerning particular disciplines such as economy, political science, anthropology, science and technology; conference proceedings including papers presented at seminars and conferences, most of them on the Islamization of Knowledge theme, but also on specific subjects such as comparative religion, the lunar calendar, Islamic economy and education; literature on different aspects of interpreting the Quran and

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<sup>54</sup>*IIIT: Catalog of Publications* (1994:84).

<sup>55</sup>Texts produced by the IIIT can be bought in any Muslim bookshop in Europe, North America and Middle East. In the United Kingdom their books are distributed by, for instance, the Islamic Propagation Centre International (IPCI) in Birmingham.

<sup>56</sup>For example, texts produced in Saudi Arabia in order to present Islam to foreigners and available through Saudi ministries are prepared in cooperation between *ad-dār al-‘alamīya li-l-Kitāb al-Islāmī*, the International Islamic Publishing House in Riyadh, and the IIIT in Herndon.

the *summa*; books on the meaning of certain Islamic words which are perceived as particularly significant, such as *tawhīd* and *idjtihād*.

In a conversation with Yusuf DeLorenzo he pointed out that when it comes to sensitive matters there can be an advantage in first publishing in English and, thereafter, in Arabic. At the moment (October 1995) he and Taha Jabir al-Alwani are writing an article on Quranic passages that discuss the status of a woman's testimony within the framework of the *sharī'a*. Al-Alwani and DeLorenzo interpret the value of female testimonies, generally valued as half the value of a man's testimony, as a rule only valid in specific situations. DeLorenzo and al-Alwani have showed the text to their advisors at the al-Azhar university in Cairo who dissuaded them from publishing the article in Arabic. Therefore, they will, according to DeLorenzo, publish the article at length in English and, thereafter, present a less controversial version in Arabic. They are, he says, well aware that the content of the article is highly provocative, and that it can cause some upheaval.<sup>57</sup>

Important authors within this position are Ismail al-Faruqi, Abul Hamid A. AbuSulayman and Taha Jabir al-Alwani. They have also been the Presidents of the IIIT since the start 1981. AbuSulayman was President during the period 1981-1984. He was also the Director General of the institute between 1984 and 1988. Since 1989 he is the rector of the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Al-Faruqi was Director General of the IIIT in 1981-1984 and its President in 1984-1986. Al-Alwani is the current President of the institute since 1987.<sup>58</sup>

#### *Adherents of the al-Faruqi and IIIT position; the status of the institute*

There are a number of Muslims who take part in activities organized by the IIIT. They can be considered to be supporters of the position of al-Faruqi in the discourse. In addition to the ones mentioned above, the following are examples of individuals who contribute to publications presented by the IIIT.

Mona Abul-Fadl was born in Cairo, but spent a great part of her youth in England. She was educated in London and holds a doctorate from London University. Mona Abul-Fadl is a professor at Cairo University, but at the present time she is in charge of an IIIT project on "Western thought" which is being carried out in the U.S.<sup>59</sup> She has written extensively and e.g. edited *Association of Muslim Social Scientists: Proceedings of the Twenty First Annual Confer-*

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<sup>57</sup>Conversation with Yusuf DeLorenzo in Herndon, 18th and 23th October 1995.

<sup>58</sup>See the list of contributors on the front paper in *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (1988). For a presentation of al-Alwani, see al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:57.

<sup>59</sup>In 1992 Abul-Fadl published *Where East Meets West: The West on the Agenda of the Islamic Revival*.

ence (1993).<sup>60</sup> Her article in the *AJISS* 1991, is an eloquent example of how adherents of the IIIT have developed from the ideas once held by al-Faruqi, and now strive to challenge methodological positions within the Western tradition.<sup>61</sup>

The late A. K. Brohi contributed articles in publications published by the IIIT.<sup>62</sup> Brohi was a lawyer and Minister of Law and Religious Affairs in Pakistan and later became rector at the Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan. Consequently, he took part in the organization of the conference held in Islamabad 1982.

Among the scholars who have published in IIIT's publication series *Islamization of Knowledge* and *Occasional Papers*, two individuals may be singled out in particular. In the former series, Akbar S. Ahmed published his *Toward Islamic Anthropology: Definition, Dogma and Directions* in 1986. Recently, Ahmed has attracted attention for his two books *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History and Society* (1988) and, especially, *Islam and Post-modernism: Predicament and Promise* (1992). He is of Punjabi origin, but obtained his Ph.D. in anthropology from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London 1978.<sup>63</sup> Ahmed has developed his own position on the Islamization of knowledge.

It is, of course, very difficult to judge the standing of the institute among Muslims in a global perspective, but an indication is the fact that Muhammad Umer Chapra was awarded the King Faisal Prize for Islamic studies and the Islamic Development Bank Award in 1992.<sup>64</sup> To define his relation to the IIIT is difficult, but he has published books at the institute, for example, *Islam and the Economic Challenge* (1992) and *Islam and Economic Development* (1994). The latter was published jointly by the IIIT and the Islamic Research Institute in Islamabad. According to DeLorenzo, the majority of the adherents of the IIIT are young Muslims in North America and Europe. Most of the young scholars who read their texts have been educated in the USA or Europe. In the case of North Americans, most of them have at some point in their education been in contact with the MSA or the AMSE. DeLorenzo states that the growing number of women who take part in their activities is one recent trend and that the IIIT will encourage women to finish their dissertations and start lecturing. This is an important question for the IIIT at the moment. In general, he continues, the sup-

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<sup>60</sup>IIIT: *Catalog of Publications* (1994:39,68f.).

<sup>61</sup>See Abul-Fadl 1991:15–43.

<sup>62</sup>See, for example, Brohi 1988.

<sup>63</sup>For a more complete description of the career of Akbar S. Ahmad, see the front cover of Ahmad 1986.

<sup>64</sup>For a portrayal of Chapra, see IIIT: *Catalog of Publications* (1994:57). Chapra has also attracted attention in Saudi Arabian newspapers and in "Moral dimensions in economic pursuits", *Arab News*, June 22, 1994:7, Chapra talks to the journalist Javid Hassan about his new book, *Islam and Economic Development* (1994).

porters in Muslim countries are former students at universities in North America and Europe.<sup>65</sup>

*Al-Faruqi's and his supporter's inspiration*

Sources of inspiration and influences are not explicitly mentioned in al-Faruqi's works. In *Islamic Da'wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam* (1992), Poston states that in topics concerning an "Islamic ecumenism" al-Faruqi's position is similar to that of Fazlur Rahman.<sup>66</sup> In the preface to *Tawhīd: Its Relevance for Thought and Life* (1983), al-Faruqi discuss some presuppositions underlying his work.<sup>67</sup> He states that *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* had a good start but failed to

crystallize the vision of Islam as relevant to every moment of human life, every shade of modern activity. The vision was at its brightest in the mind of the late Ḥasan al-Bannā; but it was somewhat confused and less clear in his followers. Unfortunately, the great Muslim minds kept themselves busy elsewhere. They did not rise to fill the task left over by al-Bannā, of elaborating the principles of Islām as those of a modern and viable existence. Thus the movement could grow in numbers but not in ideational depth which is the requirement of change prescribed by the divine decree.<sup>68</sup>

Al-Faruqi is often said to have had an ideological link to organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood and to the ideas of Ḥasan al-Bannā and Sayyid Quṭb.<sup>69</sup> Thus, he elaborated ideas about Islam in order to make Islam fit the situation in a non-Muslim state. His ideas on Islam in the West may have influenced his concept of a specific meaning of *da'wa*, and how *da'wa* should be carried out in a non-Muslim state.<sup>70</sup> It appears to have affected al-Faruqi's position in the discourse on the Islamization of science and the function of a Muslim scientist.

Al-Faruqi's and AbuSulayman's *Islamization of Knowledge* occupies a prominent position for adherents to the ideas presented in IIT publications, i.e.

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<sup>65</sup>Conversation with Yusuf DeLorenzo in Herndon, 23th October 1995.

<sup>66</sup>Poston 1992:86. However, Rahman seems to doubt the Islamization of knowledge project. For his view on this matter, see Rahman 1988:3–11.

<sup>67</sup>Al-Faruqi 1983:i. The first edition of this work was published by the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO), a Kuwayti based organization. A second edition was published by the IIT in 1992. The IIT version has a slightly different title, *Al Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (1992). It is a more refined edition with, for example, footnotes and index (al-Faruqi 1992:xiv).

<sup>68</sup>Al-Faruqi 1983:iii.

<sup>69</sup>See, for example, Haddad *et al.* 1991:28f.

<sup>70</sup>Poston discusses al-Faruqi's position in the debate concerning the meaning of *da'wa*. See Poston 1992:4,6,27,43.

those individuals who have been taking part in conferences arranged by the institute and who have published articles and monographs in IIIT publications. In editions based on papers from conferences,<sup>71</sup> authors refer to al-Faruqi as a source of inspiration. Others who are referred to are AbuSulayman, Maurice Bucaille, Syed Ahmad Khān and Mawdūdī. References are also made to classical Muslim authors such as Ibn Khaldūn, al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Taymīya (d. 1328) as well as to literature produced by non-Muslims.<sup>72</sup> The major source of reference in the texts printed and published by the IIIT is the Quran. Of course, there are also numerous reference to the *sunna*.

## The Premises of the Position of al-Faruqi and the IIIT

In several texts by al-Faruqi and adherents to the cause of the IIIT, the present *umma* is said to be in a state of malaise.<sup>73</sup> Al-Faruqi declares that the roots of the malaise are to be found in influences from a world of ideas based on a vision foreign to the Muslim world, that is, ideas from the West. In the field of the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, disciplines were introduced which were “alien to Islām”.<sup>74</sup> In the field of science the effect was the establishment of new modes of carrying out scientific work. The result was a dependency on non-Muslim research and the formation of a science which goes “against the affirmation of Islām”.<sup>75</sup> The latter is specifically due to the scientific claim of objectivity.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the problems faced in the *umma* are also referred to as a recession in thought and a “lack of vision”.<sup>77</sup> The decline is said to take place within the Islamic tradition and the *umma* itself. Therefore, the existence of different outlooks is, according to Mackeen, one of the reasons for conflicts and tensions, and it has caused an unbalance in human behavioral and thought patterns.<sup>78</sup> An example of how a response to such a statement is promoted is the following:

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<sup>71</sup>See the articles in *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (1988) and Lodhi 1989.

<sup>72</sup>The use of non-Muslim sources will be discussed below, see the section on the use of language and terminology within this position.

<sup>73</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:15f. See also *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (1988:vii) and Lodhi 1989:1.

<sup>74</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:16. See also how Atur-ur-Rahman relates this phenomenon to scientific and technological training in the Muslim countries. Thus, in the opinion of Rahman, the technological advances made in the West should be incorporated into the “Islamic rationale without being affected by the materialistic philosophies that emanate from the West”. See Rahman 1981:167.

<sup>75</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988: 16. See also Rahman 1981:167.

<sup>76</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:16.

<sup>77</sup>*Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (1988:vii). See also al-Faruqi 1988:15f. and al-Najjar 1988:138. Al-Najjar is Professor at the Department of Earth Sciences, University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>78</sup>Mackeen 1988:67.

O believers, enter into Islam in totality (...) Your thoughts, your theories, your culture, your science, your manners, your dealings, your efforts, etc., should in every aspect of life be subordinated to Islam or to the dictates of Islam. You should not divide your life into different compartments so as to follow Islamic creed in one and discard it in the other where you follow something else. That something else is clearly a Satanic creed which is your clear enemy.<sup>79</sup>

In order to reinstate the world in a state of equilibrium, the adherents of the present position refer to Islam as a totality which provides the solution to the problems of humanity. The statement stresses the idea of Islam as a total religion.<sup>80</sup> Muslims working as scientists are exhorted to become Muslim scientists.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, the intention behind a workshop arranged by the IIIT and AMSE on "Islamization of Attitudes and Practices in Science and Technology" was to discuss matters concerning the inculcation of "Islamic attitudes" among scientists in different fields.<sup>82</sup> The objective, Lodhi states, is to bring the *umma* back to its authentic state of being,<sup>83</sup> that is, the state where the *umma* is the greatest of nations as acknowledged by God.<sup>84</sup>

In the search for justifications for the idea that Muslim scientists must strive for the Islamization of knowledge, the adherents of the IIIT turn to the Quran and the *sunna*. Followers of this ideological position refer to the Quran and to the sayings of Muhammad to stress that Islam commands Muslims to acquire knowledge. Muhammad is also said to be the model for man in his search for knowledge.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, this search is sometimes regarded as a religious duty.<sup>86</sup> Naseef says that a single human being is not able to reach a comprehensive knowledge of the universe. A complete knowledge of the universe is reserved for God:

It is therefore presumptuous on the part of man to concoct new philosophies about the origin of the universe or the evolution of the spe-

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<sup>79</sup>Lodhi 1989:152.

<sup>80</sup>Baker 1989:106.

<sup>81</sup>Zahid 1989:91 and Lodhi 1989:2. This kind of statement can be seen in various forms. Kyrala states that "The conception of many Muslim theologians, that science and engineering (or in general innovative thinking) have nothing to do with salvation, must be modified." See Kyrala 1989:133. Ali Kyrala is presented as active at the Department of Physics, Arizona State University Tempe, Arizona, USA.

<sup>82</sup>Lodhi 1989:2, see also the ideas presented in *The Muslim Scientist* (1981).

<sup>83</sup>Lodhi 1989:1.

<sup>84</sup>Lodhi 1989:1.

<sup>85</sup>Hamidullah 1988:75.

<sup>86</sup>Brohi 1988:5. See also Siddiqui 1981:47 and Hamidullah 1988:75f.

cies which blatantly contradict Allah's injunction's and assume new hypotheses. It is of course the duty of the scientist to understand and explain creation, the universe and all beings, but whenever his findings and analysis come into conflict with fundamental assumptions stated in the Quran, he should realize that he has not as yet found complete data and that is why he is unable to reach a conclusion that tallies with the statements of Allah.<sup>87</sup>

The first part of the quotation is a criticism of theories such as Darwinism, which is perceived as a theory in conflict with the story of creation as presented in the Quran. In practice, knowledge of scientific findings seems to force interpreters of God's word to form their rendition of the latter to fit with the results of contemporary natural sciences.

Abul Hamid Siddiqui gives an account of the relationship between mankind and God, between a Muslim and his or her religion.<sup>88</sup> On the first matter he states that human beings have been created by God as social beings. People's God-consciousness and piety achieve their full potentiality in society. This is not to say that it is the material benefits of society that give life a meaning, but human's quality as *khalīfa*, here in the sense of God's deputy on earth. The actions of human beings, their morals and ethics will be judged on the day of judgement and it is therefore important that people worship God and not the community. Allah will consider human beings as individuals in the hereafter.<sup>89</sup> On the matter of the Muslim and his or her religion, Siddiqui says in relation to the role of the Quran:

The Holy Quran states clearly that just as the laws of nature are immutable and universal, so are the laws of religion. They are the objective realities of life, independent of ephemeral changes in man's environment. 'He (Allah) has prescribed for you the religion which He enjoined on Noah and which We have now revealed to thee, and which We enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus.' (42:13) Thus to a Muslim, his *din* is not a mere passing phase in his history, but the ultimate source of ethics and morality, law and politics, economics and metaphysics – the very alpha and omega of all his yearnings and aspirations in every age and under all sets of conditions.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Naseef 1981:145.

<sup>88</sup>See Siddiqui 1981:41–48.

<sup>89</sup>Siddiqui 1981:44ff.

<sup>90</sup>Siddiqui 1981:47f. In general, this is stated by al-Faruqi in the video *The Book of Signs*. For a presentation of the film, see the introductory part of chapter on the ideas of Maurice Bucaille.

The quotation stresses not only the idea of universal aspects of Islam which affect all the actions of a Muslim's life, but also that Islam cannot be marginalized. The laws of Islam are unchangeable "objective realities of life". Al-Hashimi, a psychologist of Syrian origin, sees the Quran as a book of guidance, a book containing a psychological theory.<sup>91</sup> The pursuit of knowledge is in al-Hashimi's opinion linked to notions concerning a personal perfection of worship.<sup>92</sup> Al-Faruqi points out the individual's responsibility to affect his or her personal situation: "Allah will not change the fate of a people until they change what is in themselves" ( a part of Quranic verse 13:11).<sup>93</sup> The Muslim's personal responsibility and religious duty to strive for knowledge in the fields of science is stressed by authors affiliated to al-Faruqi and the IIT in general.<sup>94</sup> In this idea it is possible to find *the* true and authentic meaning of the religious laws. For example, Abu Saud says that Muslims need to study *shir'ca*, "a universal Islamic concept". There should be a unity of purpose in all Muslim societies. It is not enough to say that Islam has one God and a prophet named Muhammad. Muslims have to understand the implications of their faith. Therefore, Abu Saud urges Muslims to clarify the concepts of Islam in fields concerning social, political as well aesthetic matters.<sup>95</sup>

## The Malaise of Science in the Western World and in the Muslim World

Al-Najjar poses the question "What is science?"<sup>96</sup> In order to answer the question he refers to the Latin word *scientia*. In his opinion this term refers to all forms of knowledge. It "includes knowledge gained through Divine revelation, by human thinking, creative intellect, and through human legacy and tradition".<sup>97</sup> He

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<sup>91</sup>Al-Hashimi 1981:58. Al-Hashimi has worked in the field of psychology at universities in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

<sup>92</sup>See, for example, al-Hashimi 1981:58f.

<sup>93</sup>*Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (1988:15).

<sup>94</sup>For example, the aim of the AMSS is to "establish the relevance of Islam to the present day social sciences". See *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (1988:viif.).

<sup>95</sup>Abu Saud 1988:82. On the discussion concerning a divine command urging Muslims to seek knowledge, see Hamidullah 1988:75.

<sup>96</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:135ff. Al-Najjar (1988:133f.) uses the Quran as if it were a scientific text, i.e. he refers to the Quran in order to validate statements concerning the nature of humans. However, Hussaini (1989:70) says that the Quran and the *sunna* must not be viewed as scientific, but as guidance, *hidāya*. He states that "no Islamic teaching is contradictory to the facts of science". "Facts" is here a vague term. What the "facts of science" are can be a matter of interpretation, it would not be an easy task to state what established, universally applicable scientific facts are. See also AbuSulayman 1981:114f.

<sup>97</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:139.

thus sees revelation as one significant part in the construction of science. Al-Najjar's ideal definition of science is opposed to the direction in which contemporary science is headed. He states that at present there is a tendency "to limit the term 'Science' to natural and experimental studies of all that is within the reach of the senses and intellect in the universe (i.e., matter, energy, living beings and natural phenomena)".<sup>98</sup> "In its essence, science is a method of knowing the truth, while matter is only a small portion of that truth."<sup>99</sup> If science does not become a part of revelation it will remain partial and its results will not be completely true.<sup>100</sup>

As a consequence of the above reasoning al-Najjar demonstrates the limitations of contemporary science. He states that not everything in the universe can be felt by human senses alone. Directly or indirectly, science comprises both sensual and non-sensual information. Higher truths cannot be reached by human thinking alone, and scientific theories are only working hypothesis. Humans cannot grasp all branches of knowledge, and science is a product of a particular environment. Scientific results are continuously revised and, therefore, incomplete and limited in terms of method.<sup>101</sup> The presupposition for all points is that experimental science merely studies the "outward appearance of the actual truth".<sup>102</sup> Al-Najjar presupposes that contemporary science draws the wrong conclusions because it is based on false premises.<sup>103</sup>

One of the criticisms of the West is directed against the influence of its culture and civilization on a global level. This form of critique can be exemplified by quoting Mahmood A. Ghazi. "We are living in a predominantly Western age with its thought-pattern, culture and civilization, and its intellectual make-up and educational training. This age of our history can rightly be called an age of intellectual enslavement preceded by an age of political and military subjugation".<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:139. Al-Najjar also states that "scientific victories were wrongly considered victory over religion, and were used as tools to demolish it instead of emphasizing the fact that science is one of the short-cuts for one to get acquainted with the marvels of the great Creator". See al-Najjar 1988:146.

<sup>99</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:144. Ba-Yunus states that in an Islamic perspective an individual and his environment are not two separate entities. They are both God's creation. In his perception, people and the environment are part of *tawhīd* – the oneness of God. Human beings and environment are interrelated because they are two "aspects of the Divine will, far from promoting mutual conflict, is actually the only source of harmony in the whole of creation". To emphasize the correctness of his statements, Ba-Yunus (1988:277) quotes al-Faruqi.

<sup>100</sup>Hussaini states that the advance of science and technology prepares all of humanity for Islam. The realization of such an idea would create a world in harmony. See Hussaini 1989:70.

<sup>101</sup>Al-Najjar 140–143. Some of al-Najjar's ideas are also stressed by Ghazi (1988:121f.). See also al-Faruqi 1981:9–11.

<sup>102</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:140. For example, Ba-Yunus (1988:281) says that there exists "no tradition of an Islamic sociology today." Another example is Husaini's statement that there exists no food and nutritional science that takes the divine or the spiritual aspects of human life into consideration, see Hussaini 1989:71f.

<sup>103</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:144.

<sup>104</sup>Ghazi 1988:121.

In Ghazi's understanding, the contemporary situation for Muslims is just another form of subjugation. There is an ongoing process towards domination over – and secularization of – Muslims. This process is not only supported, but also implemented by the West.<sup>105</sup> The situation is described as the result of a process which started during the Renaissance.<sup>106</sup> Since then the West, through intellectual assaults as well as political actions and military occupations, has strived to undermine the position of Islam among Muslims.<sup>107</sup>

The critique of the West is not always of a defensive character. Ali Kyrala expresses the view that the West is approaching a "catastrophic decline".<sup>108</sup> The decline, says Kyrala, is due to the supposed fact that increasing wealth cannot be upheld in the "absence of new frontiers", i.e. without constant economic expansion. Kyrala's ideas of a Western world in decline include a statement saying that citizens in Western states are increasingly oppressed. The outcome of this oppression will be the creation of a space for Islam. It can attract individuals in the Western world who may then join Islam. In Kyrala's view, Islam can replace a declining system. The critique of the West is based on a criticism of modern science. This examination of modern science can be carried out in various ways. Atur-ur-Rahman<sup>109</sup> says that it is important for Muslims not to be seduced by the achievements of Western science and technology.<sup>110</sup> In his view, mankind can never attain a complete knowledge of the world. He supports his statements by giving the example of space travel, where the distance travelled and the knowledge gained is trivial considering the overall size of the universe.

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<sup>105</sup>The relation between Muslims and the West is touched upon in the introduction to almost every article or book produced by the IIIT, or adherents of position of al-Faruqi and the IIIT. See the articles included in Lodhi (ed.) (1989) or *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (1988).

<sup>106</sup>Sayyid Waqar Ahmad Husaini (1981:158) states that "the attitude towards the medieval Islamic origins of Western science and technology, philosophy and theology, education and culture, before and during the Renaissance and the Reformation, is one of a conspiracy of silence and systematic falsification of history. The product of such a Westernized system of humanistic-social sciences studies is the typical self-assured, ethnocentric, and arrogant Western man. He is indoctrinated to believe in the originality, uniqueness, superiority, universality, and the inevitable triumph of Western-Christian civilisation." Husaini is a Muslim of Indian origin. He received his Ph.D. from Stanford University, USA. He has worked at various universities in the USA, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. During the period 1974-1975 he was the General Secretary of the AMSE (see Husaini 1981:148). Today he works on a project entitled "Water Resources, Sciences and Engineering in the Quran", scheduled to be finished in 1998.

<sup>107</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:x. The descriptions of Muslims' relation to the West often include references to contemporary stereotypes of Islam and Muslims as, for example, dangerous and/or fanatic. See al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:1.

<sup>108</sup>Kyrala 1989:133.

<sup>109</sup>Atur-ur-Rahman is Co-Director, Post-graduate Institute of Chemistry, University of Karachi, Pakistan (Rahman 1981:167).

<sup>110</sup>Rahman 1981:168f.

In fact it becomes clear with even a little depth of thought that man will never know 'everything about anything'. To me as an organic chemist, the beautiful wonders of the world within the living cell never lose their fascination. (...) Our probing intelligence, at whichever level of magnification, can only be overawed by the wonderful organizational beauty of the natural process. (...) I can only refer the reader to Surah 'Al Rahman' of the Quran where detailed reference has been made to some of the miracles around us.<sup>111</sup>

Atur-ur-Rahman reminds us that mankind is not able to gain knowledge of everything that takes place in the universe. Implicit in this statement is the converse notion that God does have such all-embracing knowledge: he, and no one else, knows the forces – and meaning – behind the creation of nature. The evidence of his knowledge can be traced in various Quranic verses. The search for an ultimate truth or an all-embracing knowledge appears, in Rahman's understanding, to be opposed to religion. Al-Najjar argues, discussing the development of modern science, that it evolved in opposition to Christianity.<sup>112</sup> He points at three cardinal reasons. Firstly, the deviation within Christianity from the basic teachings of Christ. Secondly, the infiltration of man-made ideas into the Old and New Testament. Thirdly, the standing of the Church, which in the early days of science in Europe played out religion against science. However, according to al-Najjar, Christianity – unlike Islam – is a man-made religion. Therefore, it is of a great importance that the true revelation is not lost or distorted in the same way as happened to Christianity. Science is a "a human attempt to explore Allah's creation".<sup>113</sup> The results of science cannot be opposed to statements in the Quran. If there is a contradiction between the results of science and the Quranic text, the former must be considered to be false.<sup>114</sup>

The criticism of modern science also contains a critique of the methods used in different academic disciplines. There are shortcomings in "Western methodology".<sup>115</sup> In his opinion, social sciences in the West do not observe certain aspects of reality. "In order that the analysis might remain scientific, the social scientist illegitimately reduced the moral and/or spiritual component of social reality to its material effect or carrier. His methodology remains to this day devoid of tools by which to recognize and deal with the spiritual". Al-Faruqi seems to understand Western science as an activity that does not deal with the whole of reality. There are aspects which a social scientist does not touch upon. This makes

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<sup>111</sup>Rahman 1981:169.

<sup>112</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:149.

<sup>113</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:150.

<sup>114</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:150. Several of the statements made by al-Najjar in this particular part are supported by references to works by Maurice Bucaille. See al-Najjar 1988:145,149f.

<sup>115</sup>Al-Faruqi 1981:11.

his or her science invalid because, as al-Faruqi says, there is a fundamental inaccuracy in “defining and identifying the data of social science”,<sup>116</sup> leading to a false understanding of social science as having the possibility to explain the social laws of a society by following the rules set up by a certain scientific discipline. In this context, al-Faruqi states that there is an erroneous sense of objectivity. His conclusion is that the attitudes, feelings, desires and values of the researcher determine the result of his or her research. Western research is anchored in a Western culture. Therefore, it cannot be used in the study of Muslims and Muslim societies.<sup>117</sup>

Brohi also criticizes science in the West, especially the theories of Darwin, Freud and Karl Marx.<sup>118</sup> “These thinkers have presented a picture of the universe from which God has, so to speak, been ejected, and all the phenomena in nature and history are now explained in terms of mechanical causation”.<sup>119</sup> The ideas of these three thinkers can be found in several disciplines at the university level, even in disciplines such as physics and chemistry. In Brohi’s view, Darwin, Freud and Marx shifted our understanding of the universe. His own comprehension of the universe is teleological, in opposition to a paradigm where “phenomena in nature and history” are explained as parts in a mechanistic system.<sup>120</sup> He states that results in physics and chemistry, such as theories on matter and motion as well as on time and space, do not necessarily come into conflict with ideas common in religious traditions.<sup>121</sup> In the application of knowledge, conflicts may arise between science and religion.<sup>122</sup> In Brohi’s understanding, the religious call, which provides human beings with a path revealing their destiny and purpose, is lost. The religious message of cooperation between human beings was lost and substituted by “cut-throat competition”.<sup>123</sup> Writing about Darwinism, Freudianism (i.e. psychoanalysis) and Marxism, he states:

Anyone going to the university necessarily has to look at these branches of human learning, that is, the biological, psychological and social sciences in terms of the approach that has been made by these thinkers whose work I have briefly outlined. I have done so to be able to say that their basic standpoints and findings run completely counter

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<sup>116</sup>Al-Faruqi 1981:12.

<sup>117</sup>Al-Faruqi 1981:12f.

<sup>118</sup>Brohi 1988:7. For a rejection of Marxism, see Ghazi 1988:122.

<sup>119</sup>Brohi 1988:7.

<sup>120</sup>It is not the ideas of mechanism that are criticized by Brohi. A criticism of the theory of evolution is present in the text. Brohi states that it reduces life to “the interplay of chance and variation, concepts of struggle for existence and successful adaption to environment brought out the survival of the fittest.” See Brohi 1988:9.

<sup>121</sup>Brohi 1988:7.

<sup>122</sup>Brohi 1988:9.

<sup>123</sup>Brohi (1988:9) states that a contemporary of Darwin, Herbert Spencer, paved the way for this situation.

to the view of the life, mind and history recommended by Islam, the universal religion of mankind. It is strange, is it not, that the world of Islam which commenced the fifteenth *Hijrah* century of its own history, is not even cognizant of the contradiction in the lives of the Muslim students who are sent out to study modern knowledge? They are involved in a situation where they have to keep their religious convictions in one part of their being and convictions resulting from their studies in the universities in the other. They cannot possibly appear to be one integrated personality, but instead a house divided against itself. The challenging task before Muslim thinkers today therefore is to *rewrite standard textbooks on principal branches of human learning* to make them consistent with the basic principles that are discernible in the Qur'an regarding the nature of human life, mind and its social behaviour.<sup>124</sup>

Brohi encourages Muslim thinkers to rewrite textbooks in accordance with the word of God, with the purpose of providing Muslim students with a consensus view established within the *umma*. This is an outlook which must harmonize with the natural constitution of human beings and their role in history.<sup>125</sup> These rewritten textbooks will function as a counterweight to earlier textbooks.<sup>126</sup> Therefore, he proposes the establishment of a worldwide movement for this re-writing. This would counteract the "schizophrenic personality" that characterizes many Muslims today,<sup>127</sup> which appears when Muslims are forced to change "modes", that is, on one hand adopt a secular view accepting the findings of modern knowledge and, on the other, be religious – and thereby oppose modern knowledge.<sup>128</sup>

#### *Targeting science in the Muslim world*

There can be no doubt that the main locus and core of the '*Ummah's* malaise is the prevalent educational system. It is the breeding ground of the disease. It is in schools and colleges that self-estrangement from Islām and from its legacy and style are generated and perpetuated. The

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<sup>124</sup>Brohi 1988:11f.

<sup>125</sup>Brohi 1988:12.

<sup>126</sup>Brohi (1988:12) holds that this is not the place to state what the principles of the Quran are, and how the new and Islamic textbooks will differ from the earlier ones, but that they do not have to be in opposition to all forms science and scientific findings. This appears merely to be a way of placing the natural and social sciences in a Quranic context, that is, to say to explain them as a part of a higher reality, and not as goals in themselves. This is paralleled with the aim to remove ideas which are not in accordance with the Quran.

<sup>127</sup>Brohi 1988:12.

<sup>128</sup>Brohi (1988:12) states that it is of importance that "their religious beliefs do not undergo a sort of heretical transmutation".

educational system is the laboratory where Muslim youth are kneaded and cut, where their consciousness is moulded into a caricature of the West.<sup>129</sup>

Al-Faruqi focuses on the modification of the educational system and stresses the significance of this system as a reason for the malaise.<sup>130</sup> The educational system must provide the Muslim society with true Muslims, that is, to socialize individuals to become Muslims. In al-Faruqi's view, the entire *umma* is threatened if the process of socialization is disrupted, altered or changed.<sup>131</sup> The view of the educational system as bifurcated into subsystems – one “modern” and one “traditional” – and as a cause for decline is shared by several adherents of the al-Faruqi and IIIT position.<sup>132</sup> According to Husaini, the earlier Islamic system was an integrated educational system, but the rupture of this system has created a schism “between the Muslim ‘traditionalists’ and the Muslim ‘modernists’”.<sup>133</sup>

Various adherents of the position of al-Faruqi and the IIIT have implied that the imitation of a foreign – Western – educational system was disastrous for Muslim culture. AbuSulayman holds that the imitation of a “foreign style” is fruitless.<sup>134</sup> It is also fruitless to imitate “past perspectives”.<sup>135</sup> In both cases, he says, the objectives of the *umma* have not been fulfilled. Al-Najjar also argues that copying different systems of education and science is a problem for Muslims. His criticism of a system that imports and copies scientific writings is accompanied by a discussion concerning the habit of sending students from Muslim countries to study in Europe and North America. He points out that textbooks are published in non-Arabic languages and that the few Arabic textbooks used are merely translations of foreign ideas.<sup>136</sup> They contain contradictions with the fun-

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<sup>129</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:22.

<sup>130</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:22–25) develops his ideas as a critique of the present state of education in Muslim countries and the lack of a vision in the educational system. He stresses the portrayal of the contemporary system as a caricature of the educational system in the West. He targets teachers and professors stating that they lack a vision of Islam, and that their education is not founded on Islam.

<sup>131</sup>AbuSulayman (1988:93) has noted six issues pointing at the crisis in the *umma*. They are “1. The backwardness of the *Ummah*. 2. the weakness of the *Ummah*. 3 The intellectual stagnation of the *Ummah*. 4 The absence of Ijtihad in the *Ummah*. 5. The absence of cultural progress in the *Ummah*. 6. The *Ummah*'s estrangement from the basic norms of Islamic civilization.” All points can be interpreted as relating to the development of the educational system.

<sup>132</sup>For a development of al-Faruqi's view about the bifurcation of the educational system into two sub-systems, see al-Faruqi 1988:16.

<sup>133</sup>Husaini 1981:150f.

<sup>134</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:94. The same idea is expressed by al-Faruqi (1988:15).

<sup>135</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:94.

<sup>136</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:145. The effects of sending students to Europe and North America are also touched upon by al-Faruqi. He says that Muslim countries neither have a plan for taking care of the mass of students nor a plan for the development of scholars and institutions. See al-Faruqi 1988:18. This criticism of the educational system and the

damental beliefs of Islam. This can cause “confusion in an age of great fascination for science and technology”.<sup>137</sup> It seems to be a significant project for al-Najjar to turn back the clock and establish an Islamic science and educational system. The critique of the present educational systems in Muslim countries is sometimes more specific and directed towards specific countries. Syed M. Amir describes the situation at the Aga Khan Medical University in Karachi, Pakistan.<sup>138</sup> He is mostly concerned with the lack of intellectual vitality among the teachers at this University. He maintains that if the faculty members are not involved in different forms of research, the younger generation will not receive training or a motivation to practice research.<sup>139</sup> Therefore, Amir says, the Pakistani government has launched a scheme. The idea is to invite expatriate Pakistani scientists to return and teach new techniques to scientists in Pakistan.<sup>140</sup>

Al-Faruqi states that the most important task for contemporary Muslims is to solve problems within the educational systems.<sup>141</sup> In his understanding, earlier reforms introduced by, among others, Sayyid Ahmad Khān and Muḥammad °Abduh rested on false premises. The idea that modern disciplines are harmless is seen as erroneous.<sup>142</sup> Thus, al-Faruqi and AbuSulayman say that mastering modern science is a necessity for a creation of an Islamic science.<sup>143</sup> AbuSulayman proposes a redefinition of knowledge as a starting point in a reconstruction of science and the educational system in general.<sup>144</sup> The idea is not new within the position of al-Faruqi and the IIIT. Already in 1981, Muhammad Omar Zubair argued that “the already entrenched secularist system” has to be changed, and that the new system will be built on an “Islamic infrastructure”.<sup>145</sup> In order to implement this change, Muslims should strive to learn more. In the field of science and technology, scientists and engineers are supposed to recognize Islam as being

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activities at the universities in Muslim countries is not a unique phenomenon, expressed only by adherents of the position of al-Faruqi and the IIIT. For example, Fouad Ajami (1981:36f.,132) has pronounced a harsh criticism of both science and the educational situation in Muslim countries.

<sup>137</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:145.

<sup>138</sup>Another example is Ata-ur-Rahman’s criticism of the effects of the rapid development in Saudi Arabia. He concludes that the situation where a “new class of ‘educated’, but non-religious ‘Muslim’ people” appears must be tackled immediately. See Rahman 1981:168.

<sup>139</sup>Amir 1989:16f.

<sup>140</sup>Amir 1989:18.

<sup>141</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:25.

<sup>142</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:16.

<sup>143</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:67.

<sup>144</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:94. A restoration of the educational system has been suggested by Husaini. He says that there is a need for the teaching of humanities in the education of technology and the natural sciences and, conversely, natural sciences in the humanities and social sciences. One cannot, according to Husaini (1981:151) be ignorant of the “ayat Allah in either natural sciences and technology or in humanities and social sciences”.

<sup>145</sup>See Zubair’s foreword in al-Faruqi & Naseef 1981:v. Zubair is presented as President of the first world conference on Muslim education and former President at the King Abdelaziz University in Saudi Arabia.

consistent with modern science. This acceptance will make scientists strive for the return of “Islamic” technology.<sup>146</sup> This term is not defined, but seems to refer to a historical situation – a historical time when Islamic technology was in the forefront of progress.

### The Use of Language and Terminology within the Position

In *Toward Islamic English* (1986) al-Faruqi uses the expression “Islamic English” to signify a modified form of English which will enable the English language “to carry Islamic proper nouns and meanings without distortion, and thus to serve the linguistic needs of Muslim users of the English language”. He continues by saying that the concept of “Islamic English” raises three questions. Firstly, who are the Muslim users of English? Secondly, how does one clarify the nature of the linguistic distortion that is said to exist? Thirdly, what is the content of the desired correction?<sup>147</sup>

As an answer to the first question, al-Faruqi points at Muslims in Australia, Europe and North America, who have English as their native language. Then, there are those Muslims who use English in reading, writing, communication and/or research. He stresses that the rules he would like to introduce regarding translation as well as transliteration apply to all languages written in the Latin alphabet. He maintains that the number of people targeted in his approach is far greater than the number of non-Muslims who speak English as their mother tongue.

Al-Faruqi elaborates on the second question and refers to cases where names of God, divine attributes (*sifāt*), names of Muhammad or Quranic terms expressing Islamic values are incorrectly spelled. In the end, he says, this is not only irritating but can also be blasphemous.<sup>148</sup> One reason for the circumstances that al-Faruqi perceives as problematic is the many ways in which Arabic words can be transliterated. He claims that the present systems are all incomplete and that they do not help English-speaking Muslims.

The third question concentrates on the distortions of the meaning of Arabic words introduced through translation. Al-Faruqi provides several examples. One is the translations and meanings given to the term *zakāt*. In his opinion, English

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<sup>146</sup>Kyrala 1989:133f.

<sup>147</sup>Al-Faruqi 1986:7.

<sup>148</sup>Al-Faruqi 1986:8. Al-Faruqi refers to the associations and possible connotations of misspelled Muslim names. For example, he says that they can be informative about Allah or Muhammad. Another example is the incorrect spellings of names such as ‘Abd al-Haqq (the servant of the truth – Allah). To spell the latter Abd al Hakk (the servant of scratching) is in al-Faruqi’s opinion to violate a divine name and, therefore, blasphemous. Al-Faruqi’s idea is not only concerned with the spelling of such names, but also with the pronunciation. See al-Faruqi 1986:9.

renderings such as alms, alms-giving and charity are not correct translations of the word *zakāt*. He defines it as a “public welfare tax”, and emphasizes that “its payment is religiously and publicly obligatory for all Muslims without exception”.<sup>149</sup> Consequently, *zakāt* cannot be translated. It must be understood in its Arabic form. The premises for this view is underlined by the statement that faithfulness to Islam cannot be detached from loyalty to the Quran, and the latter cannot be separated from its basis in the Arabic language. In this context, he claims that the consistency of the Arabic language has saved the Quran from the hermeneutical problems troubling the Bible, as well as the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures.<sup>150</sup> Thus, he seems to argue that Islamic terminology inherently carries meanings and fields of associations which it is the duty of a Muslim to stay attuned to.<sup>151</sup>

Words like *taqwā*, *hudā*, *ḍalāl*, *qisṭ*, *wahy*, *siyām*, *hajj*, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *hadith*, etc. have much more meaning in their Arabic form than their English approximations are ever capable of carrying. To give an English translation of them is to reduce, and often ruin, those meanings. To the scholar in general, intellectual loyalty to English form has no right to assume priority over loyalty to meaning. The latter is the realm of truth; and truth must take precedence over all other values – let alone the value of a convention of the English speaking people. *A fortiori*, for the Muslim, loyalty to “the King’s English” must never assume priority over loyalty to Islam, to its meanings and concepts.<sup>152</sup>

Al-Faruqi stresses that the English translations of these terms are a reduction. Thus, the English translations do not carry the true meanings, fields of associations and connotations of the Arabic words. In addition, the Arabic forms are seen as superior to their English translations simply because they are the actual words of the Quranic text. They represent the ultimate truth and cannot be replaced by any “ordinary” language. The Arabic language – and its Islamic terminology – is in al-Faruqi’s view part of an organic structure. In the end, distorting the lan-

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<sup>149</sup>Al-Faruqi 1986:12.

<sup>150</sup>Al-Faruqi 1986:13. Al-Faruqi’s statement that the Quran has been saved from “hermeneutical problems” appears to indicate that he does not accept the idea that the Quran has been constantly interpreted since it was formed in a more permanent edition. In addition, the problems of contemporary Muslims in relation to Islam are not seen as an internal problem, but problems forced on Muslims by the West. See, for example, al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:1–9. The view that the preservation of the Arabic language has saved the Quran from hermeneutical interpretation is maintained by al-Faruqi (1992:27–29).

<sup>151</sup>The idea of Arabic as an unchangeable language has been expressed by al-Faruqi (1992:28f.).

<sup>152</sup>Al-Faruqi 1986:12. The Arabic words in the quotation can be translated as follows: *taqwā* (piety), *hudā* (guidance), *ḍalāl* (error, straying from the true path), *qisṭ* (justice, fair-mindedness), *wahy* (revelation), *ḥadīdj* (pilgrimage), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *uṣūl al-fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence).

guage of the Quran, the word of God, would endanger the very existence of the Islamic religion.<sup>153</sup> Consequently, al-Faruqi criticizes the rise of colloquial forms of the Arabic language and the study of colloquial Arabic. This is a study that promotes a division between Muslims and that threatens the unity of Islam. The solution is to create an Islamic English for English-speaking Muslims. Islamic English, based on the addition of “the terms of the religion, spirituality and culture of Islam, together with a few pertinent rules of Arabic grammar [to the English language], is a worthy, creative and beneficial support”.<sup>154</sup> Al-Faruqi concludes the chapter by declaring that, in a modern context, the English language in general needs the values of Islam. These can only be provided by the Quranic language. This process or development of the English language will help English-speaking Muslims to protect themselves from the “onslaught of materialism, utilitarianism, scepticism, relativism, secularism and hedonism”. Finally, it may provide English-speaking Muslims with the means to end their predicament in modern times.<sup>155</sup>

#### *Terms, slogans and axioms in IIT texts*

“Islamization of Knowledge” is the most important slogan in the context of the IIT in the process of forming an Islamic system of thought. The slogan is part of a more general process of Islamization.<sup>156</sup> Islamization of knowledge is concerned with “thought, ideology and a normative and ideational human pattern – and how such a pattern, its constituents, its roots in reason, psyche, and conscience may be built”.<sup>157</sup> In the opinion of Al-Faruqi and AbuSulayman, the Islamization of knowledge is, therefore, a must for the establishment of the *umma*, a step not to be overlooked because of other, political or economic problems among Muslims.<sup>158</sup>

A term often used as a self-definition describing the whole community of Muslims is *umma*. It denotes all Muslims and is sometimes synonymous to the

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<sup>153</sup>Mackeen (1988:69) states that Arabic is the language of Islam. He says that a knowledge of Arabic is the key element for a safe and sound knowledge of Islam. Muslims should, according to Mackeen, concern themselves seriously with the study of Arabic as a way to understand the sources and principles of Islam in their most authentic form.

<sup>154</sup>Al-Faruqi 1986:14.

<sup>155</sup>Al-Faruqi 1986:15. Other parts of *Toward Islamic English* (1986), are chapters concerned with the transliteration of letters and words, lists of Islamic words and concepts, terms and expressions relevant to the Islamic sciences, Islamic devotional and social terms and expressions. See al-Faruqi 1986:16–64.

<sup>156</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:83f.

<sup>157</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:84.

<sup>158</sup>The expression “Islamization of Knowledge” will be dealt with below. See the section on Islamization of knowledge and science.

“Muslim world” – or the “nation of Islam”.<sup>159</sup> In *Islamization of Knowledge* the use of the term *umma* is the expression of an ideological position. *Umma* is also an oppositional force to the present position’s understanding of the West. The “low” position of the *umma* among nations today is, according to al-Faruqi and AbuSulayman, caused by internal strife and divisions of Muslims into separate nation-states.<sup>160</sup> The present situation stands in direct opposition to the ideal state of orders – *umma* – as presented in the Quran, and in the example of Muhammad.<sup>161</sup> AbuSulayman’s positive understanding of the early history of Islam is a significant argument in legitimating modern science as a part of the present *umma*. *Umma* appears to symbolize a pure relation between the Muslims’ striving for knowledge through “its proper sources, namely, Divine revelation and active reason”.<sup>162</sup> Active reason means the guidance that the Muslim community has from the behavioural pattern of Muhammad. The standard of Muslim behaviour set by the example of Muhammad is not restricted to a certain time in history. It can be applied by Muslims in all times and places.

The use of the word *umma* in texts originally written in English has given rise to a derived form of the word, the term *ummatic*.<sup>163</sup> Al-Faruqi uses this form of *umma* when he describes how the reform of scientific disciplines will be structured to incorporate Islam. The foundation for the reformation is the notion of *tawhīd* (unity).

The first is the unity of knowledge, under which all disciplines must seek rational, objective, critical knowledge of truth. This will lay aside once and for all the claim that some science [no examples are given] is ‘*aqlī* (rational) and some *naqlī* (textual and tradition) and hence irrational; that some disciplines are scientific and absolute and others dogmatic and relative. The second is the unity of life, under which all disciplines must be taken into cognizance and oriented to serve the telic nature of creation. This will disarm the claim that some disciplines are value oriented while others are value-free or neutral. The third is the unity of history, under which all disciplines will acknowl-

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<sup>159</sup>In relation to the meaning given to *umma*, the term Muslim occasionally designates religious affiliation or ethnicity, but e.g. al-Hashimi uses Muslim in the same sense as he uses French, English, American or Russian, that is, as an ethnic label. See al-Hashimi 1981:56.

<sup>160</sup>For the use of the term *umma*, see Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:1–5. The very existence of the *umma* can also be seen as threatened (AbuSulayman 1988:110).

<sup>161</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:94f.

<sup>162</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:95.

<sup>163</sup>Various Islamic terms have been formed in this fashion. One example is *fitric*, a term used by Mona Abul-Fadl in an article in *AJISS*. The term is a derived form from *fiṭra*. In Abul-Fadl’s understanding, it denotes an attitude to life based on Islamic values. This attitude is characterised by a common sense in the understanding of nature and it is based on revelation. The common sense shaped in the Islamic tradition is a form of *fitric* sensibility (Abul-Fadl 1991:18,26,32).

edge the 'Ummatic or societal nature of all human activity, and serve the purposes of the 'Ummah in history. This will put to rest the division of knowledge into individual and societal sciences, making the disciplines, at once, humanistic and 'Ummatic.<sup>164</sup>

Al-Faruqi seems to try to settle a controversy over the status of science with deep historical roots.<sup>165</sup> In this long lasting controversy the term 'aql (intelligence or intellect)<sup>166</sup> is sometimes interpreted as a "natural" way of knowing. This is a mode of knowledge independent of the authority of revelation. The use of the word 'aql among Muslim religious scholars is influenced by Aristotle. The antithesis of "a natural way of knowing" is a science labelled *naqlī* (traditional), in which knowledge is determined by revelation and is carried over from one generation of religious scholars to another. The differences between 'aqlī and *naqlī* science can be seen in the positions taken by the various tendencies within the Islamic tradition such as the *Ash'arī* and *Mu'tazilī*.<sup>167</sup> The quotation above expresses an attempt to legitimate traditional science as carried out by religious scholars, and to make a mode of knowledge founded on Islam compatible with knowledge based on reason.<sup>168</sup>

A second concern is the endeavour to bridge the gap between forms of science by making them serve the same goal – "to serve the telic nature of the universe". A support for this aim is the quoted "third idea of unity" where disciplines will recognize the *ummatic* nature of all social activities. This appears to mean that

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<sup>164</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:17. Al-Faruqi (1992) has paid further attention to the term *tawhīd*.

<sup>165</sup>For a detailed study on the term 'ilm (knowledge) in the medieval Islamic tradition, see Rosenthal 1970. Al-Faruqi and AbuSulayman discuss the nature of *wahy*, "revelation", and 'aql, "reason", and says that "the most far-reaching development in the intellectual history of the Ummah is the dichotomy between revelation and reason". See al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:26. They (1989:51–53) state that it is important for all people to find a way where reason and revelation can complement and cooperate with each other. The terms *aqlī* and *naqlī* have also been discussed by other adherents of the present position, see Husaini 1980 45–49.

<sup>166</sup>Other meanings of 'aql are "wisdom", "reason" and "rationality". See Wehr 1976:630.

<sup>167</sup>For example, *Ash'arī* see in relation to 'ilm *al-Kalām* (knowledge of religious science, i.e. "scholastic theology") the religious law as a carrier of the absolute truth. In their standpoint, the intellect can, or may reflect on, phenomena in the universe only because religious law ordains upon the individual to do so. From a *Mu'tazilī* approach intellect or reason is placed on a level superior to the religious law. The law is, accordingly, restricted by the intellect. For further discussions on the differences between tendencies within the tradition concerning the relation between 'aqlī and *naqlī* sciences, see Rahman 1960:341f. For the dogmatic development, see Goldziher 1910:80–138. For a discussion on the place of the intellect in the works of al-Fārābī, Avicenna and Averroes, see Davidson 1992. The latter also has a useful introductory chapter entitled "Greek and Arabic Antecedents" (Davidson 1992:7–43).

<sup>168</sup>Al-Faruqi and AbuSulayman (1989:27) discuss the controversy between the philosophers and the theologians. They try to settle the controversy by saying that "without reason, the truths of revelation cannot be appreciated; nor can they be recognized for what they are; namely, Divine, and acknowledged as such. The claims of revelation would then become indistinguishable from other claims, including the absurd. When acceptance of revelation is not based upon reason, it is subjective, arbitrary, and whimsical."

all human actions are related to Islam and that they shall serve the purpose of a Muslim civilization.<sup>169</sup>

The term *ummatic* is developed further by Al-Faruqi. He says that ummatism has the purpose to “make actionalism collective”.<sup>170</sup> The idea is founded on the understanding that the ideal society is “a society properly speaking in the *Gesellschaft* sense of the term, not in the *Gemeinschaft* sense”.<sup>171</sup> The use of “*Gesellschaft*” and “*Gemeinschaft*” can be seen as a technique of using key terms to stress the importance of a statement, and to inform the reader of one’s familiarity with ongoing academic discussions. The “*Gesellschaft*” society promoted by al-Faruqi can be understood as a society based on associations.<sup>172</sup> The basic association between individuals in such a society is the bond shaped by Islam.

Unlike the political theories of liberalism the ummatist theory is one where government governs most, not least, and where sovereignty belongs to God and His law, not to the arbitrary will of the majority; and where the ultimate good is the divine pattern, not the *eudaemonia* of the members. As a member of the *ummah* the individual Muslim is not a conscript, but a volunteer for life, perpetually mobilized to bring about actualization of the absolute on earth. The *ummah* is a society where actionalism is totalist, not totalitarian, authoritative, but not authoritarian.<sup>173</sup>

A society founded on *ummatism* is a society where arbitrary decision-making does not exist. The will of the members of the society is subordinated to a divine pattern. The latter corresponds to the “ultimate good”. To be a Muslim – and a member of the *umma* – is to promote the divine pattern, that is, to display to others the highest order of a society. The quotation underlines that “actionalism” is a completeness or a wholeness, but not totalitarianism, and that it has an authority without being authoritarian. The *ummatic* society encouraged by al-Faruqi is not a society in line with the liberal traditions in Europe and North America. To be noted is that in the quotation a Greek word – *eudaemonia* - is

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<sup>169</sup>Under the heading “Ummatism” al-Faruqi states that “Islamic actionalism means to transform the world into Paradise. Everything that natural science and technology prescribe for such a transformation becomes a religious duty incumbent upon every Muslim” (al-Faruqi 1992:76). In al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:87 the term *ummatic* is used in a context concerned with the outline of an “ummatic scheme for the ‘Islamization of knowledge’”.

<sup>170</sup>Al-Faruqi 1992:76.

<sup>171</sup>Al-Faruqi 1992:77,116f.

<sup>172</sup>The terms “*Gemeinschaft*” (“community”) and “*Gesellschaft*” (“society/association”) are not accompanied by any clear cut definitions. There have been a discussion in, for example, the field of sociology about the use of the terms. They are often related to the theoretical sociology of Ferdinand Toennies. See, for example, Abercrombie, Hill & Turner 1988:103,253.

<sup>173</sup>Al-Faruqi 1992:77f.

used. In ethics the term is used to designate a “doctrine of bliss”.<sup>174</sup> In the present context the use of *eudaemonia* shows al-Faruqi’s philosophical training and is used as a polemic against a “materialist” standpoint. However, the principal function of the term appears to be to strengthen the credibility of the author. In general, the use of words of German, Greek or Latin origin to increase the status of the author is common.<sup>175</sup>

The English adjective *ummatic* is part of the conscious creation of a mixed language. As has been stated above, al-Faruqi argues that many Arabic terms are not translatable into English.<sup>176</sup> The Arabic terms are usually kept in an Arabic form and are usually not made into adjectives, which also stresses the importance of the few terms that are given adjectival forms. In addition to incorporating a set of Islamic terms into the English language, a replacement of central terms is recommended. Examples are to replace “nature” and “natural” for “Cosmos” or “universe”, or terms such as “natural laws” and “natural selections” for “Divine laws” or “cosmic laws” and “Divine selection”.<sup>177</sup> Al-Najjar’s idea to replace certain terms shows his desire to make the superior position of Islam in relation to science visible even in the terminology of science.

The creation of an Islamic English also entails forming words or phrases in English that may develop into concepts. Terms such as “science” and “Islam” are formed into new concepts: they are given a specific meaning in order to support the position of the IIT. One such conceptualized phrase that one commonly sees is “Islamic vision”.<sup>178</sup> “Islamic vision” signifies an approach where the Islamic tradition is present in all fields of life. In the case of science and knowledge in general, the “Islamic vision” is expected to “bring Islamic knowledge to the secular system and modern knowledge to the Islamic system”.<sup>179</sup> AbuSulayman states that the “vision” *must* affect their [the Muslims’] perception, understanding, appreciation and apprehension of the values of Islam. It *must* lie in the Muslim’s capacity to be moved by the moral imperative, his sensitivity to the mov-

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<sup>174</sup>In the *Encyclopedia Britannica* the term “eudaemonism” is applied to a type of self-realization theory that makes happiness the chief good for humans.

<sup>175</sup>See, for example, al-Najjar 1988:139 and al-Faruqi 1992:22f.

<sup>176</sup>Al-Faruqi 1986:11.

<sup>177</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:148. Another example of a similar discussion is AbuSulayman when he, under the heading “Un-Islamic Concepts and Terminology” states that there is a lack of order within the field of Islamic studies among Muslims. He points at the use of references to foreign systems and political terminology. He states that Muslims have an insufficient knowledge of these systems and they approach them in an inappropriate manner. See AbuSulayman 1988:113–117.

<sup>178</sup>See e.g. al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:14f.

<sup>179</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:15. For a statement stressing the importance of an “Islamic vision” in science and education, see Bakr 1989:107f. In relation to the understanding of the “Islamic vision” a form of correct Islamic infrastructure and education must be shaped. To understand the authentic meaning of terms the scholars of the early Islamic tradition must be studied, and especially Muhammad and his context. See AbuSulayman 1988:105f.

ing appeal of Islam".<sup>180</sup> It should be stressed that it is an "Islamic" vision and not an "Muslim" vision. The term "Muslim" is considered to be more of an ethnic label, on the same level as French, English or German.<sup>181</sup> In his work, al-Faruqi turned against groups or movements such as the Malaysian Islamic Study Group. In his view such groups or movements were in opposition to the idea of an *umma*, and therefore in opposition to his understanding of an "Islamic vision".<sup>182</sup>

One example of the interpretation of Islamic terms comes from the work of Husaini, who says that the orientation of social sciences towards Islam requires "an innovative mentality (*ijtihadiyya*) and creatively imitative (*taqlidiyya*) mentality".<sup>183</sup> These two Arabic words have positive connotations and are the opposite of "pure or blind imitation (*taqlid mahd*)".<sup>184</sup> Even though the meaning of the word *idjtihād* has been discussed for a long time among Muslims, Husaini's definitions are influenced by the contemporary discourse concerning the Islamization of science.<sup>185</sup> Consequently, the terms are interpreted or modified in order to make room for, and connect, modern science with the Islamic tradition.

A further point of interest is the way English terms are commented upon and interpreted. In discussions concerning the field of political science, AbuSulayman says that words such as democracy and sovereignty are "alien to our culture", that is, they are un-Islamic.<sup>186</sup> The Islamic term to match democracy is *shūrā*. "Democracy" is defined as a term rooted in Western civilization.<sup>187</sup> AbuSulayman says that it

does not signify merely the procedural measures of choosing political leaders. It is a natural extension of the materialistic philosophy that regards man as a physical entity whose value is measured in terms of the pragmatic or utilitarian sense of his usefulness to the 'state', society, and the world. The spiritual aspect of man's existence, which is his real value, is not stressed in the system. In essence, democracy is no more than an amalgamation of individuals who, by forming a majority, assume the right and the power to propagate their thoughts and

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<sup>180</sup>AbuSulayman 1981:103. My italics.

<sup>181</sup>See, for example, al-Hashimi 1981:56.

<sup>182</sup>See the characterization of the ideas of al-Faruqi, especially his understanding of the MSA. Al-Faruqi's critique of groups such as the Malaysian Islamic Study Group has been seen as an expression of ethnocentrism (Quraishi 1986:9).

<sup>183</sup>Husaini 1981:152.

<sup>184</sup>Husaini 1981:152.

<sup>185</sup>See Husaini 1981:149. See also al-Faruqi 1986.

<sup>186</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:113f.

<sup>187</sup>For a shorter discussion on democracy versus *shūrā*, see Ghazi 1988:125.

achieve their personal interests, while making minimal concessions to minorities.<sup>188</sup>

To AbuSulayman, the secular foundation of democracy is disturbing, because it does not include a higher reality above the level of the human being. That is, the system – or present ideas – of democracy is not subordinated to another system based on the word of God – the Quran. It is important to note that the democratic system appears in the eyes of AbuSulayman as an order which suppresses the rights of minorities. Therefore, an Islamic political science must find another concept or system, specifically rooted in Islam.

By definition, *al Shūrā* derives from a philosophical perception essentially different from that of democracy. The difference lies in the notion of justice as a concrete fact of existence which man arrives at through his own nature and Divine revelation, and which he endeavours to attain irrespective of his personal desires and interests. As a method, the system of *al Shūrā* provides the procedure whereby Muslims sit together and deliberate upon important matters to arrive at and be bound by conclusions in the light of the philosophical concept of justice. If the issue under consideration does not concern justice but a case of preferring one to the other, there is no harm in adopting measures such as voting, abiding by the point of view of the minority, etc. The same measures could be resorted to if the discussion reached a deadlock in the absence of an authentic analogy. (...) If we concentrate on the philosophical background of the concepts pertaining to this or that system, we will be able to develop insight into the nature of Islamic political systems, whose processes for arriving at and executing decisions are totally different from those of the West. Blind Westernization will not only cause us to drift away from our avowed goals but will ultimately lead to catastrophic results.<sup>189</sup>

The situation of minorities in a contemporary democracy is compared with the situation of minorities in the ideal – and Islamic – system. The justice of the *ash-shūrā* system is founded on the nature of mankind and on the revelation. The term itself is considered to imply a method. In general, *ash-shūrā* is translated “consultation” and Muslims sometimes stress that the word expresses an ideal manner in which human beings should conduct their affairs.<sup>190</sup> The expression

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<sup>188</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:114.

<sup>189</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:114f.

<sup>190</sup>The word *shūrā* appears once in the Quran in verse 42:38. *Sūrā* 42 is entitled *surāt ash-shūrā*. In the Quranic context the word is translated “consultation”. There are also various levels in which “consultation” can be conducted, such as consultation between man and wife or between rulers and ruled. For an example of interpretation of the term see the commentaries to the verse in Yusuf Ali’s translation of the Quran.

“authentic analogy” is probably a reference to the legal principle of *qiyās* (“deduction by analogy”). The possibilities of the method of *qiyās* should be exhausted before one turns to measures such as voting. The study of a term such as *shūrā* is said to bring about a knowledge of the Islamic political system and such a knowledge can be used to develop a system containing processes and modes for executing decisions. Finally, AbuSulayman underlines the danger of “blind Westernization”.

#### *The use of the Quran*

In several of the books published by the IIIT, Quranic verses are interpreted on the pages before the actual texts start. The verses that appear to be the most popular are *sūra* 96:1–5 and verse 78 in *sūra* 16.<sup>191</sup> The former verses are translated into English in the following way

Read in the name of your Sustainer,  
Who has Created man out of a germ cell.  
Read – for your Sustainer is the Most bountiful One.  
Who has taught (man) the use of the pen.  
Taught Man what he did not know.<sup>192</sup>

The verses 96:1–5 are often used to support statements on the obligation of Muslims to pursue knowledge.<sup>193</sup> They are applied in various contexts to show that there is a Quranic exhortation to study the cosmos, that is, to understand the creation of God.<sup>194</sup> This use of popular Quranic verses can have different purposes. It may constitute a point of departure for ideas presented by the IIIT: science in all its forms is a way to understand the creation of God. However, different translations are used. In al-Najjar’s rendering, the verses 96:1–5 are translated as follows:

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<sup>191</sup>In the larger Islamic tradition verses 96:1–5 are usually understood to be from the early Meccan period and part of the first revelation to Muhammad. The verse 16:78 is conceived as partly Meccan and partly Medinan, see Watt 1967:315 for verses 96:1–5 and Watt 1967:130,132 for verse 16:78.

<sup>192</sup>See the front pages of e.g. *Islamization of Knowledge* (1989); Lodhi (ed.) (1989), *Toward Islamization of Disciplines* (1989) and *Al Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (1992).

<sup>193</sup>See al-Najjar 1988:136. Al-Najjar gives various examples of how Muhammad and the Quranic text stress the importance of seeking knowledge, and how it honours persons who have knowledge. He mentions the following verses: 20:114, 39:9, 58:11 and 62:2. See al-Najjar 1988:136.

<sup>194</sup>See al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:9f. In their perspective the study of the cosmos will reveal the “Divine power at work in the ordered universe. The purpose behind them all is to prepare man to acquire learning and promote civilization” (al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:9f.). For other examples of Quranic verses that urge humans to work actively in the search for knowledge, see al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:5–11.

Read in the Name of thy Lord and Cherisher,  
Who created man out of a clinging clot of congealed blood (a tiny piece  
of flesh surrounded with blood clinging to the inner side of the womb)  
Read! And thy Lord is most bountiful,  
He Who taught with (by the use of) the pen,  
Taught man that which he knew not.<sup>195</sup>

The text put in brackets is al-Najjar's interpretation – and explanation – of the Quranic text. In the same way as in the former translation of the verses, there is a modern understanding of the text. Modern phenomena as “germ cell” are used in the translation to connect the text to our present understanding of how life is created. Translations of Quranic verses contain, as in the quotation above, a florid language, and are written in a somewhat archaic form of English. This may be an attempt to strengthen the authenticity of the message. Sometimes there is a tendency to interpret the Quranic text as if it referred to modern science, for example, earth sciences and hydrology.<sup>196</sup> Science must be subordinated to a religious order, and Quranic verses are quoted both in order to show that modern science is compatible with Islam, but also that science is a phenomenon that must be subordinated to the word of God. Quranic verses are, therefore, quoted as support for these views.<sup>197</sup> The verses 96:1–5 are accompanied by verse 16:78:

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<sup>195</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:136. Another example is al-Alwani and Khalil's version “Read in the name of your Lord Who created: Created man out of a [mere] clot of congealed blood. Read! And your Lord is Most Bountiful. He Who Thought [the use of] the pen. Taught man that which he knew not”. They say that the verses “contain two commands each of which has both a Divine and human aspect.” The first aspect is the command, i.e. “to receive, understand and proclaim the Revealed Message” and the second command urge “mankind to study the cosmos and decipher its affinities and its multifarious components, all ruled by Allah (SWT) and intimating His Oneness.” See al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:8f.

<sup>196</sup>See, for example, Bakr 1989:107f. To stress this statement, Bakr quotes verse 164 in *sūra* 2. Bakr's manner of interpreting the Quran is similar to the understanding of the Quran held by Maurice Bucaille. Another example close to Bucaille is Syed, who interprets the Quranic text in the same fashion as Bakr. Syed aims at showing how modern findings in embryology are in agreement with the Quranic text. He also refers to Bucaille and to one of Bucaille's followers, Keith L. Moore. See Syed 1989:119–129. One conclusion Syed draws from his statements is that the correct interpretation of the Quranic verses was not possible fourteen centuries ago. In general, he says that in a situation when our knowledge increases our understanding of Quranic verses will also increase (Syed 1989:128).

<sup>197</sup>One example of the use of a Quranic verse is AbuSulayman quoting the Quran 4:135, stating that the verse includes an effort to come to terms with the problems existing in the educational systems and social conduct among Muslims. The verse also includes the foundation for reform of education and can solve the crisis of thought. The verse says: “Uphold justice, and witness unto Allah alone, even if this goes against your own persons, or your parents and relatives. Do not follow your personal passion, lest you violate justice”. See AbuSulayman 1981:111. In order to develop a Quranic perspective on the philosophy of science, Golshani (1989:79–89) uses the same technique. He views the Quranic verses as facts from which a true philosophy of science can be established.

And Allah has brought you forth from your mother's wombs knowing nothing – but He has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and minds, so that you might have cause to be grateful.

The verse tells the reader who the creator is and reminds him or her of the position of human beings in relation to God. To seek knowledge, which is the emphasized theme in 96:1–5, is then combined with this verse stressing the position of God as the creator of mankind, who gives people the possibility to seek knowledge, i.e. to gain knowledge of his creation. Hence, the usage of Quranic verses can be viewed as an attempt to dispel the idea that Islam is incompatible with modern science, and to point at the true construction of the world.

#### *The use of non-Muslim thinkers*

The repeatedly expressed idea that the contemporary Muslim *umma*, and the whole world, is in a state of crisis is a central concern in this position. In an article dealing with the possibility of the Islamization of the discipline of psychology, the previously mentioned psychologist Abul Hamid al-Hashimi states that the phenomenon he designates “Western psychology” has paid too much attention to the “physical aspects of the psyche”.<sup>198</sup> This is a misdirected interest, because it implies a negligence of the spiritual and moral aspects of the personality. This leads al-Hashimi to the conclusion that, although “Western man” knows a lot about different aspects of the physical world, “he still stands on the threshold of real knowledge of his own psyche”.<sup>199</sup> The material desires of “Western man” have turned him away from an understanding of himself. In the end of this paragraph, al-Hashimi quotes Alexis Carrel to support his ideas. In a footnote, he describes Carrel as a scientist specialized in chemistry, biology and physiology and his book *Man, the Unknown* is said to be an important and extensive work in this subject.<sup>200</sup> Carrel is also referred to by al-Najjar. He states that Carrel is an example of a foreign writer who has shown an effort to write on science from a “true believing perspective”.<sup>201</sup> The use of Alexis Carrel as a source of reference among Muslims has been observed by Youssef M. Choueiri who analyses Sayyid Qutb's relationship to Carrel.<sup>202</sup> Among all European and American historians, scientists and intellectuals, Qutb had, Choueiri says, singled out Carrel as the one to praise; yet Carrel is certainly not a household name in Europe or North America. There is a current of Fascist ideology in Carrel's approach to

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<sup>198</sup>Al-Hashimi 1981:54.

<sup>199</sup>Al-Hashimi 1981:54.

<sup>200</sup>Al-Hashimi 1981:68n.

<sup>201</sup>Al-Najjar 1988:145.

<sup>202</sup>See Choueiri 1990:142–149.

human nature. Carrel also joined the French Ministry of Public Health during the time of the Vichy government.<sup>203</sup> Choueiri holds that in “Islamic radicalist literature his views on modern civilization, morality and human knowledge are quoted and requoted, but often at second hand”.<sup>204</sup> Both writers may have read the works of Sayyid Quṭb, or texts influenced by his ideas in which Alexis Carrel is quoted as a distinguished representative of the West who criticizes Western civilization.

Another characteristic in texts written by adherents of the IIIT is the presentation of ideas and theories of scholars and scientists originating in Europe and North America. Some examples are Charles Darwin, Max Weber and Thomas S. Kuhn. Muhammad Ma’ruf<sup>205</sup> discusses Darwin’s role in relation to the theory of evolution.<sup>206</sup> In particular, Ma’ruf concentrates on the use of evolutionary theory by anthropologists. In his view, evolutionism is an underlying presupposition in the field of anthropology, but also in other fields of sciences.<sup>207</sup> He states:

The picture of man that emerges out of the pages of anthropological literature is painted on an evolutionary canvas. (...) From an anthropological point of view, what remains to be done now is to study the ways in which man is unique: ways in which he has changed to evolve as a cultural and moral being as well as a biological organism. The principal instrument of human adaption is culture.<sup>208</sup>

In Ma’ruf’s view, anthropology is to be a discipline that studies the nature and genuine characteristics of human beings. Therefore, anthropologists’ use of evolutionism is characterized by an endeavour to combine the study of organic and cultural evolution.<sup>209</sup> Consequently, Ma’ruf devotes part of his article to the link between anthropology and human biology.<sup>210</sup> In two paragraphs he treats the development of “Social Darwinism” and “Cultural Evolutionism”.<sup>211</sup> In a final part he discusses other trends in anthropology such as the relationship with phenom-

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<sup>203</sup>Choueiri 1990:123,149.

<sup>204</sup>Choueiri 1990:142.

<sup>205</sup>In 1987 Ma’ruf taught in the department of Behavioural and Social Sciences, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, USA. He has written a review article in *AJISS* entitled “The Rescuing of Muslim Anthropological Thought”. In this article Ma’ruf reviews Akbar S. Ahmed’s *Toward Islamic Anthropology: Definition, dogma and directions* (1986) and Talal Asad’s *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (1986). See Ma’ruf 1987:305–320. He also has an article in *Social and Natural Sciences: The Islamic perspective* (1981). See Ma’ruf (Mauroof) 1981:116–139.

<sup>206</sup>For another example of a disapproving presentation of Darwin, see Brohi 1988:7–9.

<sup>207</sup>Ma’ruf 1989:165f.

<sup>208</sup>Ma’ruf 1989:169.

<sup>209</sup>Ma’ruf 1989:170.

<sup>210</sup>See Ma’ruf 1989:170–175.

<sup>211</sup>See Ma’ruf 1989:175–183.

ena such as sociobiology. In Ma'ruf's perspective, there is an anthropological project "to fill the gap of information on humans in biological evolutionary theory".<sup>212</sup> The ideas on evolution and culture are founded on categories based on Western civilization, and are therefore under Western control. Geertz's studies of Islam are singled out as an example. He concludes that "the idea of progress is a significant element in the construction of hierarchies".<sup>213</sup> On this matter he says that it is necessary to build an Islamic notion of progress before Western typological and taxonomic categories are adopted.<sup>214</sup>

Thomas S. Kuhn's ideas on scientific paradigms are used to introduce the idea of an "ummatic paradigm".<sup>215</sup> In the discussions Kuhn is referred to together with Karl Marx, Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault, although these thinkers are used in different ways. Al-Faruqi's reference to Max Weber can serve as an example "Man is indeed a *homo economicus*, not in Max Weber's sense of man's subjection to sovereign economic laws which dominate his activity. In themselves, economic laws may be sovereign; but the economic pattern to which man subjects his life is his own deliberate choice".<sup>216</sup> In this context al-Faruqi constructs an "Islamic" definition of the nature of human beings, and their relation to economic matters. In al-Faruqi's interpretation, Islam is an ideology superior to any economic laws, and Max Weber's name is used to support his own interpretation of Islam as an ideology superior to other ideologies, particularly those of European or North American origin.<sup>217</sup> This way of using well-known names is common in the works of the adherents of al-Faruqi and the IIIT. A. K. Brohi, for example, brushes aside the ideas of Darwin, Freud, Marx, Herbert Spencer and others.<sup>218</sup> The reason for this, except for the irreligious character of their ideas, is that Muslims require an Islamic approach to modern knowledge for their own survival.<sup>219</sup> On the other hand, the effort to combine the Quranic text with the statements of Einstein and Max Planck to support the idea of the Quran as containing ultimate laws shows that scholars in the West are not always used as examples of the bad guys.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>212</sup>Ma'ruf 1989:188.

<sup>213</sup>Ma'ruf 1989:187.

<sup>214</sup>Ma'ruf 1989:187. It should be noted that, in this article, Ma'ruf utilises mostly literature 25 or 30 years old to exemplify ideas within the field of anthropology. More recent discussions on methodological matters in anthropology are not touched upon at all.

<sup>215</sup>Langgung (1989:116–129) presents the idea of an "ummatic paradigm" in the field of psychology.

<sup>216</sup>Al-Faruqi 1992:169.

<sup>217</sup>For the context of the discussion on Islam and materialism, see al-Faruqi 1992:166–170.

<sup>218</sup>Brohi 1988:7–11.

<sup>219</sup>At least that is one possible interpretation of the concluding part of Brohi's article. See Brohi 1988:12. For other examples of brief treatments of European or North American theorists, see al-Faruqi 1981:15; Siddiqui 1981:42ff.; al-Faruqi 1992:54,71,74 and Golshani 1989:77f.,83,86.

<sup>220</sup>Golshani 1989:86.

A more elaborate discussion of the ideas of theorists in social science and the humanities can be found in works by Mona Abul-Fadl and Ilyas Ba-Yunus.<sup>221</sup> The article by Abul-Fadl in *AJISS* (1991) is written in a language which demonstrates a knowledge of contemporary scholarly discussions in Europe and North America. Popular key words such as “discourse”, “metaphors”, “symbolism”, “postmodernism”, “intercultural”, “paradigm” and “hermeneutics” are used. The modern vocabulary of the social sciences and the humanities is combined with Latin terms and Islamic words such as *fiṭric*, *tawḥīdī* and *fiqhī*. In the text and in the footnotes there are references to Greek sources, Ibn Khaldūn and other classical Arab scholars as well as to Jürgen Habermas. The article can be conceived as an attempt to present the view that Islam is an ideology or culture superior to other ideologies/cultures. Ba-Yunus elaborates on the possibility of an Islamic paradigm in sociology.

several prophets of Allah, from Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, to ʿĪsā and Muhammad (may peace be upon all of them) were above all protesters, challengers, and callers for revolutionary change. All of them were charismatic leaders whose charisma still mystifies a large part of humanity even today. In fact, the Qur’anic accounts of the prophets may teach a few lessons to those sociologists who are interested in analyzing charismatic growth and revolutionary change in society.<sup>222</sup>

Thus, the Quran provides methodological lessons for sociologists with a preference for a Weberian approach in analysing society. These statements by Ba-Yunus can be interpreted as expressing a wish to give the Quranic text a sociological meaning. To be noted is the use of “in fact” to introduce a provocative statement, provocative to Euro-American sociologists as well as to Muslims. Abul-Fadl and Ba-Yunus criticize Western civilization in terms familiar to a Western academic audience, a fact which may be due to their education in England and the USA. They are both educated and active in a Western context and relatively young. Thus, it seems that Abul-Fadl and Ba-Yunus represent a new way of relating Islam to phenomena such as sociology or cultural studies.

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<sup>221</sup>See Abul-Fadl 1991:15–43 and Ba-Yunus 1991:45–66.

<sup>222</sup>Ba-Yunus 1991:64. See also Ba-Yunus 1981.

## The Use of History by al-Faruqi and Adherents to the IIIT Position

The advocates of the IIIT consider, as most Muslims do, the *sunna* of Muhammad as next in terms of authority to the Quran.<sup>223</sup> Al-Alwani and Khalil state that the *sunna* will “help govern the Ummah’s affairs”.<sup>224</sup> In their perspective, it is important to understand how the *sunna* should be employed in a modern context. They state that the *sunna* should not be interpreted in a literal way. The sources of Islam must be studied with a “contemporary Islamic outlook” in mind.<sup>225</sup> In their concluding remarks concerning the status of the *sunna* they say:

The Prophet’s Sunnah, his way of life as well as that of his close Companions represent the objective, practical embodiment of that [the Quranic] intellectual framework. (...) A correct reading of the Sunnah and of the aims of the Prophet’s implementation of the message of the Qur’an as well as his making it a vivid reality in the lives of men, will put an end to the darkness of ignorance, hatred, conflict and wasted energies in our Ummah.<sup>226</sup>

The time and environment of Muhammad and his companions is the ideal model to implement for al-Alwani and Khalil. It can be seen as a time of perfection.<sup>227</sup> They stress the importance of the practice of Muhammad as a norm for Muslims to follow. In order to promote their message, references to Muhammad, his companions and the first four caliphs as ideal figures are common. Al-Faruqi states that Islam is a meta-religion in history and the most perfect expression of it in the physical world is the Islamic *umma*. To be a meta-religion means to be superior to other religions, but able to include other religions in its Islamic framework.<sup>228</sup>

In relation to knowledge and science, Muhammad constitutes an exemplary individual. He constitutes a pattern for Muslims in their search for knowledge and their endeavour in scientific enterprises.<sup>229</sup> The advocates of the present position

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<sup>223</sup>This is in accordance with the standard view of Muslims and the often pronounced idea that the *sunna* explains and clarifies the Quran. Al-Alwani and Khalil (1991:28f.) underline the relationship between the Quran and *sunna* by stating that the latter was never questioned by the early Muslims. Thus, they refer to the controversies that developed concerning the status of the *sunna* in relation to the Quran.

<sup>224</sup>Al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:35.

<sup>225</sup>Al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:37.

<sup>226</sup>Al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:37f.

<sup>227</sup>According to Mackeen (1988:68), “Its impact was absorbed in the following centuries and found itself permanently enshrined in the entire range of Islamic literature”.

<sup>228</sup>Al-Faruqi 1989:444,449.

<sup>229</sup>Muhammad is considered as a perfect example in most fields. For instance, AbuSulayman (1988:95) pays tribute to Muhammad as a political leader.

paint a picture of this period of time as an epoch when there was no division between religion (the spiritual) and politics (the temporal).<sup>230</sup> In various texts, the Medinan society, and the time of the four first caliphs, is depicted as a balanced and harmonious society. Therefore, words such as “reconstruct” or “proper understanding” are used to outline the contemporary Muslims relationship to *sunna*.

*The classical age and classical scholars – a time of unity and balance*

The classical age of Islam is often conceived as constituting an epoch starting with the time of Muhammad and ending with the onset of a more or less unspecified era of Muslim decline. Most authors refer in general terms to an era of scientific and cultural prosperity, but do not define it in time. Najjar, who is more specific, maintains that Muslim civilization came to a halt in 1662 because of the battle of Christian armies against the Muslims.<sup>231</sup> Muslims have since then been subject to a “continuous process of fragmentation”.<sup>232</sup> AbuSulayman mentions Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Cordoba, Aleppo, Delhi and Istanbul as centres whose rise and fall was linked to a division between thought (Islamic vision) and action.<sup>233</sup> AbuSulayman appears to hold the view that the ideal Islamic society was characterized by a united harmonious vision among its members. The advocates of the position of al-Faruqi also stress that the early Muslim societies were in the forefront in terms of scientific development. Muslims were superior in the fields of science.<sup>234</sup> For example, Syed states

At the rise of the Islamic Empire, the Muslims were at the forefront in all sciences, technology, medicine, etc. and contributed immensely to the advancement of knowledge without which the Western Civilization would have still existed in the dark ages. Unfortunately, the Muslims deviated from the Islamic path and fell down from the exalted position to what we are now today – with colonial minds possessing brain wasted non-Islamic attitudes and practices in science.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> AbuSulayman 1988:97. See also AbuSulayman 1981:105.

<sup>231</sup> Al-Najjar 1988:137. The idea of 1662 as the first year of decay can be extended to the time of the enlightenment. AbuSulayman has described the decline in the *umma* after the enlightenment. See AbuSulayman 1988:95–98.

<sup>232</sup> Al-Najjar 1988:137.

<sup>233</sup> AbuSulayman 1981:106.

<sup>234</sup> In matters concerning technology, Husaini states that “the classical and early medieval Muslim educational systems were, indeed, Islamic integrated technical educational systems. They produced the Islamic, integrated, ‘scientist-philosophers.’” The picture of an ideal is presented and Husaini uses it as a prototype for a contemporary situation. See Husaini 1981:150.

<sup>235</sup> Syed 1989:119.

In this quotation the role of Muslims as intermediaries in the transmission of knowledge and science is emphasised. The fall of Muslims from this position is seen as closely related to the fall of Islamicness. In the end, Syed appears to claim that the separation of religion from science and from other fields in society leads to a disaster.<sup>236</sup>

In a number of articles, the challenges faced by contemporary Muslims are compared to earlier challenges in history. Mackeen compares the situation of today's Muslims with the situation when Muslims were challenged by Greek philosophy.<sup>237</sup> He says that keeping the "understanding and preservation of the integrity of the Islamic world-view" alive was the foundation for stability and made it possible for Muslims in the early times to "withstand the strains and stresses accompanying the internal expansion of Islam".<sup>238</sup>

The adherents of the position of al-Faruqī and the IIT not only refer to a prosperous historical time as a pattern for contemporary actions, but also use a set of prominent historical individuals in the history of Islam as models for Muslims. The foremost example, as has been stated above, is Muhammad, but one also finds other historical names such as al-Bukhārī (d. 870) al-Tirmidhī (d. 892-3), Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (d. 1209), al-Fārābī (d. 950) and Ibn Taymīya in the texts of the present position. Ibn Taymīya is referred to more frequently as a source of inspiration than are the others.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>236</sup>For ideas on the effects of the separation in the field of politics, see Ghazi 1988:127. AbuSulayman argues that the "dichotomy between the political and the intellectual leadership was the main cause of the weakness and gradual withering away of Islamic knowledge and culture and also of the tyranny, ignorance, and despotism of the politicians. At present, as a result of the historical vacuum created by that dichotomy and the military, political, and cultural impact of Western colonial influence, there is still a dualism in knowledge itself". See AbuSulayman 1988:103.

<sup>237</sup>On the idea of an early Islamization of foreign ideas the following is stated in the introduction to *Toward Islamization of Disciplines* (1989:3): "Indeed, since the 'Abbāsī Khulafā' charged the scholars of their day with the task of Islamization of Greek, Persian and Indian knowledge, the same demand has not been repeated with such clear vision in a millennium of Muslim history. Muslim scholars were clearly asked to shoulder the burden of Islamizing of their discipline. (...) The world *ummah* of Islam must master and transcend that legacy if it is to reconstruct itself and build a world order fulfilling the Divine norms pattern". The introduction to this work is unsigned. Obviously the "Divine norms pattern" includes every field of science and the idea of Islam as an all-encompassing religion is once again manifested. Significantly, Islam as a phenomenon embracing all spheres of society is presented as a matter of survival.

<sup>238</sup>Mackeen 1988:68. In a way Mackeen can be seen as pessimistic concerning the future. He says that "although the predicament of the Muslims of this age may be compared in one sense with the positions of the early Muslims (...) the contest between them in the nature of ability of their striking power seems so helplessly marked that nothing short of a major offensive to halt the further disintegration of the mentality of the Muslims can save the situation". See Mackeen 1988:70f.

<sup>239</sup>See AbuSulayman 1981:106; Abu Saud 1988:88; Siddiqi 1988:167; Ahmad 1988:293,297; Al-Faruqī & AbuSulayman 1989:25; AbuSulayman 1989:49f.; Lamyā al-Faruqī 1989:468; Mursi & Rashidi 1989:153,155 and al-Faruqī 1992:123. In several references these authors point at Ibn Taymīya and his discussion on the possibility of *idjihad* and on leadership in general.

A particular group of individuals are linked to a more specific discussion concerning science. The names repeated most often are Ibn Khaldūn<sup>240</sup> and al-Ghazzālī.<sup>241</sup> To lesser extent the names of al-Bīrūnī (d. 1050)<sup>242</sup> and al-Khwārazmī (d. 875)<sup>243</sup> are mentioned. It is significant that the various names are usually simply enumerated to support a given statement. One of the few occasions when one of the individuals above is introduced in more detail is in an article by Ba-Yunus. He says, in a passage on the origins of sociology, that it is customary to trace the roots of modern sociology to Auguste Comte (d. 1857), thereby forgetting the works of Ibn Khaldūn. Writing about contemporary sociology, Ba-Yunus concludes that this discipline is a product of the post-industrial civilization of Europe and North America. Ba-Yunus stresses that it is not obvious that a continuity within sociology from Ibn Khaldūn to Comte would have enriched the Islamic tradition, but he says that it “could have saved contemporary sociology from its present extreme provincialism”.<sup>244</sup> His critique appears to be founded on the idea that today’s sociology is so intimately related to a European and North American tradition that it is more or less useless for a Muslim studying the Muslim world. According to Ma’ruf, European and North American scholars “have not paid sufficient attention to the relevance of Quranic and post-Quranic Islamic idea-sets in their evaluation of Ibn Khaldūn’s genius”.<sup>245</sup> In Ma’ruf’s article, Ibn Khaldūn is mostly referred to in a unproblematic fashion; he is not presented thoroughly and he is referred to in the same way as to contemporary anthropologists. In Brohi’s view, religion in the eyes of anthropologists has low status and is sometimes seen as little more than a source of superstition.<sup>246</sup> The rival claims of science and religion as sources of knowledge have been central in a debate which has been going on since the 19th century. The outcome of the debate has forced the representatives of religion on the defensive by scientists acting as philosophers of science presenting a outlook which answered all the metaphysical questions which were earlier seen from a religious view. Brohi continues by stating that religion was largely replaced by disciplines such epistemology, cosmology and ontology, rational psychology and natural theology.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>240</sup>See Siddiqi 1981:47f.; Ma’ruf 1981:120–135; Abu Saud 1988:88; Siddiqi 1988:167; Ba-Yunus 1988:274; Dani 1988:322f.; Muhammad 1989:23; AbuSulayman 1989:50f.; Ahmed 1989:231; Lamyā al-Faruqi 1989:468; Zubairi 1989:47ff.,59 and al-Faruqi 1992:146,172.

<sup>241</sup>See al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:36; Abu Saud 1988:84,88; Siddiqi 1988:167; AbuSulayman 1989:32; Golshani 1989:86; Lamyā al-Faruqi 1989:468 and al-Faruqi 1992:1,42,54f.

<sup>242</sup>See Ma’ruf 1981:122,126f.; Kazi 1988:186; Siddiqi 1988:194 and Zubairi 1989:51.

<sup>243</sup>See Kazi 1988:186; Siddiqi 1988:194 and Zubairi 1989:51.

<sup>244</sup>Ba-Yunus 1988:274.

<sup>245</sup>Ma’ruf 1981:124.

<sup>246</sup>Brohi 1988:6.

<sup>247</sup>Brohi 1988:6.

In his perspective, the Quran and the religion of Islam must reclaim their position as *the* source for human life.

*The Quran and history*

The references to the Quranic text are numerous. I will here provide only a few examples by way of illustration. Abul Hamid Siddiqi on the relationship between the Quran and history:

The Quran is not a book of history but it is a divine verdict on history. The superb style in which the Holy Quran has discussed the different phases of the progress of various nations – their rise, development and decline, as well as the causes underlying these changes – has no parallel in the historical records of the world. It was under the impact of the Quran that man learned to furnish answers to the two fundamental questions ‘Why did it happen?’ and ‘How did it happen?’, that he began to fight against the conception of ‘chance’ as the motive force of change in the universe, and strove to discover the determining law of which, what man calls ‘chance’ is the visible expression. Thus, the transition from mere narration of events to their rational explanation and the introduction of logical order in the recording of them, all these developments in the human history are due to the Holy Quran.<sup>248</sup>

The first sentence illustrates a presupposition of Siddiqi’s own view. In his perception, the Quran can pass verdicts on historical events and persons because it is the word of God.<sup>249</sup> The idea is further stressed by claiming that it was under the influence of the Quran that mankind started to struggle against the thought of “chance” as the force of change in the universe. Implicitly, the statement seems to contain a critique of ideas connected with Charles Darwin and the theory of evolution. Such an interpretation of the function of the Quran in history can be interpreted as a projection backwards to find explanations of, and solutions to, present matters perceived as problematic, such as the theory of evolution. According to Siddiqi, the struggle against “chance” directed mankind towards an attempt to reveal a law – an unchangeable objective law. It is significant that the unchangeable objective law in Siddiqi’s use of the word means producing “rational explanations” for, and to understand the logical order of history. “There is no change in the laws of nature, and the physical phenomena of our age are controlled by those very laws which governed them in the past, so is the case with

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<sup>248</sup>Siddiqi 1981:41.

<sup>249</sup>In general, in Islamic studies the overall picture of the Quran is that it is difficult to extract reliable historical information from the Quranic text. For discussions of this problem, see Wansbrough 1977, Crone & Cook 1977, Cook 1981 and Rippin 1985.

the human race and its problems. (...) The Islamic view of history is universal; it is neither time-bound nor space-bound".<sup>250</sup> Siddiqi maintains that the very same law governs the events in history and in our own time. Therefore, the narration of events in the Quranic texts shall be observed as *‘ibra*.<sup>251</sup> In his view, this term means "instructive value"; a value open to interpretation, but guided by history. The early times of Islam, especially the lifetime of Muhammad, must be considered as a historical period containing "lessons" for Muslims. Siddiqi returns to the term *‘ibra* and observes that the title of one of Ibn Khaldūn's works is *kitāb al-‘ibr*. According to Siddiqi, *‘ibr* means "moral lessons". Ibn Khaldūn's title reveals, he says, the interest of Muslims in history. They surveyed the origin and aim of human development, a study that is urged by the Quran and *sunna*. Consequently, for a Muslim the history of religion is a source for ethics, law and politics as well as economics and metaphysics.<sup>252</sup> Historical events can serve as a warning to Muslims against "certain patterns of action".<sup>253</sup> There is room for the individual to work for a kind of collective salvation through the values he learns to recognize in his religious tradition.<sup>254</sup> This statement indicates that Siddiqi supports individuality in the interpretation of Islam; he supports a personal and active search for norms and values, often expressed in the framework of the term *idjtihād*.

A view that complements Siddiqi's idea of the relationship between the Quran and history is expressed by Al-Alwani and Khalil. They maintain that the texts of the Quran were revealed in specific situations and connected to specific events. In their understanding, the revelations came to "prepare people's hearts, minds and souls to accept, understand and meditate on it at the time of its revelation. People would then be able to understand it and fix its words, meanings, guidelines and directives permanently in their consciousness."<sup>255</sup> The quotation shows the importance for Muslims to study the earliest history of Islam in order to understand how the Quran was received and understood at the time of the revelation. The knowledge of the earliest understanding of the text can function as a guideline for contemporary interpretations of the Quranic text. It is unfortunate that the Quran has been understood primarily as a source of the history of the Arab nations. It should be treated, they say, as a source for all forms of knowledge and it can serve as a guide for scholars in the field of humanities and social

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<sup>250</sup>Siddiqi 1981:41f.

<sup>251</sup>The word *‘ibra* can have several possible translations, e.g. "admonition", "warning", "example", "lesson" and "that which has to be taken under consideration" (Wehr 1976:587).

<sup>252</sup>Siddiqi 1981:47f.

<sup>253</sup>Siddiqi 1981:48.

<sup>254</sup>Siddiqi 1981:45f.

<sup>255</sup>Al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:12.

sciences.<sup>256</sup> The Quranic text contains “a methodology for the discovery of the laws of nature”.<sup>257</sup> The function of the Quran on the “Islamic cultural scene” must be restored and “the Muslim’s ability to apply the Qur’an in a sound manner” must be reestablished.<sup>258</sup>

The attempt restore the place of the Quran and the Islamic traditions in the fields of science and knowledge goes against established systems of education in the Muslim countries. It is sometimes emphasized by adherents of the present position that a secular system of education was shaped in colonial times. The secular system of education created new generations of Muslims “ignorant of their Islamic legacy”.<sup>259</sup> These Muslims were suspicious of the ‘*ulamā*’. Therefore, a gap developed in the *umma* between the “Westernizing secularizers” and their opponents. The former were supported by the colonial powers and installed in power after the establishment of national states. Al-Faruqi and AbuSulayman state that the achieved result was not a “Western model”, but a caricature of it.<sup>260</sup> The circumstances faced by Muslims, especially in the fields of science and knowledge, are in the opinion of Mackeen comparable with the situation that Muslims faced in the early years of the Umayyads. In the Umayyad Muslim empire, just as today, the constitutional and legal traditions underwent massive change. During the same time the construction of Islamic thought took place. In both situations Muslims desired to maintain the “integrity of Islam” in a changing world. In times of change and challenges Mackeen argues that it is important to stick to established values.<sup>261</sup>

#### *Ideas on the study of history*

The possibilities of constructing a discipline designated “Islamic history” is discussed by Ahmad and Dani.<sup>262</sup> On the meaning of history Anis Ahmad states: “The Islamic understanding of history is that it is carried out by man’s action. The freedom of human will rather than divine determinism is, therefore, at the basis of the Islamic concept of history.”<sup>263</sup> With this as a starting point Ahmad develops a working definition of the meaning of history which contains three fundamental tenets. The first recognizes the function of guidance in the Quran and other heavenly scriptures, and accentuates the role of human beings in a given

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<sup>256</sup>Al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:14.

<sup>257</sup>Al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:44.

<sup>258</sup>Al-Alwani & Khalil 1991:22.

<sup>259</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:21.

<sup>260</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:6f.

<sup>261</sup>Mackeen 1988:70.

<sup>262</sup>Ahmad 1988:287–311 and Dani 1988:315–323.

<sup>263</sup>Ahmad 1988:287.

society. The second, Ahmad holds, “liberates history” from an understanding of history as an attempt to interpret and describe the past on the basis of fragmentary evidence as it happened.<sup>264</sup> The third stresses the freedom of will as a foundation for a moral dimension.<sup>265</sup> These three tenets give a picture of the preconditions for an Islamic discipline of history. Ahmed argues that the Quran is the *hidāya*, “guidance”, for mankind in a study of history which stresses the idea of wholeness. The idea of a moral dimension seems to indicate that there is a universal norm which humans has to take into consideration.

After a tentative description of different approaches among Muslims and non-Muslims to the study of the history of Islam, and history in general, Ahmad presents his idea in a paragraph entitled “The Historical Vision of *Tawhīd*”.<sup>266</sup> Ahmed defines the term as “the oneness and uniqueness of Allah”. It is “a revolutionary principle”. The latter means that the application of the term caused a transformation “in the vision and personality of the early Muslim *Ummah*”. Ahmad develops the meaning of *tawhīd* further by saying:

It is an assertion of the ultimate universal truth and reality about the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. (...) *Tawhīd*, in fact, was the secret of the rise and expansion of Islam as the world civilization in the seventh century A.C. The historian of religion knows, more than anyone else, that if Muslims have a future role in the history of mankind, it should emanate from *Tawhīd* alone.<sup>267</sup>

Ahmad uses the phrase “in fact” to introduce an unusual interpretation of *tawhīd*. The assertion concerning the supposed knowledge of any historian of religion appears as a statement utilized in order to support Ahmad’s personal idea on the status of the term *tawhīd*.<sup>268</sup> After the statements on the true meaning and nature of the term, Ahmad continues by developing his ideas about *tawhīd* in connection with various fields such as worship, epistemology, social transformation, economic activity and political life. *Tawhīd* as a key word in the study of history is a concept lost to modern Muslims. In the end Ahmad states that the understanding of *tawhīd* that he has presented is a frame of reference for the Muslim historian, particularly for the study of comparative religion.

From this vantage point, the historian should start his analysis of the past and present and forge a vision of the future in which man’s free

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<sup>264</sup>On this point Ahmad quotes Marvick’s *The Nature of History* (1971) and Barraclough’s *History in a Changing World* (1955) to support the claim that this idea is also found in Western historiography.

<sup>265</sup>Ahmad 1988:287.

<sup>266</sup>Ahmad 1988:302–311.

<sup>267</sup>Ahmed 1988:303.

<sup>268</sup>Ahmad’s ideas concerning *tawhīd* appears to be inspired by al-Faruqi. See Ahmad 1988:310.

will and moral choice play a central role in the social reconstruction of reality. Without a clear vision of the vital and dynamic force of *Tawhīd* in Islamic history, no transition from a tradition-bound, backward society into a modern developing society can take place. Islamic social change is a translation of *Tawhīd* into social reality. No interpretation of Islamic history can be made without taking into consideration the full meaning and comprehension of *Tawhīd*. It is the point of departure and the ultimate objective in Islam.<sup>269</sup>

The history of Islam and the historian have a crucial role to play in the formation of the future. The word *tawhīd* is the focus in this work. Through a correct interpretation of this central term Muslims will be able to construct an Islamic civilization. In this case the conceptualization of the word *tawhīd* makes it possible for Ahmad to state that a single term can be the foundation for a complete civilization.

Dani elaborates on a workable typology of Muslim historiography. He states that his typology is not a definitive statement, and that there is room for further development.<sup>270</sup> The premise of his idea is that it is feasible to construct a philosophy of history out of the Quranic text. The derived philosophy of history "can enlighten man in his effort to develop historical knowledge".<sup>271</sup> Dani recognizes various types of historical reconstruction among Muslims.<sup>272</sup> The final type is related to that of Ibn Khaldūn.<sup>273</sup> Dani stresses that Ibn Khaldūn's approach to history is sociological.

It is the individual persons, as laid down in the Holy Qurʾān, who compose the society and who are responsible for movement in the society. (...) The role of the individual in society is the deciding factor in history. It is by gathering human experiences that we add to our historical knowledge. Such experiences are seen in the long and short perspective of history. The longer the view, the better the perception man has about himself, i.e. his own nebulous place in the vast creation of Allah (SWT).<sup>274</sup>

Dani emphasizes the significance of the individual in history and stresses that the individual's place in creation can be seen more clearly in a long historical perspective. This is by Dani understood as the purpose of studying history.

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<sup>269</sup>Ahmad 1988:310f.

<sup>270</sup>Dani 1988:318.

<sup>271</sup>Dani 1988:318.

<sup>272</sup>For descriptions of the different types, see Dani 1988:318–323.

<sup>273</sup>Dani 1988:322f.

<sup>274</sup>Dani 1988:323.

Like Ahmad and Dani, AbuSulayman has stated that Muslims require a thorough study of the earliest period of Muslim history. The aim is to find the germ that caused later decay.<sup>275</sup> In this work, he continues, Muslims must look at the past with the eye of the historian and understand it as if they were themselves a part of the history being studied. If Muslims fulfil these objectives, the way will be prepared for “a clear vision and understanding”.<sup>276</sup> The correct understanding of events in the early history of Islam will shape a pattern to be followed by contemporary Muslims. Consequently, in the views of Ahmad, Dani and AbuSulayman, the study of history has a normative aspect. Muslims can actually learn from history how they should act as Muslims. Mackeen has commented on this normative approach. He says that modern historical criticism might reject a normative interpretation of history, but historians cannot deny “the fact that they too rely on professional definition of historical norms in order to evaluate historical processes”.<sup>277</sup> Mackeen’s statement is based on the idea that an approach to history where various sources are evaluated and a probable history is constructed is dangerous because of an element of arbitrariness. In his perception, the history of Islam needs a re-examination in order to find the normative history of the law of Allah.

### The Function of Religion – to Combine Revelation with Reason

In the terminology of the present position, Islam is again and again depicted as an all-encompassing religion or system.<sup>278</sup> This system is commonly presented as standing in opposition to a Western counterpart.<sup>279</sup> Islam is described as a force able to place Muslim civilization in its correct – and superior – position compared with other civilizations, i.e. a force able to solve all the present predicaments of Muslim society.<sup>280</sup> Lodhi remarks that no Islamization is possible

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<sup>275</sup>AbuSulayman 1981:104f.

<sup>276</sup>AbuSulayman 1981:107. It should be remarked that AbuSulayman uses the term “vision” which, as has been stated above, is often used to describe the aim of contemporary Muslims.

<sup>277</sup>Mackeen 1988:72.

<sup>278</sup>See AbuSulayman 1988:116f.; Bakr 1989:113f.; al-Najjar 1988:135 and Lodhi 1989:152. See also the introduction to *Islamization of Knowledge* (1989) by al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:ix–xv.

<sup>279</sup>See Ba-Yunus 1981:23f. Briefly, Ba-Yunus sees Islam as an independent ideology that exists in a continuum where shades of capitalism can be found at one end and shades of socialism at the other. According to Ba-Yunus, Islam “rests midway” and, therefore, avoids the extremes of both capitalism and socialism. See Ba-Yunus 1981:31.

<sup>280</sup>AbuSulayman (1988:116f.) supports the idea to reinstate the caliphate. The foundation for that statement is his view that there is no difference between politics and religion.

“without a good comprehension of Islam and its spirit”.<sup>281</sup> Similarly, Ba-Yunus says:

The systematic view of human society which characterizes the structural functional approach is nothing new to an ideological Muslim. For him, not only human society, but the whole universe is a system. For him, Islam came to establish a well integrated system functioning under the rules provided by God. Any society which deviates from this ideal is a society in conflict which in times creates disintegration. And if we look closer, it may not be difficult to find the indeterministic emphasis which has become the trade mark of the symbolic interactionist approach in sociology, as the basis of law and punishment in Islam. (...) Emanating from the Divine, Islam is the natural law of human interaction. There is no other just way of human interaction. God created the universe and provided laws of structure and change in it. Because all objects in the universe, physical as well as biological, function according to the Divine law, they function harmoniously. Physicists, chemists and biologists try to discover these laws. (...) Islam, then, is not merely a formula of rituals. It is the process of obedience to the rule of God in human relationships in all aspects – economic, political, family, law, punishment, war, recreation, innovation, education and socialization. Emphasis is on deliberation.<sup>282</sup>

Ba-Yunus perceives Islam as an objective phenomenon, a holistic view capable of holding together and explaining the entire phenomenal world.<sup>283</sup> This is further stressed by the statement that the society which deviates from Ba-Yunus’ ideal is a society in disintegration; a society which is not in balance and harmony. A balanced and harmonious society can only be shaped by adherence to the rules set by God. To follow the regulations of the Islamic law is to live in a natural condition, because Islamic law is the natural law for mankind as well as for nature.<sup>284</sup> This property of the law is a sign of its divine status. The natural law is an expression of authentic justice. Academic disciplines within the fields of the humanities and natural sciences should reveal the true nature of Islamic

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<sup>281</sup>Lodhi 1989:152.

<sup>282</sup>Ba-Yunus 1981:30f.

<sup>283</sup>For similar statements on sociology see Ba-Yunus 1988:280.

<sup>284</sup>Ba-Yunus (1981:31) also states that “Islam is the natural law of interaction even if a Muslim society does not follow it”. In a note he says “The Quran describes Islam as Din al Fitrah [*dīn al-ḥiṭra*] which is translated as ‘the religion of nature’. Here I am aware of the way many Muslims interpret this Quranic expression i.e. Islam is in accordance with the nature of man. This interpretation poses a difficult question: what is the nature of man? There is no reason why we cannot interpret Din al Fitrah as the natural law of human interaction. My interpretation does not merely avoid the above mentioned difficulty. It is consistent with the pursuit and purpose of what is known as science in the most general sense”. See Ba-Yunus 1981:39n.

law. Ba-Yunus points out that Islam is not “merely a formula of rituals”. The statement can be interpreted as a critique of many religious scholars, and an attempt to present the true nature of Islam and what it means to be a Muslim. The last sentence in the quotation stresses the possibility of deliberation. The emphasis on deliberation appears as an attempt to stress a potential within Islam to discuss various possibilities of interpretation in order to face modernity.

The idea that Islam is a system giving order to the universe forces the adherents of al-Faruqi to clarify the relationship between the Quran and science. Imtiaz Ahmed and Abdel A. Bakr maintain that the Quran puts an emphasis on knowledge. In the following discussion I will concentrate on Ahmed’s views.<sup>285</sup> Ahmed says that the central texts of the Islamic tradition can “teach lessons” applicable to the field of knowledge engineering.<sup>286</sup> Ahmed adduces several quotations from the Quranic text to illustrate what the text says about knowledge engineering:

Our mind stores the information received from the senses in a variety of ways. All of this information can be recalled under appropriate conditions. This is a working premise of knowledge engineering. The stored information appears not to depend on the language in which the information is transacted. Consider now what is said in the Qur’an about the sense perceptions: ‘That day shall We set a seal on their mouth but hands will speak to us, and their feet will bear witness, to all they did.’ (Qur’an 36:65). ‘Their hearing, their sight, and their skins will bear witness.’ (Qur’an 41:20). ‘On the day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions.’ (Qur’an 24:24).<sup>287</sup>

The Quranic text is examined by Ahmed in order to find similarities between his professional experience and the word of God. He starts with a number of statements. These are not supported by references to scholarly research made in the field of knowledge engineering but to scriptural passages. The excerpts are in the first and the last case (36:65 and 24:24) full verses. In the second case it is the middle part of the verse. In this manner the Quranic text can serve to support

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<sup>285</sup>For an example of Bakr’s stance, see his exposition of the relation between the Quran and hydrology and energy in Bakr 1989:105,108,109,113f.

<sup>286</sup>See Ahmad 1989:75–77,80f.,84. According to Ahmed, knowledge engineering deals with building systems in order to handle knowledge and to apply knowledge effectively. One important aspect is to make knowledge accessible for people. See Ahmad 1989:77,81.

<sup>287</sup>Ahmad 1989:85. See also Ahmad’s exposition of the term *nafs* in order to establish a relationship between the Quranic text and the human mind (Ahmad 1989:86).

ideas founded in contemporary science.<sup>288</sup> For Ahmad, the revealed word is sacred. The cognitive meaning of the Quranic context is less important than the sheer fact that it is the word of God which supports the ideas presented by Ahmad. He therefore sees no problem in picking out the middle part of a verse and using it as a substantiation of statements which are not related to the Quranic context. This is a form of eisegetic approach, i.e. Ahmad's ideas on knowledge engineering are read into the text of the Quran.<sup>289</sup>

To further legitimate a position promoting an Islamization of science, supporters of the position can state that Islamization is a matter of survival.<sup>290</sup> If one shares Ahmad's view that Islam is the superior system and that contemporary Muslims are far from following the ideal Islam, it becomes important to reflect on the position of modern science.<sup>291</sup> Therefore, in the field of science it is necessary to construct a specific Islamic methodology. According to al-Faruqi, the distinctive attribute of Islamic methodology "is the principle of the unity of truth".<sup>292</sup> "This principle holds that truth is a modality of God and is inseparable from Him, that truth is one just as God is one. Reality does not merely derive its existence from God Who is the Creator and ultimate cause; it derives its meaning and its values from His will which is its end and ultimate purpose."<sup>293</sup> Al-Faruqi presupposes that there is one absolute truth and that it has not been revealed. Accordingly, when this ultimate truth is found, the will of God will be unveiled. Therefore, the aim of an Islamic methodology is to shape a science in accordance with the will of God, which will rest on values and meanings created by God.<sup>294</sup> Hence, the ideas concerning the Islamization of science are a part of a general

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<sup>288</sup>The first verse (36:65) concerns, in Yusuf Ali's as well as in Watt's commentaries to the text, the ungodly or the unbeliever and their destiny. The same subject is treated in the second verse (41:20). The third verse (24:24), according to Watt and Yusuf Ali, deals with lies, and evil deeds in general. The whole *sūra* is traditionally said to be concerned with the relation between lies, false charges, scandals and similar matters and spiritual ideals. The slander concerning the behaviour of 'Ā'isha, one of Muhammad's wives, is a central element of the text. See the introduction to *sūra* 24 in Yusuf Ali's translation of the Quran and thereafter the respective verse and the commentaries on it. See also Montgomery Watt 1967:162–164, 202, 216.

<sup>289</sup>In the case of Bakr, see his discussion on the relation between hydrology and the Quran (Bakr 1989:105). For another example of the eisegetic approach, see Zahid 1989:93f.

<sup>290</sup>See also Mackeen 1988:71 and Lodhi 1989:1.

<sup>291</sup>See al-Faruqi 1988:22.

<sup>292</sup>Al-Faruqi 1981:13.

<sup>293</sup>Al-Faruqi 1981:13. See also al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:49. Kyrala (1989:138) states that "In Islam the concept of Allah is an abstraction free of inconsistent descriptions in terms of human or other forms. Thus Islam is the only religion which could survive encounters with alien lifeforms from other regions of the universe without major revision. It does not submit pictures of one race's conception of a deity for worship by another race. It offers universal salvation on the basis of ethical behaviour to all intelligent beings. There are no hypocritical racial prejudices in Islam".

<sup>294</sup>For a discussion on how to transfer the discipline of economics to a discipline of Islamic economics within the position, see Siddiqi 1981:71–86.

trend of Islamization among Muslims. By definition Islamic knowledge is “the knowledge of the will of God as given in revelation”.<sup>295</sup> Al-Faruqi’s views are common among the adherents of this position and Lodhi states that the *umma* offers rightly guided leadership to mankind.<sup>296</sup> Lodhi also maintains that promoting science and technology – a quest for knowledge – is in accordance with “the spirit of Islamic philosophy”.<sup>297</sup> According to AbuSulayman, the contemporary crisis reveals the inability of Muslim thinkers to

measure the extent of change that has taken place in the realm of knowledge, culture, and civilization in the modern world. There is also a parallel inability to locate the points of strength in the sources of Islamic knowledge and to learn from past experience. As a result of the situation, people have felt the urgent need to restore *’Ijtihād*.<sup>298</sup>

AbuSulayman sees the tradition as a source which provides Muslims with possible solutions to contemporary problems. Thus the “inability” of Muslim thinkers to learn from history and understand Islam have made “people” (i.e. lay persons) experience the desire to reinstall the principle of *idjtihād*. The *faqīh* is described as “one who is still capable of resolving the crisis of thought, culture and knowledge”. The jurist is expected to use *’Ijtihād* in order to provide solutions and alternatives which the *’Ummah* might use to counter its enemies.<sup>299</sup> In AbuSulayman’s understanding, the religious scholars in their capacity as *fuqahā’* can still play a part in a process which reforms Muslim attitudes towards knowledge and thought.

In the opinion of AbuSulayman, scholars should be involved in a “critical examination” of all fields of society.<sup>300</sup> The aim is to clarify and to elucidate the meaning of Islam “so that the relevance of Islam in each [field] may be clearly established and understood by specialists and workers alike”.<sup>301</sup> The importance of this duty is further emphasized when he states that “Islamic education and information ought to become the basis of a new Islamic leadership; ever-conscious of the Islamic vision; committed to its realization in history; and *engagé* in the *umma* as its fundamental source”.<sup>302</sup> Accordingly, in AbuSulayman’s opinion,

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<sup>295</sup>Al-Faruqi 1981:14.

<sup>296</sup>Lodhi 1989:1.

<sup>297</sup>Lodhi 1989:144.

<sup>298</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:98.

<sup>299</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:99.

<sup>300</sup>AbuSulayman 1981:108.

<sup>301</sup>AbuSulayman 1981:108.

<sup>302</sup>AbuSulayman 1981:107.

this task is extremely important. It is more vital than any other question or predicament facing Muslims today.

For the individual Muslim, Islam is supposed to give guidance on matters concerning religious ritual, but also on life in general. How to act as an individual in a Muslim society is a religious matter. In the position of the IIIT, the return to an Islamic behaviour is the foundation for an Islamic society.<sup>303</sup>

In order to develop a strategy for Muslim scientists and engineers to practise their religion, Kyrala extends the meanings of the five pillars of Islam.<sup>304</sup> The pillars are in his understanding *tawhīd*, *zakāt*, *ṣawm*, *ḥaḍj* and *ṣalāt*. They are, he maintains, not only religious rituals. There is also a moral obligation to struggle for the betterment of society. For example, *zakāt* means that Muslim scientists and engineers “must never cease to raise the standard of living and improve the understanding of Muslim communities everywhere”.<sup>305</sup> In his explanation of the four other pillars he makes a similar interpretation emphasizing that scientists and engineers have an Islamic responsibility to improve the standard of their society. He concludes with the following remarks:

They [the five pillars] are not to be seen as a maximal set of obligations but rather as a minimal set to be expanded into a complete philosophy of Islamic technology in service of man’s traversal of *al-Strāṭ al-Mustaḳīm*. In Islam, science is not isolated from the system of belief but is an integral part of the Muslim Ummah. <sup>306</sup>

The quotation is another example of the wish to shape a society where every activity is subordinated to Islam, understood as an objective and superior system. For Kyrala, Muslim scientists and engineers must find a model – by interpreting the Islamic traditions – where Islam can be a functional force in their daily life. It should act as *the* source of inspiration in their professional work. Otherwise they will no longer be able to walk along *aṣ-ṣirāt al-mustaḳīm* – the straight path.

#### *Reason versus revelation*

Al-Faruqi has the following to say about the status of revelation and reason:

Islam is a vision of world, time and life which God has revealed to humankind by a succession of messengers. (...) Both reason and revelation are avenues of knowledge, each designed to correct not the truth

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<sup>303</sup>See AbuSulayman 1981:102; Abu Saud 1988:83 and Kyrala 1989:137ff. See also the introduction in al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:1–20.

<sup>304</sup>See Kyrala 1989:138–140.

<sup>305</sup>Kyrala 1989:138.

<sup>306</sup>Kyrala 1989:139f.

(the truth stands beyond correction!) but our understanding of the truth. Where our rational knowledge is deficient or incoherent, revelation is the only recourse. Where our understanding of revelation is marred by forgetfulness, prejudice and passion, the only recourse is to reason.<sup>307</sup>

In the first part of the quotation, the all-embracing nature of Islam is once again stressed. This truth cannot be challenged by reason or science. Al-Faruqi's point is that reason and revelation ultimately have the same goal – to discover objective truth.<sup>308</sup> In other words, they complement each other. That is an important aspect of al-Faruqi's position, since it supports his general idea that science and religion are interrelated forces in the service of God. Such an idea makes it feasible for Muslims to have recourse to reason as well as to revelation.

Like al-Faruqi, AbuSulayman holds that the "Islamic sources of knowledge" are divine revelation and reason. The problem is rather to define and give a concrete framework for the relationship between the two. AbuSulayman supports al-Faruqi's ideas and states that revelation "embodies the objectives of human reason and prescribes checks and controls against intellectual deviation and spiritual perversion".<sup>309</sup> Thus, revelation and reason can be misinterpreted and misunderstood. AbuSulayman also says that a false understanding of a phenomenon in the field of reason can provide a false understanding of a phenomenon in the field of revelation, i.e. he shares al-Faruqi's assumption of the interrelatedness of revelation and reason.

In their present situation Muslims cannot afford to lose the opportunity to use systematic reasoning. He states that the *umma* has experienced several examples of failure in employing reason. He maintains that the conclusions made by the '*ulamā*' in some cases lead to an alienation of Muslims and non-Muslims (sic!) from the cause of God. This alienation is a reason for the contemporary crisis. In AbuSulayman's view, the cause behind the crisis lies in the erroneous understanding of the connection between revelation and reason. Like al-Faruqi, he stresses the idea that the crisis is not caused by Muslims' use of reason, but by the failure of Muslims to combine reason and revelation in the way that AbuSulayman considers to be Islamically correct.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Al-Faruqi 1981:5.

<sup>308</sup> Al-Najjar (1988:140) states that if one leaves out revelation, science will be incomplete.

<sup>309</sup> AbuSulayman 1988:100.

<sup>310</sup> AbuSulayman 1988:100f.

## The Islamization of Education, Knowledge and Science

Muslims who support the ideas of the IIIT see education as one field where change is necessary.<sup>311</sup> The criticism of education in Muslim countries, at universities as well as in private educational institutions is harsh. Al-Faruqi holds that to modernize in a “genuine sense” means to “improve the Islāmic quality of education and the Islāmic orientation of students and faculty”.<sup>312</sup> Thus, the problem is not only the introduction of educational systems that Muslims perceive as foreign. “No Muslim university, not one, can claim that its social science curriculum is Islamic”.<sup>313</sup> According to al-Faruqi, of all the educated Muslim M.A.’s and Ph.D’s, only few are aware of the concept or need to Islamize academic disciplines. He presents four measures in order to support the process of Islamization of science, especially in the social sciences. In short, the first concerns the establishment of an association of committed scientists with the purpose to increase the awareness of these problems. A complete reconstruction of the *umma* cannot take place, al-Faruqi says, if the intellectuals are not involved. In his opinion, however, such an organisation already exists. The second measure is to give the thus established association links to various Muslim universities. The task of these universities is to provide the association with resources, to shape an arena for its work and its accomplishments. The third measure concerns the internal strategies within the association. One of the primary tasks ought to be to identify potential members. The main target should be graduate students, and then religious scholars. After that, the association should look for Muslim talent outside the academic circles. The fourth step, finally, concerns the training of Muslims on a post-doctoral level with the aim to teach them the content of the vision of an Islamic social science. Al-Faruqi states that the association should arrange courses, seminars, research projects and compose programs to suit the needs of its members.<sup>314</sup> The four measures were proclaimed in the early 1980s. Apparently, al-Faruqi’s intention was to shape an education on a higher level in order to make scholars of various ranks aware of the Islamic vision presented by him and the IIIT.

Today, the IIIT can be said to have fulfilled several of these objectives. The organization has gained a strong influence among Muslim groups in Europe and North America as well as in various Muslim countries. It takes part in the construction of university curricula in many countries and at several Muslim universities.<sup>315</sup> The IIIT has also started research projects. The project headed by Mona

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<sup>311</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:22f. and al-Najjar 1988:139.

<sup>312</sup>Al-Faruqi 1988:23.

<sup>313</sup>Al-Faruqi 1981:18.

<sup>314</sup>Al-Faruqi 1981:18f.

<sup>315</sup>See the example above referring to a university in Algeria.

Abul-Fadl has been mentioned. One of the aims of the IIIT is, as has been mentioned above, also to start a new program in Islamic studies in the fall of 1996. According to DeLorenzo this is an important step in the development of the IIIT and the study program will contain a curriculum designed in accordance with the perspective of the Islamization of knowledge.<sup>316</sup>

The idea to present the Islamic vision to young Muslims active in the field of science has been stressed in various texts.<sup>317</sup> Syed, in the same manner as al-Faruqi, emphasizes the importance of the young generation to finally establish Islamic science in its right position.<sup>318</sup> Essam Ismail suggests the development of a program to maintain communication with students educated in the United States to “prolong the positive effect of their experience in USA in order to serve their country and the Muslim Ummah at large”.<sup>319</sup> If the IIIT can form young Muslim students’ ideas on the nature of Islam, the program will also provide the organisation with well-educated mouthpieces in Muslim countries.

“It is a sure sign of decadence when political rulers tell educators what to teach and how to run the academic function.”<sup>320</sup> In many Muslim countries it would no doubt be dangerous to sharply criticize political rulers. The aim of implanting the Islamic vision is, as has been stated above, to bring Islamic knowledge to the secular system and modern knowledge to the Islam. Another objective is to provide Muslim students with an Islamic identity. The solution is to establish an educational system where every part of the curriculum is founded “upon Islamic values, principles and objectives”.<sup>321</sup> Al-Faruqi and AbuSulayman propose a four year course on the foundations of Islam. The primary aim would be to give Muslim students a knowledge of Islamic civilization and the course would present Islam as the only possible option for contemporary Muslims dealing with today’s predicaments of Muslims as well as of non-Muslims. The course must be introduced in the core program of a curriculum for all students regardless of specialization.<sup>322</sup> Their ideas seem to be used in the planning for the new study program mentioned above.

Related to education is also IIIT’s objective to collect various works by Muslim scholars in order to form working models in the contemporary Islamization

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<sup>316</sup>Personal conversation with Yusuf DeLorenzo in Herndon, 23th October 1995.

<sup>317</sup>Syed 1989:120.

<sup>318</sup>In various proposals for action suggested by adherents of the IIIT it is stressed that in order to be effective the plans must take several levels from the schools to colleges and universities into consideration. See, for example, Quraishi & Ali-Shah 1989:106f. See also al-Faruqi 1988:27f. and al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:15f.

<sup>319</sup>Ismail 1989:43.

<sup>320</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:14.

<sup>321</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:17.

<sup>322</sup>Al-Faruqi & AbuSulayman 1989:17f.

of knowledge and science.<sup>323</sup> The collection aims to preserve the legacy of Islam. Syed says that books on science written by Muslim scholars and scientists well versed in the Islamic traditions should be introduced by relevant Quranic verses and references to the *ḥadīth*, as well as to important Muslim scholars. In his view, the meaning of the Quranic verses should be extended by references to modern scientific knowledge.<sup>324</sup>

*Ideas on the Islamization of knowledge and science*

In *Islamization of Knowledge* a chapter entitled “Agenda of the institute” outlines the course of action. It is a comprehensive plan, but the specific objectives for the Islamization of knowledge are the following:

1. To create awareness in the Ummah of the crisis of ideas. This involves enlightening the Ummah about the place and methodology of the crisis of Islamic thought in the perspective of its cultural and civilizational existence.
2. To foster a deeper understanding of the nature of the crisis of ideas in contemporary Islamic thought, its causes, and its solutions.
3. To define the critical relationship between the failure of Islamic thought and its methodology; the current absence of the Ummah as a civilization; and its failure to succeed as a free, progressive, and prosperous nation.
4. To work toward reviving the ideologies of the Ummah, reinvigorate and gradually redeveloping its methodology, and elucidating its viewpoints and its intimate relationship with original Islamic goals.
5. To work for adopting and incorporating comprehensive Islamic methodology in the fields of social sciences and the humanities, as well as foster and fund scientific studies in actual individual and social life conditions.
6. To implement the requisite steps to allow the developing contemporary Islamic culture and methodology to avail themselves of the foundations of Islamic principles and legacy, as well as of modern sciences and knowledge, by making them accessible and digestible to Muslim students.
7. To provide help in researching, studying and working on the methodology and its presentation, with a view toward elucidating Islamic

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<sup>323</sup>Al-Faruqi (1989:19f.) recommends the collection of bibliographies, anthologies and articles on relevant works within the Islamic tradition in order to serve contemporary Muslims. These collections will form a foundation on the basis of which it will be possible to develop textbooks for use by Muslim educational institutions. The production of textbooks must include a program for training teachers.

<sup>324</sup>Syed 1989:121.

concepts and intellectual outlook and toward laying the foundation for the evolution of Islamic social sciences and humanities.

8. To prepare the requisite intellectual cadres to broaden the field of Islamization of knowledge through providing academic supervision, and establishing academic programs of Islamic studies in all fields of contemporary social sciences and humanities.<sup>325</sup>

These points are general in character, but they have had a strong influence on the advocates of this position. *Umma* plays the role of an all-embracing civilizational project. In the end, the eight points appear to say that Islam is a perfect system – it is the Muslims who have lost the right path. Therefore, the eight points will put the Muslim community back on the right track.<sup>326</sup> The fourth point touches upon the principle of *idjtiḥād*. However, it is not clear who will have the right to perform *idjtiḥād*. In the exposition of the points it is explicitly stated that knowledge is not reserved only for a minority. Instead, it is said that to attain the aim of the Islamization of knowledge, the means – the possibility to interpret Islam – must be within the reach of all educated members of society.<sup>327</sup> In point four, al-Faruḡi and AbuSulayman stress the importance of mastering the Islamic heritage. They would like to store major Islamic works on computer media for scholarly research purposes. The aim is to construct collections of works from the Islamic traditions to function as sources for contemporary scientific work. The way of ordering the historical sources of Islam appears as a “scientification” of the heritage. This means to make it part of contemporary academic disciplines. The process of evaluating and making the heritage available involves a choice of including or excluding certain texts. The classification and ordering of the materials will probably form a presentation of the Islamic traditions that fits the general understanding of the meaning of Islam found in the present position.<sup>328</sup>

To be noted is also the absence of the natural sciences in the eight points, although it is stated that this is an agenda for the Islamization of knowledge in general. However, ideas on the Islamization of natural sciences and technology have developed and are today presented in various texts of the adherents of the present position. In 1987 the IIIT, in cooperation with AMSE, organized a workshop where the Islamization of attitudes and practices in the natural sciences was emphasized.<sup>329</sup> The present goal of the IIIT is thus to Islamize all academic disciplines.

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<sup>325</sup>Al-Faruḡi & AbuSulayman 1989:57f. The plan reminds of the four measures outlined by al-Faruḡi above.

<sup>326</sup>The Muslim must have a knowledge of “Islamic values, ideals and the essence of their ancestors’ thought through the choicest treasures of the legacy”. See al-Faruḡi & AbuSulayman 1989:69.

<sup>327</sup>Al-Faruḡi & AbuSulayman 1989:62.

<sup>328</sup>Al-Faruḡi & AbuSulayman 1989:64f.

<sup>329</sup>See *Islamization of Attitudes and Practices in Science & Technology* (1989).

The principles and the plan of action presented by al-Faruqi and AbuSulayman have influenced several other adherents to this position to try to develop a scheme for Islamization.<sup>330</sup> However, these attempts are always in line with those presented above. They can be sketched in a general manner such as the points for Islamization delineated by Lodhi.<sup>331</sup>

#### *Islamic sociology and hydrology*

Another example of the concrete Islamization of one specific academic discipline is Ba-Yunus' ideas on the Islamization of sociology.<sup>332</sup> He says that if we look closely at this discipline we will find a variety of approaches among sociologists from different countries. This variety seems to be seen as something negative by Ba-Yunus. He states that there are very few adequate sociological studies concerned with Islam and Muslim societies, and draws support from Turner's *Weber and Islam* (1974). To support his statements in general Ba-Yunus quotes Turner's commentaries, and he refers to what he describes as the inconsistency of Weber's understanding of Islam.<sup>333</sup>

In his outline of an Islamic sociology, Ba-Yunus stresses that such an approach will include a different understanding of religion. Religion is not *one* institution of society, but it is *the* fundamental framework of society.<sup>334</sup> One suggestion he makes is to construct an ideal type of the Islamic model (Ba-Yunus turns to Weber in spite of the previous criticism). Muslim societies and minori-

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<sup>330</sup>For an example of a proposal which contains guidelines for the education of students and the rewriting of science, see al-Najjar 1988:146–149,150f. General guidelines can be found in Rahman 1981:174–177 and Husaini 1981:149–152,162–165 and al-Faruqi 1981:15–20. For an example concerning the Islamization of psychology, see al-Hashimi 1981:64,66f., concerning food and nutrition sciences, see Hussaini 1989:72.

<sup>331</sup>See Lodhi 1989:152. The same points are outlined by AbuSulayman as tools for the reformation of Islamic thought and a bridge between the reconstruction of Islamic research methods and the foundation for Islamic thought. In AbuSulayman's text the translations of some terms are somewhat different from those made by Lodhi. The term *maṣlaḥa* is said to mean "need of the hour", *istiṣḥāb* means "association" and *istiḥsān* is translated "preference". AbuSulayman states that they are all "methods to facilitate legal inference, i.e., to apply the Qur'ān to practical problems.", see AbuSulayman 1988:104. It is possible that Lodhi is influenced by AbuSulayman. Thus, Husaini (1980:72–91) used the terms in *Islamic Environmental Systems Engineering*.

<sup>332</sup>The following presentation is from *Social and Natural Sciences: The Islamic Perspective* (1981). Even if its an old source compared to the lifetime of the IIIT, the ideas Ba-Yunus discusses in this book do not differ from Ba-Yunus 1988 and Ba-Yunus 1991 concerning the fundamental presuppositions on the status of Islam. See also Ma'ruf 1981:116–139; Ma'ruf 1989:165–195 and Ahmad 1989:199–247. See also ideas on the establishment of an academic discipline concerned with Islamic economies. For examples, see Abu Saud 1988:81–89; Abu Saud 1989:265–270; Siddiqi 1981:71–86; Siddiqi 1989:253–261; Khan 1989:273–291; Mannan 1989:295–311 and al-Zarqa 1989:317–351.

<sup>333</sup>Ba-Yunus 1981:23.

<sup>334</sup>See Ba-Yunus 1981:33ff.

ties “could be judged as to their degree of congruence to Islamic ideology.”<sup>335</sup> The objective, Ba-Yunus says, is to produce comparative data in order to understand “how far Muslims are removed from Islam today”.<sup>336</sup> The idea to shape ideal types as a form of yardstick against which one can measure the religiosity of a society can be applied to non-Muslim societies.<sup>337</sup> Another point Ba-Yunus presents as a characteristic of an Islamic sociology is that it is applied sociology, i.e. it concerns the practical usage of sociological knowledge. The primary task for the Islamic sociological approach is to bridge the gap between “existing social processes of both a macro and micro nature and the Islamic ideals”.<sup>338</sup> An Islamic sociologist, he states, has a religious outlook and not the prevalent “materialistic” and “secular” one common among sociologists.<sup>339</sup> The aim of Islamic sociology is in Ba-Yunus’ perception, therefore, to reveal the true nature of Islam as a normative model for society.<sup>340</sup>

In proposals for an Islamization of earth science and hydrology, Bakr develops a “step by step program”.<sup>341</sup> It stresses the need for the production of textbooks which will emphasize Islamic knowledge and will be written in Arabic. Bakr states that the Islamization process cannot start at university level. It must be the general aim in all curricula. Therefore, he states that teachings of the Quran and the *sunna* must be an important part of school and college curricula. For example, he says that “college students should be required to study the history of Islamic civilization regardless of their career objectives.”<sup>342</sup> To be noted is a point that suggests the establishment of an organizational body with the aim to implement the program. According to Bakr, it should be located in the United States and have branch offices in “a few Muslim countries”.<sup>343</sup> In the end, Bakr says that a hydrologist who is trained according to the outlined program is prepared – and expected – to practice his profession on the basis of the *shari‘a*.<sup>344</sup> Bakr gives an example of how a hydrologist will act when he is guided by the *shari‘a*. He will, in the case of distribution of scarce water resources, put the interest of the whole community ahead of the interest of the individual. One reason for this is the belief of the Islamic hydrologist that he or she is accountable

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<sup>335</sup>Ba-Yunus 1981:34. See also Ba-Yunus 1981:37.

<sup>336</sup>Ba-Yunus 1981:34.

<sup>337</sup>Ba-Yunus 1981:35.

<sup>338</sup>Ba-Yunus 1981:37.

<sup>339</sup>Ba-Yunus 1981:35.

<sup>340</sup>Ba-Yunus understanding of the aims of Islamic sociology reminds of the aims of an Islamic anthropology outlined by Wyn Davis. See the section on Islamic anthropology in chapter 2.

<sup>341</sup>See Bakr 1989:110f.

<sup>342</sup>Bakr 1989:111.

<sup>343</sup>Bakr 1989:110.

<sup>344</sup>Bakr 1989:111f.

for his or her actions before God on the day of judgement. In the same manner the hydrologist will be guided by the example of Muhammad. Finally, Bakr says that scholars specialized in *fiqh* will revise water laws in Muslim countries to make them accord with the will of God.<sup>345</sup>

Lodhi says that the main task of the Islamization of the attitudes and practices of Muslim scientists still lies in the future. The first goal to attain must be to create an environment where Islamic values exist and where it is possible to carry out the Islamization in practice.<sup>346</sup> Lodhi stresses the significance of the term “attitude”. Hussaini also uses the term “worshipful attitude” when he states that “the signs and tokens of Allah’s sovereignty must be discovered in each experience, phenomenon, and experimentation”.<sup>347</sup> Knowledge can be learned from books, but the “scholarly attitude” can only be communicated by distinguished teachers. Thus, the attitude of a Muslim scholar is no secret. The correct attitude has been provided to humans by “the great master Muhammad”.<sup>348</sup> Lodhi’s ideal seems to be the idea of sitting at the feet of a master, in the same way that Muslims have been taught throughout the ages.

An important aspect of these views of science as well as the ideas about the individual Muslim scientist is that science has a special purpose or meaning. It is stated in almost all texts that science is an instrument in a struggle to create a better world, i.e. to reinstate the conception of Islam in its rightful place. In statements such as these it is sometimes stressed that the sciences have to serve a public interest.<sup>349</sup> Consequently, applied sciences are preferable, but they will be based on a “pure” science. Primarily, the latter concerns the work to outline an Islamic platform for research based on the legacy of Islam.<sup>350</sup> Finally, in order to carry out the process of Islamization of knowledge and in order to start scientific work in accordance with the Islamic view, new research institutions must be established.<sup>351</sup> The task of the established institutes is to offer Islamic studies in parallel with the study of modern science and technology. Hence, the institutes demand a new cadre of teachers who are familiar with the traditions of Islam and with modern sciences.

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<sup>345</sup>Bakr 1989:112f.

<sup>346</sup>Lodhi 1989:148.

<sup>347</sup>Hussaini 1989:69.

<sup>348</sup>Lodhi 1989:151.

<sup>349</sup>In addition, Lodhi states that the aim of research cannot be just to produce more and more facts, but facts that have a “strategic value”. The latter implies, ultimately, linking science with revelation – a form of applied sciences since such a linkage is in the public interest. See Lodhi 1989:144. For another example of an attempt to develop an applied science in a specific discipline, see Husaini 1980.

<sup>350</sup>For statements where science is seen as having a purpose or meaning, see Ba-Yunus 1988:284 and Mackeen 1988:70.

<sup>351</sup>See Zahid 1989:100 and Durrani 1989:23.

## Summary

In the early days of the IIT, the position was mainly concerned with the social sciences, but their goals have developed and today all sciences including natural sciences are discussed in texts presented by the position. In the texts concerning the status of science, the texts written by al-Faruqi have had a major influence. Most proposals mirror his ideas. It is important to say that some of the adherents of the position of the IIT today have developed the ideas of al-Faruqi, and in many books and articles his views are subject to interpretation. Since its inception, the IIT has developed several projects, has been active in the publication of journals, and translations of the institute's works have been presented in many languages. Currently the institute also prints its writings in Islamabad, Kuala Lumpur and Cairo. Two current trends appear to be that the IIT is striving towards a more prominent position in Muslim countries, and that published works also include authors critical of the position generally presented in the IIT publications. The work of the IIT has also gained some recognition, at least in the Muslim world.

For the adherents of the IIT position, the stereotyped image of the West represents a threat to their civilization. Values, norms and ideologies originating from Europe or North America are perceived as a challenge to what is perceived as *the* Islamic tradition. This challenge is defined as a situation where science challenges religion in its function as ideology. This is seen as a condition where people are considered more knowledgeable than God. In order to avoid being dominated by the West, the aim of adherents of the position of the IIT is to establish an educational system rooted in Islam. They see matters concerning education on all levels as the means to place Islam in its rightful position. A proper Islamic science cannot just be a Western science in disguise. The adherents of this position state that there is no way to be objective. Science is always influenced by cultures, desires, values etc. Therefore, it is not possible to utilise Western science in a Muslim context. In particular scholars such as Darwin, Freud and Marx are symbols of a culture or an ideology opposed to Islam. The desire to develop an Islamic educational system and an Islamic science is legitimated by references to the decadence of Western society. Paradoxically, references to scholars of a European and American origin are used in order to support the position of the IIT. It seems that representatives of the IIT position are not especially interested in a dialogue with representatives of other religious denominations, other cultures or other views on science. Their audience is other Muslims.

The fundamental reason for the establishment of an Islamic science can be seen in the statements supporting a teleological understanding of nature. In his capacity as sovereign creator, God has a purpose with his creation, and he has arranged nature so that all creatures have a place within it. The word of God must

be relevant in relation to science. In al-Faruqi's view, Islam has a holistic approach to all aspects of life and the universal aspect of the religion must be brought out. Otherwise Islam will lose its natural function. Therefore, the ideal world is based on *one* outlook. In the opinion of al-Faruqi and the adherents of the IIT, the Muslim individual, and especially the Muslim scientist, has an obligation to contribute to an Islamization of knowledge. In this urgent appeal directed to Muslims, it is often stated that the model and the example to follow is Muhammad. Thus, al-Faruqi can also be regarded as a prototype for Muslim scientists. His actions and life constitute a model to be followed in matters concerning the Islamization of knowledge project. Al-Faruqi's radical change from being a committed Arab nationalist to becoming a committed Muslim can serve as an example for Muslims to follow in their daily life.

One trait in texts published by al-Faruqi and adherents of the IIT is the endeavour to develop and establish an Islamic English. Islamic English is in the view of the adherents to this position a fundamental need for Muslims in a non-Arabic-speaking environment. A distortion of Islamic terms can in the worst cases lead to blasphemy. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate Islamic terminology in the present form of English. In order to formulate Islam as an ideology, Islamic terms are conceptualized. The slogan "Islamization of knowledge" is described and defined in order to evoke "Islamic" associations and emotions in relation to science. On another level the conceptualization of Islamic terms appears as a key element in the approach to modernity. Islam can be displayed as an alternative – and correct – system for human beings, which is superior in essence to the democratic societies in Europe and North America.

The image of "history" in the IIT position can be characterized as an attempt to project emotions, motives and ideas into historical settings or historical figures. A correct understanding of historical events guides contemporary Muslims, and solves their predicaments. The history of Islam appears as a handbook for solving problems. The Quran represents the objective truth independent of time and place and is able to pass verdicts on history. The approach contains a selective use of history. The adherents of the position see the earliest history of Islam as an era of perfection. The earliest history and to some extent the subsequent developments until the 13th century is treated as sacred history. It appears as a phenomenon founded on a form of ideological relation to history. It is a normative history from which the individual as well as the society can derive examples to follow. The two most important historical prototypes in the present position are Ibn Khaldūn and al-Ghazzālī. They are models for the scientist emphasizing the ethical and moral aspects of scientific work. One important aspect of history is its role as a means to find a new equilibrium in a time permeated by anxiety and lack of balance. The idea is to construct a normative history, but also to appropriate the meaning of history since, after all, the present position shares the

same traditions with other interpreters of Islam. The purpose of studying history with an Islamic understanding is to find the authentic meaning of the past. The interpretation – and use of history – can also indirectly reveal the position of the adherents of al-Faruqi and IIT on certain sensitive aspects of Islamic history. For example, the division between *sunnī* or *shī‘ī* Islam is almost never mentioned in the texts published by the IIT.

The picture of contemporary religious scholars is a stereotype. It is argued that they have not been able to understand and convey the true nature of that message to Muslims. Therefore, there is a harsh critique of the ‘*ulamā*’, but in some texts the door is left open for religious scholars to take part in the creation of an Islamic society, if the religious scholars act immediately and interpret Islam in a fashion that suits the advocates of the al-Faruqi position. However, most of the adherents to this position return to the source material of Islam in order to form interpretations which can solve problems in relation to their positions as scientists. In general, they do not refer to the traditions developed by religious scholars.

The sacred texts of Islam describe the relationship between Islam and knowledge. Verses in the Quran can be quoted in order to link knowledge to the word of God, and to demonstrate the validity of the Quran in a modern age. Correctly interpreted, the sacred sources of Islam are an expression of rationality and reason. In contemporary Muslim countries there is a broad gap between Muslims and Islam. Therefore, the message has to be elucidated and made clear to Muslims. To reduce or, preferably, bridge that gap is an important obligation for Muslims today. The success of their project is a matter of survival. In the Islamic vision presented by the position, one of the most important aims is to convince Muslims of the true interrelationship between revelation and reason. In the message, revelation and reason have the same purpose – to discover the nature of God’s creation, that is, to detect the true nature of Islam. To work in the field of science is part of a broad endeavour to understand the nature of creation. Therefore, a scientist can, even must, play a significant role in the shaping of an Islamic society. Some supporters of the al-Faruqi and IIT position state that the endeavour to establish an Islamic science and an Islamic educational system is the most urgent undertaking for the *umma*. The adherents of the al-Faruqi and IIT position conceptualize the term *umma*, and see it as a civilizational project. It can be characterized as a symbol for the legitimate Islamic society. In the correct *umma*, science is founded on revelation. Therefore, science has a special meaning. It cannot function arbitrarily, for example, in terms of choice of research subject. Through science, human beings will come closer to God. According to the supporters of the position, the understanding of the importance of this task is steadily increasing among educated Muslims. However, this understanding is still considered to

be on a low level. Therefore, one important objective among the adherents of the position is to reveal the nature and possibilities of Islam to fellow Muslims.

The contemporary educational systems among Muslims from school level to the college and university level is seen as a mere caricature of educational systems in Europe and North America. The Muslim educational systems proclaim the same vision as these non-religious systems. There are several proposals for ways of switching to an Islamically correct educational system. In the same manner, suggestions on how to shape an Islamically correct science are made. In both fields one aim that is often stressed is to rewrite textbooks. A new Islamically educated generation is the key to the future – a world in harmony and balance. In that world Islamic scientists will carry out scientific work in accordance with the public interest and phenomena such as environmental pollution will only be a bad memory. Thus, sometimes the adherents of the position appear to have a strong belief in the possibilities of Muslim authorities to convince Muslims of the accuracy of their message through the textbooks. The figure of authority does not have to be a religious scholar. Instead, it can be a successful scientist who is able to interpret the religious tradition in what is perceived as a just manner, that is, to perform the principle of *idjtihād*. All educated Muslims can, if they have the competence, use and interpret the *sharīʿa*.

In addition to proposals for a new educational system, the establishment of new research institutions is suggested. These would act as a forum for the development of Islamization programs. Scientists active at the institutions will work on the basis of the legacy of Islam. This is described as a “pure” science, which can then be used as a foundation for applied research. The legacy will be put in action. In that work, researchers will have the possibility to perform *idjtihād*. One task of the Islamization programs is to train scholars to know their tradition – to give them the ability to perform *idjtihād*. Finally, the new institutions should not depend on earlier interpretations of Islam. One idea, which stresses the freedom of institutions or organizations, is to establish new institutes in the United States rather than in Muslim countries. Adherents seem to think of the IIT as one organisation which has the ability to fulfil the objectives set forth in the texts of the position. In certain respects the organisation has accomplished some of the aims outlined by al-Faruqī and AbuSulayman in *Islamization of Knowledge* (1989).

## 5. The Quran and Modern Science – The Position of Bucaille

On a very dark and warm evening in August 1988, a number of students were sitting outdoors on wooden chairs watching television and drinking tea at the Khartoum International Institute of Arabic Language. This institute is located on the southern outskirts of Khartoum, Sudan. I was the only person from Europe or North America, and the only “Christian” at the institute. Their definition of me as a Christian – and as a white person from northern Europe – made the Muslim students see me as a representative of Christianity and of the so-called Western world. I therefore often had to answer questions concerning all kinds of political actions undertaken by the governments of Europe, as well as questions about Christian theology, and respond to their ideas on the moral decline of the West. This was not an easy task, and I sometimes felt as if I were part of a hearing. On this particular evening, however, the discussion circled around the relationship between reason and religion. One theme in the conversation was the consequences of natural science in “the West”. Among other things, we discussed phenomena such as environmental pollution. I was expected to defend the Christian religion and the West in general. In the end, the conversation developed into a bitter critique of Western civilizations as well as of Christianity. A Sudanese Muslim, accompanied by a Palestinian friend, referred to Bucaille’s *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science: The Holy Scriptures examined in the light of modern knowledge* (1978)<sup>1</sup> to stress the point that Islam is *the* superior religion and civilization. I felt that from a logical point of view, there was a general inconsistency in their argumentation. My point was that the comparison of the actual practice and outcome of science and technology in Europe and the USA with an idealized and objectified form of Islam was inconsistent, and the discussion ended without any agreement between us. However, the next day the Sudanese student showed me Bucaille’s book in the library of the institute. This was my first encounter with any book written by Maurice Bucaille. One year later, during a visit to the London Central Mosque next to Regent’s Park, I bought, as I described above, my first copy of *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science* (1978).

Maurice Bucaille was born in France in 1920. He became a surgeon by profession and was until his retirement the chief of the Surgical Clinic at the Uni-

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<sup>1</sup>This book was first published in French and entitled *La Bible, le Coran et la Science* (1976). The first English edition was published in 1978. Since then, the book has been printed in numerous editions. For example, the 14th French edition was published in 1989. In the following only the main title of the book, *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science* (1978), will be used. In his text Bucaille primarily refers to Christianity, Islam and Judaism. For obvious reasons, I will concentrate on his treatment of Islam.

versity of Paris. In the late 1960s Bucaille became interested in Islam. One topic he started to study was the relationship between modern science and religious Scriptures, first and foremost the Quran and the Bible. Bucaille also started to study Arabic and was by his early fifties able to read the Quran in the original language. This was in the beginning of the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> In 1974 and 1975 Bucaille was involved in medical examinations of the mummy of Pharaoh Merenptah in Cairo. This investigation was carried out by several researchers from Egypt and France. Financially, the project was supported by the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. Bucaille also states that he initiated the examinations of Ramesses II in Cairo and Paris in 1976 and 1977.<sup>3</sup>

*The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* was an outcome, Bucaille states, of his discovery of the conformity between the Quranic text and the results of modern science and his insight that many "facts" mentioned in the Quran had not been rediscovered until recently.<sup>4</sup> In November 1976 he presented his ideas in a lecture entitled "Physiological and Embryological data in the Quran" held at the French National Academy of Science.<sup>5</sup> The conclusion of his lecture was, according to Bucaille, that several teachings in the Quranic text cannot be explained if a human origin of this religious document is assumed and, he said, nobody was able to raise any objections.<sup>6</sup> According to Bucaille, the agreement between modern science and the text of the Quran is a challenge to the human being.<sup>7</sup> One overarching aim of *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* is, to understand the conceptions Christians and Muslims have of their respective Scriptures. In his opinion, the harmony between the Quranic text and modern science re-opens the discussion

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<sup>2</sup>This is told by Bucaille in the film *The Book of Signs* (1986). In *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* (1978) Bucaille states that he experienced a need to study Arabic in order to understand the misunderstood religion of Islam and that his first goal was to read the Quran. His purpose was to make an analysis of the descriptions of natural phenomena in the Quranic text (Bucaille 1978:128).

<sup>3</sup>See Bucaille 1994:9,65,77–80,116,199–201,211.

<sup>4</sup>Bucaille 1978:3.

<sup>5</sup>This lecture appears to be a summary of the ideas in *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* (1978). See Bucaille 1978:3 and Bucaille 1982:14,159. Another lecture held by Bucaille, which took place at the Commonwealth Institute in London in June 1978, has been printed by the International Islamic Publishing House in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It is entitled *The Qur'an and modern science* (n.d.) This text concerns the same themes as *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*. It appears to be widespread. The booklet can be obtained in bookshops in Egypt and Syria as well as in translations into Swedish in Muslim bookshops in Stockholm. A shorter version of the booklet was published as an article in *The Journal Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami*, vol. 6, no.10, August 1979:19–26. This journal is published by the Muslim World League in Mecca.

<sup>6</sup>This was stated by Bucaille in a letter to me dated 15th January 1995. In Bucaille (1984:14) he concludes: "In fact, the Qur'an contains statements concerning man that are astounding: It is impossible to explain their presence in human terms, given the state of knowledge at the time the Qur'an was communicated. In the West, such statements had never before formed the subject of a scientific communication until November 9, 1976".

<sup>7</sup>Bucaille 1978:3.

about the relationship between science and religion.<sup>8</sup> Hence, one of Bucaille's aims is to reveal the harmony between Islam and reason. *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* made Bucaille famous in the Muslim world. I have on numerous occasions, in various discussions concerning the relationship between science and Islam, been recommended to read the book. Its success has brought Bucaille to many Muslim countries.<sup>9</sup> The reputation of this book has led not only to numerous re-editions, but also to translations into various languages: Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, Persian, German, Indonesian, Gujarati and Bengali.<sup>10</sup> The book has also been published in Muslim countries with very different political systems, e.g. Saudi Arabia and Libya. The prominence of Bucaille and his book are recognized even by his critics. Pervez Hoodbhoy<sup>11</sup> states that

hundreds of thousands of copies of the book have been printed and distributed free of cost by Muslim religious organizations throughout the world. At international airports and American university campuses, it is the spearhead with which evangelical students seek to win conversion to Islam. Most Muslim intellectuals that I know of have either read the book, or at least have heard about it. As for the author, his popularity is unquestionable.<sup>12</sup>

Even though Hoodbhoy criticizes Bucaille's ideas, he appears to acknowledge Bucaille's high standing among Muslims in general. He also notes the widespread popularity of *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*. According to Bucaille one criticism he received after publishing the book was that the supposed accordance between data recently discovered by modern science and the Quranic text is due to mere chance.<sup>13</sup> Naturally, Bucaille dismisses this critique. He also points to another form of criticism expressed in the journal *Islamo-Christiana*, published by the Vatican Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (P.I.S.A.I.),<sup>14</sup> which describes his text as "dangerous".<sup>15</sup> We will return to this form of critique below.

In *L'Homme d'où vient-il? Les réponses de la Science et des Écritures*

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<sup>8</sup>Bucaille 1982:14.

<sup>9</sup>In his own works, Bucaille mentions Algeria (Bucaille 1994:66,175).

<sup>10</sup>The information on these translations is taken from the concluding paper in Talbi & Bucaille 1989.

<sup>11</sup>Hoodbhoy is a physicist active at Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad, Pakistan. He is also a visiting research scientist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Personal data on Hoodbhoy can be found in Hoodbhoy 1991.

<sup>12</sup>Hoodbhoy 1991:67. Hoodbhoy's book is sometimes quoted in order to level criticism at Bucaille. See Lewis 1994:238n. Lewis also makes references to Ziauddin Sardar in his portrayal of Bucaille's standpoint (Lewis 1994:193,238n.).

<sup>13</sup>Bucaille 1984:215.

<sup>14</sup>In Italian, Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e D'Islamistica (P.I.S.A.I.).

<sup>15</sup>Bucaille 1994:24f.

*saintes* (1982), Bucaille develops a passage from *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* concerning his ideas on the origin of human beings. *L'Homme d'où vient-il?* appears in an English translation in 1984 entitled *What is the Origin of Man? The answers of Science and the holy Scriptures*.<sup>16</sup> The approach in this book is much the same as in *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*. For example, one significant statement concerning the role of science is Bucaille's critique of those who understand science as "the key to everything".<sup>17</sup> His book also includes a summary of the discussion in *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*.<sup>18</sup> It is, however, explicitly concerned with one specific question, namely to bring new light on the question of the origin of humankind. Bucaille compares the Quran and the Bible with modern scientific knowledge.<sup>19</sup> There are immediately apparent differences between *What is the Origin of Man?* and *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*., not least the improved editing of the former book as well as the better translation. However, one common problem in both Bucaille's books is the system of references. Bucaille can, in a somewhat arbitrary way, sometimes make full references to written sources, but refer to statements or television programs without any form of reference.<sup>20</sup>

In 1986 a film entitled *The Book of Signs* was released. This film is based on Bucaille's *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* and *What is the Origin of Man?* In the beginning of the film Maurice Bucaille is shown sitting surrounded by books in the circular room of the British Library. He speaks in a reassuring manner about the foundation for his work and the atmosphere of the British Library lends strength to his statements. He tells us that when he read the Quran for the first time in the original Arabic, he was highly impressed by statements concerning human beings. In his view, the scientific character of the text makes it inconceivable for humans at the time of Muhammad to produce such a text. Therefore, Bucaille states, it is perfectly legitimate to regard the Quran as a revelation. According to a review of the film, published in *Arabia, The Islamic World Review*, the idea to produce it came from the former prime minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, and the film was supported financially by HE Dato Patinggi Abdul Taeb Mahmud, chief minister of Sarawak.<sup>21</sup> The latter, it is stated, also met with Bucaille. Further financial support the film was received from the Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia. The manuscript was writ-

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<sup>16</sup>This book was printed in its 4th edition in 1988 and it has been translated into Arabic, Turkish and Indonesian. See the concluding paper in Talbi & Bucaille 1989. In the following text this work will be referred to as *What is the Origin of Man?* (1984).

<sup>17</sup>Bucaille 1984:10f.

<sup>18</sup>Bucaille 1984:181–189.

<sup>19</sup>See the discussion in the introduction in Bucaille 1984:9–16.

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, Bucaille 1984:12,116.

<sup>21</sup>Sarawak is one of the territories in the Malaysian part of the island of Borneo.

ten as a joint project between Shahrom Mohammed Dom and Maurice Bucaille. The former was also the director. According to the reviewer, the theme of the film is “that man’s faith has deteriorated in ratio to man’s increasing confidence in the great god, ‘Science’.”<sup>22</sup> But, wonders Bucaille, can science ask us to ignore truth? He concludes by saying that the truth has been in the Quran all the time.<sup>23</sup>

In the film *The Book of Signs* Ismail al-Faruqi appears as an authority on the relationship between Islam and science, and the ideal relationship between Muslims and knowledge. Bucaille says that he has fruitfully exchanged ideas with al-Faruqi. Bucaille seems to regard himself as a scientist, concerned with scientific matters. Al-Faruqi is, in Bucaille’s view, responsible for the guidance of the believers in the theoretical field of religion and science. Personally, Bucaille appears to dissociate himself from this responsibility.<sup>24</sup>

In *Réflexions sur le Coran* (1989) Bucaille and the Tunisian author and academic Muhammad Talbi reflects on their, and other peoples’, approaches to the Quran. In this book Bucaille repeats his positions concerning the relationship between the Quran and modern science.<sup>25</sup> In the end of Bucaille’s part of the book there is an appendix where he responds to various objections to his position.<sup>26</sup> It will be discussed below.

One subject already touched upon in *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science* concerns the Exodus, and especially the lives and roles of the Pharaohs Mernep-tah and Ramesses II. In 1987 Bucaille published *Mummies of the Pharaohs – Modern Medical Investigations*.<sup>27</sup> This book won a History prize from the French Academy in 1988 and another prize from the French National Academy of Medicine.<sup>28</sup> One reason for not treating this book in the present work is that Bucaille recently published a work entitled *Moses and Pharaoh: The Hebrews in Egypt; Teachings of the Holy Scriptures and History* (1994).<sup>29</sup> *The Hebrews in Egypt* repeats in an updated form most statements in *The Mummies of the Pharaohs*, especially the statements concerning science. Moreover, the particular subject of that book is of marginal significance for the present study. It does not add anything new to our understanding of Maurice Bucaille’s conception of methodology or historical research. Furthermore, *The Hebrews in Egypt* contains passages where he reflects on the legitimacy in searching for correspondences be-

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<sup>22</sup>“See *Arabia* 1986:75.

<sup>23</sup>“See *Arabia* 1986:76.

<sup>24</sup>The relationship to al-Faruqi is explained in a letter to me dated 15th January 1995.

<sup>25</sup>See Talbi & Bucaille 1989:157–245.

<sup>26</sup>Talbi & Bucaille 1989:238–245.

<sup>27</sup>The first edition in French, *Les Momies des Pharaons et la Médecine*, was published in 1987, while the first English edition, *Mummies of the Pharaohs – Modern Medical Investigations*, appeared in 1990.

<sup>28</sup>Concluding paper in Talbi & Bucaille 1989 and introductory paper in Bucaille 1994.

<sup>29</sup>In the following text this work will be referred to as *The Hebrews in Egypt* (1994).

tween religious Scriptures and history. In a previously mentioned letter from Bucaille to the present author, Bucaille stresses that he is not primarily guided by a theoretical interest in the relationship between religion and science. His interest is scientific and, consequently, he draws scientific conclusions only. To support his position he refers to the positive response his books have received in Japan. He also states somewhat sweepingly that *The Hebrews in Egypt* has become a success in Jewish, Christian and Muslim circles.<sup>30</sup> There is a certain bitterness implicit in this statement: Bucaille points at the positive response in Japan, a kind of response he did not receive from the scientific community in Europe or North America.

#### *Influences on Maurice Bucaille's ideas*

Maurice Bucaille was trained scientifically as a medical doctor, a profession he practised until his retirement. Bucaille's repeatedly stressed concern for facts and objectivity can be seen a result of this early scholarly training, and of a lifetime practising a profession where the search for facts is of fundamental importance.

Another general assertion concerns Bucaille's conversion to Islam. He never states explicitly in the texts mentioned above that he has converted to Islam. However, in his criticism of Bucaille's position Pervez Hoodbhoy states that Bucaille is a convert to Islam.<sup>31</sup> After reading Bucaille's texts, his religious affiliation can be of no doubt, and some of his texts can even be characterized as *da'wa*-literature. This is a form of literature where the aim is to preach Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims and to warn humanity what will happen if the call to Islam is not followed. The introduction and the final passage of *The Qur'an and Modern Science* (n.d.) can serve as examples of this aspect of Bucaille's texts.<sup>32</sup> These passages have an apologetic function, defending the status of Islam as an eternal and all-embracing ideology.

The effects of conversion have been discussed by Tomas Gerholm. In his article "Three European Intellectuals as Converts to Islam: Cultural Mediators or Social Critics" he states:

In the well-known manner of converts, they often become more royalistic than the king. But it also happens that they bring an inquisitive mind to their new religion interpreting it in new ways. Thus they may

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<sup>30</sup>Information received from Bucaille in letters addressed to me, dated the 15th and 27th January 1995.

<sup>31</sup>This statement seems to be rhetorically intended, i.e. in order to reduce Bucaille's reliability (Hoodbhoy 1991:67). For a positive presentation of Bucaille as a French professor of surgery who embraced Islam, see Qush 1988:ii.

<sup>32</sup>See Bucaille n.d.:introductory paper and 26.

contribute to the continuous evolution of Islam helping to mould it to fit the conditions of contemporary European society.<sup>33</sup>

Bucaille's firm conviction that the meaning of the Quranic text is further buttressed by modern science, and the way he points at the accordance between the two in order to present the text as a revelation from God, can be understood in terms of being "more royalistic than the king". Bucaille describes himself as "inquisitive"<sup>34</sup> and his interpretation of his current religion seems new. In France, intellectual converts often adopt various branches of Sufism.<sup>35</sup> The texts of French mystics such as René Guénon are characterized by their turn toward the spiritual framework of the Islamic tradition.<sup>36</sup> There is, however, no sign in Bucaille's writings that he is associated with any form of Sufism.

Gerholm quotes Berger's & Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967): "To have a conversion experience is nothing much. The real thing is to be able to keep on taking it seriously; to retain a sense of its plausibility."<sup>37</sup> This statement can be linked to the above quote. Bucaille's sincerity, and his striving to make Islam plausible in the light of modern science fit well with this quote. The strive to "defend" Islam is one important foundation for Bucaille's work.

In the various texts referred to above, Bucaille does not explicitly mention which sources have influenced him. However, he refers to a relatively small number of authors who appear to share his position. They seem to be rather arbitrarily used by Bucaille in order to stress his own position. In *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*, *What is the Origin of Man?* and *The Hebrews in Egypt* three individuals are quoted frequently in order to give his statements legitimacy. They are Jean Guitton, Carra de Vaux and Pierre-Paul Grassé. Jean Guitton is presented by Bucaille as a Christian thinker who has changed our view on the status of the Bible.<sup>38</sup> In *What is the Origin of Man?* he is said to have pointed

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<sup>33</sup>Gerholm 1990:263. In this article, Gerholm discusses the conversions of three European intellectuals. They are the Swedish painter Ivan Aguéli (d. 1917), the Polish-Jewish journalist Leopold Weiss (d. 1992) and the French philosopher, politician and member of the French Communist Party Roger Garaudy (b. 1913).

<sup>34</sup>Bucaille often stresses his desire for knowledge as the starting-point for his work.

<sup>35</sup>There are well known examples of European and North American scholars in the field of Islamic studies or History of religions who have converted to Islam or who at least are inspired by a *ṣūfī*-tradition. One can mention William Chittick, Michael Chodkiewicz, Victor Danner, Oliver Lehman and Louis Massignon.

<sup>36</sup>See Gerholm 1990:264.

<sup>37</sup>Gerholm 1990:273. Berger & Luckmann 1985 (1966):177.

<sup>38</sup>In *The Hebrews in Egypt* he is presented as well-known in France as a member of the French Academy and as the author of a best-selling work on the relationship between God and science. Guitton's works are commented on and Bucaille also describes him as a friend of the late Pope Paul VI. Finally, Bucaille points out that Guitton was the only layman who had the opportunity to speak before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) (Bucaille 1994:25–29).

out the human fabrication of the Bible. According to Bucaille, Guitton's statement that "scientific errors in the Bible are the errors of mankind" is significant. Firstly, it alters our understanding of the Hebrew Bible as the word of God handed down to Moses and, secondly, these errors are pointed out by a Christian authority who supports Bucaille's final conclusion that the Bible is not an authentic revelation, but a human product.<sup>39</sup> Statements by another Christian – de Vaux – are used in the same way to support Bucaille's ideas. According to Bucaille, de Vaux, former head of the Biblical School in Jerusalem, in an introduction to his translation of Genesis, shares the idea of the Old Testament as written much later than the time of Moses.<sup>40</sup> Once again, the overall aim is to emphasize the human interference in the divine message, and to show that the Bible contradicts modern knowledge.

Bucaille uses Grassé for a somewhat different reason. Grassé is, says Bucaille, an eminent zoologist, a specialist in the natural sciences, particularly in the theory of evolution, and a scholar in general.<sup>41</sup> There are several references to Grassé in *What is the Origin of Man?*.<sup>42</sup> Bucaille stresses the objective approach that characterizes Grassé's research. Bucaille argues, for instance, that Grassé is one of those scientists who construct "their theories according to objective observations".<sup>43</sup> Grassé thus appears to represent a trustworthy form of science, based on sound conclusions. Grassé criticizes several scientific doctrines, primarily Darwinism and the theory of evolution. Scientists supporting Darwinian theory are, in Bucaille's view, therefore not objective in their work, and base their results on false assumptions.<sup>44</sup>

Bucaille's texts contain further references that appear to provide support for his ideas. References to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) are one example. These are primarily found in passages criticizing the authority of the Bible as the word of God, and in passages on the relationship between the Bible and science.<sup>45</sup> For similar reasons, the Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin is mentioned in *The Hebrews in Egypt*. According to Bucaille, Teilhard de Chardin attempted to reveal the accordance between his faith and his findings in the field of palaeontology. His theories were, however, not accepted by Church authorities and he had

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<sup>39</sup>Bucaille 1984:10,152f.,217. Bucaille also makes references to Jean Guitton in the preface to *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*.

<sup>40</sup>See, for example, Bucaille 1978:32–34,42,51,53,231f. Bucaille criticizes the ideas presented by de Vaux concerning the time of the Exodus and the Pharaohs of that time (Bucaille 1978:247f., 253). In *The Hebrews in Egypt* there are references expressing a critique of the Vaux's ideas, see Bucaille 1994:23,42.

<sup>41</sup>Bucaille 1984:53,77,80,109.

<sup>42</sup>See Bucaille 1984:20–22,25,32,37–40,53–56 (*passim*).

<sup>43</sup>Bucaille 1984:109.

<sup>44</sup>We will return to Grassé below.

<sup>45</sup>See, for example, Bucaille 1978:23,59f. and Bucaille 1984:217.

to keep silent.<sup>46</sup> Bucaille recounts this episode as an implicit criticism of Christian authorities. In a polemic against the concept of natural selection, Teilhard de Chardin is presented as a sound individual who observed that the evolution of living things is not a continuous process, but that it includes halts and the disappearance of lineages.<sup>47</sup> Bucaille and de Chardin agree that evolution is not a matter of natural selection, and that it is definitely not a continuous process. Consequently, human beings could not have descended from apes.

Bucaille also makes a reference to a significant encounter in his life. He recounts that it was in Saudi Arabia that he had the opportunity to “realize the false nature of the judgements generally made in the West about Islam”<sup>48</sup>. He stresses the gratitude he owes to the late King Faisal:

The fact that I was given the signal honour of hearing him speak on Islam and was able to raise with him certain problems concerning the interpretation of the Qur’an in relation to modern science is a very cherished memory. It was an extremely great privilege for me to have gathered so much precious information from him personally and those around him.<sup>49</sup>

The encounter with King Faisal seems to indicate that Bucaille has been influenced by a critique formulated in Saudi Arabia on the understanding of Islam in the West. Ideas formulated by King Faisal and others form a support for Bucaille’s position on the relationship between Islam and modern science. The connection to Saudi Arabia can also be interpreted in political terms. Bucaille wishes to maintain positive relations with an important power, at least financially important, in the discourse on the role and function of Islam in general. Yet, he does not disapprove of all studies of the Islamic tradition carried out in Europe and North America. Bucaille refers several times to the works of Jaques Berque. In Bucaille’s text references to works by Berque are used to support Bucaille’s own statements; he also refers to a personal relationship with Berque.<sup>50</sup> It appears that Bucaille wishes to strengthen his general position by referring to a famous French scholar in the field of Islamic studies.

Finally, an important influence on the position of Bucaille is, as paradoxical as that may seem, are those ideas he sees as contrary to his own. All Bucaille’s texts referred to above are, generally speaking, written in response to various notions that he regards as erroneous. One typical example is his argumentation

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<sup>46</sup>Bucaille 1994:24 and Bucaille 1989:243.

<sup>47</sup>Bucaille 1984:211f.

<sup>48</sup>Bucaille 1978:128.

<sup>49</sup>Bucaille 1978:128.

<sup>50</sup>See Bucaille 1994:159,164,175,187,195,197.

against the authenticity of the Bible and his support of the view of the Quran as the authentic revelation. Another example is his criticism of ideas stemming from Darwin and his opposition to the theory of evolution.

*Bucaille's and his supporters*

Apparently, *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* has been read by a large number of Muslims, although it is conceivable that many Muslims refer to the book without actually having read it.<sup>51</sup> Hoodbhoy says the following about the Bucaille's popularity: "One wonders how much of this arises from the fact that he is a white man; for it cannot be denied that even with the demise of colonialism the white skin still commands much authority".<sup>52</sup> It is certainly significant that Bucaille is a white man from France. The fact that he is a surgeon is, however, also important, as is his position as former head of a clinic at the University hospital of Paris. His position in society – his cultural capital – increases his status as a Muslim. Another aspect of the process of legitimization is Bucaille's study of Arabic in order to understand the meaning of the Quran. His knowledge of Arabic as well as of modern science makes his position influential and convincing. Gerholm's discussion on the general roles of converts as both "cultural mediators" and critics of their own cultural background appears to be applicable in Bucaille's case.<sup>53</sup> His treatment of the Bible and the Quran seems to reflect a desire to explain the true nature of the Scriptures to both Muslims and Christians. In the end, his aim might well be to bridge the gap between himself and the others, "to address a message both to his culture of departure and culture of arrival".<sup>54</sup> In such a process, nothing would be gained by Bucaille appearing under a Muslim name, "since Western culture – in spite of everything that is being held against it – carries high prestige even in the Muslim world, the fact that a leading spokesman [Roger Garaudy] for it turns to Islam is a sign of the innate superiority of that faith."<sup>55</sup> Regarding Bucaille it is, on the one hand, possible to state that his position is strengthened by the fact that he is a white French medical doctor and

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<sup>51</sup>This seems to be the experience of Hoodbhoy (1991:67). The present author has also met Muslim university students in various countries such as England, Sweden, Egypt, Jordan, Sudan and Syria who refer to Bucaille in order to support their own position, but when asked directly if they have read the book, some of them answer no. Lewis (1994:193) states that "the anti-Christian controversialist Ahmad Deedat, Gujarati resident in South Africa, utilises Bucaille's work and distributes his writings through his organization, the Islamic Propagation Centre International in Birmingham". It should be noted that the Islamic Propagation Centre (IPC) also distributes the books published by the IIT.

<sup>52</sup>Hoodbhoy 1991:67.

<sup>53</sup>For a discussion on "cultural mediators or cultural criticism", see Gerholm 1990:275f.

<sup>54</sup>Gerholm 1990:276. Bucaille shares these features with other converts such as Martin Lings, Ahmed von Denffer and Roger Garaudy.

<sup>55</sup>Gerholm 1990:276.

that he has an understanding of modern science. On the other hand, Bucaille fiercely criticizes what he designates as Western science. Perhaps his position as a white, successful European is equally significant in upholding his status as is his knowledge of Arabic and of the traditions of Islam. In the end, in order to successfully propagate a “radical” interpretation of the Quranic text, a solid social standing is required. Hence, it is significant that Bucaille has cultural capital as understood both in his culture of departure and in his culture of arrival.

Since the publication of *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* in 1978 a considerable number of books have been published written by various Muslim authors who discuss the relationship between religion and science. It is difficult to systematize this divergent and geographically widespread genre. Roughly, however, one group of authors seems to have a secular affiliation, while another group of authors belongs to the field of religious studies. In some sense these groups are intertwined due to lay persons' claims to take part in the interpretation of the religious tradition and to theologians' demands to have a stake in a discussion concerning modern science.<sup>56</sup> One group of authors who seem to be close to Bucaille's ideas is composed of other converts.<sup>57</sup> The most frequently quoted of these is Keith L. Moore. He is a professor of Anatomy and chairperson of the Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto.<sup>58</sup> At the seventh Saudi Medical meeting held at the King Faisal University in Dammam 1982, Moore presented a paper entitled “Highlights of Human Embryology in the Koran and the Hadith”. The general tone of this article has much in common with Bucaille's position. Moore is, in the same sense as Bucaille, astonished by the “scientific accuracy” of statements made in the field of embryology and human reproduction in the seventh century. He also states that he makes a personal interpretation of the Quranic text based on his “knowledge of embryo-

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<sup>56</sup>One example is a book published at al-Azhar in Cairo after the earthquake in 1992. The Quran contains a *sūra* entitled *sūra az-zilzala*, “The earthquake”, which prompted the religious scholars at al-Azhar to issue a statement on the relation between the word of God and the earthquake. After an introduction written by Ali Ahmad al-Khatib, the account of earthquakes is written by a scientist, namely Ahmad Fawad Basha at the Department of Physics, Cairo University. The general aim is to show that the Quran is in accordance with modern science. This book was partly a response to statements made by Islamists that the earthquake was caused by God in order to punish Muslims because of their un-Islamic behaviour. See Basha, 1992 (1413).

<sup>57</sup>Not all converts taking part in the discourse concerning the Islamization of science share Bucaille's views. A German Muslim, Ahmad von Denffer, in cooperation with the Islamic Foundation, published *‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’ān* (1985). In this work von Denffer presents Bucaille's position and proceeds to criticize it. Von Denffer stresses the possibility that scientific “facts” change, i.e., “the very same scientific fact is seen in a new light and perhaps differs from what one previously accepted as the Qur’ān's position on the matter” (Denffer 1985:157). Von Denffer shares his criticism with Hoodbhoy (1991:68). According to von Denffer, the Quran is not just a book of science, but a book of guidance (Denffer 1985:157). For a complete presentation of von Denffer's discussion on Bucaille's position, see Denffer 1985:155–158.

<sup>58</sup>This was his position in 1982.

logical history and of the modern science of human embryology”.<sup>59</sup> Moore makes various assumptions concerning the accordance between data in the field of embryology and verses from the Quran. Still, he does hedge his claims and uses wordings such as “it is reasonable to interpret” or that the Quranic text “could refer” to phenomena in modern embryology.<sup>60</sup> Finally, Moore concludes his article by the following statement: “There are other statements in the Koran and sayings in the Hadith about embryology that are meaningless to me, but very likely they will make sense later when new knowledge is developed.”<sup>61</sup> Possibly, Bucaille would be more careful in the use of the *ahādith*. In Moore’s article there is no discussion of the supposed reliability of the sayings of Muhammad and their relation to the Quran. However, it is revealing that Moore shares Bucaille’s method of starting with modern scientific findings and then turning to the Quran in his interpretation of the religious text. Thus, in order to understand the entire meaning of the Quran we will have to wait until modern science takes new steps forward.

Bucaille’s mode of attempting to link modern science to the Quranic text has followers among Muslims on the Indian subcontinent.<sup>62</sup> An Indian Muslim connected to the Islamic Centre in New Delhi, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, follows Bucaille’s position.<sup>63</sup> In his *God Arises: Evidence of God in Nature and in Science* (1991)<sup>64</sup> references to Bucaille are utilized in order to support Maulana Wahiduddin Khan’s own views on various subjects such as the relationship between the Quran and different fields of the natural sciences.<sup>65</sup> In a passage describing the, according to Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, remarkable descriptions of embryonic development in the Quran he refers to Keith L. Moore. In Khan’s text, Moore and Bucaille appear as distinguished authorities who help to support the purported insights of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan.<sup>66</sup>

In the same sense as in the text of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Bucaille is referred to in *Scientific Discoveries in Correlation to the Glorious Quran* (1988), a book published and distributed by The Islamic Da’wah Council of the

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<sup>59</sup>Moore 1982:51.

<sup>60</sup>See Moore 1982:52,53.

<sup>61</sup>Moore 1982:58.

<sup>62</sup>See, for example, *Muslim Contribution to Science* (1986). A book compiled by two Pakistani scholars Muhammad R. Mirza and Muhammad Iqbal Siddiqi and published in Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>63</sup>Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is a religious scholar, born in 1925. He is the founder and head of the Islamic Centre in New Delhi, and has published numerous books and articles in English, Urdu, Arabic and Hindi. In his writings, he is mainly concerned with the Islamic tradition and its encounter with modernity. He aims, in his texts, to present the religious tradition in the style and language of today. The information on Maulana Wahiduddin Khan was received in a letter to me dated 16th April 1995 from the Islamic Centre in New Delhi.

<sup>64</sup>Khan 1991:159–215. He has, in the same genre, also written *Religion and Science* (1988).

<sup>65</sup>See Khan 1991:176,179,197,200,208,211.

<sup>66</sup>Khan 1991:207f.

Philippines. The author, Suleiman Qush, states in the preface that he had two sources of inspiration. One is the Yemeni shaykh °Abd al-Mađđid az-Zindhānī and the other is Maurice Bucaille.<sup>67</sup> However, Qush makes one reservation. He states that the conformity between modern discoveries and science does not necessarily mean that it explains the texts of the Quran. The aim is not to explain verses of the Quran with science.<sup>68</sup> Qush's point is that science is to be explained by the scientific statements in the Quran, because human science is limited and changeable, but the Quranic text is the inclusive fixed word.<sup>69</sup> In the first chapter of *Scientific Discoveries in Correlation to the Glorious Quran*, "The Creation of Man in Revelation to Medicine and Quran", Qush several times refers to a work of az-Zindhānī.<sup>70</sup> In a passage Qush has reprinted the foreword of Keith L. Moore's *The Developing Human* (1983). Qush urges us to read and consider. In the foreword, Moore praises az-Zindhānī's achievements in preparing an Islamic edition of his textbook on embryology, *The Developing Human*. Az-Zindhānī's work has been to add references from the Quran and the *sunna* as a complement to the original text. Moore says that az-Zindhānī has worked for three years at the King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah interpreting statements in the religious texts which refer to human reproduction and prenatal development.<sup>71</sup> In *The Developing Human* Moore's original text is complemented by an Islamic introduction and commentaries at the end of each chapter. There verses in the Quran and *aḥādīth* relating to the subject of the chapter are quoted. The book also has an "Islamic Epilogue". In this epilogue, az-Zindhānī discusses subjects such as the creation, the creation of humans, whether there is a purpose with creation and scientific miracles. The last part of the epilogue consists of a list of references in which Quranic words are interpreted and given a scientific meaning.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup>For an example of the use of Bucaille, see Qush 1988:201.

<sup>68</sup>Qush 1988:ii. On this particular point Qush supports his statement by a reference to professor Farouq al-Baz who maintains that Muslims should not explain the Quranic text according to what has been achieved scientifically, see Qush 1988:iii.

<sup>69</sup>Qush 1988:iii. In the introduction, Hussam Suffee from the University of Baroda, Mauritius, states concerning Qush's work: "He has dealt with each topic meticulously and in its most scientific way that nobody would dare to deny the plain and universal truth. To deny the truth means to deny not the Holy Quran only, but the 'scientific discoveries' as well. And therefore to accept the scientific discoveries means also to accept the Glorious Quran as it is." In this somewhat florid statement, Suffee appears to view the Quran as a book of science containing all forms of "scientific discoveries". It is unclear in this quotation in what way acceptance of science must lead to an acceptance of the Quran as expressing a universal truth. See Qush 1988:vii.

<sup>70</sup>See Qush 1988:1,2,10,11,15,17,18,19,20.

<sup>71</sup>Moore 1983:viii and Qush 1988:22. In the introduction to *The Developing Human* (1983) it is stated that az-Zindhānī is the director of a project on scientific miracles in the Quran and *ḥadīth*. On subjects such as human development and embryology have az-Zindhānī and Moore presented unpublished papers at various conferences. I have found some papers at the library of the IIIT in Herndon. These papers mostly repeat statements found in *The Developing Human*.

<sup>72</sup>Moore 1983:458a-s. The epilogue is paginated in so that page 458a is followed by 458b etc.

Az-Zindhānī is also a popular preacher whose cassettes and videos can be found in various Muslim book shops. In one cassette entitled *al-ilm 'l-ḥadīth wa i' djāz al-Qur'ān*, “The modern science and the wondrous nature of the Quran”, az-Zindhānī comments on Bucaille’s statements in *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science* on the relationship between religion and science.<sup>73</sup> He also sums up the content of the book. On the cassette, az-Zindhānī says that Bucaille studied Islam for ten years. He also stresses the results of Bucaille’s research, that is, that the Bible is a product of human work, and that the conformity between modern science and the Quranic text shows that the latter is the word of Allah. On the cassette a voice introducing various speeches by az-Zindhānī, he states that the former king of Saudi Arabia, Faisal, appreciated Bucaille’s books.

Bucaille has also gained support from official religious scholars in high positions. The Syrian theologian and religious leader Saīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī declares in a conversation at the Faculty of *Sharī‘a* in Damascus that the Quran approves any theory that becomes true. To become true means, according to al-Būṭī, to become an established, real and scientific fact. On a question concerning Darwin and the theory of evolution he says that Darwin has not proved anything yet about the creation of humankind. He stresses that at the Damascus University, no less than 16 critical studies of the ideas of Darwin have been undertaken. He underlines his criticism of Darwin by claiming that Darwin’s ideas are not accepted in the USA or in other Western countries. On this matter al-Būṭī also points out that he teaches the history of ideas at the Faculty of Theology, and that his students study the ideas of Jean Paul Sartre and Dialectics. We stop, he says, only when we know that science stops. On a question concerning his possible relationship with Maurice Bucaille he says that Bucaille is his friend. He cannot comment on his ideas within the field of medicine, but on his ideas on Islam, *afkār al-islāmīya*, al-Būṭī has no objections.<sup>74</sup>

In an Egyptian context as well, Bucaille has received support for his ideas. In Egypt the discussion on the Islamization of science has been more intense than in Syria. A prolific writer within the Egyptian discourse is Mustafa Mahmoud,<sup>75</sup> a physician and former Marxist who turned into a devout Muslim. He has created the Mustafa Mahmoud complex in the Cairene suburb of Mohandessin. It con-

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<sup>73</sup>This cassette was bought in a bookshop selling Muslim literature, cassettes and videos in Copenhagen, Denmark. I have also received a video from friends belonging to the *Naqshbandī* order in Damascus, Syria during a visit in the country in April and May 1995. The video contains a speech on science and Islam held by az-Zindhānī. On the video az-Zindhānī repeats the idea that the Quran contains statements on modern science, especially embryology.

<sup>74</sup>Conversation with al-Būṭī at the Faculty of Theology, Damascus, 22 April 1995.

<sup>75</sup>In a description of Mustafa Mahmud, Sivan states that “the most popular Egyptian writer in the last thirteen years is Dr. Mustafa Mahmud, a physician who had formerly been a staunch believer in scientific positivism, human engineering, and materialism before converting to religiosity in the late 1960s”. His writings have been popular among young people and university students (Sivan 1990:132,159). On the popularity of Mustafa Mahmud, see also Rugh 1993:164.

tains a mosque, but also a medical clinic providing cheap medical services to the poor. Mahmoud has a high standing as an author and has published more than fifty books, novels and short stories. He has his weekly TV programme called "Science and Faith". The mosque in Mohandessin includes a geological museum, rooms for lectures and an astronomical observatory. All of these institutions are said to represent an authentic interpretation of Islam. The complex and its leader Mustafa Mahmoud also challenge the state which cannot provide the same low cost medical service to the citizens.<sup>76</sup>

An Egyptian author who supports the ideas of Mustafa Mahmoud is Ahmed Abd al-Wahab. He is a retired General Major in the Egyptian army. Throughout his life he has been interested in comparative religion, and has published several books on subjects relating to that field of study. His interest in the subject increased after his retirement in 1980.<sup>77</sup> He has written at least six works on various subjects such as revelation and prophethood in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.<sup>78</sup> One of his works concerns the relationship between science and Islam. It is entitled *asāsiyyāt al-<sup>c</sup> ulūm ad-darra al-ḥadīth fī al-turāth al-islāmīya*, "Basics of Modern Atomic Sciences in the Islamic Heritages" (1984). Its build-up is similar to the structure of Bucaille's *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*. Firstly, al-Wahab gives an account of the development of the study of atoms and its results. Thereafter, he turns to Islam and its relation to knowledge in general, and finally, he quotes various parts of the Quran and the traditions in order to show that they contain facts discovered by modern science. This idea concerning the nature of the Quranic text and *sunna* is particularly emphasized by al-Wahab, and in my conversation with him he advised me to read the books by the French physician Maurice Bucaille and Professor Keith L. Moore.<sup>79</sup> Regarding Moore, al-Wahab stressed the significance of the introduction to *The Developing Human* where Moore describes his fascination with the scientific content in the Quran,

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<sup>76</sup>Mustafa Mahmoud's complex has been given some attention in international media. See e.g., the *Los Angeles Times*, September 23, 1987, *International Herald Tribune*, July 7, 1987, *The Times*, October 30, 1987 and *The Economist*, December 5, 1987. I have written several letters to Mustafa Mahmoud, but have never received any answer. I have also visited the mosque and its facilities twice, in April and September 1992, and was shown around the centre, but was not allowed to meet Mustafa Mahmoud.

<sup>77</sup>Conversation with al-Wahab in Cairo, 3 October 1992.

<sup>78</sup>The works are listed in a presentation of the author in the concluding paper in *The Christ as Seen in the Sources of the Christian Beliefs* (1985). In terms of methodology, this work is similar to Bucaille's writings. Al-Wahab compiles various statements on Christ as presented by scholars of Christianity, in order to show that the notion of Jesus as he is presented in mainstream *sunnī* theology is the authentic version. This strategy is, however, implicit and is never clearly stated. See al-Wahab 1985:208–213.

<sup>79</sup>Ahmed Abd al-Wahab introduced me to a work by Mansour Hassab El Naby entitled *The Glorious Qur'an and Modern Science* (1990). El Naby states that the book is founded on an earlier book by him, *Universe and Scientific Marvels of the Quran* (1980) and Bucaille's *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*. This book is thoroughly influenced by Bucaille's book, and there are several references to it, see El Naby 1990:11,17,18,32,44,72,95–97 (*passim*). He also refer to Moore (El Naby 1990:148).

revealed in the seventh century.<sup>80</sup> For al-Wahab, the meaning of science is to learn more about Allah's creation – a science in the service of God. Thus, science should serve to create a stronger belief among Muslims. On a direct question Ahmed Abd al-Wahab states that his ideas are approved by religious scholars at al-Azhar. He gives the examples of two well-known scholars, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Maḥmūd and al-Marārī, who have clearly said, according to al-Wahab, that scientific discoveries will serve the faith and that there are no contradictions between science and the Quran and Islam. If you see contradictions, al-Wahab states, it is because of a poor understanding or false interpretation of the Quranic text. Al-Wahab says that he represents the educated Muslim's view of Islam. "Islamism", he says, is a sign of *djahl*, "ignorance".<sup>81</sup> The representatives of Islamism have not studied Islam. They know bits and pieces, but they do not know the history of Islam. In a portrayal of the current conditions among Muslims, al-Wahab concludes that Muslims behave in contradiction to Islam. His conclusion is that Muslims in the contemporary world do not practice Islam as it should be practised.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, it seems that his books aim at guiding Muslims back on the right track.

The similarities between al-Wahab's ideas and those current among religious scholars at al-Azhar are not surprising. In al-Wahab's as well as in Bucaille's work there is a leaning towards the interpretation of the Islamic tradition as represented by theologians such as those at al-Azhar.<sup>83</sup> One element of similarity between the 'ulamā' of al-Azhar and the supporters of the present position is the desire to strengthen the position of the Quran, to show how topical the Quran – and Islam – are in the lives of contemporary Muslims. Bucaille's and El Naby's method of using modern science to interpret verses in the Quran has also been approved by religious authorities in Libya, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.<sup>84</sup> The desire to display the currency of the Quranic text and the Islamic tradition in general to Muslims can also be found in, *Madjallat al-Azhar*, "Al-Azhar magazine", which regularly presents material on *al-'ulūm al-kūnīya*, "the cosmic sciences". Articles under the subheading *al-djadīd fī al-'ulūm wa al-tiqnīya*, "news in science

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<sup>80</sup>The following was said by al-Wahab in a conversation in Cairo, 3 October 1992.

<sup>81</sup>In a modern context the word can also mean "stupidity" (Wehr 1976:144).

<sup>82</sup>This outlook was stated in a conversation with the author by a researcher in Physics at the University of Ladhikiya in Syria. The same view has also been expressed by Muhammad Asad in an interview in *Arabia, The Islamic World Review*. vol. 5, no 61, September 1986:55. This is a quite common view among many Muslims (Munson Jr 1988:12f.).

<sup>83</sup>The similarities between these positions will be discussed below.

<sup>84</sup>See the publisher's note in El Naby 1990:7. Bucaille, Moore, El Naby and az-Zindhānī all appear to be affiliated with an organization called "The Organization of Scientific Miracles of Quran and Sunna" established by the Muslim World League in Mecca, see El Naby 1990:9. In the case of Libya one reprinting of the English edition of *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* was financed by the World Islamic Call Society in Tripoli.

and technology” are frequently published under that particular section.<sup>85</sup> Under this sub-heading, articles on Islamic guidelines for education in the sciences can appear.<sup>86</sup>

Another example of Bucaille’s high standing is from a Jordanian scholar, °Abd ar-Raḥman Šālīḥ °Abd Allāh. Together with Nāṣir Aḥmad Khuwālīdīh and Muḥammad °Abd Allāh aṣ-Šamādī, he wrote a book entitled *madkhal ilā al-tarbīya al-islāmīya wa ṭuruq tadrīsīha*, “An Opening to the Islamic Education and Ways to Study it” (1991).<sup>87</sup> In the first part of this work, which is concerned with the understanding and characteristics of the concept of Islamic education, Bucaille is cited as an authoritative source.<sup>88</sup> In a chapter entitled *khaṣā’iṣ at-tarbīya al-islāmīya*, “The characteristics of Islamic education”, °Abd Allāh describes the qualities of Islamic education.<sup>89</sup> Bucaille is quoted in order to underline the author’s idea that the qualities of human beings are stable. The quotation is a paragraph from *What is the Origin of Man?*, where Bucaille himself quotes Grassé in order to stress that the anatomical and physiological structure of human beings is stable.<sup>90</sup>

### The Premises of Bucaille’s Position

Closely connected with a contemporary discourse on the relationship between the Quran and modern science are perceptions of miraculous qualities of the Quran. These qualities are expressed by the term *i°djāz al-Qur°ān*, the miraculous inimitability of the Quran. In *ṣunnī* theology, the inimitability of the Quran – often founded on the linguistic qualities of the text – appears as a demonstration of the prophethood of Muhammad, that is, that the Quran contains revelations from God.<sup>91</sup> In a modern context, claims that the Quran contains scientific truth seem to fit well in the tradition of *i°djāz al-Qur°ān*.<sup>92</sup> In *The Interpretation of the Koran in modern Egypt* (1974), the Dutch scholar Jansen states:

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<sup>85</sup>For example, see the volumes of the magazine for the year of 1992 and 1993.

<sup>86</sup>See *Madjallat al-Azhar*, 1992, January, vol. 64, part. VII:808–811.

<sup>87</sup>I bought this book outside the mosque in Malmö, Sweden.

<sup>88</sup>°Abd Allāh 1991:11–66.

<sup>89</sup>°Abd Allāh 1991:43–57.

<sup>90</sup>°Abd Allāh 1991:45f. °Abd Allāh quotes a version of *What is the Origin of Man?* published in Arabic in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 1985. The title in Arabic is *mā aṣl al-insān*. For the specific quotation in English, see the second paragraph in Bucaille 1984:99.

<sup>91</sup>On the term *i°djāz* in general, see al-Azmeh 1986:60f. and Ayoub 1984:2,68.

<sup>92</sup>See, for example, the part on miracles in the Islamic epilogue in Moore 1983:458f–g.

The remark that the Koran contains scientific truth, but should not be taken as a textbook on modern science although its truthfulness is miraculous, is encountered more and more frequently in Egyptian contemporary writings on scientific exegesis. On the other hand, the emphasis laid on the miraculous character of the scientific truthfulness of the Koran cause, with some interpreters, a change in attitude as regards the 'wondrous nature' (*Igāz*) of the Koran.<sup>93</sup>

In the text that follows, Jansen says that the "modern scientific exegetes" differ considerably in their opinions from classical ideas on the *idjāz* as elucidated by von Grünebaum in the article on the term in *Encyclopedia of Islam*.<sup>94</sup> Further, Jansen refers to Muslim scholars who maintain that in contemporary Muslim countries few believers understand the subtle rhetorics – the eloquence of the word – of the Quran. "Therefore it is imperative that the theologians demonstrate the wondrous nature of the Koran in other spheres".<sup>95</sup> In rendering the Egyptian discourse, Jansen points out that the miraculous nature of the Quran is perceived in the fact that the book contains scientific "facts" revealed to Muslims in the seventh century – facts which have not been discovered by modern science until the 19th or 20th century. In az-Zindhānī's perspective, scientists have been called upon to understand the miracle, i.e. the meaning of the Quran.<sup>96</sup> However, the ideas raised by Muslim exegetes on this issue have, Jansen says, aroused criticism. He describes a criticism developed by Amīn al-Khūlī as the first significant and systematic refutation of "scientific" exegesis. According to Jansen, the statements of al-Khūlī have found wide acceptance and are often repeated.<sup>97</sup> Firstly, the criticism is founded on the idea that the meanings of Quranic words do not carry modern science. Secondly, it is philologically unsound to perform a scientific exegesis. Thirdly, the Quran is a book on religion, and therefore it is theologically fallacious to give it the status of a book on science. Finally, it is logically impossible that the Quran should contain the mutable and transient views of scientists in the 19th and 20th century.<sup>98</sup>

One example of a work in the tradition of scientific exegesis is *Scientific Trends in the Qur'an* (1985), which was originally published in two volumes in Arabic. The first was published in 1948. The author, Ahmad Mahmud Soliman holds that

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<sup>93</sup>Jansen 1974:51.

<sup>94</sup>EI vol. III:1018–1020.

<sup>95</sup>Jansen 1974:51.

<sup>96</sup>Moore 1983:458f–g. In order to reinforce his statement az-Zindhānī refers to *sūra* 34:6, 22:54 and 29:49.

<sup>97</sup>Jansen 1974:53f.

<sup>98</sup>Jansen 1974:54.

facts of astronomy, cosmology, geology, medicine, biology, history and prophecies are found in abundance in the Qur'an. (...) The scientific style of the Qur'an is clear and to the point. It is precise and concise. Its verses dealing with science need very little explanation. When we read them, they immediately convey their meaning. There is no symbolism or ambiguity. Early Muslims did not need these scientific facts, because of the entirely religious atmosphere in which they existed.<sup>99</sup>

Soliman's argument may seem reasonable to a believing Muslim, but it seems likely that Bucaille would reject the statements in the above quote as an over-interpretation of the Quranic text. However, Soliman aims to show that ideas concerning the scientific nature of the word of God have prevailed in a Muslim context. Hence, to state that discoveries in modern science are in accordance with statements in the Quranic text, and with Islamic traditions in general, is nothing new. This way to discuss the relationship between the Quranic text and science has a relatively long history.

Bucaille's understanding of the Quran becomes clear in the following quotation:

We should note that the Qur'an is a religious book par excellence. We should not use statements that have a bearing on secular knowledge as a pretext to go hunting after any expression of scientific laws. As stated earlier, all we should seek are reflections on natural phenomena, phrases occasioned by references to divine omnipotence and designed to emphasize that omnipotence in the eyes of mankind throughout the ages. The presence of such reflections in the Qur'an has become particularly significant in modern times, for their meaning is clearly explained by the data of contemporary knowledge. This characteristic is specific to the Qur'an.<sup>100</sup>

Bucaille's ideas on the nature of the Quran deviates from Soliman's outlook as presented above. Bucaille does not state that the Quran is a book of science, but that modern science can clarify and give us the full meaning of certain verses of the Quran.<sup>101</sup> He criticizes those who regard "science as a key to everything"<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Soliman 1985:14. The content of the quotation is not unique. Soliman represents a common argument. In a contemporary context views similar to Soliman's can be found in Muslim journals such as *The Criterion*, *The Muslim World League Journal*, *The Muslim Scientist* and *Hamdard Islamicus*. The Internet is also used to spread such statements. On one list, the Islam and Science list (ISL-SCI@VTVM1.CC.VT.EDU) there sometimes are discussions in which both Bucaille and Deedat are referred to in order to support statements of the same type as those found in the quotation above.

<sup>100</sup>Bucaille 1984:162.

<sup>101</sup>Bucaille 1984:169. He also states that science cannot explain miracles since miracles are inexplicable and all verses in the Quranic text cannot be elucidated by the help of modern science, see Bucaille 1984:162.

as well as those who suppose that the text contains more than it teaches.<sup>103</sup> In his perception of the Quran – as seen in the quotation above – there are several parts of the text that are of a spiritual nature and, therefore, cannot be further elucidated by modern science. Bucaille states that the accordance between the Quran and discoveries of modern science concern scientific “facts”, that is, established and confirmed results.<sup>104</sup> It is not advisable, or even possible, to use theories of science to interpret passages in the Quran. In Bucaille’s view a theory is to be understood as an idea not yet formed into an established scientific “fact” and sometimes the term “theory” is used in a pejorative sense. One example is Bucaille’s treatment of the theory of evolution.<sup>105</sup> Yet, Bucaille makes a prediction and states that “I may have found references in the Qur’an to the presence of planets in the universe that are similar to the earth”.<sup>106</sup> Thus, we do not have the full comprehension of the Quranic text, but in the future, discoveries made by science will further reveal our understanding of the text. Assertions on the “true” status of the Quran is often made in a polemic with the Bible.<sup>107</sup>

Bucaille feels that the monotheistic religions are challenged by modern society and, especially by forces of materialism and atheism. Naturally, to Bucaille the terms “materialism” and “atheism” have negative connotations.<sup>108</sup> However, if scientists and others understand that the world is the creation of God, and that the Quran is an authentic and correct revelation, they will be more successful in their work as scientists.<sup>109</sup> In order to understand the origin of human beings a bond between science and religious belief must be established.<sup>110</sup> The idea of the Quran as the book of God is a significant premise in the texts of Bucaille.<sup>111</sup> This presupposition underlying Bucaille’s position makes it possible for him to say:

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<sup>102</sup>Bucaille 1984:10.

<sup>103</sup>Bucaille 1994:158.

<sup>104</sup>In the introduction to *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science* Bucaille (1978:18) states that he would like to make a comparison between the facts – the established and incontrovertible data of science – and the scriptures in order to explain their meaning.

<sup>105</sup>Bucaille 1984:79f.

<sup>106</sup>Bucaille 1978:130,219.

<sup>107</sup>This is explicitly made throughout the whole of *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science*. For an illustrative example, see Bucaille 1984:161–165.

<sup>108</sup>See Bucaille 1978:16. To separate religious belief and scientific knowledge is an expression of atheism (Bucaille 1984:13).

<sup>109</sup>See Bucaille 1978:13–19 and Bucaille 1984:9–16.

<sup>110</sup>Bucaille 1984:13f.

<sup>111</sup>See, for example, Bucaille 1994:158. Bucaille explicitly puts forward this question and in a somewhat rhetorical manner he asks, concerning the nature of the Quran, “is it a Revelation coming from God, or a text of human origin?”. See Bucaille 1994:160.

God does not manifest himself scientifically, yet it is perfectly possible to conceive of Him in scientific terms. My personal outlook remains profoundly rational, and although I have adopted the conclusions of modern science (when these are firmly established facts and not mere conjectures), I cannot find any incompatibility between scientific findings and Scriptural teachings. At the same time, however, the origin and history of the Scriptural texts must also be taken into consideration. If we omit this aspect, we shall make an uneven assessment of the Scriptures, for we shall have failed to make allowance for the part played by error or human interpretation.<sup>112</sup>

In the quotation Bucaille stresses the idea of the use of “firmly established facts”. He also states that his “personal outlook remains profoundly rational”. Bucaille’s rationality and ideas on objectivity are often put forth in his texts, and serve as a theoretical point of departure.<sup>113</sup> The concepts of objectivity and facts are significant. He states that his study of the Quran is founded on facts and “logical deductions”. Bucaille claims that if he had not carried out his research, “others would have performed it in my place”.<sup>114</sup>

In order to outline his approach, Bucaille says that his aim is to examine “the Scriptures themselves in the light of modern scientific knowledge.”<sup>115</sup> He appears to hold that the use of modern science to interpret the Quranic text is a postulate in order to understand the purpose of the text. One example is the use of science to grasp the meaning of certain passages in the Quranic text considered to be difficult on account of their vocabulary. For Bucaille it is clear that certain previous interpretations must be seen as erroneous by scientists.<sup>116</sup> Accordingly, he appears to favour a solution where scientists as interpreters of the Quran take precedence over religious scholars.

In all of Bucaille’s texts the Quran is established as the authentic revelation.<sup>117</sup> In order to know that the Quran is a true revelation from God, Bucaille develops six criteria’s in *The Qur’an and Modern Science*:<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Bucaille 1984:16.

<sup>113</sup>Cf. how Bucaille describes his own way of presenting data in Bucaille 1984:95.

<sup>114</sup>Bucaille 1984:163. A complementary idea to Bucaille’s notion about objectivity and facts is his understanding of his studies, and his view that it “lacks prejudice”. To be without prejudice is, according to him, a necessity in a comparative study of the texts of the Bible and the Quran (Bucaille 1994:4).

<sup>115</sup>Bucaille 1978:16.

<sup>116</sup>Bucaille 1978:197, see also Bucaille 1984:162.

<sup>117</sup>The introduction of the part in *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science* can serve as an illustrative example of this statement (Bucaille 1978:121–132). In the general introduction to the book Bucaille also states that the Quran is a revelation and the Bible a book of inspiration. See Bucaille 1978:3 (preface).

<sup>118</sup>Bucaille n.d.:25.

Rational teachings: Since God bestowed reason and intellect on mankind, it is our duty to use it to distinguish truth from falsehood. True undistorted revelation from God must be rational and can be reasoned out by all unbiased minds.

Perfection: Since God is all perfect. His revelation must be perfect and accurate, free from mistakes, omissions, interpolations and multiplicity of versions. It should be free from contradictions in its narrations.

No Myths or Superstitions: True revelation from God is free from myths or superstitions that degrade the dignity of God or man.

Scientific: Since God is the Creator of all knowledge, true revelation is scientific and can withstand the challenge of science at all times.

Prophecy: God is the Knower of the past, present and future. Thus His word of prophecies in His revelation will be fulfilled as prophesied.

Inimitable by Man: True revelation from God is infallible and cannot be imitated by man. God's true revelation is a Living miracle, as an open Book challenging all mankind to see and prove for themselves.<sup>119</sup>

The revelation must be rational and objective. God's revelation is supposed to be perfect – free from myths and superstitions – and it cannot exist in multiple versions. In his ideal there can only be one representation of the revelation which exists in a harmonious and balanced setting. In the quote above Bucaille states that the omnipotence of God can “stand the challenge of science at all times”. Revelation is in such a statement a fixed phenomenon which necessarily must be in accordance with a temporary and alternating science, otherwise the revelation would simply not be true. The passage on “prophecy” appears to contain Bucaille's idea on the possibility to come to a new understanding of passages in the Quran by the help of scientific discoveries of the future. The last criterion is an often repeated statement by Bucaille. He distinguishes true revelation from false revelation by saying that it “cannot be imitated by man”. This idea seems to be enounced in a polemic with Christianity. In short, the Quran is an authentic and correct revelation from God, whereas the Bible is a distorted version of the same revelation.<sup>120</sup> Bucaille's reasoning on this point is in line with a “classical” way among Muslims to understand the Bible as a message from God which has been distorted by human interference. Bucaille's comprehension of God as the creator and the Quran as the word of God are significant. One never explicitly expressed premise appears to be the idea to display the realm of revelation, i.e., to present Islam as a solution to the predicaments of living in modern society. In Bucaille's

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<sup>119</sup>Bucaille n.d:25.

<sup>120</sup>For the idea of the Bible as a book based on an oral tradition, see Bucaille 1978:25f. In addition, Bucaille also considers the Bible to be of human origin (Bucaille 1978:34,52f.,74,89).

utopia religion and science come to terms with each other in order to establish a sound society.

## The Malaise of Science and Science as the Saviour of the World

Bucaille criticizes the West, which is depicted as a materialistic society. "Judaism and Christianity make no secret of their inability to cope with the tide of materialism and invasion of the West by atheism."<sup>121</sup> "Materialism" and "atheism" are, in Bucaille's opinion, the primary forces in the societies of Europe and North America. Another characteristic trait of the West is that since the nineteenth century religion has been in opposition to science. There is, he says, a "discrepancy between the Biblical text and scientific data".<sup>122</sup> Bucaille stresses that this argument has no meaning since the human origin of the Bible is established.<sup>123</sup> Yet, Bucaille makes frequent remarks on various differences between statements in the Biblical text and the results of modern science.<sup>124</sup> He also points at anachronisms in the Biblical text.<sup>125</sup>

Bucaille also delivers a criticism of the research and general picture of the Islamic tradition prevalent in the West. He makes references to his own childhood stating that during the time he grew up he always thought "that 'Mahomet' was the author of the Qur'an; I remember seeing French translations bearing this information".<sup>126</sup> Another of Bucaille's comments on the misconceptions of the Islamic tradition is:

This observation [on one hand the agreement between science and the Quran and on the other hand the incompatibilities between science and the Bible] is of prime importance, since in the West, Jews, Christians and Atheists are unanimous in stating (without a scrap of evidence however) that Muhammad wrote the Qur'an or had it written as an imitation of the Bible. It is claimed that stories of religious history in the Qur'an resumé Biblical stories. This attitude is as thoughtless as say-

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<sup>121</sup>Bucaille 1978:126.

<sup>122</sup>Bucaille 1984:14, see also Bucaille 1978:18.

<sup>123</sup>Bucaille 1984:14f.

<sup>124</sup>See Bucaille 1978:131.

<sup>125</sup>Bucaille 1994:44f. The example given in the reference is a critique by Bucaille of the use of "Pharaoh" in the Biblical narration. He states that there was no Pharaoh under the rule of Hyksos. Very likely, Bucaille says, the writer of the text used the word Pharaoh because "such was the custom in his time".

<sup>126</sup>Bucaille 1984:157. He also points at the use of the terms "Muhammedan religion" and "Muhammedans" as examples of how the "facts" concerning Islam are ignored in the West (Bucaille 1978:14).

ing that Jesus Himself duped His contemporaries by drawing inspiration from the Old Testament during His preaching.<sup>127</sup>

It should be noted that for Bucaille, “atheism” seems to be a belief system in the same sense as Christianity and Judaism.<sup>128</sup> It is possible that Bucaille is familiar with the discussion within the field of Islamic studies concerning the influence from Christianity and Judaism on the Islamic tradition. In his studies of the history of Islam he may have come across ideas expressed by early “orientalists” such as von Harnack or Richard Bell. They can be seen as two influential representatives of the idea that Islam is influenced by Christianity. Bell also states that Muhammad is the actual writer of the Quranic text.<sup>129</sup> By contrast, the basic idea formulated in the quote above is that Muhammad was God’s messenger and that the Quran is the word of God. Therefore, there is an agreement between the text of the Quran and the “facts” of modern science. Hence, Bucaille’s view is that there is an accordance between the Quran and science, and that the relationship cannot be explained in “human terms”.<sup>130</sup> This, he says, “appears to have been entirely overlooked by Western Islamologists”.<sup>131</sup> Another problem is that the Quran is poorly translated and interpreted. Therefore, Bucaille says, a thorough knowledge of the Islamic revelation is not reachable. In the end, the corruption of the original text, especially the passages concerning scientific data, justifies a critique from scientists. However, this is a criticism “that the Book does not actually deserve at all”.<sup>132</sup>

In spite of his antipathy toward the West Bucaille states that the progress of modern science has “enabled us to acquire definitively established, experimentally verifiable ideas on natural phenomena, thereby excluding theories which by their very nature are liable to change”.<sup>133</sup> This is the essence of Bucaille’s ideas on science. In science there are “facts” and “theories”. The former are, as has been stated above, well-established and unquestionable statements about the natural world, while the latter are temporary ideas, and therefore subject to change. In order to study the accordance between various religious texts and science, Bucaille makes a comparison between established scientific “facts” and statements in the Bible and the Quran.<sup>134</sup> The established “facts” produced by science act as a yard-

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<sup>127</sup>Bucaille 1978:131f. According to Bucaille, most intellectuals in the West have “an impressive collection of false notions about Islam”. Hence, it is a misunderstood religion (Bucaille 1978:127f.).

<sup>128</sup>See also Bucaille 1978:127.

<sup>129</sup>Bell 1960:vi. Bucaille says that there are French scholars who today express the view that Muhammad wrote the Quran, “although perhaps in a more subtle form”. See Bucaille 1984:157.

<sup>130</sup>Bucaille 1978:3 (preface).

<sup>131</sup>Bucaille 1978:3 (preface).

<sup>132</sup>Bucaille 1978:127.

<sup>133</sup>Bucaille 1978:preface.

<sup>134</sup>See, for example, the discussion in Bucaille 1978:16–19.

stick against which he measures the sacredness of religious texts. Bucaille does, however, qualify this point. He notes that there are major differences between the narrations in the Quran and the Bible. But some of them will escape examination because of the lack of “objective data” to bear on that particular narration.<sup>135</sup> Scientific ideas that are not “facts” should, in Bucaille’s opinion, be of no consideration. However, when they have become established “facts” they can reveal new – and authentic – understandings of passages in the Bible and the Quran.<sup>136</sup> The total accordance between the scientific “facts” and the Quran also reveals that the Quranic text is the word of God. In the end, results from modern science are used to form value judgements on the level of sacredness of religious texts. It should be noted that, for Bucaille modern science appears to be *the* fundamental instrument to make such judgements.

*The malaise of the scientists*

According to Bucaille, an individual who talks about God “in scientific circles really does stand out.”<sup>137</sup> This influences students – Muslims as well as non-Muslims – who receive a university education. For Bucaille this seems to be a paradox.

The further one advances along the road to knowledge, especially of the infinitely small, the more eloquent are the arguments in favour of the existence of a Creator. Instead of being filled with humility in the face of such facts, man is filled with arrogance. He sneers at any idea of God, in the same way he runs down anything that detracts from his pleasure and enjoyment. This is the image of the materialist society that is expanding at present in the West.<sup>138</sup>

In the same sense as was pointed out above, the sciences can be the key to a better understanding of the creation. It should be inevitable for a well-trained scientist to recognize the existence of God.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, in the “materialist soci-

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<sup>135</sup>Bucaille 1978:235.

<sup>136</sup>Bucaille says that there are “facts” in the Quran that have “not yet been verified by man in our time”. He mentions, as an example of such not yetverified facts, the possible existence of other planets with the same type of life as on earth. See Bucaille 1978:147.

<sup>137</sup>Bucaille 1978:126.

<sup>138</sup>Bucaille 1978:126.

<sup>139</sup>Bucaille states: “In modern times, a scientific background may indeed contribute reasons that, far from causing people to reject the idea of God, may in fact bring them nearer to it by inducing man to reflect on certain discoveries that science has allowed us to make. Within the context of this present study, it is first and foremost the prodigious organization and perpetuation of life that leads us to acknowledge, not only as possible, but as highly likely that there exists a Creator.” The quotation is a suggestion that scientists are more suitable than others to see the signs of the revelation in the modern world. See Bucaille 1984:194.

ety” scientists react in a negative way and deny the existence of God. According to Bucaille, all the evidence for the existence of a “creator” produced by scientists are rejected by those very same scientists. In some scientific disciplines, such as biology, genetics and physiology, researchers are, he claims, more or less infatuated with the possibilities given by these disciplines.<sup>140</sup> He sees this as due to the power conferred by these disciplines to explain nature and creation. They have, he says, “lost their appetite for arguments based on solid facts from the past”.<sup>141</sup> This situation also causes problems for individual researchers since the results of science can be used in support of a number of different opinions. However, Bucaille says, contrary to the common belief that the ideas of evolution conflict with religious teachings, modern discoveries may in fact offer arguments for an opposite position, if the study of the creation of human beings is approached without any preconceived notions.<sup>142</sup> He argues that researchers are simply carried away and that their studies have little to do with reality. He also claims that the studies are often combined with a partisan desire to promote a certain non-religious ideology.<sup>143</sup>

In Bucaille’s texts some researchers are explicitly criticized. In others, Bucaille refers to professors or individuals not mentioned by name.<sup>144</sup> He criticizes ideas ascribed to Jacques Monod (d. 1976).<sup>145</sup> Monod was a Nobel laureate in medicine in 1965 together with François Jacob and André Lwoff. Bucaille’s critique of Monod centers on the latter’s description of the process of evolution. Monod talks, according to Bucaille, about fortuitous events, chance and accidental alterations as the intervening factor in the development of new structures such as in the genes of living organisms. As Bucaille sees it, Monod’s ideas of chance as the prime mover of evolution is not founded on empirical research. The explanation, he says,

lies in a doctrinal system that rests on a postulate that its author [Monod] calls ‘the postulate of the objectivity of nature... the systematic refusal to admit that any interpretation of phenomena cast in terms of a ‘final cause’ – meaning plan – can lead to ‘true’ knowledge... While the organism observes the physical laws, it also surpasses

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<sup>140</sup>Bucaille (1984:80) also criticizes the specialization within various disciplines of science.

<sup>141</sup>Bucaille 1984:29.

<sup>142</sup>Bucaille 1984:29f.

<sup>143</sup>Bucaille 1984:11ff.

<sup>144</sup>See Bucaille 1984:102.

<sup>145</sup>This critique of Monod is presented in Bucaille 1984:52–56,123,206. See also Bucaille’s critique of Aleksandr Oparin (d. 1980), a Russian biologist and chemist. He won fame with the publication of *The Origin of Life on Earth* (1938). It was originally published in Russia 1924. A revised and enlarged version was published in 1957. His ideas are based on the theory that life originated through a chemical evolution where molecules developed in complexity and formed a cell. See Bucaille 1984:52.

them, thus devoting itself entirely to the pursuit and realization of its own plan...’ This means that henceforth only those factors that add new possibilities to the organism will be acceptable... We must also show our admiration for the ‘miraculous efficiency in the performances of living beings, ranging from bacteria to man...’. The ideological ulterior motive is patently obvious: It consists in the refusal to accept the existence of any organization in nature, and it leaves room only for individual ‘performances’.<sup>146</sup>

This criticism of Monod is based on the idea that nature is not merely an objective phenomenon and that modifications in the construction of natural phenomena are not fortuitous. In order to argue against the ideas of Monod, Bucaille supports his statements by frequent references to Grassé. At the end of the quotation, he states that a refusal to accept an inherent organization in nature disregards the operation of any other forces than “individual performances”. In his theory such a way of understanding development in nature, i.e. basically founded on accidental alterations, is false, and researchers working in fields dealing with the way that natural phenomena are made up avoid the significant question. They particularly avoid seeing that there is an inherent, specific organization of nature. They also do not want to answer the question concerning the origin of this organization.

#### *Darwin, Darwinism and the theory of evolution*

Darwin, Darwinism and the theory of evolution are primarily discussed in *What is the Origin of Man?* It is in this context important to remember that Bucaille expresses a criticism of exaggerated interpretations of what he calls “facts” concerning the origin of humans.<sup>147</sup> The first time Darwin turns up in the book is in a passage where Bucaille claims that the term “evolution” was not part of Darwin’s original terminology.<sup>148</sup> Therefore, Bucaille argues that the “true father of evolution is Lamarck” who, according to Bucaille, as early as in the beginning of the 19th century showed that living conditions and environment influence the development of a species.<sup>149</sup> He expresses, of course, a criticism of the ideas of Lamarck and states that, although Lamarck revealed a form of evolution in the animal kingdom, “where he went wrong was in his assessment of the amplitude of evolution, as gauged through his observations”.<sup>150</sup> One point Bucaille would like to make is that we need to discuss a phrase like “influence of the environment”. All Lamarck’s ideas are, he says, not wrong, but to what extent does the

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<sup>146</sup>Bucaille 1984:54.

<sup>147</sup>Bucaille 1984:196f.

<sup>148</sup>According to Bucaille (1984:27), the term did not appear until the sixth edition of *The Origin of Species*.

<sup>149</sup>Bucaille 1984:27,31–34.

<sup>150</sup>Bucaille 1984:34.

environment influence organisms? As Bucaille sees things, Lamarck and all his followers such as Darwin exaggerate the influence of the environment to the point of absurdity.<sup>151</sup>

In *What is the Origin of Man?* one passage is entitled “Darwin and Natural Selection, or a Hypothesis Survives Through Ideology”.<sup>152</sup> The title is in itself pejorative and reveals Bucaille’s negative attitude toward the ideas associated with Darwin. In his criticism he concentrates on a set of concepts. Two concepts to which he pays a great deal of attention are “natural selection” and “evolution”. Bucaille’s objections to the idea of natural selection are expressed in the following manner:

When we observe animal populations living within a certain territory, we are well aware that a system of balances is in operation, even though the balances may not be the same everywhere – in one section of the territory a species predominates, in another it is supplanted by a different species. In cases such as this, there is no doubt that selection is operating within a single population, but it does not influence biological evolution as a whole.<sup>153</sup>

Bucaille recognizes that there does in fact exist a form of natural selection. However, his idea is that natural selection does not play as central a role as in the Darwinian theory. Instead of being dominated by the forces of natural selection, the relation between species is dominated by a balance between them. Of course, he says, animals or plants are influenced by phenomena such as defects or changes in climate, but that is not the same as stating that “selection in nature ensures only the survival of the strongest and fittest” or that “death does not always make a distinction”.<sup>154</sup> Another problem, Bucaille maintains, for those who support the idea of natural selection is that progress does not include all living animals or plants. On this matter he says that Darwin speaks “of the ‘progress’ that natural selection ought to ensure in living beings, by which he confuses ‘progress’ with growing organizational complexity”.<sup>155</sup> It is important to Bucaille to show that natural selection, and Darwin’s ideas in general, are not established scientific “facts”.

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<sup>151</sup>Bucaille also states, supporting his ideas by references to Grassé, that the ideas of Malthus inspired Darwin and he says that Darwin in the introduction to the second edition of *The Origin of Species* (1860) states that he is applying the doctrine of Malthus, a socio-economic theory, to the animal and vegetable kingdoms. See Bucaille 1984:37.

<sup>152</sup>Bucaille 1984:35–46.

<sup>153</sup>Bucaille 1984:39.

<sup>154</sup>Bucaille 1984:39.

<sup>155</sup>Bucaille 1984:40.

When Darwin put forward the idea of natural selection as a tentative explanation of his objective observations, he was simply proposing a theory. By definition, a theory is no more than a hypothesis that for a while serves to link facts of various kinds by way of an explanation. While it may prove useful at a certain stage in human knowledge, however, it is the future that determines whether a certain hypothesis is valid or not. The validity of Darwin's theory has not yet been proven.<sup>156</sup>

In a way, Bucaille uses the idea of a provisional postulate of science to throw suspicion on the credibility of Darwin's ideas. The idea of natural selection is also connected to the term "evolution". But evolution in the form expounded in Darwinian theory is rejected by Bucaille, who claims that Darwin himself knew that he was not able to explain evolution. In connection with this idea, he also states that Darwin's ideas have been used for ideological purposes.<sup>157</sup> In his exposition of the theory of evolution Bucaille says that there is a gap between different disciplines and researchers. He mentions zoologists on one hand and palaeontologists on the other. Bucaille argues that palaeontologists are different from "laboratory researchers". The opposition between the two disciplines is, he states, founded on the "fact" that one discipline – palaeontology – studies organisms that do not change, and the other discipline – "laboratory research" – studies organisms that rapidly change. Hence, according to Bucaille, palaeontology deals with established "facts", which the other discipline does not – it is concerned with the "theory" of evolution. For Bucaille, serious science must consider the results presented in all sciences. Thus, there is a need to take into account the discoveries made in, for instance, palaeontology.<sup>158</sup>

Under the headings "Neo-Darwinism" and "Sociobiology" Bucaille discusses phenomena which he sees as results of Darwin's theories, namely the theory of evolution.<sup>159</sup> Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism are, according to him, more prevalent in America, because of the ideological use of the ideas put forward by Darwin. In Europe, he claims, Darwin has been criticized more strongly. Some of the individuals who support Darwin's theories have stated that criticizing Darwin is about as meaningless as criticizing Einstein. Nevertheless, for Bucaille, the Einstein's ideas belong to the realm of established scientific "facts", and their validity can, therefore, be proven. Under the same headings, Bucaille discusses scholars who work in the field of genetics. He says that these scholars study "mutations that modify certain minor characteristics", and that they concentrate

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<sup>156</sup>Bucaille 1984:42.

<sup>157</sup>Bucaille 1984:42. This is not explained further in this paragraph, but, as has been stated above, it has to do with Bucaille's understanding of the use of Darwin's ideas to promote a "materialistic society".

<sup>158</sup>Bucaille 1984:47.

<sup>159</sup>Bucaille 1984:44–46.

their research “on living beings that reproduce very rapidly”.<sup>160</sup> For Bucaille, this means that they make claims on the past based on results of studies that directly cause them to make false interpretations of these past events. Another, and related, comment on the ideas of neo-Darwinism is that this theory does not take into account the variable speed of evolution. In the end, Bucaille says “modern followers of Darwinian theory have no coherent explanation of evolution to offer us. Their explanatory suggestions – however brilliant – do not seem applicable to a real situation that requires real answers”.<sup>161</sup> In this manner Bucaille dismisses those scholars who support Darwin’s ideas. Thereafter, he turns to sociobiology. This discipline, he argues, is an expression of “explanatory theories” which aim at clarifying all human actions. His criticism of sociobiology, in Bucaille’s book represented by E. O. Wilson, focuses on two issues. Firstly, Bucaille holds that Wilson’s ideas, which stress the similarity between human and animal motivations, lead to “an ‘animalisation’ of man that is scientifically unacceptable”.<sup>162</sup> Secondly, he claims that sociobiologists propose that scientists “ought to exercise the right to modify man at will by genetic procedures”. Genetic manipulation or engineering is totally rejected by Bucaille, who rhetorically states that such ideas remind us of the “social ideal that was once constructed on principles of race”. Finally, he points out that such ideas carried humankind to the “most widespread slaughter in the history of modern times and to the final collapse of the ‘master race’”.<sup>163</sup> One can, of course, question Bucaille’s attempt to link the ideas of sociobiology and Wilson with the crimes of the Third Reich.

Generally speaking, the whole text of *What is the Origin of Man?* has the aim to question our understanding of the origin of human beings. Scholarly research as well as generally held suppositions regarding the origin of mankind are challenged. Bucaille wants to present an alternative view of how humankind came into being. In order to do this, Bucaille introduces the term “creative evolution”.<sup>164</sup> This term is used in opposition to Darwinism and to the theory of evolution. These latter theories, founded on “random genetic mutations”, “fortuitous mutations” or “the necessity of natural selection”, says Bucaille, have not yet provided us with any comprehensive answer to the question of our origin.<sup>165</sup> This can explicitly be seen if we with “complete objectivity” consult the different ideas on animal evolution presented by researchers from various disciplines, such as palaeontology, molecular biology and genetics.<sup>166</sup> The basis for Bucaille’s

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<sup>160</sup>Bucaille 1984:45.

<sup>161</sup>Bucaille 1984:45.

<sup>162</sup>Bucaille 1984:46.

<sup>163</sup>Bucaille 1984:46.

<sup>164</sup>On the term “creative evolution”, see Bucaille 1984:79–84.

<sup>165</sup>The idea that humans evolved by chance is rejected by Moore and az-Zindhāni (Moore 1983:458d–e).

<sup>166</sup>Bucaille 1984:80.

introduction of the term “creative evolution” is his criticism of those results of science which relate to the evolution of humankind.<sup>167</sup> According to Bucaille, humans have existed as almost unchangeable “human types” throughout the ages. The dismissal of, for example, “fortuitous mutations” as the key to understanding variations and modifications in organs forces Bucaille to present an alternative view of the origin of human beings. His idea, heavily supported by quotations from Grassé, is that humans develop through stages, or lineages, where some of these stages disappear and new ones are developed.<sup>168</sup> This development came to a halt “shortly before the beginning of recorded history.”<sup>169</sup> In this process it is not forces based on chance or selection that are important. Rather, the development of human beings is accompanied by a balance between nature and humans. However, the major idea in his view of evolution is the notion of the occurrence of discrete changes in the genetic code. For Bucaille, there is no continuum of evolution. Human beings have evolved through stages where the development in the human construction is founded on new genes causing new lineages to appear. In the idea of a creative evolution, lineages underwent their own specific transformations. “The latter took place within an organizational pattern that manifested itself at various levels over the course of time.”<sup>170</sup> Concerning evolution among animals Bucaille says:

Evolution in the animal kingdom must have taken place with the creation of new genes. The latter regulate functions that grow increasingly complex as one rises in the animal scale. They guide the anatomical and functional organization of all living beings. The constitution of an initial genetic code for the most primitive beings remains a scientific enigma. So does the enrichment of that code through the introduction of new genes, a process that is crucial to the most evolved species, involving ever-larger numbers of genes as one ascends the animal scale. The failure of science to provide an answer to the above enigmas shifts the emphasis of our study from material to the metaphysical. In this context, those who believe in God are more than willing to suggest the intervention of His creative genius: Science itself has shown that the theory of a creative influence, operating in the strict order present in evolution, is in perfect agreement with material findings.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>Bucaille 1984:87ff.

<sup>168</sup>See Bucaille 1984:87–94,95–100. One important consequence of Bucaille’s statements on this particular point is that human beings do not descend from apes. That is a “fact” Bucaille repeats zealously (Bucaille 1984:103f.,170,200).

<sup>169</sup>Bucaille 1984:98.

<sup>170</sup>Bucaille 1984:200.

<sup>171</sup>Bucaille 1984:207f.

Like human beings, animals evolved through a creation of new genes. In the quote, Bucaille states that the existence of an “initial genetic code” is a scientific enigma. That is a statement Bucaille makes in order to support his own position, namely that humans have developed through certain stages. He is also critical of the idea that the initial set of genes would be able to develop by means of the addition of new genes to the original code. In the end he turns to what appears as the central aim of *What is the Origin of Man?*, namely that the origin of humankind cannot be explained by science as long as science does not incorporate a metaphysical understanding of the world. Nevertheless, Bucaille does make some reservations and states that creative evolution involving manifestations of God in the process of development cannot be validated by any scientific data, but that this is an equally plausible explanation as any other. Hence, he also underlines that the general Biblical and Quranic statements concerning creation are not incompatible with the data supplied by science.<sup>172</sup>

### The Use of Language and Terminology

In all his books Bucaille strongly emphasizes that his studies are objective.<sup>173</sup> Statements about his supposed objectivity are often accompanied by assertions stressing that his studies deal with scientific “facts”. As shown above, Bucaille needs to give his studies this label in order to maintain his position. Besides scientific “facts”,<sup>174</sup> there are also “objective facts of religious history”.<sup>175</sup> In *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science* (1978) Bucaille states that his observations are based on “facts” and that he has presented “the logical deductions necessarily to be drawn from them”.<sup>176</sup> “True facts” will always exist, and Bucaille holds that “facts” are eternal phenomena which sooner or later will be corroborated by researchers. Bucaille is more or less forced to claim that the Quran first and foremost contains “objective facts of religious history”. These “facts” should be compared with the established “facts” of science. This undertaking – to study the compatibility between the scriptures of the monotheistic religions and modern science – must be performed in a spirit of objectivity. Consequently, the terms “objectivity” and “fact” are cornerstones in the theory developed by Bucaille.

Bucaille criticizes Christian commentators for being apologetic when they

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<sup>172</sup>Bucaille 1984:201.

<sup>173</sup>See, for example, Bucaille 1978:18f.,128; Bucaille 1984:101 and Bucaille 1994:179.

<sup>174</sup>For an elucidating example, see Bucaille 1978:18f.

<sup>175</sup>In the particular passage quoted, the “objective facts of religious history” make it possible to designate the Old and New Testament and the Quran as “collections of written revelation”, see Bucaille 1978:13.

<sup>176</sup>Bucaille 1978:3 (preface).

strive to defend the Biblical text.<sup>177</sup> The introductions to *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* and to *The Hebrews in Egypt* can give the reader the feeling that Bucaille is presenting “objective” and critically minded scientific studies. He explicitly states that whenever there are no “objective data” from the field of science, he will refrain from making any value judgements on the authenticity of the narrations in the Quran or the Bible.<sup>178</sup> Nevertheless, he often treats the Biblical narrations literally, in marked contrast with his more interpretational treatment of Quranic passages.<sup>179</sup> One aim of Bucaille’s discussion about “objectivity” and scientific “facts” in relation to the Bible and the Quran appears to be to demonstrate that the scriptures are not collections of myths.<sup>180</sup> Modern and secular knowledge – and “objective” methods – can be used in the study of the history of the Quran and the Bible.<sup>181</sup> For Bucaille the scriptures can be studied in the light of modern science, a method which underlines the rationality and historicity of the scriptures. In the end, the particular slant of his enterprise makes it possible for Bucaille to conclude that both the Bible and the Quran are authentic scriptures, even though a comparison between the two texts ends to the advantage of the Quran.<sup>182</sup>

### *Interpreting the Quran*

In the following I will give some examples of Bucaille’s specific use of passages in the Quran. Bucaille criticizes in general terms extant translations of and commentaries on the Quran. He claims that many of these works are unacceptable to scientists because “the majority of translations describe, for example, man’s formation from a ‘blood clot’ or an ‘adhesion’. A statement of this kind is totally unacceptable to scientists specializing in this field.”<sup>183</sup> According to Bucaille, translations of this kind are made by Arabists who lack knowledge in the field of science. Consequently, he stresses the importance of competence not only in phi-

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<sup>177</sup>Bucaille 1978:53,65.

<sup>178</sup>Bucaille 1978:235.

<sup>179</sup>This can be seen in his treatment of passages in the Old Testament and the Quran, in Bucaille 1978:41–52,140–155. This will be further discussed below.

<sup>180</sup>On the Bible, Bucaille says “Statements of this kind [that 600.000 men with their families, led by Moses, took flight from Egypt] call attention to the history of the biblical texts, a complex history that I shall try to summarize. When one is objective, the awareness of this history shows that the lack of authenticity of certain scriptural narrations may be easily explainable. Such a reflection – for those who have no preconceived ideas – is far from leading one to relegate all the biblical statements to the field of mythology.” See Bucaille 1994:7. “How could one uphold that the Scriptural narrations of this period, so rich in consequences for human history, only contain legends?” (Bucaille 1994:13).

<sup>181</sup>Bucaille 1994:11.

<sup>182</sup>See Bucaille 1978:228 and Bucaille 1994:13.

<sup>183</sup>Bucaille 1978:212. “Blood clot” and “adhesion” are references to the Arabic word *‘alaq* in *sūra* 96:2.

lology but also in science when it comes to grasping the correct meaning of statements on human reproduction in the Quran. An example which illustrates this is Bucaille's translation of *sūra* 51:47: "The heaven, we have built it with power, Verily, we are expanding it".<sup>184</sup> According to Bucaille, this is the correct translation of the verse, the true meaning of which was not understood by well-known translators of the Quran such as Blachère and Hamidullah.<sup>185</sup> One can incidentally also note that Bucaille likes to point out how difficult the work with the Quranic translations is.<sup>186</sup> The verse quoted above, 51:47, is translated as follows by Yusuf Ali: "With power and skill did we construct the firmament: For it is we who create the vastness of space". In a commentary to this verse, Yusuf Ali states that the passage concerns the powers and abilities of God showing his strength and magnitude.<sup>187</sup> In Bucaille's text the verse appears as a confirmation of one of the author's own statements. He notes that modern science has discovered that the universe expands. This scientific claim is, according to Bucaille, suggested by the theory of relativity and supported by various theories in physics. At the end of a short passage where he sums up various such supporting discoveries on the nature of the universe, he claims that this scientific view can be compared with his translation of verse 47 in *sūra* 51.

The passage on the expansion of the universe is followed by a paragraph entitled "The Conquest of Space".<sup>188</sup> There, Bucaille's specific way of expounding the Quranic text is continued. Bucaille states that three particular verses are relevant. These are *sūra* 55:33 and 15:14–15. He translates the latter as follows: "Even if we opened unto them a gate to heaven and they were to continue ascending therein, they would say: our sight is confused as in drunkenness. Nay, we are people bewitched".<sup>189</sup> The translation itself is not in any sense speculative, but the interpretation of the meaning of the verses is not the usual one. Bucaille maintains that the verses quoted above are references to:

the human reactions to the unexpected spectacle that travellers in space will see: their confused sight, as in drunkenness, the feeling of being bewitched... This is exactly how astronauts have experienced this remarkable adventure since the first human space flight around the world

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<sup>184</sup>Bucaille 1978:173.

<sup>185</sup>Bucaille 1978:174,209f. The latter example concerns *sūra* 16:66. Bucaille reinterprets this verse and says that Blachère and Hamidullah do not grasp its authentic meaning because they are not familiar with the "fact" that the Quran makes statements on scientific matters. For the latter subject see also Bucaille 1978:127.

<sup>186</sup>See Bucaille 1978:212.

<sup>187</sup>Quran (Yusuf Ali):1427, note 5025.

<sup>188</sup>Bucaille 1978:174–176.

<sup>189</sup>Bucaille 1978:175. This is almost the same translation as in Yusuf Ali: "Even if we opened out to them a gate from heaven, and they were to continue (all day) ascending therein, They would only say: 'our eyes have been intoxicated: Nay, we have been bewitched by sorcery". See Yusuf Ali, Quran:639.

in 1961. (...) Here again, it is difficult not to be impressed, when comparing the text of the Qur'an to the data of modern science, by statements that simply cannot be ascribed to the thought of a man who lived more than fourteen centuries ago.<sup>190</sup>

Descriptions of the sensations experienced by astronauts during the first manned space flight are used to elucidate and understand a Quranic verse. Significantly, there are no references at all to any scholarly interpretations of the Quran.<sup>191</sup> To omit traditionally educated scholars' interpretations of the Quran is a common strategy in Bucaille's books. However, he does explicitly state, speaking of certain verses, that there is not much to say from a contemporary – and scientific – point of view.<sup>192</sup> In this context he uses the inherent vagueness in the text of the Quran – a vagueness that this text, incidentally, can be said to share with most other major religious texts. By interpreting Quranic verses in the light of modern science, vague passages are by Bucaille infused with a more specific meaning. Thus, the meaning of verses in the Quran are "discovered" to be related to modern science. The reinterpretation of a Quranic verse can constitute a "new fact of divine Revelation."<sup>193</sup>

There is a specific structure underlying those passages where Bucaille interprets the Quran. The basic idea is that general accounts of various achievements in the field of natural sciences are keys to grasp the authentic meaning of the Quranic revelation. The Quranic quotations are either placed directly under a heading and followed by an interpretation, or they can be placed elsewhere in support of statements on certain matters.<sup>194</sup> The achievements of science are read into the text – an approach that can be designated as *eisegesis*.<sup>195</sup> However, the attempt to examine the Quran in this manner is not always unproblematic and it can in some passages be difficult, at least to non-Muslims, to understand the relationship between general statements in the verses and Bucaille's particular interpretation of these statements, especially when he connects the verses to modern science.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>190</sup>Bucaille 1978:176.

<sup>191</sup>Despite that, Bucaille mentions *Muntakhab* (Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Cairo) in Bucaille 1978:174,210,215.

<sup>192</sup>Bucaille 1978:190f. As has been remarked above, Bucaille dislikes far-fetched interpretations of the Quran (Bucaille 1994:158).

<sup>193</sup>Bucaille 1978:157.

<sup>194</sup>For an example, see Bucaille 1978:158ff.

<sup>195</sup>In general, the process of eisegesis and exegesis is not characterized by clear borders between the two, both ways of interpreting a text carry within them elements of the other.

<sup>196</sup>The chapter entitled "Astronomy in the Qur'an" can be an illustrative example of this phenomenon, see Bucaille 1978:157–176. Another example can be seen in a paragraph entitled "The Earth", especially in a part where Bucaille discusses the water cycle and Quranic statements on the role of water (Bucaille 1978:180–187). For this form of

In order to substantiate his claim that the Quran contains not a single assertion that goes against the findings of modern science, Bucaille has to reinterpret certain Islamic terms. On statements concerning the duration of the creation of the earth, a keyword in his interpretation is the meaning of the Arabic word *yawm*, (plural, *ayyām*).<sup>197</sup> This word occurs in the verses 7:54, 32:5, 70:4 and three times in 41:9–12. In the first example, the verse in most translations starts thus: “Your Lord is God who created the heavens and the earth in six days” Bucaille, like many others, interprets six days metaphorically. He points out that there are some translators who have noticed that “days” “should really be taken to mean ‘periods’” and he maintains, if we scrutinize the Quran closely we will find that there is internal support in the text for translating the word “periods”.<sup>198</sup> This is a statement Bucaille supports by references to verse 5 in *sūra* 32 and verse 4 in *sūra* 70. The middle part of the former verse he translates “in a period of time (*yawm*) whereof the measure is a thousand years of your reckoning” and the latter, which is the last part of the verse, “in a period of time (*yawm*) whereof the measure is 50.000 years”. By comparison, Yusuf Ali in both cases uses the word “day”, but in his footnotes says that “day” is not to be understood literally, but denotes a spiritual dimension and can designate a period of time.<sup>199</sup> In his interpretation of those verses Bucaille makes references to earlier commentators, and states that some of them noted that “day” also had the meaning of a period of time.<sup>200</sup>

It is therefore possible to say that in the case of the Creation of the world, the Qur’an allows for long periods of time numbering six. It is obvious that modern science has not permitted man to establish the fact that the complicated stages in the process leading to the formation of the universe numbered six, but it has clearly shown that long periods of time were involved compared to which ‘days’ as we conceive them would be ridiculous.<sup>201</sup>

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reasoning, see also Bucaille 1978:193 and Bucaille 1984:199.

<sup>197</sup>Another illustrating example is Bucaille’s interpretation of the word *kawkab* (plural *kawākib*). In the famous verse 35 in *sūra* 24, as in other verses where this word is found, he translates it “planet” instead of “star”. The reason for such a interpretation is that it makes it possible for Bucaille to say that his translation shows that the Quranic text treats planets, i.e. planets as they are understood within fields of modern science. See Bucaille 1978:163f. Further, he says that in a verse he describes as treating the earth’s creation, the Word *dukhān*, often translated “smoke”, means “a gaseous mass with fine particles”, see Bucaille 1978:145.

<sup>198</sup>Bucaille 1978:140. Such a metaphorical interpretation of the word *ayyām* in verse 54 in *sūra* 7 is supported by Yusuf Ali (Quran:355n.).

<sup>199</sup>Bucaille refers to Yusuf Ali’s interpretation of the verses and says that most modern commentators have noticed this “fact” (Bucaille 1978:141f.). See also Yusuf Ali’s comments in the Quran:1093n.,1605n.

<sup>200</sup>The sixteenth century A.D. commentator Abū as-Sū’ud is mentioned as an example (Bucaille 1978:141).

<sup>201</sup>Bucaille 1978:142.

The number six in verse 54 in *sūra 7* appears to be of minor significance. Its role is decided upon by a general account of achievements in modern science. Thus, it is concluded that the creation of the earth was a long process. Finally, to underline his interpretation of the word *yawm* or *ayyām* in the Quran, Bucaille quotes a long passage from the text, verses 9 to 12 of *sūra 41*.

Say: Do you disbelieve Him who created the earth in *two periods*? Do you ascribe equals to him. He is the Lord of the worlds [verse 9]. He set in the (earth) mountains standing firm. He blessed it. He measured therein its sustenance in *four periods*, in due proportion, in accordance with the needs of those who ask for (sustenance? or information?) [verse 10]. Moreover (*thumma*) He turned to heaven when it was smoke and said to it and to the earth: come willingly or unwillingly! They said: we come willingly in obedience [verse 11]. Then He ordained them seven heavens in *two periods*, and He assigned to each heaven its mandate by Revelation. And we adorned the lower heaven with luminaries and provided it a guard. Such is the decree of the all mighty, the full knowledge [verse 12].<sup>202</sup>

Some of the themes in these verses Bucaille discusses at length. Some of them concern the “gaseous state of celestial matter and the highly symbolic definition of the number of heavens as seven”.<sup>203</sup> However, in the discussion on the meaning of the word *yawm* he notes that some have argued that in these verses it is not a matter of six periods but eight. In their view, there is a contradiction in the Quranic text concerning the number of periods during which the earth was created. In order to rule out this form of criticism he makes the following interpretation of the verses:

In fact however, this text, which leads man to reflect on divine Omnipotence, beginning with the earth and ending with the heavens, provides two sections that are expressed by the Arabic word ‘*thumma*’, translated by ‘moreover’, but which also means ‘furthermore’ or ‘then’. The sense of a ‘sequence’ may therefore be implied referring to a sequence of events or a series of man’s reflections on the events mentioned here. It may equally be a simple reference to events juxtaposed without any intention of bringing in the notion of the one following the other.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup>Bucaille 1978:142. My Italics, except for the word *thumma*, italicized in the original.

<sup>203</sup>Bucaille 1978:143.

<sup>204</sup>Bucaille 1978:143.

The expression “in fact” is often used rhetorically by Bucaille to introduce precisely those of his interpretations which are most open to controversy.<sup>205</sup> The term often introduces a statement that has to do with *the* truth – a fact. The key-word in his interpretation is *thumma*. He uses this word in a manner which weakens the meaning of the verses quoted above. The purpose is to smooth over passages in the Quran that appear mutually contradictory. This is necessary for Bucaille, since any internal inconsistencies between verses in the Quran would constitute a problem in understanding and presenting the word of God as being in total accordance with modern science. It would also be problematic to claim that the entire Quran is an “objective fact” of religious history. In sum, he elaborates on words and passages in the Quranic text along primarily two lines. Firstly, he examines verses in the light of modern science, that is, he reads general accounts on modern science into the text. Secondly, in situations where the passages in the Quran are not easily adaptable to the achievements of science he reinterprets words or sentences to make them fit with the “facts” of science. In this way the achievements – “the facts” – of modern science act as a means of access to the authentic meaning of the revelation.

Bucaille consequently uses the word God instead of Allah to designate the supreme being and the creator. He states that to utilize Allah in the meaning of God would imply that there is a difference between the two. In order to maintain the view that there is no division between the two, Bucaille says that “*al lāh* means ‘the Divinity’ in Arabic: it is a single God”.<sup>206</sup> This idea of one God lays the foundation for the claim that the Quran is the final revelation and that Muhammad is the last in a long chain of prophets. To further underline that the Quran is the authentic revelation of God he consistently uses archaisms in his English renderings.

### Bucaille’s Use of Biblical and Quranic History

In his books, Bucaille deals with historical matters. He discusses the authenticity of statements on science in the Bible and in the Quran, the origin of man, and the Hebrews in Egypt. Basically, his idea is to find out what is authentic in the Scriptures and what is not. To find what is historically true, Bucaille wishes to develop an objective method. This method is, as has been stated above, based on

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<sup>205</sup>For some examples of Bucaille’s use of the expression “in fact” or similar expressions like “the fact is”, see Bucaille 1978:193 and Bucaille 1984:100f.,178,214.

<sup>206</sup>Bucaille 1978:122f. This is a quite common view among Muslims concerned with these matters, especially in Europe and North America. The idea is based on the notion of *tawhīd*, but it is also possible that Muslims in Europe have come across ideas in Christianity which are similar to this approach, e.g. the thoughts of Wilfred Cantwell Smith.

the idea that modern science can serve to verify the authenticity of statements in the Scriptures.<sup>207</sup>

Bucaille seeks rational explanations of parts in the Scriptures that are surrounded by uncertainty. In *The Hebrews in Egypt* he comments on the plagues of Egypt. On plague number 7, the hail mentioned in Exodus 9:13–35, he refers to heavy hailstones which fell in the Egyptian delta in 1966. On plague number 9, the darkness, he states that the explanation “might have been natural cataclysms of a very high intensity”.<sup>208</sup> Another example from *The Hebrews in Egypt* is the interest Bucaille shows in the life of Moses. In a chapter entitled “Birth of Moses – Construction of the city of Pi-Ramses” he says that the lack of accurate data concerning the life of Moses has left the discussion open for various hypotheses concerning the spiritual influences on Moses. From Bucaille’s perspective, it is important to define the time of Moses in history in order to establish the roots of Moses’ ideas. If Moses is situated in time it will be possible to establish certain hypotheses. “There are major conclusions to be drawn in order to position in time the period of Moses, thanks to the data from secular knowledge.”<sup>209</sup> Bucaille’s overall endeavour is to find reasonable explanations for the mysteries of the Scriptures. In the same manner as for the Scriptures, events in the history of religions in general can be elucidated by modern science.

Bucaille’s relationship to the history of Islam appears in his portrayal of the early period of Islam, and in his description of the history of the Quran. The history of the early tradition and the history of the Quran are closely related in his books.<sup>210</sup> In a comment on the “battle” within Christianity between those who proclaimed that the story of creation in the Bible was true and those who supported Darwin’s ideas, Bucaille states:

At a time when Western science, though still in its infancy, was already at odds with religion, such controversies did not exist in Islam. The reasons for this lie deep in Islamic history – at its very origin in fact. A Muslim tradition dates back to this period, according to which the increase of knowledge must always be encouraged. The Prophet indeed ordered the believers to: ‘Search for science from the cradle to the grave’, ‘search for science, even in China’, by which he meant that no journey could be too long, if it served this purpose. Many verses in the

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<sup>207</sup>Bucaille 1978:55 and Bucaille 1994:6ff.

<sup>208</sup>Bucaille 1994:102.

<sup>209</sup>Bucaille 1994:71.

<sup>210</sup>Bucaille’s understanding of the origin of the Quran is common and his conception of Islam can be appreciated by scholars at al-Azhar and other centres of learning in Muslim countries. See Bucaille 1978:17,133.

Qur'an urge man to seek for signs of God's omnipotence through his contemplation of natural phenomena of all kinds.<sup>211</sup>

The early history of Islam is displayed as a moment in time when the Muslim civilization had reached a higher level than the European civilization. This is underlined by references to well known sayings by Muhammad. Such short and idealised sketches of early Islamic history are often supplemented by statements on the eternal status of the Quran. Bucaille states that the Quran also prescribes a study of the natural environment and, in the end, a search for knowledge.

By promoting a new mentality, the Qur'an was at the origin of a considerable contribution to scientific culture, from the Middle East to Spain. The meaning of such prescriptions was clearly grasped by the Prophet himself, who is said to have claimed one day: 'The scientists' ink is more precious than the martyr's blood.'<sup>212</sup>

In the early history of Islam, science and religion, according to Bucaille, walked hand in hand. However, the reception of the revelations and their reduction to written form are seen as a major shift in the social environment. The coming into being of the Quran is not seen as a process as described by, for example, Montgomery Watt.<sup>213</sup> The reason for Bucaille's statements on the nature of the early history of Islam appears to be apologetic. Hence, the above quotation is utilized in a polemic against the Bible and Christianity.<sup>214</sup> Bucaille's aim is to show that the Quran is a true revelation and that the Islamic tradition contains a drive to acquire scientific knowledge. Thus, contemporary Muslims should turn to the origin of their faith and view it as a catalyst for scientific work and not just imitate the West.

The Quran has an eternal status. It was, according to Bucaille, impossible for the people at the time of the revelation to have the knowledge to understand the message of the Quran in its totality. There are, Bucaille says, still parts of the Quranic text that we cannot deal with. Another way to show the quality of the Quran is to sample a number of verses and state that they are in accordance with modern science.<sup>215</sup> Bucaille's notion of the Quran as eternal is combined with

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<sup>211</sup>Bucaille 1984:217f.

<sup>212</sup>Bucaille 1994:163. For a similar statement, see Bucaille 1984:218.

<sup>213</sup>For the account of the founding of Islam, see the first part of Watt 1992.

<sup>214</sup>Bucaille also points at parts of the Bible which are in accordance with findings of modern science. He states that there is a "striking accord between the biblical text and the medical investigation of the mummy of Merenptah". This was underlined "when an eminent specialist of scientific commentary on the Bible, Professor H. Baruk, stressed the major points of corroboration between the Scripture and modern knowledge regarding the lesions of the pharaoh of the Exodus" (Bucaille 1994:128f.).

<sup>215</sup>See Bucaille 1994:156. Bucaille also says that an evidence for the Quran being the authentic word of Allah is

ideas on the text as a historical document. Nevertheless, he states that the Quran is not a book of history,<sup>216</sup> that is, a detailed and chronologically arranged study of events. Still, his statements on the events narrated in the Quran clearly reveal that he deals with the text of the Quran as if it were a book of historical facts, and that the Quran is never subject to any form of criticism. Any criticism appears to be reserved for the *ḥadīth* literature. Thus, Bucaille says that certain *aḥādīth* are “scientifically unacceptable”.<sup>217</sup> The Quran was written down at the time of Muhammad – as an expression of genuine and authentic divineness. Therefore, it is unique. The sayings and actions of Muhammad were, Bucaille states, written down after the death of Muhammad. As a result, human errors could have slipped into the text. The authenticity of the *aḥādīth* can, therefore, be questioned in the same way as Bucaille questions the authenticity of the Gospels.<sup>218</sup>

### Bucaille’s Ideas on Islam, Religion and Science

Bucaille discusses the term “Islam”. He is opposed to the supposedly wide-spread idea that Islam is a “religion of fear” and makes references to the beginning of *sūra* 2 verse 256 and *sūra* 22 verse 78. The former verse says, in Bucaille’s translation, that “there is no compulsion in religion” and the latter that “[God] has not laid upon you in religion any hardship”.<sup>219</sup> Bucaille also points at a document presented by the Offices for non-Christian Affairs at the Vatican.<sup>220</sup> In this document, he says, Islam is generally depicted in a positive way, but he continues “the number of people in the West who are aware of the new attitudes adopted by the highest authorities in the Catholic Church is however very small.”<sup>221</sup> In his discussion of the Vatican document Bucaille concentrates on what Islam is not. Bucaille rarely gives the reader any explicit picture of his own idea of what Islam is. The reason for Bucaille’s referring to the document appears to be a desire to present Islam in a positive manner. He attempts to buttress his own opinion by referring to Church authorities who share his view.

According to Bucaille, the “onslaught of materialism” threatens the status of

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that it does not contain any anachronisms. He states that in the Bible the mention of camels and Pharaoh in certain passages of the Old Testament are examples of anachronisms (Bucaille 1994:176).

<sup>216</sup>Bucaille 1994:183.

<sup>217</sup>Bucaille 1978:134,263.

<sup>218</sup>Bucaille 1978:133f, 263f.

<sup>219</sup>See Bucaille 1978:123.

<sup>220</sup>Bucaille makes a reference to *Lumen Gentium*, a document produced by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), see Bucaille 1978:123.

<sup>221</sup>Bucaille 1978:124.

Islam. The idea that science and religion are incompatible is, he maintains, a problem that concerns Judaism and Christianity as well as Islam. In his view, materialism becomes a common enemy threatening the position of religion in general, and he favours a cooperation between the monotheistic religions against this enemy. Therefore, Bucaille's ideas concerning the Scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in relation to science have some implications for the relationship between Islam and other faiths, and for the function of religion in general. The view of the Quran as God's final and authentic message to human beings, written down at the time of the revelations, makes it possible for him to state that it contains the primordial revelation. Bucaille appears to share a common idea among Muslims that Islam is the natural religion, *ḍīn al-ḥiṭra*.<sup>222</sup>

Bucaille's idea that one has to turn to the latest results in modern science to understand certain references in the Quran has implications for his understanding of religion.<sup>223</sup> His idea is to make room for religion, especially Islam, in public life. Even though he is specialized in the field of science, the general problem discussed time and again in his books is the tendency towards a marginalization of religion. Indeed, to be a Muslim is an expression of reason. By placing Islam in a modern context, its rationality is revealed. In this way, Bucaille aims to counteract the marginalization of Islam and to stop the spread of atheism and materialism.

According to Bucaille, the discord "between the texts of the Scriptures and scientific data has always provided man with food for thought".<sup>224</sup> For example, Christian Biblical scholars and scientists are opposed to each other. In Islam, he says, this opposition has never existed and it is not present today, because scientific data are in agreement with the Quran.<sup>225</sup> This idea functions as a reservation against the possibility that interpretations of the Quran will be locked to a certain theory. This is to avoid a situation where theoretical shifts in science cause earlier interpretations of the Quran to be regarded as false.

Although Bucaille criticizes certain ideas and problems within science he has a strong faith in both science and Islam. Secular science also appears as the key to a comparison between various religious Scriptures.<sup>226</sup> His frequent statements concerning the compatibility between a modern and secular science and the text of the Quran reveals his idea of a world where religion is not marginalized. Bucaille

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<sup>222</sup>Among European converts to Islam it is common to speak about reversion, rather than conversion, to Islam. For a general discussion on the term *al-ḥiṭra* in Islamic traditions. See EI vol. II:931f.

<sup>223</sup>See Bucaille 1978:148f.,268.

<sup>224</sup>Bucaille 1978:17.

<sup>225</sup>Bucaille 1978:17. In such statements Bucaille omits the scholarly discussions that have been going on among Muslim scholars and others throughout the history of Islam.

<sup>226</sup>See, for example, Bucaille's notions on the possibility of studying religious texts in a new light founded on secular science (Bucaille 1978:19 and Bucaille 1994:156f.,205).

says that no text pertaining to the monotheistic religions condemns science. He states that some scientists have had problems with “religious authorities of certain creeds.”<sup>227</sup> In a comment to the latter statement, Bucaille says that these problems have been restricted to the Christian world. In the world of Islam there have been no negative views on science.<sup>228</sup> Bucaille contrasts a normative Islamic ideal with the actual history of the progress of science in Europe. One underlying problem in Bucaille’s interpretation of the Quran is that the statements on modern science in the Quranic text are scattered throughout the book. One example is the story of creation. Bucaille edits the verses in the Quran in order to make them compatible with modern science. A large part of *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science* is structured in this way.<sup>229</sup> The editing of the verses appears to be made in a manner that lays the ground for statements that the Quran is compatible with modern science. For Bucaille this is a natural relationship. There is an accordance between “true science“ and “true faith”.<sup>230</sup> One implication of this supposed accordance is that the Quran can be seen as a scientific text.<sup>231</sup> Bucaille does not aim at developing a specific Islamic science since science by nature is Islamic. This is a point that has been somewhat misunderstood both by Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>232</sup>

## Summary

Maurice Bucaille is a retired physician and a convert to Islam. His books have been read by and influenced many Muslims. Bucaille’s ideas appear in texts which have been widely distributed all over the world. Above all, the influence of his book *The Bible the Qur’an and Science* has been remarkable. This work seems to have influenced the choice of preferred topics to be treated by the supporters of Bucaille’s position. Bucaille’s opinions influence young Muslim students in Europe as well as in Cairo, Damascus, Lahore, Kuala Lumpur and Riyadh, as well as political leaders in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. Moreover, *The*

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<sup>227</sup>Bucaille 1978:125.

<sup>228</sup>Bucaille 1978:125. For other examples of the alleged accordance between the Quran and science, see Bucaille 1978:152–154 and Bucaille 1994:157,201.

<sup>229</sup>Bucaille 1978:119–223.

<sup>230</sup>Bucaille 1984:219.

<sup>231</sup>If *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science* (1978) had been written thirty years ago, Bucaille says, “another fact predicted in the Qur’an would have had to have been added to what would have been cited concerning astronomy; this fact is the conquest of space (...) it was then known that a verse existed in the Qur’an predicting how one day man would make this conquest. This statement has now been verified” (Bucaille 1978:130).

<sup>232</sup>The adherents to the position of Bucaille make, as has been stated above, interpretations of the Quran that are too extensive according to him.

*Bible, the Qur'an and Science* has influenced religious scholars in Muslim countries as well as in Europe and North America. Bucaille has, however, criticized some of the interpretations of his work. This criticism is directed both against those who oppose his views and those who support his notions on the character of the Quranic text, because there are both negative and positive over-interpretations of his works. As a reaction to the criticism that Bucaille's own books have received, Bucaille often stresses that he has never claimed that all forms of science can be found in the Quran.<sup>233</sup>

In his interpretation of Islamic terminology, Bucaille concentrates on the Quran. His reading of the Quranic text is centered on an examination of specific verses in the light of modern science. The achievements of the natural sciences are the instrument by which one can measure the quality of individual statements in religious texts. In an analogous manner, he uses the achievements of science to interpret single words in the Quranic text in order to reveal their authentic and eternal meanings. Science is the key to understand the purpose of the revelation and the intentions of its creator. In order to establish his interpretations as true and legitimate he claims a preferential right of interpretation. This right is rhetorically constructed on the basis of Bucaille's expertise in Arabic, his knowledge of modern science and his studies in the field of Islamic theology. In his ambition to appropriate the meaning of the Quranic text, he uses a form of captivating interpretations in order to convince his audience.

The position held by Maurice Bucaille is based on some general notions. The Quran contains the revelation, the word of God. He attempts to give the Quran a certain meaning, that is, to take away its interpretative – mystic – possibilities. A broad aim appears to be to bridge a perceived gap between reality – in form of a “materialistic” society – and Islam as represented by the Quran. The correctness of the revelation is affirmed by stating that the qualities of the Quran cannot be an outcome of any human endeavour. The latter statement is Bucaille's often repeated argument against an acceptance of the Bible as a revelation. To him, the Bible is founded on oral tradition.

For Bucaille the construction of the human body is so complex that it cannot have come about by chance. This implies a critique of the theory of evolution. In Bucaille's and his supporters' opinion, the theory of evolution and Darwinism are the same thing. They are the symbols of a culture and civilization from which they wish dissociate themselves. It is often emphasized that science is temporary and mutable. In the critique of the theory of evolution and Darwinism, these phenomena are, however, treated as if they were as absolute or fixed as the story of the creation. Of course, the story of creation can be interpreted in many ways, but in Bucaille's position it seems to be understood in one single manner.

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<sup>233</sup>For the response to the critique directed towards his position, see Talbi & Bucaille 1989:242.

In Bucaille's terminology both atheism and materialism are in opposition to religion. In the West the challenge of anti-religious forces has caused religion to be on the defensive. This defensiveness of religion has caused, among other things, a specialization of science with negative consequences. Contemporary science is divided into various disciplines, each of which is unable to take into account the results from other fields. In Bucaille's view, science – and scientists – see nature as an objective phenomenon, and within different disciplines of science the study of the laws of nature are the ultimate end. Consequently, the development in the so-called Western society has given rise to a science without any concept of a transcendental reality. Bucaille's aim is to study statements in the religious texts of the monotheistic religions to see in what way they differ from established "facts" of modern science. This leads him to certain conclusions: The religious texts are in their general statements in accordance with the results of modern science. In the Quran, specifically, there is no incongruity whatsoever with the established "facts" of modern science. The ideas of Darwin, Darwinism and the theory of evolution can therefore, in short, be placed in the category of scientific "theories". Some form of natural selection and evolution may exist, Bucaille maintains, but not in the form presented by Darwin and others. Ideas and proposals from scientists must be fully validated by empirical tests. In Bucaille's view, various scientists and others have used ideas originating from Darwin for ideological purposes in order to challenge religion and to establish a materialist society. Islam is the authentic revelation and this can be validated by the results of modern science. Bucaille brings in the idea of harmony and balance as a foundation for evolution.

In Bucaille's understanding "history" is intimately related to religion. He belongs to a *sunnī* mainstream current in his interpretation of the history of Islam. Those parts in his books that deal with history present it in a way common to this tradition. He recounts a history of Islam as it has been told by religious scholars for centuries, that is as a true story which can be taken for granted. He does not explicitly say that the Quran is a book of history, but the Quranic events and histories that he deals with in his texts are never subject to any criticism. On the other hand, he does use a form of textual criticism, one developed by Christian theologians in their study of the Bible, in order to support his statement that the Bible does not contain an authentic revelation in the same sense as the Quran. In Bucaille's opinion finding the historical facts is a tool for understanding the authentic revelation. In his rationally sounding approach he emphasizes the authenticity of the Quranic text. However, it should be remarked that he places the *aḥādīth* and the Gospels on an equal footing. According to Bucaille, the *aḥādīth* are to be treated carefully, because they have been subject to human interference and were written down years after they were uttered. Bucaille stresses that his approach to the scriptures of Islam, Judaism and Christianity is

an expression of “objectivity”. Related to this is his search for “facts” and Bucaille’s view of himself as an objective researcher. He criticizes Christian commentators who claim that the Bible is the word of God. He critically designates them apologetics.

The critique Bucaille expresses is general in its character. There are very few passages that contain any explicit criticism of any specific individual or work. The statements make general assertions about Muslims’ and non-Muslims’ attitudes to science. Bucaille seems to regard himself as a scientist who has understood the authentic message of the Quran. There is therefore an edge of bitterness in his response to those who have criticized his views. This bitterness is caused by the fact that his ideas have neither been accepted among men of religion nor among men of science. His critique of “materialist and atheist” society, and especially of the vague relationship between the Scriptures and science, resembles the critique of science and society levelled by the “creationists” (see below). It is difficult to find any positive reaction to Bucaille’s works in non-Muslim sources. Those writers who do comment on Bucaille’s position do, however, often stress his enormous influence among young Muslims today – a point that may alleviate his bitterness.

Islam – and the Quran – are according to Bucaille often misunderstood in Europe and North America. If we would examine Islam properly we would see that it contains the primordial and authentic message from God to humankind. Forces in today’s society challenge religion in general. The task carried out by Bucaille is to show that modern science and Islam are in harmony with each other. The point is to place Islam in its proper position, that is, as a total order of life for individuals as well as for the community. Hence, there exists a form of reciprocity between science and religion, where “true science” and “true religion” are complementary in the sense that they both are applicable as sources in search for a better understanding of nature.





## 6. Communication and Interaction Between the Positions

The exponent who most vehemently criticizes other participants in the discourse is Ziauddin Sardar. Therefore, his view of the other positions will constitute the bulk of this chapter. In *Explorations in Islamic Science* (1989) Sardar discusses and examines the actors he regards as significant in the discourse.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the criticism expressed by the participants is formed on the basis of a shared presupposition, namely that it is possible to create an Islamic science. One should also note that the borders between the positions are not closed. This means that the question whether Islam can constitute an all-encompassing order for society is never discussed, including the issue whether Islam can be the basis for science. All this is simply taken for granted. Therefore, the subjects discussed concern the actual practice of Islamization: the formulation of a correct relationship between Islam and knowledge. I consider the critique against the West and modernity to be sufficiently well covered in the presentations of the four positions above.

### *Ziauddin Sardar's critique of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's position*

Nasr faces fierce criticism from the *idjmālīs*.<sup>2</sup> He is chosen as their principal opponent. Despite the criticism of Nasr, many adherents of the *idjmālī* position state that Nasr's works have led to an increased focus on the issue of Islamization of science.<sup>3</sup>

Sardar describes the actors in the discourse, perhaps somewhat flippantly, by means of lines taken from songs from the world of pop and rock music. The headings of different sections are song titles.<sup>4</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr is discussed under the heading *Nowhere Man* inspired by the Beatles. Nasr is taking us on a *Magical Mystery Tour*, and the part where Sardar summarizes Nasr's views is called *Ground Control to Major Tom* after the first line in David Bowie's song *Space Oddity* where Major Tom, an astronaut, is lost in space in a technically defective rocket, totally unable to do anything to change his situation.<sup>5</sup> Such

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<sup>1</sup>Sardar 1989:111–177.

<sup>2</sup>See Sardar 1977:28,33; Sardar 1988b:14f.; Anees & Wyn Davies 1988:251f. and Manzoor 1991:126.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Sardar 1977:29,36n. and Anees & Wyn Davies 1988:251.

<sup>4</sup>Sardar (1989:176n.) says "I have been having fun at the expense of the lyrics from the late 1960s pop songs: 'Ground control to Major Tom' is attributed to David Bowie; 'We have only just begun' to the Carpenters; the others are from the Beatles. No indirect promotion of pop culture is intended!"

<sup>5</sup>I do not know if Sardar is aware that Major Tom appears in a song, *Ashes to Ashes*, presented by Bowie about ten

colourful labels for the position of another scholar may at first look superficial, or even absurd, but I believe that they do expose some of the presuppositions underlying the ideas of both Sardar and Nasr. Under the heading *Ground Control to Major Tom*, Sardar in 12 short points presents what he thinks Nasr is telling us in his books:

1. All religions, including secular worldviews such as Buddhism [sic!], are the same at a certain level of reality.
2. Pythagorean cult, neo-Platonism and other ancient esoteric mythologies are the basis of Islamic metaphysics.
3. The Zoroastrian notion of a world perpetually in battle between the forces of light and darkness is a part of the Islamic metaphysical system.
4. the Hindu notion of cyclic time, reincarnation and karma are also an integral part of the Islamic metaphysical system.
5. Gnostics are somehow superior beings who know the truth.
6. Islamic cosmology is essentially a combination of gnosticism and occultism.
7. The history of Islamic sciences is basically a history of astrology and magic, numerology and alchemy, sacred geography and geometry, gnosis and Greek mystical mythology.
8. Islamic science has nothing to do with the practical realm; it is a purely abstract form of mysticism.
9. Islamic science is divorced from ethics.
10. The goal of Islamic science is unity, but in science the unity is so all pervasive that there is no distinction between the Creator and the created [*wahdat al-wudjūd*] it is essentially an elusive goal.
11. Islamic science is the study of ontological reality.
12. Islamic science is hierarchical, which means that it must submit to the authority of the Gnostics and others who know the truth so that the correct esoteric interpretations can be given to Islamic science.<sup>6</sup>

Sardar considers Nasr to be “a nowhere man occupying a nowhere land: his discourse is neither about Islam, nor about science, but is a purely totalitarian enterprise”.<sup>7</sup> This statement can be regarded as an attempt to discredit Nasr’s standpoint, and, in turn, an attempt by Sardar to monopolize the interpretation of the content of Islam. Sardar concludes that those who read Nasr’s works may be forgiven for “believing that Islamic science is another name for Ismaili gnosis,

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years later, and in this more recent song Major Tom is still out there without contact with the earth.

<sup>6</sup>Sardar 1989:129.

<sup>7</sup>Sardar 1989:128f. Nasr’s ideas on science have been interpreted as anti-democratic by non-Muslim scholars. See Elzinga and Jamison 1981:18.

Greek mystery religions and the occult”.<sup>8</sup> Anees and Wyn Davies argue that “gnostic pursuits” have always been regarded as suspicious by Muslims.<sup>9</sup> Nasr’s main purpose is, in their view, to propagate such gnostic ideas and when Sardar comments on Nasr’s presentation of the history of Islamic science, he says: “Even if one accepts Nasr’s ideas as ‘Sufism’, which I do not, we know that Sufism was not the only trend, nor indeed the dominant trend, in Muslim intellectual history”.<sup>10</sup> In Sardar’s view, Nasr’s philosophy is a kind of *philosophia perennis* in which all religions are supposedly the same at a certain level of reality.<sup>11</sup> This means that when Nasr describes the cosmology of Islam, both description and definition are reductive. This interpretation of Islamic cosmology, says Sardar, is based on Nasr’s own view of *ṣūfī* mystical experiences.<sup>12</sup> In Sardar’s opinion, Nasr ignores questions such as the origin and structure of the universe.

Add Islamic terminology, and you have the gnosis of Nasr. So where does Islam figure in all this? It is clear that there is little Islamic content, but as Greek gnosticism is able to fasten like a parasite on Islam, it is able to present the whole thing in Islamic terminology. It is hardly surprising then when it comes to the actual history of Islamic science, Nasr presents it essentially as a history of esotericism and occult, interpretation and adaption of Greek methodology by the Muslims, and takes every opportunity to glorify gnosticism.<sup>13</sup>

Sardar particularly stresses Nasr’s use of ideas of Greek origin. The rhetorical purpose of such an attack is to link Nasr to a non-Islamic movement, that is, Gnosticism. Nasr is, Sardar says, not at all interested in the “real” aspect of Islamic astronomy. The latter is a science motivated by the needs of the religious ritual, basically the search for the determination of the direction of *qibla*, the visibility of the lunar crescent and the pinpointing of the times of prayers.<sup>14</sup>

In the section of *Explorations in Islamic Science* where Sardar criticises Nasr’s opinions and notions on Islamic science, there is also a criticism of Nasr’s works in general, levelled at his choice of subjects and references. One

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<sup>8</sup>Sardar 1989:124. *Ismā‘īliya* is a branch of *shī‘ī* Islam. For a description of their doctrines, see Daftary 1990, Halm 1991 and Stern 1983.

<sup>9</sup>Anees & Wyn Davies 1988:252.

<sup>10</sup>Sardar 1989:124.

<sup>11</sup>This idea has deep roots in the West. Well-known supporters of the idea during the 20th century are for example Mircea Eliade and Aldous Huxley.

<sup>12</sup>Sardar 1989:117.

<sup>13</sup>Sardar 1989:119 and Sardar 1988b:14f.

<sup>14</sup>Sardar 1989:120. *Qibla* is Arabic and the term designates the direction of the *Ka‘ba* in Mecca which has to be observed during prayer.

example is Nasr's choice of subjects in *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study*. Talking about the structure of the book Sardar says:

Physics does not deserve one [chapter]; astronomy does not deserve one; even the chapter on environment does not discuss the contemporary work done by Muslim environmentalists and architects; but occult sciences deserve an 'Islamic alchemy today' section!<sup>15</sup>

In a footnote Sardar states that the book's "un-Islamic stances" caused protests by members of the *Federation of Students Islamic Societies* (FOSIS) in front of the administrative offices of the World of Islam festival. Sardar concludes by stating that the festival "had little to do with Islam and more to do with the celebration of Guénonite thought – all publications of the festival were produced by Guénonite savants".<sup>16</sup>

Sardar continues by arguing that Nasr is not able to distinguish between important works and trivia. This makes Nasr's *An Annotated Bibliography of Islamic Science* a third-rate bibliography.<sup>17</sup> For the same reason, the references in Nasr's books are always to works by the followers of the René Guénon/Frithjof Schuon Traditionalist theology. Nasr freely mixes the esotericism of the *Isma'īliya* with ideas on the *religio perennis* philosophy formulated by Guénon and Schuon.<sup>18</sup> This makes Nasr a "devotee" who merely repeats the thoughts of the "masters' philosophy", especially those of Schuon.<sup>19</sup> Sardar argues that the result of Nasr's view on science is that it "becomes subject to the esoteric interpretation of the Imam".<sup>20</sup> Nasr also to a large extent quotes himself, and is therefore self-righteous.<sup>21</sup> Sardar is of the opinion that Plato, Pythagoras and Aristotle are used selectively. When Nasr refers to persons within Muslim history, he often prefers referring to Persian scholars.<sup>22</sup> The latter are

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<sup>15</sup>Sardar 1989:122f. For a similar critique of Nasr, see Anees & Wyn Davies 1988:251.

<sup>16</sup>Sardar 1989:173f.

<sup>17</sup>Sardar 1989:123.

<sup>18</sup>Sardar 1989:115. The American anthropologist Michael Fisher (1980:142–145) describes reactions to Nasr and his ideas during interviews with primarily religious scholars in Iran. He points out that among the religious classes Nasr is unpopular because of his alignment with the Pahlavi political establishment. According to Fisher, Persians also objected to Nasr's association with a group of mostly European scholars of a mystical bent. The reason for the objection was simply that Nasr is associated with non-Persians. Several Iranian scholars viewed Nasr's understanding of Sufism, especially its elitistic elements, as unacceptable.

<sup>19</sup>Sardar 1989:116. For a harsh criticism of Nasr and his relation to Schuon, see Sardar 1993:33–36. In this review article Sardar presents a scathing criticism of the "cult of Schuon" and he points at the esoteric faith of the "tariqa Mariamiah" as a mix of Gnosticism, Occultism, Hermeticism, Pythagoreanism, neo-Platonism, Hinduism, Sufism, Christianity and Kabbalism.

<sup>20</sup>Sardar 1989:128.

<sup>21</sup>Sardar 1989:117,124.

<sup>22</sup>Sardar 1988b:14.

ascribed inventions which they did not make. One example is when Nasr attributes “the calculation of the tables of tangent” to the Persian *Naṣīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī* who only copied them from the Egyptian *Ibn Yūnus*.<sup>23</sup> There is thus an attempt in Nasr’s presentation of Islamic science to appropriate it for his own ends and to give Islamic science a specific meaning in conformity with *Ismā‘īlī* ideas. As Sardar notes: “then the contemporary debate on the subject can be focused on this arena”.<sup>24</sup> This is the motive why several works concerning Islamic science have been left out in Nasr’s *Islamic Science: An Annotated Bibliography*. Sardar gives several examples, such as Fuat Sezgin’s *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, I-IX, 1967-1984 and says that the intention behind the omission is that the students of Islamic science must not observe “the real content and nature of Islamic science”.<sup>25</sup>

To support his argument, Sardar cites the example of *al-Ghazzālī*. He is described as a *ṣūfī*, but a *ṣūfī* who “rejected all the magical, mystical constructions, labelling them blameworthy knowledge”.<sup>26</sup> Sardar also compares Nasr’s notion of hierarchy and the masters’ absolute judgement with the reactionary movements that contributed to the construction of the Third Reich.<sup>27</sup> The purpose of the statement appears to be to arouse suspicion of Nasr’s position in the eyes of other Muslims. In the same way a reference to the Third Reich can discredit Nasr in the eyes of non-Muslims, as well as of Muslims brought up in Europe and the USA.

#### *Nasr’s response – Muslims in the West, fundamentalism and modernism*

The *idjmalī* critique of Nasr is less than subtle and it is obvious that Sardar and Nasr dislike each other. Nasr’s opinion is that Sardar is badly informed about the content of the various philosophical traditions within Islam, in a historical as well as a contemporary perspective. In his eyes, Sardar is unable to make correct interpretations of the Islamic traditions. Sardar is a person who just adds the word Islamic to various scientific disciplines and thinks that this is enough. Nasr says that Sardar seems to hate Sufism, that to be a *ṣūfī* is to be a criminal. It should be noted that Nasr thinks it unnecessary to express strong and personal judgements on the ideas of Sardar, or anyone else, in writing.<sup>28</sup> Instead, his statements

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<sup>23</sup>Sardar 1989:120. For a portrayal of the works of Naṣīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī, see al-Hassan & Hill 1994:24,69.

<sup>24</sup>Sardar 1989:123.

<sup>25</sup>Sardar 1989:123.

<sup>26</sup>Sardar 1989:125.

<sup>27</sup>Sardar 1989:130. The relations between certain Muslim intellectuals and reactionary movements are discussed in the chapter concerned with the position of Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

<sup>28</sup>Nasr’s critique of other perspectives is not direct. He seldom explicitly mentions persons, movements or regimes of which he is critical. His critique of societies and governments that claim to be Islamic can be interpreted as a

are general and aimed at the positions within the discourse. However, in Nasr's view the basic difference between himself, Sardar, Bucaille and al-Faruqi is that he constructs a comprehensive philosophy, while his opponents, primarily Sardar and Bucaille, take single elements or words from the Quran and compare them with modern science. On the other hand, Nasr also says that he and Bucaille have a knowledge of the natural sciences that Sardar and al-Faruqi lack. In opposition to the other three, Nasr takes the Muslim intellectual tradition of Islam very seriously and he identifies with a certain trend within it. Nasr argues that al-Faruqi is opposed to the intellectual tradition of Islam, Sardar knows nothing about it and Bucaille does not say anything about it.<sup>29</sup>

Nasr criticizes those individuals he labels "Western-educated Muslims", and says that most of them are critical towards their own culture for not producing science in the modern Western sense. This group, he claims, is not aware of the facts related to the Traditionalist sciences, and does not understand that the academic disciplines which study science in fact glorify modern science.<sup>30</sup> The statement stresses his view that the study of Western science is to be blamed for the neglect of alternative concepts of science.<sup>31</sup> To teach young and Western educated Muslims their own tradition and show them how to use it in a scientific context is the urgent task for Nasr today.<sup>32</sup>

Nasr's outline of a Traditionalist perspective stands in opposition to the approach to science and technology among fundamentalists. The fundamentalist view is in his opinion almost identical with that of the modernists, especially in their practice, i.e. in the field of science and technology. Nasr continues by saying that there is no difference in the application of science and technology in the Muslim states that have modern forms of government and those that claim to be Islamic governments. They all adopt technologies from the West without thinking about the consequences upon the minds and souls of Muslims. In the domain of science, many fundamentalists try to build a Quranic foundation for the modern domination and devastation of nature by human beings.<sup>33</sup>

Nasr sees the use of the Quranic text by fundamentalists as an attempt to come to terms with the discoveries and facts of modern science. The answer is not simply to say that Islam is scientific in the way that various modern apolo-

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criticism directed primarily towards the Islamic Republic of Iran. Of course, the criticism involves movements, individuals and states which interpret Islam in a fundamentalist manner. In conversations with Nasr he has pointed out that some representatives of the Iranian government have tried to come to a reconciliation with him concerning his relation to the present regime of Iran (conversation with Nasr in Washington DC, 28th April 1994).

<sup>29</sup>Personal conversation with Nasr in Birmingham, 26th October 1994.

<sup>30</sup>Nasr 1976:114n.

<sup>31</sup>Nasr 1990:51,53.

<sup>32</sup>Conversation with Nasr in Birmingham, 26th October 1994. See also Nasr 1993b.

<sup>33</sup>Nasr 1987c:19.

getics are inclined to do.<sup>34</sup> The fundamentalists, he says, cannot just take the “Islamic” concept of knowledge (*‘ilm*) and equate it with modern forms of knowledge. In the same manner Muslim apologetics cannot equate modern science with *al-‘ilm* without qualifications or modifications.<sup>35</sup> They have to ask themselves what kind of knowledge Muhammad alluded to in the *ḥadīth* when he urged Muslims to seek *‘ilm* from the cradle to the grave.<sup>36</sup> This critique appears to be directed against the position in the discourse represented by Maurice Bucaille, but is also directed against Sardar who stresses the use of *‘ilm* in his outline of Islamic science.

Nasr discusses different traditions among Muslims. He calls fundamentalism a “pseudo-tradition” or “counter-tradition”.<sup>37</sup> Thus, they are a challenge to the Traditionalist perspective. Nasr argues that there are different strands of “fundamentalism” and his standpoint is that all Muslim traditions meet in their acceptance of the Quran and *ḥadīth*, and in their stress on the *sharī‘a*. However, the differences between his ideas and the fundamentalist position are profound. The Traditionalist standpoint cannot accept their way of using the Islamic texts. He exemplifies by stating that many fundamentalist groups pull out a verse from the Quran and interpret it in accordance with their predefined goals.<sup>38</sup> The differences between his view and the modernist and fundamentalist positions are particularly clear in the fields of politics, economy and social life. The Traditionalist outlook strives for a society in which social institutions are based on *sharī‘a*. The family, the village and local urban quarters are part of a social fabric founded on bonds created by religion. In economics, Nasr’s perspective is distinctly pre-modern, based on face-to-face transactions, morality and trust. The “traditional bazaar” is Nasr’s ideal arena for economic transactions. The image of a revival of the Traditionalist idea in the field of social and political life is connected to Muslim notions of a “renewer” (*mudjaddid*)<sup>39</sup>. This is not, Nasr states, to be compared with the Muslim reformers who appeared in the 18th and 19th century, i.e. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, al-Afghānī and ‘Abduh. Nasr describes the renewers as great saints and sages such as ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Djilānī (d. 1166), al-Ghazzālī, Shaykh Abū ‘l-Hasan ash-Shādhilī (d. 1258).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Nasr 1979:30.

<sup>35</sup>Nasr 1991:54.

<sup>36</sup>Nasr 1987c:19.

<sup>37</sup>Nasr 1987c:18. For Nasr’s view on fundamentalism. See Nasr 1987c:11–25.

<sup>38</sup>Nasr 1987c:18.

<sup>39</sup>*Mudjaddid* is a renewer of the faith. The aim of the renewer is to bring a people back to the authentic faith.

<sup>40</sup>Nasr 1987c:17f. All three have prominent positions within Sufism. Al-Ghazzālī is used by several positions, to further their respective views. Sardar uses him in order to undermine the position of Nasr (see above). Nasr, on the other hand, criticizes the modern use of al-Ghazzālī and the dispute concerning al-Ghazzālī’s transition from legalism to mysticism (conversation with Nasr in Birmingham, 26th October 1996).

In Nasr's view the purpose of the Quran is not to express historical facts, but to be a text with a symbolic content. However, the literal understanding of the text is also always valid. It is therefore absurd to try to find detailed scientific information in the Quran or, for that matter, the Bible.<sup>41</sup> He says that challenges to Muslims by Marxism or Darwinism as well as existentialism can be responded to, but not by a simple rationalistic interpretation of Islam in a *salafiya* manner.<sup>42</sup> The description among fundamentalists of Islam as a political ideology is questionable. If Islam is an ideology, why is there no word to express this concept in Arabic or Persian, or other languages of the Muslim peoples? And if it is a complete way of life, he asks, why does Islam have to use a 19th century European concept to describe its nature? In his view, the Traditionalist perspective does not accept the understanding of Islam as an ideology. A society ruled under the banner of a religious ideology creates serious consequences for religion itself.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, if Muslims want to gain respect and adherence from non-Muslims and from Muslims educated in the West, religion must present itself as an alternative to currently popular Western ideologies. The alternative will consist of a comprehensive programme for the entire life of the individual and his or her place in this world.<sup>44</sup>

In Nasr's definition, the adherents of modernism are those Muslim individuals or movements who have accepted ideas that came to *dār al-islām* some two hundred years ago. In his perspective, most fields in society were influenced by modernist thoughts. Finally, modernist trends were to be found within religion.<sup>45</sup> Modernism in Muslim societies is a trend which runs counter to the Traditionalist position, and is a set of ideas imported from Europe and North America without any form of adaptation to local conditions.<sup>46</sup> Modernism tends to adopt "an ideology that happens to be fashionable in the Western world and then attach the adjective 'Islamic' to it". The result is plethora of expressions such as "Islamic Democracy", "Islamic Socialism" and "Islamic Rationalism". The aim is to make Islam acceptable and modern, but the result is a betrayal of "Islam by reducing it from a total body of principles and from a complete outlook to an adjective modifying a noun." This is a statement directed against Sardar and al-Faruqi and IIT. Therefore, implies Nasr, al-Faruqi's and Sardar's accounts should not to be taken seriously, especially not their ideas concerning the history of Islam.<sup>47</sup> For Nasr,

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<sup>41</sup>Nasr 1979:49f and Nasr 1991:56.

<sup>42</sup>Nasr 1991:52f.

<sup>43</sup>Nasr 1987c:21. This type of statement is also used by Nasr when he says that there is no distinction between "the sacred" and "the profane" in languages of "the Islamic peoples". See Nasr 1991:166.

<sup>44</sup>Nasr 1991:52.

<sup>45</sup>Nasr 1987c:12.

<sup>46</sup>Nasr 1987c:12f.

<sup>47</sup>The idea that Sardar is badly informed on the history of Islam was stated in conversations in Washington DC and

the idea discussed by, for example, Sardar, i.e. the possibility to fuse the sciences of East and West, is impossible as well as dangerous. In his opinion, such a mixture of sciences cannot be constructed as long as the basic attitude of modern science remains what it is today.<sup>48</sup>

Nasr describes three “voices” that the West have heard from the Muslim world during the past century. Two voices which have attracted attention are those of the so-called fundamentalists and those of the modernists. The first are represented by the *Wahhābīs* and the *Salafīs*. Nasr says that these movements were at first directed against Western science and technology, but that later followers have espoused science and technology from the West. The modernists have voiced a firm defence of Western science and technology from the early 19th century. Nasr mentions such personalities as Muḥammad ‘Alī, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, Muḥammad ‘Abduh and the Turkish nationalist ideologist Zia Gökalp (d. 1924). Djamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī, Nasr says, equated Western science with Islamic science.<sup>49</sup> This view, he continues, has been expressed by teachers in classrooms as well as by preachers for over a century. The third voice presented by Nasr is Traditionalist Islam. This voice has almost not been heard at all in the West until recently. Nasr mentions Muḥammad Iqbāl as an example. He states that Iqbāl is not a representative of Traditionalist Islam, but that one occasionally can get a glimpse of the Quranic attitude towards nature in his poetry, an attitude which has been cultivated by *ṣūfī* and Islamic philosophers over the centuries.<sup>50</sup> Parenthetically, Nasr also states that Iqbāl is an example of how Nietzsche has influenced intellectuals in Muslim countries. Iqbāl mentions Nietzsche as his interlocutor in the West. In his short résumé of Nietzsche’s works, Nasr seems to have a positive opinion of the German philosopher, especially his critique of the spiritual poverty in Europe at that time.<sup>51</sup>

#### *The idjmālī idea of al-Faruqī and the IIT*

The *International Institute of Islamic Thought* and Ismail al-Faruqī are not mentioned at all in the criticism in *Exploration in Islamic Science*. Sardar in a conversation with me claimed that the reason for not mentioning al-Faruqī or the IIT is that they are not concerned with Islamic science, but with Islamization of knowledge.<sup>52</sup> The latter is then regarded as a different discourse.<sup>53</sup>

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Birmingham, 25th April 1994 and 26th October 1994.

<sup>48</sup>Nasr 1991:157.

<sup>49</sup>Nasr 1993:139.

<sup>50</sup>For Nasr’s presentation of the three “voices”, see Nasr 1993:138f.

<sup>51</sup>Nasr 1993b:171f.

<sup>52</sup>Conversation with Sardar in London, 2 November 1994.

<sup>53</sup>Sardar (1989b:27) sees three discourses as taking place in the arena of contemporary Muslim thought. The first

It is not always clear, for example, where the boundaries of the debate on Islamization of knowledge end and discourse on Islamic science begins (...). Ideally, the discourse on Islamic science should be an integral part of the discourse on Islamization of knowledge – science, after all, has shaped contemporary epistemology and philosophy of knowledge and is the main source of our understanding of the material, physical and natural world. For historical reasons science has been left out of the discourse on Islamization of knowledge, although parallel with this has developed the debate on the nature and style of a contemporary Islamic science.<sup>54</sup>

Sardar's opinion is thus that they are separate – but related – discourses. A reason for this statement appears to be that he understands science to be the same as the natural sciences. Therefore, he considers the work concerned with the Islamization of social sciences carried out at the IIIT as somewhat removed from the work promoted by the adherents of the *idjmālī* standpoint. Nevertheless, Sardar discusses al-Faruqī's notions on the Islamization of knowledge. In his account, al-Faruqī synthesized the views of Syed Naquib al-Attas and Jaffar Sheikh Idris, and he says that the foundation of al-Faruqī's ideas is the notion that social science in the West rejects the validity of "a priori data". This gives an erroneous sense of objectivity, "violating the principle of unity".<sup>55</sup> Sardar argues that al-Faruqī also pointed out that it was the contemporary generation of Muslim intellectuals that discovered a conflict between Islam and the West. Al-Faruqī thus brushed aside the ideas of earlier Muslim scholars and reformers such as Djamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad °Abduh. Further, Sardar gives an account of al-Faruqī's plan of action to Islamize the social sciences. Al-Faruqī's plan is compared with one presented by Idris in *AJSS*.<sup>56</sup> Sardar concludes that Idris' plan is both clearer and more achievable.<sup>57</sup> However, it is still vague when it comes to implementation, i.e. how to actually shape an Islamic framework for science. This is a crucial question and he turns to specific fields of science, starting with Islamic economics, to see how the process towards Islamization has been implemented.<sup>58</sup>

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concerns the Islamization of knowledge project, the second the development of an understanding of Islamic science, and the third shaping "a vision of a dynamic, thriving future civilization of Islam".

<sup>54</sup>Sardar 1989b:27f.

<sup>55</sup>Sardar 1989b: 31.

<sup>56</sup>See Idris 1987:201–208.

<sup>57</sup>Wyn Davies comments on various individuals and schools taking part in the discourse concerning Islamization of knowledge. There is a critique of Ismail Raji al-Faruqī's position and a supportive stance towards the ideas of Ziauddin Sardar. The latter is lauded in a statement to the effect that "Sardar's approach is the most stimulating because he stresses the operational process as being the embodiment of Islamization now, just as it was in the foundation of Muslim civilization". See Wyn Davies 1988:79f.

<sup>58</sup>For an overview of Sardar's description of al-Faruqī's ideas, see Sardar 1989b: 31–36.

This criticism of al-Faruqi's ideas is also expressed on a more general level. Manzoor stresses the naiveté and abstract character of al-Faruqi's position.<sup>59</sup> The abstract character of al-Faruqi's ideas is exemplified by the lack of concreteness and the neglect of empirical realities. In Sardar's view, al-Faruqi's vision is always directed towards an ideal understanding of Islam, an ideal which cannot help "those who are in search of moral imperatives within the inescapable context of modernity."<sup>60</sup>

*Al-Faruqi and the IIT on the ideas of Sardar, Bucaille and Nasr*

There may be many reasons for the fact that Sardar is left out in the literature of the position of al-Faruqi and the IIT.<sup>61</sup> One reason could be the American context of the IIT and al-Faruqi. In North America, Sardar is overshadowed primarily by the IIT. Another reason may be the similarities between their positions.

Those individuals who in the present work are presented as adherents to the position represented by Seyyed Hossein Nasr are mentioned in various contexts. Ahmad states that Nasr has not understood the difference between *dīn* (religion) and *ad-dīn* (the religion). The former refers, says Ahmad, to any religious or political system, the latter especially to Islam – "the eternal religion".<sup>62</sup> Nasr and Frithjof Schuon are said by al-Faruqi to belong to a school of mystics.<sup>63</sup> In al-Faruqi's view, the claims of Nasr and Schuon have a long history. He states that the foundation for their position is an assertion that all religions are anchored in an absolute and transcendent reality.<sup>64</sup> All religions, al-Faruqi says in his description of Nasr's and Schuon's ideas, "conceive of transcendent reality as normative, a source of standards and commandments relevant for the conduct of life."<sup>65</sup> In the end, Schuon and Nasr are advocates of the idea that the relationship between the religious and the sacred constitutes a base for a "universal human religion". In a critical commentary al-Faruqi says that the various advocates of a universal religiosity, from Pythagoras to mystics of all religions, have in reality been adherents of different traditions and cultures. The idea of universality is more a case of wishful thinking than an expression of an actual state of affairs. To support his statement, he says that often the "fiercest religious opponents were mystics".<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>See Manzoor 1991:40,120–124.

<sup>60</sup>Manzoor 1991:121.

<sup>61</sup>Yet, Mona Abul-Fadl refers to Merryl Wyn Davies. See Abul-Fadl 1992:43.

<sup>62</sup>Ahmad 1988:299.

<sup>63</sup>See al-Faruqi 1989:409–453.

<sup>64</sup>Al-Faruqi 1989:433. The books al-Faruqi (1989:432) refers to are Schuon's *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (1953) and Nasr's *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (1966).

<sup>65</sup>Al-Faruqi 1989:433.

<sup>66</sup>Al-Faruqi 1989:433.

There would be no telling whether the transcendent reality claim is indeed a reality or simply a great hallucination. That is why every Batini form of religion must end in corruption. (...) As a world theology, mysticism's claim for a transcendent unity of all the religions is empty. (...) A critical world theology cannot be content with such affirmation, because it cannot rest with a relativist understanding of the content commanded.<sup>67</sup>

The criticism directed against Nasr and Schuon is sweeping. Al-Faruqi targets mysticism in general. In his view the approach of the mystics causes an arbitrariness in the understanding of authentic religion. Therefore, mysticism always ends in corruption. In opposition to the basic idea of Sufism, mystics establish a number of interpretations. It is significant that Ibn ʿArabī, so often present in works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr and his adherents, is practically absent in works by al-Faruqi and the supporters of the IIIT. When referred to, Ibn ʿArabī is used in a negative sense. To be close to his ideas, or to be affiliated with Sufism in general, is to be open to severe criticism from the adherents of the position of al-Faruqi and the IIIT. The premise for their criticism of Ibn ʿArabī and of Sufism, is that a reality experienced esoterically can be used to validate any view. For al-Faruqi, this necessarily ends in the corruption of the authentic message of God, a message that one must be able to study by reason.<sup>68</sup> Yet, in other contexts, works of other advocates of Nasr's position are held in esteem. Lamyā al-Faruqi sees Coomaraswamy and Burckhardt as figures who are opposed to secularization in art. Similarly, Ghazi mentions Schuon and Guénon as examples of scholars who have embraced Islam and “renounced Christianity in view of the basic drawbacks of Western materialism”.<sup>69</sup> Ghazi argues that Guénon and Schuon express “effective critiques of the Western thought, culture and civilization”.<sup>70</sup> It should also be noted that in the IIIT series of *Occasional Papers*, Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr published *Islamization of Knowledge: A Critical Overview* in 1992. In this paper, Nasr is critical against the structure of the Islamization of social science in practice. It should not begin, he states, but rather end with the establishment of institutions.<sup>71</sup> The critique he develops of the IIIT, is taken by DeLorenzo as evidence of the open-minded attitude within the IIIT.

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<sup>67</sup>Al-Faruqi 1989:434. The word *bāṭin* means inner, inwardly, but also secret and hidden. *Bāṭinī* means internal. *Al-bāṭinīya* is the name of a school of thought characterized by divining and seeking a hidden and spiritual meaning in the revealed texts, especially the Quran. The technique is a mode of allegorical interpretation. See Wehr 1976:64 and EI vol. I:1098–1100.

<sup>68</sup>Al-Faruqi 1989:433f.

<sup>69</sup>Ghazi 1988:126.

<sup>70</sup>Ghazi 1988:126.

<sup>71</sup>Nasr 1992:18.

Maurice Bucaille is dealt with in a positive manner by al-Najjar and Syed. They especially refer to him, in situations where they wish to demonstrate the scientific validity of the Quran.<sup>72</sup> Naseef, on the other hand, criticizes Muslim scholars who try to read modern scientific theories into the Quranic text.

They wanted to prove that all scientific theories were to be found in the Quran. Instead of regarding all scientific theories as tentative they interpreted them as absolute. Fortunately today it is no longer necessary to prove that scientific theories are tentative. (...) It is therefore possible for a Muslim scientist to explore the universe without first of all accepting an anti-Islamic concept as an absolute criterion.<sup>73</sup>

Bucaille is not explicitly mentioned in this quotation, but it appears as a critique of a position that he shares. Naseef describes scientific theories as temporary in order to justify an Islamic method in research. The arbitrariness and relativism that characterize modern science are criticized by the adherents of the position of the IIT.

#### *Bucaille and Bucaillism in the eyes of Sardar*

Ziauddin Sardar regards Bucaille's assertions on the relationship between the Quran and modern science as quite objective and says that they remain more or less within the boundaries of common sense.<sup>74</sup> He considers that Bucaille's approach to the Quran constitutes a classical way of quoting the text and giving it a scientific interpretation. The problem with Bucaille's approach, for Sardar, is that books such as *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* seem to legitimate the Qur'an in terms of modern science – a legitimation that a revealed Scripture does not and cannot need. Ideas such as Bucaille's, that may at first seem harmless and naive, can have the effect that modern science is given "the same universal and eternal validity as the Quran."<sup>75</sup> In Sardar's opinion the Quran does not need such a validation, because it is eternal in the eyes of Muslims. Furthermore, to read science into the Quran can make it subordinated to science. Sardar gives frequent examples of studies since the early 1960s that stand in the same tradition as Bucaille. Yet, he points out that the legitimation provided by Bucaille's *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* has encouraged a new wave of studies that continues where Bucaille himself stops. That is, in the aftermath of Bucaille's study a large

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<sup>72</sup>See al-Najjar 1988:145,149f. In the article by Syed he makes a reference to al-Faruqi to describe the cause of the decline and to Bucaille's *The Bible, Qur'an and Science* to show the agreement between the revelation and modern science.

<sup>73</sup>Naseef 1981:146.

<sup>74</sup>For Sardar's outline of Bucaille and Bucaillism. See Sardar 1989:30–37.

<sup>75</sup>Sardar 1989:31.

number of books have been published, which try to find every imaginable scientific result in the Quran. It is the latter trend that Sardar calls Bucaillism. In his warnings against Bucaillism, Sardar refers approvingly to classical Muslim scholars, saying that one should be cautious and follow the established rules when it comes to interpreting the Quran. He also refers to Sayyid Qutb who, in Sardar's opinion, was opposed to the idea of discovering modern science in the Quranic text.

While the Quran obviously contains some passing references to natural facts, it is by no means a textbook of science. It is a book of guidance. It provides motivation, and only motivation, for the pursuit of knowledge. Knowledge begins with the Quran and does not end with it.<sup>76</sup>

For Sardar, Bucaillism is dangerous. Although the positive response to Bucaillism from many Muslims is understandable, since it reinforces their faith, it must be stopped. It would be fatal if Bucaillism found its way into the curricula of higher education in Muslim countries. He points at one particular offshoot of Bucaillism, what he describes as nonsensical numerology.<sup>77</sup> The Egyptian engineer Rashad Khalifa found a number of alleged connections between the numerical values and number of letters in the Quranic text on one hand and sophisticated statistical and mathematical correspondences on the other. To prove that the Quran is the word of God by means of a numerical analysis of the content is a mistaken approach, says Sardar. It will in the same way as Bucaillism strengthen the faith of the faithful, but a statistical or mathematical analysis cannot show that the Quran is the authentic revelation.

#### *Similarities with other participants – the danger of secularism*

In all four positions, positivism and secularism are seen as forces threatening an authentic Islam. All four positions condemn secular ideas especially when they come from other Muslims. Prestigious names representing a positivistic and secular approach are Abdus Salam and Ali Kettani.<sup>78</sup> In Sardar's musical categorization this approach has been given the heading *Look at All those Lonely People*.<sup>79</sup> The line from the song *Eleanor Rigby* by Beatles shows Sardar's

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<sup>76</sup>Sardar 1989:36.

<sup>77</sup>For an overview of Sardar's response to the numerological approach to the Quran, see Sardar 1989:37–42. The section is a response to the ideas on the Quran developed by the Egyptian engineer Rashad Khalifa.

<sup>78</sup>Abdus Salam is presented in the introduction. Ali Kettani was in 1984 director of the Islamic Foundation for Science and Technology for Development located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>79</sup>Sardar 1989:134–147. Abdus Salam is also quoted by Sardar as an example of a scientist who has been in an isolated position in a Muslim country and, therefore, moved to Europe or North America. Abdus Salam is an example of a person in a "problematic situation", i.e. Sardar's view of what it means to be secularized, but he is not

opinion that those who believe and maintain that science is a universal and objective pursuit of truth, and that science in such a pursuit is divorced from values, are very lonely people. Sardar says that Abdus Salam represents a positivistic approach to science where “science is neutral and objective”. Ali Kettani, on the other hand, represents an approach in which the construction of an Islamic science is advocated, but in which Western science is treated as something beyond, or transcending values and ideology. In Sardar’s perspective, this makes him a positivist, and this is where the approaches of Salam and Kettani meet, despite the fact that Abdus Salam is characterized as a secularist and Ali Kettani as an advocate of Islamic science.<sup>80</sup> Sardar claims that their position has been proved wrong by both philosophy and the history of science. He frequently quotes Feyerabend and Kuhn to support his view.<sup>81</sup> To be lonely is also to be without guidance in one’s scientific work. Sardar argues that positivistic science is a science without norms, values and ideology. A positivistic science does not have any relation to an Islamic value system and, therefore, it does not fit in a Muslim setting. Positivistic science is incorrectly put on the same level or above the level of religion, a view which is, of course, vehemently rejected by him and the *idjmālīs* primarily because “the positivists” do not share the fundamental premise that science is a religious activity and, accordingly, should be based on Islamic norms and values.

One reason for the criticism directed against Abdus Salam is probably that he belongs to the *Aḥmadīya* branch of Islam, a branch seen by many Muslims as heretic. From the perspective of Salam a secularization of the Muslim countries would be welcomed. Therefore he opposes an Islamization of science since he sees it as part of a larger process aiming at an Islamization of Muslim countries. This opposition parallels his rejection of Islamic science from a philosophical perspective.

#### *The danger of fundamentalism*

Nasr’s ideas on the position he refers to as fundamentalism are presented above. Many of his arguments are shared by the *idjmālīs* and the position of al-Faruqī and the IIT. Sardar discusses the Islamic resurgence and he maintains that there have always been movements in the history of Islam fighting against despotism, dictatorship and external domination.<sup>82</sup> In a sense, Sardar sees the resurgence

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criticized for a particular understanding of the function of Islam. See Sardar 1977:147f.

<sup>80</sup>Sardar 1989:134f.

<sup>81</sup>For the concluding part on the positivistic standpoint, see Sardar 1989:146f. Sardar (1989:129) is also referring to Feyerabend in his critique of Nasr.

<sup>82</sup>For an overview of Sardar’s view of Islamist movements and their role in the Muslim world. See Sardar 1985:43–61.

movements throughout Islamic history as signs of the vitality of Islam. Sardar regards the revolution in Iran as a watershed for all Muslims who strive for an Islamic state. He recognizes a number of different Islamization projects, e.g. in Sudan, Malaysia and Pakistan. He also mentions the emergence of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In Sardar's view, the various contemporary Islamization projects are linked to a new political and cultural consciousness in Muslim countries. In recent history he points at *al-ikhwān al-muslimūn* and *djamā'at-i Islāmī* as the two most important Islamist movements. The influence of the movements are strong and they have won many Muslim intellectuals for their cause, but they have not gained any victories in the political field. Sardar considers the Islamist movements to be institutionalized and elitist. One problem is also that the movements concentrate on gaining political power. They have not been able to improve the situation for Muslims. A Muslim society must be created out of the whole intellectual Islamic heritage and must concern the political as well as the social, economic, technological and scientific fields in society. He is much more optimistic when he points out that the Iranian revolution was based on the support of the people. The OIC is also looked upon in positive terms and is judged as an organization that can serve as a common ground to develop a form of Muslim commonwealth. The supportive reactions towards the revolution in Iran and the establishment of the OIC in the Muslim world shows that the wish to return to the roots of Islam is a transnational phenomenon. However, Sardar is not entirely positive to the revolution in Iran and the OIC.<sup>83</sup> He says "Islamization or Islamic revivalism is not the exclusive province of the so-called Islamic fundamentalists."<sup>84</sup> To operationalize Islam in the melting pot of modernity is not the exclusive right of any "so-called Islamic fundamentalist". This critique is based on the strategic attempt to appropriate the right of interpretation and not so much on the content per se of the "fundamentalist" message. Although Sardar criticizes Islamist movements, he has been described as a radical Muslim himself.<sup>85</sup> This position is, according to Akbar S. Ahmed, in opposition to a traditionalist concept of Islam.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>See Sardar 1985:46ff.

<sup>84</sup>Sardar 1989:10.

<sup>85</sup>Ahmed (1992:160ff.) labels Sardar, Manzoor, Wyn Davies and Kalim Siddiqui radical Muslims. In his description of the radicals they "reflect the general Muslim sense of anger". The criticism of the radicals is also directed against other Muslims. Sardar and Davies, Ahmed says, have "attacked unfairly, with unholy venom, almost every established Muslim scholar, as being not sufficiently Islamic, for years". One effect of the accusations hurled at the West and at other Muslims, is that individuals such as Sardar or Kalim Siddiqui fit the media stereotype of an angry Muslim. Ahmed continues stressing that their denouncing phenomena or ideas from the West in a vulgar manner makes them no better than the people they attack. Instead, they have left behind the "traditional Islamic scholarship" and adopted the idiom of the West.

<sup>86</sup>The traditionalists believe in the universal message of God. Under this label Ahmed (1992:157ff.) places al-Faruqi, Nasr and others. An important branch of the position is, Ahmed says, Sufism. The message in Sufism of

People within the position of al-Faruqi and the IIT criticize those they call “Islamic fundamentalists”. Kyrala<sup>87</sup> states:

Although the call of the Islamic fundamentalists for a return to Islamic law is clearly motivated by a desire to overcome the corruption and deviousness of certain Middle East governments, it has the great danger to Islam that it may attract the masses to a conception of salvation achieved by mechanical observances of ceremonies rather than by a sincere reflection (*dhikr*) on the inner meaning of Muhammad’s (ṢAAS) message. Any attempt to restrict this meditative aspect of Islam to a ‘Muslim clergy’ while leaving ‘mechanical observances’ to the lay public would be a clear contradiction of the Prophet’s admonitions.<sup>88</sup>

Kyrala seems to share a desire to overcome the problems of certain Muslim countries due to the presence of Islamic fundamentalists. He stipulates *dhikr* to mean the opposite of “mechanical observances of ceremonies”. In his presentation, *dhikr* emerges as a loosely defined term designating a form of “sincere reflection” on the meaning of “Muhammad’s message” (sic!).<sup>89</sup> In Kyrala’s understanding, *dhikr* is not reserved for the clergy. Through his general critique of both the religious scholars and the so-called Islamic fundamentalists, the position of the lay public is strengthened.

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universalism and tolerance is in the eyes of Ahmed represented by European *ṣūfī* personalities like Lings and Schuon. Ahmed makes a comparison between the “traditionalists” and the “radicals”. The first, he says, have Arabic, the language of early tradition, the Prophet and the Quran. The radicals have a problem. They are in danger of forgetting their national language, e.g. Urdu for those of Pakistani origin, and they do not master English. It is, according to Ahmed, not only a matter of language, it is also a matter of lifestyle in general. The radicals live in United Kingdom for economic and political reasons. They live a life where they hold British passports, write in English, use the English media to proclaim their message, and wear English clothes. In his eyes all of this seems contradictory and paradoxical, and he regards this – the remoteness from the central Muslim lands – as the major weakness of their works.

<sup>87</sup>It is significant that Kyrala has to make a reservation before he expresses his criticism. He says that he is not developing a general critique of Islam, but that his aim is to target the Muslims’ behaviour, ethics, morals etc. According to him, he belongs to the loyal opposition, “Even as the sharp scalpel of the surgeon may hurt his patient it is used to his ultimate benefit.” In Kyrala’s perception one of the most important factors which prevents the development of a society is “suppression of free competition”. See Kyrala 1989:134.

<sup>88</sup>Kyrala 1989:137f.

<sup>89</sup>*Dhikr* (“remembrance” or “commemoration”) is a technical term in Sufism. In a traditional *ṣūfī* meaning it designates the invocation and glorifying of God. Al-Faruqi (1986:32) translates this term “the remembrance of Allah (SWT), or His presence in the consciousness of mankind.” He stresses the general meaning of the word. In addition, AbuSulayman, on the possibility to train Muslims to act for the Islamic cause in the same spirit as the companions of Muhammad, states that in the time of the companions: “Islam was not a moment of *dhikr*, nor one of charity, but a persistent advance in the cause of Allah”. See AbuSulayman 1981:108f.

*The critique of the 'ulamā' – the religious scholars*

All four positions share a critical view of traditionally educated religious scholars. Sardar, al-Faruqi and the IIT as well as Nasr are more critical than Bucaille of the 'ulamā'.<sup>90</sup> In the following I will present some statements made by primarily al-Faruqi and adherents to the IIT that can be seen as typical for the condemnation of the traditional religious scholars.

In the past, the *Ummah* or world community of Islam has trusted and relied upon the 'Ulama or 'men of knowledge' to guide its course in history. (...) In modern times their task has become difficult and challenging. The *Ummah* has been torn between conservatives who seek to preserve intact the figurization of earlier times, and liberals anxious to alter the figurization as present realities dictate. (...) As guides and leaders endowed with clear perception of the Muhammadan vision, of the wisdom of the fathers displayed in their figurizations, and of the knowledge of modern realities, the Muslim social scientists are the 'Ulama of the *Ummah* today. They are the planners of its strategies and designers of its future, the educators of the *Ummah* at large as well as of its political, social and economic leadership. In short, they are the scientists whose object of study is the *Ummah* in all its activities as an *Ummah*. Their studies are the 'ummatic' sciences, i.e. those disciplines which study human behaviour as it effects, and is affected by society.<sup>91</sup>

Basically, al-Faruqi states that contemporary religious scholars are challenged by modernity and that they are not able to guide Muslims in their present way of life. In the quotation – and in general – the religious scholars as a collective are characterized in stereotype terms. Their weakness has, in al-Faruqi's opinion, given rise to a situation where arbitrarily formed interpretations of Islam struggle for influence among Muslims. In his view, the problematic situation can be solved by placing Muslim social scientists in the role of the 'Ulamā'. Lay people should replace the religious scholars as the foremost interpreters of the religious tradition. It means that the possibility to perform *idjtihād* is not a sole prerogative of the 'ulamā'.<sup>92</sup> Al-Faruqi expresses a strong faith in the possibility of social scientists to function as "doctors" who make prescriptions in order to heal a suffering society. A social scientist will in that particular function – apart from his knowledge as a social scientist – have the capacity to interpret the religious tradition in a sound manner and to implement and realize that interpretation

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<sup>90</sup>See, for example, Sardar 1985:56f.

<sup>91</sup>The quotation is from the foreword written by al-Faruqi in al-Faruqi & Naseef (eds.) 1981:6f.

<sup>92</sup>For general discussions within the position concerning the use of the principle of *idjtihād*, see Naseef 1981:146; al-Faruqi 1986:52 and AbuSulayman 1988:99.

in the construction of an Islamic society. This highly positive view of the possibilities of the social sciences and the role of the social scientist may be grounded in the view that the social sciences constitute a form of social engineering.<sup>93</sup> In al-Faruqi's view, the social sciences have a responsibility towards society in general. Hence, the ultimate aim of the social sciences is to establish a sound Islamic society.

A similar criticism is expressed by AbuSulayman who states that the *faqīh* does not possess the necessary knowledge to formulate an Islamic alternative.<sup>94</sup> This alternative should be constructed through "rational effort".<sup>95</sup> *Faqīh* is used here as a derogatory term, designating the "orthodox jurists". According to AbuSulayman, the main cause of the crisis of knowledge in a Muslim context is the confidence invested in the possibility of the *fuqahā'* to interpret the tradition so that it can cope with the onslaught of modernity.<sup>96</sup> The problem is that modern knowledge has expanded, and that it thus is impossible for a single individual to master all fields of science. The various branches of knowledge require a high degree of specialization. Religious scholars advanced in legal studies cannot, AbuSulayman maintains, be the only performers of *idjihad*. His solution is to gather expertise from various academic disciplines and other fields in society, all well versed in the Islamic traditions, to form inter-disciplinary groups developing a "legislative source material" for decisionmakers.<sup>97</sup> Knowledge (*ilm*) should, Sardar says, be accessible to every member of society. It should not be limited to the few who can afford the cost of education. Knowledge is also a question of responsibility. To be a Muslim is to be obliged to seek knowledge in every field, also in the field of the natural sciences. Sardar's criticism is shared by many individuals who take part in the discussion concerning the state and the position of Islam in contemporary society.<sup>98</sup>

In the eyes of the advocates of the present position, the religious scholars represent an "Islamic orthodoxy which emphasizes rigid observances of ritualistic ceremonies as a mechanistic formula for salvation".<sup>99</sup> The critique is not only

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<sup>93</sup>The idea of social scientists carrying out social engineering is, at least in the field of sociology, associated with older theory in the field, especially Marxist theory, but also with the ideas behind the creation of Nazi Germany and the Socialist Soviet Union.

<sup>94</sup>See AbuSulayman 1988:99.

<sup>95</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:102.

<sup>96</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:99,101f. *Fuqahā'* is the plural form of *faqīh*.

<sup>97</sup>AbuSulayman 1988:102f.

<sup>98</sup>Haddad (1986:162) states that "A major characteristic of Islamic revival in the twentieth century is the obvious breakdown of the monopoly of religion by the ulama class, those who have been educated in the traditional Islamic sciences. This might be characterized as the 'Protestantization' or 'laicization' of Islam. While the presence of the ulama in society continues to be evident, their influence, effectiveness, status and clout have been reduced, and they now are little more than religious functionaries or employees of the State bureaucracy".

<sup>99</sup>Kyrala 1989:137.

directed against the religious scholars' interpretation of Islam, but also against the following of a rigid ritual.

### *Competing for influence*

All four exponents of the positions above have, as has been shown above, links to centres of learning in Muslim countries. They often attend conferences or lecture at institutes in e.g. Jordan, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan and Malaysia. Especially the latter country seems to be the most interesting for the participants in the discourse today: all four positions are represented by institutions in Malaysia that promote their understanding of Islam. Sardar, Nasr and the IIT have all influenced the design of university curricula.<sup>100</sup> In a sense one can say that they propagate for their understanding of Islam on a global level. One example of the competition over influence is their links to a centre in India, the Aligarh Centre for Science Studies.<sup>101</sup> In discussions with DeLorenzo at the IIT, Nasr and Sardar, all of them pointed out Aligarh as important. They all claim that they influence the centre's policies. The Aligarh Centre is also represented in the discourse by *The Muslim Association for the Advancement of Science (MAAS) Journal of Islamic Science*.<sup>102</sup> Ziauddin Sardar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and AbuSulayman are (or were) members of the advisory board of this journal. Most of the prominent participants in the discourse have published articles in this journal at least since 1985. Sardar considers the establishment of MAAS and especially the publishing of their journal as much needed: "When MAAS began publication of the bi-annual Journal of Islamic Science in 1985, Islamic science had arrived".<sup>103</sup> The adherents of the Aligarh school of thought, according to Sardar, focus on criticism of the methodology of the various positions on Islamic science. Sardar has characterized them by means of a famous pop song, again by Beatles, *I Should Have Known Better*.<sup>104</sup> The group has stressed the importance of Islamic ethics in relation to science and has, therefore, centred on methodology.<sup>105</sup> The above mentioned journal has also published a number of articles dis-

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<sup>100</sup>For example, Nasr states that this work is used widely in educational institutions in Algeria and Iran. In the latter case, the Persian version of the book was printed without the name of the author on the cover. Some of his works continue to appear without his name, but many works are now being reprinted with his name. As for Iran in general, he says that for the moment his relation to the Iranian government is improving. This information was given to the author in a conversation with Nasr at the George Washington University in Washington DC, 28th April 1994.

<sup>101</sup>For a short presentation of Aligarh. See the section "A background to the discourse" in the introduction.

<sup>102</sup>See *MAAS Journal of Islamic Science*, vol 6, No 2, July - December 1990/1411 AH.

<sup>103</sup>Sardar 1989:4.

<sup>104</sup>For a critique of this "school", see Sardar 1989:147-154.

<sup>105</sup>Sardar 1989:147.

cussing various proposals for an Islamic science.<sup>106</sup> The *idjmālī* position and the Aligarh school of thought do not agree on the interpretation and conceptualization of Islamic terms.<sup>107</sup> However, both positions express a form of conceptual *realism*, i.e. an understanding of concepts as being independent of human thought. Where opinions diverge is on the actual interpretation of the inner meaning of Islamic concepts.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr also mentions Zaki Kirmani, the editor of *MAAS* and director of the Centre for Studies on Science in Aligarh, as a person who follows his ideas. He also mentions the Aligarh school as an example of his influence in India. In his view, the Aligarh school is an example of his idea of training a new generation of young Muslims educated in Western science, but rooted in Islamic traditions in order to create a Traditionalist science.<sup>108</sup> In the end, it seems that the Aligarh centre is relatively independent and acts as an authority on its own in the discourse, however, always with special reference to the situation of Muslims in India.

#### *Cooperation and relations between the positions*

It has been stated above that the borders between the four positions are not closed. The openness between them is evident in several ways. For example, Naseef and Brohi figure in several different positions. Naseef is present in both the position of Sardar and that of al-Faruqi and the IIIT. One reason is the similarity between the two positions. Another reason is simply that Naseef has cooperated both with Sardar and al-Faruqi. However, Naseef also represents the Muslim World League and has held prominent posts in Saudi society. One can especially note that he has organized conferences in which representatives from all four camps have been present. The most important one is the international Islamic conference under the heading “Dawa and Development of the Muslim World” held in Mecca in 1987. Due to his position as head of the Muslim World League with an interest in questions concerning Islam and knowledge, he is in a situation where he can financially support projects on the subject. In the same way, the late Brohi, a central figure in the political life of Pakistan and former rector of the Islamic University in Islamabad, was important to the exponents of the positions in terms of financial matters. The Islamic University in Islamabad was also co-sponsor of the conference arranged by the IIIT in Islamabad in 1982.<sup>109</sup> A third person who seems to be important today is Anwar Ibrahim,

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<sup>106</sup>For a summary of the articles published in *MAAS* on the Islamization of science, see Ahmad 1990.

<sup>107</sup>See Sardar 1989:147–154.

<sup>108</sup>Conversation with Nasr in Birmingham, 26th October 1994.

<sup>109</sup>The Islamic university in Islamabad also arranged the first international seminar on “Scientific Miracles of the Quran and Sunna” in 1987. One of the key speakers at that conference was Bucaille.

who formerly was minister of education in Malaysia, but today is deputy prime minister. Sardar claims to be his advisor.<sup>110</sup> Ibrahim's earlier post as minister of education and his present position as deputy prime minister are, of course, central when it comes to implementing ideas on an Islamization of higher education in a country that can be seen as a key arena for the discourse.

The four exponents and their adherents participate in conferences arranged by supranational organizations. One of the most recent conferences in which representatives of the IIT as well as Nasr and Sardar took part, was the international conference on science in Islamic polity in the twenty-first century, held in March 1995. It was arranged by the OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) and took place in Islamabad, Pakistan. At the conference Nasr and Sardar held public lectures.<sup>111</sup> The IIT has arranged many conferences and a substantial part of the literature produced by the institute are proceedings from various such conferences. In the 1990s the number on conferences treating Islam in relation to knowledge, science and technology has been increasing. There are also a large number of conferences available to the Muslim community in North America.<sup>112</sup> The above conference in Islamabad will also be followed by another large conference on "Values and Attitudes in Science and Technology" to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in the beginning of September 1996. The IITM arranges the conference in cooperation with the International Islamic University in Malaysia. The conference is supported by Anwar Ibrahim.<sup>113</sup>

The proceedings published after conferences sometimes contain contributions from different positions. In *The Revenge of Athena* (1988) and *An Early Crescent* (1989), both edited by Ziauddin Sardar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr contributes with articles. In the introductions to the books Sardar presents the articles and criticizes Nasr's ideas. In a rather unusual manner, the editor of a book thus devotes the introductory presentation of a number of articles to criticizing their contents.<sup>114</sup> There is thus an openness in the positions, especially in the IIT. As a larger organization, it encompasses a wide range of views from Muslims all over the world. According to Yusuf DeLorenzo, the IIT has also invited Nasr to lecture at the institute in Herndon in order to create a dialogue. However, none of the positions are in their relations to other positions notable for their desire for

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<sup>110</sup>Conversation with Sardar in London, 2 February 1996.

<sup>111</sup>According to Nasr, he was invited to hold the inaugural speech of the conference (conversation in Birmingham, 26th October 1994).

<sup>112</sup>A number of conferences on different themes are arranged by various Muslim organizations in North America and Great Britain. Many of them are announced on the Internet. See, for example, the MSA-list.

<sup>113</sup>The *International Journal of Science and Technology* (IJST) published a special issue on the conference in Malaysia. See *IJST*, Spring 1996, vol 9, no. 2.

<sup>114</sup>See Sardar 1988:14f. and Sardar 1989:9f.

dialogue. The cooperation and interaction between them seems more to be of a practical nature, the result of taking part in conferences etc., arranged by national or supranational organizations. The latter are often linked to countries or individuals that are of importance – financially, ideologically and politically – to the participants.

#### *A Christian counterpart and connection*

The attempt to establish links between religion and knowledge is nothing new. The role of science in society and its relation to religion in general has been debated within the framework of many societies and religions throughout the ages. In a Christian context, discussions between men of science and the clergy have been held since the Middle Ages. Over the last few centuries, the progress of modern science has led to theories of cosmogony and evolution which, in the eyes of many believers, are opposed to the stories of creation presented in the Bible and the Quran. During at least the past twenty years, perhaps since the 1950s, this development has provoked various responses from various individuals as well as religious groups in Europe and North America. Creationists, most of whom are evangelical Christians, try to combat the influence of the theory of evolution by developing a non-evolutionary view – “creation science” – on the origin of humans and the world.<sup>115</sup> Due to the creationist movement it comes as no surprise that the first European conference on “Science and Religion” chose to treat the subject of “Evolution and Creation”.<sup>116</sup> The following quotation captures the core of the debate within the framework of Christianity:

Religion provides a unique means of access to its subject, God, but what it asserts about God must be in harmony with scientific knowledge and also indicated by that knowledge. Transposed to our specific topic, the Troeltschian question is, ‘Can our fundamental theological understanding of nature be harmonious with scientific knowledge and indicated, in some way at least, by that knowledge?’<sup>117</sup>

In my understanding, the “Troeltschian question” indicates a desire to simplify the switch from a religiously founded system of reference to a profane one, i.e. to come to terms with modernity. In such a perspective, theology needs the service

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<sup>115</sup>Durant 1987:13.

<sup>116</sup>The first conference on “Science and Religion” was held at the Evangelische Akademie in Loccum 13–16 March, 1986. The papers of the conference are published in Andersen & Peacocke (eds.) 1987. The second conference was held in Twente, papers presented there are published in Fennema & Paul (eds.) 1990. The third was held in Geneva, the papers are published in Wasserman, Kirby & Rordorff (eds.) 1992.

<sup>117</sup>Hefner 1987:141. Ernst Troeltsch (d. 1923) is considered to be one of the most eminent historians of Christianity in Europe, see Graf 1987:58–61. For an overview of the ideas of Troeltsch, see Gill (ed.) 1987:56–68.

of science in order to understand God's creation. This conclusion is stressed in several papers in the volumes published after various conferences on science and religion.<sup>118</sup>

In the Muslim context the participants in the debate concerning the Islamization of knowledge are to a certain extent conscious of similar discussions taking place within a Christian framework. In a sketch of the present situation for Muslim scientists, Ziauddin Sardar states that they may don an "evolutionist garb" when they are inside a laboratory, but can become "creationists" in the outside world.<sup>119</sup> This was also stated in papers presented at the first international seminar on "Scientific Miracles of the Quran and Sunna". In his paper, Amriah Buang refers to "creationists" when he presents the "Islamic position" on creation.<sup>120</sup> An explicit example of a cooperation between creationists and Muslim movements can be seen in *The Muslim Education Quarterly*, the journal published by the Islamic Academy in Cambridge, England. According to Shaikh Abdul Mabud, assistant editor of the journal, the editors have invited well-known creationists to write articles for their publication.<sup>121</sup>

The relation between Christians and participants in the Muslim discourse is, however, not always of the positive kind. Christians have developed a response to Bucaille's statements on the supposed contradictions, incompatibilities and so forth in the Bible. William Campbell, who like Bucaille is a physician, answers Bucaille's claims. In Campbell's view, Bucaille deliberately hides certain facts. Campbell argues that the fulfilled prophecies are not mentioned by Bucaille. Moreover, Campbell's view is that the Gospel is an authentic record of events written down by eye-witnesses. The latter relates to Campbell's basic aim, which is to go against Bucaille's idea that Bible was changed by human beings, and that it therefore is not the word of God.<sup>122</sup>

Bucaille formulates a general critique of Judaism and Christianity. He says that these two religions "make no secret of their inability to cope with the tide of materialism and invasion of the West by atheism".<sup>123</sup> This is a critique which is

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<sup>118</sup>Durant 1987:24; Hefner 1987:141–151; Schmitz-Moormann 1987:34 and van Melsen 1990:34.

<sup>119</sup>See Sardar 1989:22.

<sup>120</sup>The first international seminar on "Scientific Miracles of the Quran and Sunna" was organised by the International Islamic University in Islamabad in collaboration with ar-rābiṭa al-‘ālam al-islāmīya (The World Muslim League), and was held in Islamabad 17–20th October 1987. Amriah Buang, at the National University of Malaysia, presented a paper entitled "The Science of Quranic Cellular-Genetic Set-up" (unpublished).

<sup>121</sup>Conversation with Shaikh Abdul Mabud at the Islamic Academy in Cambridge, 5th February 1996.

<sup>122</sup>The book by Campbell (1992:161–210) contains a chapter on science and revelation. In reply to Bucaille's assertions, Campbell finds scientific problems in the Quran. See Campbell 1992:161ff. For more information on a response from Christians to Muslims on these, and similar matters, visit, for example, the web sites on Christian answers to Islam (See <http://www.math.gatech.edu/~Jkatz/Islam/>). Most of them contain a discussion on science and revelation.

<sup>123</sup>Bucaille 1978:126.

also targeted at scientific disciplines.<sup>124</sup> Generally speaking, his criticism of the secularized society and of science as it is carried out in Europe and North America resembles the criticism expressed by “creationists”.<sup>125</sup> Bucaille levels a fierce criticism at the position of “the materialist atheist”.<sup>126</sup> His view on this position is not fully developed, but Bucaille concludes that its representatives side with the majority of Western intellectuals, especially when it comes to their false ideas on Islam.

Islam has always been subject in the West to a so-called ‘secular slander’. Anyone in the West who has acquired a deep knowledge of Islam knows just to what extent its history, dogma, and aims have been distorted. One must also take into account the fact that documents published in European languages on this subject (leaving aside highly specialised studies) do not make the work of a person willing to learn any easier.<sup>127</sup>

Bucaille seems to conclude that from the position of the “materialist atheist”, as well as from the position of intellectuals in Europe and North America, it is impossible to understand Islam.<sup>128</sup> Bucaille appears to believe that Islam has been exposed to a more or less deliberate plot. In accordance with this idea, Bucaille develops a critique of Islamic studies in the West. “The fact” that Abraham, Moses, Mary and Jesus are also a part of the revelation displayed in the Quran is, Bucaille maintains, not commonly known in Europe and North America. The reason is that people have been purposely held in ignorance. The use of words like “Muhammadans” and “Muhammadan religion” have played a significant role in upholding false concepts regarding the function of Muhammad in Islamic traditions. His statements on the use of terms such as “Muhammadan” and “Muhammadan religion” are, however, not substantiated by any references.<sup>129</sup> Bucaille stresses that one has to be well versed in Arabic to make any comparisons between the Quran and science. His point is that the Quran must be read in Arabic, because a translator does not always understand – interpret – the correct meaning of the text. Another problem is that the translators – men of letters – do not possess the knowledge of science required to interpret the meaning of the

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<sup>124</sup> Such a critique is partly directed against scientists who are capable of seeing where “data concerning man and the origins of life” may come from (Bucaille 1984:11).

<sup>125</sup> See the rhetoric in the critique of modern science displayed by Bucaille (1984:11f.).

<sup>126</sup> Bucaille 1978:127.

<sup>127</sup> Bucaille 1978:127.

<sup>128</sup> In the history of Islam many Muslims have, according to Bucaille, neglected the obligation to educate themselves and others. He says that the relationship between Islam, education and science has not always been clear to Muslims (Bucaille 1978:125).

<sup>129</sup> Bucaille 1978:14 and Bucaille 1994:161.

Quran. This a problem not only in translations made by non-Muslims, but also in those made by Muslims.<sup>130</sup>

In later works Bucaille shows an awareness of the criticism directed against his position. He comments on a review of his work in *Islamo-Christiana*, a journal published by the Vatican Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAD),<sup>131</sup> as well as on an article in *Études Arabes-Dossiers* in an appendix in *Réflexions sur le Coran* (1989).<sup>132</sup> The latter journal is published by the Institut Pontifical des Études Arabes et Islamiques. His response is structured along the following lines. Firstly, he points out that details in the criticism are factually incorrect. For example, the reviewer has, he says, not been able to place the books in the correct order in terms of the date of publication. Bucaille cannot, for instance, have exerted any influence on works that were written prior to his own books. Secondly, he refers to Christian theologians who work in a similar manner, and therefore support his views. Thirdly, he refers to the success of his books and points out that one reason for the positive reception of *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* is its accuracy. Implicit in his response lies a component of bitterness caused by the critique. He states that prejudice and emotions have influenced those who have a negative view of his ideas. He also expresses surprise at the fact that other men of religion could attack his work.

Bucaille criticizes two ideas which he thinks have been drawn to extremes. He criticizes those who proclaim that all science can be found in the Quran. This is, he says, "an absurd and fallacious assertion".<sup>133</sup> In Bucaille's perspective this is a naive idea. The Qur'an, he says, makes general statements on a limited number of issues. The second idea concerns those who know what the Quran contains, but do not recognize its divine origin. In this case Professor Muhammad Arkoun at the University of Sorbonne is explicitly mentioned. Bucaille quotes Arkoun when the latter expresses the idea of the Quran as having a mythical structure and being a human product. In Bucaille's quotation Arkoun also says that the Quran is "abandoned to the dogmatic constructions of the theologians and to the arbitrary interpretations of the adepts of scientism".<sup>134</sup> A statement such as this is simply ridiculous to Bucaille.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>See Bucaille 1978:3,127 and Bucaille 1984:158.

<sup>131</sup>See Bucaille 1994:24f.

<sup>132</sup>See Bucaille 1989:238–245.

<sup>133</sup>Bucaille 1994:161.

<sup>134</sup>Arkoun in Bucaille 1994:162.

<sup>135</sup>Bucaille 1994:162.

## Summary

Ziauddin Sardar and the *idjmālīs* fiercely criticize Seyyed Hossein Nasr's ideas, but at the same time they recognize his importance in terms of drawing attention to the discourse. The *idjmālīs* stress what they consider to be a non-Islamic foundation for Nasr's philosophy. They point at the Greek influence on Nasr's work and vehemently oppose his *ṣūfī* affiliation. Nasr adds the word Islamic to all kinds of pre-Islamic traditions in the belief that it will make them Islamic. The *idjmālīs* use all their persuasive powers to show that Nasr's views rest on an un-Islamic foundation. The criticism of Sufism and Nasr is also shared by al-Faruqi and the IIIT. Even Bucaille, who does not mention any of the other exponents by name, dislikes mystical interpretations of Islam.

In a similar way, Nasr does not like to mention the other participants by name. He prefers to present a critique of the ideas of Sardar, Bucaille and al-Faruqi and the IIIT in general terms, claiming that they are tainted by modernism or fundamentalism. In personal communications with Nasr he has however been highly critical of the other three positions. In his view they are all characterized by a superficial knowledge of Islam. The ideas Nasr designates fundamentalism and modernism are characterized by the mixing of Islam with Western ideas on science and technology. The modernist and fundamentalist perspectives also treat the Islamic traditions incorrectly. To just pick words from the Quran and connect them to modern science is, says Nasr, a fundamentally wrong approach. In the same way, it is wrong to prefix the term Islamic to phenomena in modern science and think that this strategy will make modern science Islamic. In the end, Nasr argues that fundamentalism and modernism are pseudo-traditions or counter-traditions.

The IIIT is a world wide organization. Under the umbrella of the institute, a variety of ideas are expressed. For example, although al-Faruqi is critical of mysticism, his wife Lamyā al-Faruqi expresses her appreciation of the works of Coomaraswamy and Burckhardt. Bucaille's ideas are also described in appreciative terms by some of the authors who regularly publish articles in IIIT publications. This positive approach to Bucaille's ideas is analogous with the positive views of him expressed by many Muslims interested in questions concerning the relation between science and religion. In Sardar's opinion, Bucaille's personal ideas stay within the boundaries of common sense. The problem is that his ideas have inspired a number of followers who do not stop where Bucaille himself has drawn the line. This trend is labelled "Bucaillism" by Sardar, who sees this as a dangerous ideology for the institutes of higher learning in the Muslim world. He warns that one effect can be a situation in which science is given the same eternal value as Islam. The search for knowledge should, according to Sardar, start with the Quran and not end with it.

All four exponents and their adherents take part in conferences in various Muslim countries. They are all familiar with the positions of their respective opponents. Although they criticize other positions, they are at the same time linked by their critique of fundamentalism and secularism. Both of these forces are perceived as dangerous to the authentic understanding of Islam. Together with the opposition to fundamentalism and secularism, there is a distrust of traditionally educated religious scholars. A common element in the critique of fundamentalism, secularism and of religious scholars, is that they are all seen as a unable to solve the problems of Muslims in the contemporary world. Their attendance at the same conferences has also generated a form of cooperation. The result is a number of jointly edited volumes containing articles by the participants. However, the exponents and their adherents basically show little interest in dialogue, whether it be with Muslims or non-Muslims. The participation in conferences mentioned above is also related to economical, political as well as ideological cooperative ventures between the positions and governments and institutions in Muslim countries.

Finally, the criticism voiced by each participant in the discourse against the others is based on a struggle over the definition of Islam and over influence in various Muslim countries. The aim of the four positions is to give Muslims what each perceives as a correct understanding of Islam. However, the ideas formulated are not unique. Rather, similar discourses have developed within other religions. Relations have especially developed between the Muslim discourse and the Christian counterpart, due to shared views and similar ideas.

## 7. Analysis

This analysis is divided into three sections. The first focuses on the points of similarity as well as the differences between the positions of al-Faruqi, Bucaille, Nasr and Sardar in order to show the foundations for the discourse. In the second, I will emphasize the fundamental ideas of the four positions. The aim is to place the presuppositions – including hidden presuppositions – in a context. This task is carried out on two interrelated levels. The first explores the history of the ideas and the functional aspect of the positions. The second stresses the social environment. The two levels are often interwoven and difficult to divide in separate entities. Furthermore, in the first and the second section of the analysis, I will focus on the use of various Islamic traditions. In the last section, I will return to the discussion on the relations between the discourse and the phenomenon of modernity.

### Similarities – the Foundations for the Discourse

In the introduction a “discourse” was defined as the practice that shapes certain statements. It was also stated that the discourse is concerned with power relations. The formation of a discourse contains both exclusive and inclusive elements. Basically, they tell us which standpoints will be approved of in the discourse and which will not. The themes outlined below are the presuppositions that form the foundation of the discourse. However, they are not closed, but are constantly changing, and must therefore remain somewhat unclear.

1. One assumption is the conception of the contemporary world as fragmented and/or compartmentalized. The world needs to be put together. In order to survive, human beings have to understand the world as a systematized totality, which is how it is constructed “in reality”. This understanding of the true construction of the universe is part and parcel of an Islamic knowledge, because such a knowledge is firmly rooted in an organic world picture due to the inherent superiority of Islam. The statements contained in the discourse concerning this issue circle around ideas associated with the Islamic word *tawhīd*. However, in the shaping of actual statements, the participants often support their argument by references to various works criticizing science or the social structure in general in Europe and North America. They also use concepts from the social sciences, such as “holism”, to describe their approach.

2. Among the participants in the discourse there is a unanimous understanding of the conditions for Muslims in the contemporary world. The presupposi-

tion for their explanations of the situation rest on the belief that there is nothing wrong with Islam. Problems are due to the fact that most Muslims do not practice Islam in a correct manner. To them, Islam is an objective reality. Through a correct interpretation of the revelation – the Quran – human beings can gain an understanding of the true meaning of the world. The importance of the Quran is stressed. The general trend is to go directly to the Quranic revelation in search for solutions to perceived problems. The *ahādīth* seem to be considered difficult to use as sources for the construction of an Islamic model. They are too many, too divergent and it takes the ability of a religious scholar to bring order in the mass of traditions. Therefore, Muhammad is in the discourse portrayed in very general terms, and mostly in reference to his position as the ultimate prototype for Muslims. The work of interpreting the Quran is not seen as something finished. Islam contains a system for regulating the life of the individual on the personal level as well as on a societal level. Therefore, an Islamic science must be constructed.

3. The idea among the participants in the discourse that existence has a meaning – a teleological perspective – influence their view of history. Their use of history may vary in terms of focus, but it rests on the same presupposition. They all turn to history in order to seek the true norms and values of Islam. The idea is to return to and interpret – allegorically – the early history of Islam – with the Muhammadan society of Medina as a norm. The aim is not to establish a copy of the Medina state, but to transfer the conditions – the norms and the values – of that state to the present time. In their view, parts of history or certain individuals in history convey the true and authentic form of Islam. The result is a projection of contemporary conditions and problems onto history. In their perspective, the conditions of modernity are assimilated and internalized into the framework of Islam. They all hope to find guidance for the solution of today's predicaments in their respective interpretations of history. In their historiographic constructions they all tend to idealize certain periods as well as individuals. In addition, the use of history as a source to legitimize positions in the discourse appears to have a specific reason: a common problem for all participants in the discourse is the absence of a single principal authority who can make universally accepted judgements on religious matters. The traditionally educated religious scholars, '*ulamā*', are not recognized as legitimate authorities. Therefore, the participants in the discourse use history, that is, they search for authority in times which they consider as more Islamically perfect than the present. Finally, history has two main interwoven purposes; It is a norm for behaviour as well as a source presenting solutions for contemporary problems. In addition, prominent people and important events in history seem to point at an epistemology that can be resurrected and implemented today.

4. In their perspective, Muslims are also obliged to work for the implementation of Islam. In his or her practice of science a Muslim scientist should strive for an Islamization of science. The stress on this individual obligation links the performance of the individual to a meaning of the greater *djihād*, the striving of every individual in the service of Islam. These general premises in the discourse are widespread notions among Muslims, and are not ideas exclusively connected with this particular discourse. They have been expressed throughout the history of Islam.

5. The participants in the discourse use the principle of *idjtihād*. This is particularly clear in their interpretation of history, but also in their interpretation of Islamic terminology. In relation to the latter, the discourse can be characterized as a struggle concerning the meaning of Islamic terms. All participants strive to appropriate the vocabulary of the Quran. In their treatment of the Islamic terminology in general, all participants use a form of realism in the philosophical sense of the term. Words in the Quran are dealt with as if they had an objective and eternal meaning. Correct Islam contains a set of eternal Islamic norms and values. Such a view appears as the fundamental reason for the participants' struggle to enforce their own interpretation of various Islamic terms as the authentic one. Consequently, the debate on the appropriation of the meaning of words reveals a lack of agreement on the meaning of "Islam". In the end, the struggle between the various positions concerns who will formulate the true understanding of Islam – the One Islam – and present it in a convincing manner to Muslims in general. The basic idea in using Islamic terminology is to evoke Islamic feelings, associations and memories, in order to make Muslims support that particular form of Islamic science. In this context, words or phrases from the sacred sources function as the link between an exponent of a position and groups of more loosely attached followers, mobilizing their support. Although the participants have affiliations to different traditions of Islam and to different political strands, they all share this presupposition concerning the significance of Islamic terminology.

6. A foundation for Bucaille's, al-Faruqi's, Nasr's and Sardar's possibility to act as exponents of certain sets of ideas on Islam and knowledge is their status among other Muslims. They have all arrived at their respective positions through careers carried out outside the field of a scholarly study of religion. Their status is founded on secular knowledge, especially of natural science. Their standing as lay persons with a general concern for the role of Islam in modern society is important; and their loose connection to established scholarly traditions makes room for relatively independent interpretations of the sacred sources. They also hold a trump card through their possibility to print and distribute their books through international publishing houses or through their own organizations. In order to spread their message, they all utilize the means of the consumer culture – a cul-

ture they often criticize. Their message is directed at somewhat different audiences. Still, they all seem to be interested in communicating their ideas to the young generation of Muslims, since they are the ones that could implement their ideas on Islam.

7. All four exponents of the discourse share a fierce critique of the religious scholars, *‘ulamā’*. Their attitude can be designated as anticlerical. The *‘ulamā’* are stereotyped as a negative and closed force in Muslim society. The fear of losing the initiative in the formulation of Islam has forced religious scholars to take part in the discussions on Islam and science. Still, it appears that religious scholars have restricted their attention to limited domains within the sciences, mainly certain natural phenomena and subjects such as astronomy. These discussions have not helped the modern Muslim natural scientist to bridge the gap between his or her roles at work and at home. However, today one can find the opinions of traditionally educated religious scholars via the Internet. Thus, they are now meeting the challenge of lay persons interpreting Islam in order to make it fit with modernity.

8. The conceptualization of terms does not only concern Islamic ones. The meaning attached to the term “the West” has a similar purpose. The stereotype encountered in the discourse is strongly emphasized and is too narrow. It should be noted that South America or Eastern Europe are not explicitly mentioned. The aim is to fabricate a dichotomy between the culture – and science – of the Western world and the culture and science of Islam. The use of the West reminds one of the concept of the “stranger” outlined by Bauman, after Simmel. In his understanding the stranger – in opposition to friends and enemies – undermines the order of the world and embodies a form of incongruity. The stranger comes uninvited and settles in an environment. He is not a distant enemy. Instead, he calls for attention in the same way as a friend. He or she represents something threatening. It is possible for the stranger to leave on his or her own free will, but he or she may also be forced to leave.<sup>1</sup> This dichotomy between the West and Islam serves to legitimate the conceptualization of a specific Islamic science. Notably, the understanding of knowledge as subjective, for example bound to a certain culture, is used to formulate an epistemology. The subjective choice of Islam as the basis for a science is the path to genuine knowledge. In this sense the objectified Islamic science is the result of a subjective choice.

9. The four Muslims thinkers studied in this thesis all criticize science as it is carried out in most countries today. One point they all stress is that contemporary science is compartmentalized and does not give clear answers to the predicaments of the modern world. Science is seen as a “technocratic wasteland”, a phe-

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<sup>1</sup>Bauman 1990:149f.

nomenon that has nothing to offer humanity but alienation and enslavement.<sup>2</sup> They also criticize what they see as the fixed body of values embodied by Western science. However, at least since the time of Weber, science is generally seen as provisional, temporary and universal. Hence, it lies in the very nature of science that its results will be questioned and re-examined. Similarly, the multitude of methods available in most disciplines is seen as a weakness. Thus, their criticism of science is founded on an understanding of science which differs considerably from that held at, say, universities in most countries of the world. Moreover, “science” is objectified in the sense that a specific Islamic science means a divinely ordered science. Therefore, disciplines of an Islamic science cannot ideally contain a set of different methods. There has to be *one* method that can be utilized in order to arrive at definitive answers. In their perspective, the very nature of “science” entails that it should contain a single method – an image of the “exact science”. Yet, the stress given this ideal may serve a rhetorical purpose. Another possibility is that they are aware of the conditions of science, but simply disapprove of this situation. The “single method of science” is based on the Quran. Science that contradicts the word of God will not be tolerated. However, the question of determining which research goes against the Quran is not settled once and for all, i.e. judgements and agreements concerning which research that may be seen as Islamic may vary over time. Moreover, the participants in the discourse are not opposed to scientific, technological and economical modernization. Their opposition is directed against a social form of modernization, often manifested in a rejection of phenomena associated with Western civilization.

10. In the conception of Islam, the West, history and science, and of creating Islamic science, there is an element of nostalgia, that is, of returning to the authentic understanding of the world. Turner proposes a sociological understanding of nostalgia.<sup>3</sup> If we use his framework to elucidate the premises of the discourse we can see that the components of Turner’s discussion bear directly on ideas central to the discourse. Firstly, the Muslim civilization is in decline. It has deviated from the values which were present during the ideal time of Muhammad. Secondly, pluralism and secularization bring about a fragmentation of belief – an idea that lies at the heart of the presuppositions of the discourse. Thirdly, the bureaucratic regulations within the modern state are an impediment to the autonomy of the individual. Modern human beings are not free. Complete freedom for the individual can only be achieved in an Islamic society. The fourth premise is that simplicity, authenticity and spontaneity are lost. The bureaucratic and administered world hampers genuine feeling and emotion. In the same sense as above, for the participants in the discourse a world which allows the expression of genuine

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<sup>2</sup>Elzinga & Jamison 1981:9.

<sup>3</sup>See Turner 1994:120f.

feelings and emotions can only be constructed in an Islamized society. This involves a nostalgic appeal to the past, the aim of which is basically to formulate a critique of modern society. The construction of an Islamic alternative to modern society is characterized by an arbitrary use of a variety of sources, that is, authors mobilized in support of ideas are such disparate thinkers as e.g. Paul Feyerabend and Sayyid Qutb. Often, a writer will back up his views by restricting his references to other people who share the same idea and belong to the same position. This is an important strategy in the discourse, because it reveals the artificially constructed and pseudo-scientific character of the discourse as well as the nature of the discourse as basically a struggle for the power or the privilege to define Islam. Finally, the common ideas outlined in this section compose a pattern in terms of establishing positions which form the discourse. It should be noted that they can shift over time due to changes of the social, political and economical conditions.

### Differences – as a Foundation of the Discourse

The boundaries between the four positions are neither sharp nor definite. The exponents and their advocates occasionally refer to other positions in order to support a view. One reason, as explained above, is that the participants share a set of presuppositions which constitute the basis for taking part in the discourse. It is significant that ideas – and representatives of ideas – that are considered as totally erroneous interpretations of Islam are tacitly excluded from the discourse. Religious scholars and Islamistic groups have crossed beyond the borders of the discourse and are therefore repudiated by the participants. However, the general ideas on the relationship between Islam and science put forward by scholars and Islamists are not sufficiently clearly demarcated to differentiate them completely from the ones expressed in the discourse. For example, ideas associated with Sayyid Qutb are found also within the discourse. However, today Qutb and Mawdūdī can be seen as authors not exclusively linked to Islamist movements. Rather, they are institutionalized and can be used by various authors promoting separate ideas on the function of Islam. Probably, the reason for the dismissal of certain views is not primarily based on religious or ideological concerns. The motive is rather a political one. The exclusion concerns the power over the framing of Islam. Representatives of ideas that have political connections to certain oppressive states, or to radical and militant Islamistic movements, are excluded for these reasons.

The four exponents and their adherents share some premises, but they belong to somewhat divergent trends within the framework of contemporary Islam. A dividing line goes between the *sunnī* Muslims Bucaille, al-Faruqī and Sardar on one side and the *shīʿī* Muslim Nasr on the other. Nasr is, as has been stated

above, strongly criticized, and Nasr in turn also criticizes the trend in *sunnī* Islam called *salafīya*. On the other hand, Bucaille and al-Faruqī are positive towards the *salafīya*. The critique is, however, not always based on a presumed conflict between *sunnī* and *shīʿa* Islam. Instead, it is Nasr's mix of Gnostic ideas with Islam that is the prime target of the criticism. It denounces his use of non-Muslim sources, placing him in a general tradition of mystics. The ideas pronounced by followers of the so-called *philosophia perennis* are seen as heretic. In my opinion, Sardar's fierce critique of Nasr aims at excluding him from the discourse. Yet, Nasr's status among Muslims and non-Muslims in general makes it somewhat difficult to eliminate him entirely from the discourse. A presupposition underlying the critique of Nasr is also that he and his adherents represent a form of piety outside the control of the Muslim mainstream, endangering their rational approach to the Quran and seen as threatening to Islam. Sardar knows that Sufism is a form of popular religion that seems to have a strong capacity for survival, especially in times when there is no religious authority deciding what Islam is "in reality". Yet, Nasr at the same time represents Sufism, in his form not to be understood as popular mysticism in general, but a highly intellectual and elitistic activity. Therefore, the critique sometimes depicts the ideas of *shīʿīs* as representative of an elitistic idea of the Islamic society and *sunnīs* as representatives of an Islamic society based on equality. Furthermore, the hostility between Nasr and Sardar is intensified by the difference in their social backgrounds. Nasr belongs to a group in Iranian society closely linked to the former Pahlavi regime, while Sardar comes from a Pakistani background, his father having been a civil servant in the British colonial administration. In addition, they belong to different generations, a fact that is mirrored not only in their taste of music – Sardar's documented appreciation of the Beatles – but also in their view of gender roles. In the *idjmālī* position as well as in the position of al-Faruqī and the IIT there are women in prominent positions. Such is not the case in Nasr's and Bucaille's positions. Possibly the condition of women in some Muslim organisations in Europe and North America is changing towards a situation in which women will play a more active part in the interpretation of Islam. Still, the language of the four exponents can be interpreted as sexist. For instance, they all use the generic "man" instead of "people" or "human beings" when they describe humankind.

Another dividing line goes between al-Faruqī, Nasr and Sardar on one hand and Bucaille on the other. The former exponents' outlines of Islamic sciences are based either on elitistic traditions within Islam or on familiarity with science as carried out in a European and North American context. The result is that their books are difficult to read for large sections of the Muslim community. Bucaille to a higher degree represents popular views among Muslims in general on the relationship between Islam and science. This is probably a determining cause for

Bucaille's strong influence. His ideas are closely related to common understandings of Islam among Muslims. His basic ideas, as was stated above, are not new, but the subjects he treats are new. Bucaille's frequent references to Teilhard de Chardin also separates him from the other three. It can be noted that Bucaille shares many of the ideological roots of the New Age movement. By contrast, Nasr is critical of the ideas of Teilhard de Chardin.<sup>4</sup> In this way Bucaille's high standing can counterbalance any disadvantage caused by his being a convert and a somewhat odd figure in the discourse. The general accessibility of Bucaille's books gives him a larger audience than that of al-Faruqi's, Nasr's or Sardar's books. The latter are, however, constantly improving their channels of distribution. The IIT as an organization works more actively than the others to actually implement their ideas, rather than just discussing them in a philosophical manner. The increasing impact of all four participants in Muslim societies is strengthening their position in the discourse. However, the audience of the four positions varies. One example is the influence and the relations with institutions in Egypt developed by the IIT. Their ideas appear to fit well with ideas on Islam held by many young and well-educated people. Conversely, Nasr's audience is small in Egypt, probably due to the position of Sufism in the country. In addition, his Persian and *shī'ī* background may influence his popularity negatively. In non-Muslim contexts their status is different. Bucaille is often treated condescendingly by other writers, as somebody who does not even have the most elementary understanding of science. The other three take or took part in academic discussions and are seen as well-adjusted and well-behaved Muslim participants. Basically, the judgement on their standing is a consequence of their partial adaptation to a terminology and language used in discussions on science in Europe and North America.

There is also a difference between al-Faruqi, Nasr and Sardar on the one hand and Bucaille on the other in the way they deal with the sacred sources, especially the Quran. There is in the discourse a difference between the participants concerning their stress of the *eisegetic* approach in the interpretation of the Quran. Bucaille's approach is strongly coloured by the method described above as *eisegesis*. However, there is also a contrast between the interpretations of the Quran represented by al-Faruqi, Nasr and Sardar. The approach used by al-Faruqi and the IIT and Sardar are close to each other in terms of premises and method and differ from the ones used by Nasr and his adherents. Nevertheless, the differences are based on their adherence to theological and ideological trends in the framework of Islam. The link to a specific strand within Islam forms the starting-point for the application of Western science and modernity in general. The interpretation of the Quran is supported by references both to non-Muslim sources and to adherents of

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<sup>4</sup>See Nasr 1993:87. Nasr's ideas, however, resemble New Age philosophies just as much as Bucaille's do.

their own ideas. The former are often taken out of their context. The same condition applies when the participants in the discourse use the history of Islam in order to support their statements. History is in the discourse not studied in order to understand the past, but to shape the future. Hence, there is an element of choice involved in the conceptualizations of history, as well as of Islamic terminology. In their ambition to reinterpret history, or to create a concept out of a term, the participants purposefully seek a suitable interpretation of history and/or a suitable interpretation of Islamic terminology. The overall aim is to form an Islamic future meeting the challenges of modernity, i.e. to construct an Islamic version of modernity.

### Ziauddin Sardar – a Position Founded on the *Idjmālī* Ideas

The historical perception of the *idjmālīs* is not only based on prestigious words from the history of Islam, but also on prestigious individuals. In early works, historical references are less common than in later works. Important periods are, firstly, the early history of Islam, especially the time of Muhammad in Medina. It is defined by Sardar as “the Medina state” or sometimes “the Medina model”. Secondly, the “golden period” from about the 9th to the 13th century is seen as such an important epoch. Muhammad’s time in Medina is the ideal period in human history. The sayings of Muhammad are used in the same way as quotations from the Quran: They are infallible sources and a standard against which one can measure science. The lives and works of important individuals as well as Islamic words are interpreted to serve the cause of the exponents’ outline of an Islamic science, and to be ideal examples of how to work scientifically. In general, history plays a prominent role. It is almost always used as a reference where the referred event or individual serves as a substantiation of a statement. Some examples are al-Bīrūnī, al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Khaldūn. In *idjmālī* texts references to contemporary Muslim ideologists such as Sayyid Quṭb, Mawḍūdī and Fazlur Rahman can also be found. In the development of *idjmālī* ideas, many of the adherents have changed their once radical views, and today support ideas similar to Rahman’s understanding of Islam. The *idjmālī* historiography is not bound to any particular tendency within the history of Islam. Rather, the *idjmālīs* deliberately choose from the mass of sources in order to produce historical support for their standpoint. Their lack of formal religious education, and their position in mainstream *sunnī* tradition, make them utilize the usual prestigious personages used in Muslim contexts.

Sardar has established a pattern accepted among other *idjmālīs*. They bring out an idealized image of history where the almost utopian notion of Muhammad’s period in Medina is connected with a modern – and organic –

framework. Adherents to the *idjmālī* position compose ideal alternatives or solutions to the problems they see in the modern world. The ultimate goal is to establish a notion of history which can have a normative function among Muslims in general. In this view, history has a purpose. Another goal in their use of history is to mobilize Muslims for their standpoint. They project present problems into history. Moreover, the *idjmālīs* are not a homogenous group. Both Anees and Manzoor are ambivalent in their portrayal of their relation to Sardar, and have asked me not to be mentioned as “Sardarians” in this thesis. Their motive is that they prefer to be treated as independent thinkers, and not as members of a group headed by someone else.

The awareness of notions in Western society, such as ideas in social science, philosophy, religion and natural science, is reflected in *idjmālī* books. Sardar’s *Explorations in Islamic Science* is directed toward an audience with a knowledge of the history and philosophy in the West. The use of titles of pop and rock songs indicates that his statements are directed at Muslims for whom artists like the Beatles and David Bowie are part of daily life, rather than, say, the Algerian born female super-star Warda. Of course, many young Muslims are well aware of various styles of music.

The self-elected name of the group, *idjmālī*, can, in accordance with the frames of references of the adherents, be translated as “holistic”. The first term which Sardar used in his earlier works, inspired by Kuhn, was “paradigm”. The second was “holism”. Recently the emphasis has been put on ethics. The interest in ethics is in the text above represented by Sardar’s eagerness to take part in conferences and discussions on globalization or “world futures”. In the 1990s he has made an attempt to contribute to discussions about postmodernism. In many ways Ziauddin Sardar can be characterized as following the changing and somewhat trendy fashions prevailing in the contemporary debate on science. The way Sardar supports his statements by presenting a set of popular names and words makes such a characteristic pertinent.

When Sardar vindicates the *idjmālīs*’ notions on the function of Islam, and specifically the outline of a conceptual matrix of the position, several characteristic traits become visible. One is the frequent use of persuasive definitions. This means that Islamic terms, and definitions of ideologies or philosophical ideas developed by individuals, are defined in a manner where they support the statement proposed by Sardar, and convince the reader that his argument is legitimate. The recurring references to Kuhn, Feyerabend or Popper, and the short definitions of their ideas, serve to strengthen the statements. The adherents to the *idjmālī* position also point at the failures of Western civilization as an indication that philosophies – or utopian schemes – such as communism and capitalism have proven unsuccessful in establishing a “truly” human society. Therefore, Sardar’s and his adherents’ outlook is a critique of Western civilization. In what they per-

ceive as a vacuum, they propose “Islam” as the solution. Islam is the true and natural foundation for all societies, not only the Muslim ones. Islam is in the *idjmālī* perception conceptualized as an organic totality. It provides humanity with a world in order, harmony and balance. Islam is a global force. The *umma* is supranational, and Islam is the natural response to the predicaments of the contemporary world. Islam is a challenge to every human being.

In their conceptual matrix, representatives of the *idjmālī* position have chosen to designate knowledge, and in a wider context the sciences (*al-<sup>‘</sup>ulūm*), with the Arabic word *‘ilm*. By this choice the *idjmālīs* take a position opposing Sufism, in a historic conflict in which the traditional religious scholars have searched for knowledge as *‘ilm* – knowledge in general acquired by the independent exercise of the intelligence – while the *ṣūfī shaykhs* have preferred the word *ma<sup>‘</sup>rifa* – “coming to know by experience or reflection”, or “gnosis”. Sardar and his adherents explicitly oppose the idea that religious scholars should have the preferential right to interpret religion and the Quran. To emphasise *‘ilm* also entails that the adherents remind the reader of this historical conflict. Thus, conflicts in the history of ideas are utilized to promote the position of the *idjmālīs*, and to persuade the reader to make a sound judgement between the available positions in the discourse concerning the Islamization of science. Their interpretations of Islamic terms function as a form of watershed and force individuals to take a stand.

In order to cure the malaise of the *umma*, Sardar emphasises that key Quranic terms are designed to express the ethics and values of correct Islam. The interpretation of these words will reveal the true meaning of Islamic traditions, especially the purpose of the Quran and *sunna*. In this perspective the interpretations of the words is the only possible basis on which a reconstructed Islamic civilization can be established. The “Sardarian” outlook, consequently, includes a set of Islamic terms intended to work as basic tools in the founding of an Islamic science. The specific Islamic science promoted by the adherents of this position is based on a set of words picked out of a primarily Quranic vocabulary. Terms such as *‘adl* or *‘ilm* are interpreted in different ways from the ones traditionally given to them. The meaning is often expanded, and in its new context the term is given meanings related to science and to the discourse concerning the Islamization of science. The emphasis on this procedure in the *idjmālī* position makes it possible to name the position “ilmist” after the Arabic word *‘ilm*, which is one of the most important words used by the group.

Islamic terms are chosen and used consciously. They are prestigious terms, used as symbols sending out a set of signals to the reader, as in the case of *‘adl*. In this way the meaning of the words interpreted by *idjmālīs* is slightly transformed, and is sometimes divorced from their conventional meaning in *sunnī* mainstream theology, to fit into a system promoting an Islamic science. The

English language used is also influenced by Islamic terms. They are not only explicitly present in the text, but words familiar to Muslims are translated into English. The idea is to reveal the significance – and all the associations attached to it – of the Arabic word by means of English ones. This gives rise to the formation of an Islamic – English terminology. The translation is based on the ideological and contextual affiliation of the translator. The deliberate use of Islamic terms in texts in English as signalling the ideological roots of the author is a new phenomenon. The Islamic terms are, in a sense, “iconized”. The aim is to free Sardar and his adherents from earlier interpretations of them. Therefore, *idjmālīs* are not in need of a comprehensive religious education. It is enough with a general knowledge of the history and theology of Islam. The stress on a conceptualization of Islamic terminology creates a specialization among the *idjmālīs*. A biologist such as Munawar Anees becomes a specialist on questions concerning biology and Islam. The development of such a foundation for the *idjmālī* position is also related to the fact that the group is not tied to any specific place or region where there is an established religious hierarchy.

The descriptions of their opponents can also function as a watershed in the discourse. Nasr is criticised, but also treated as an authority. Sardar even questions if Nasr, and the adherents of his ideas, can really be regarded as Muslims. Sardar’s opinion is that Nasr’s worldview is formed out of non-Islamic sources and that he promotes ideas seen as heretic by the *sunnī* majority. One point is to show Muslims that Nasr does not act in accordance with the basis of the doctrine expressed in the Muslim article of faith (*shahāda*).

Sardar’s criticism of Nasr also reveals an epistemological presupposition. He treats Nasr as if he is only repeating what he has received from Guénon and Schuon. He is presented in a role traditionally given the transmitters of Prophetic traditions and representatives of the study of *ḥadīth*, i.e. a *muḥaddith*. Sardar either deliberately describes Nasr as a *muḥaddith*, or exposes his own ideas of how the relation between a master and a disciple should be formed. It is a way of connecting Nasr with a scholarly praxis that Sardar and his adherents dislike, and is put forward in order to discredit Nasr’s statements. The critique of Nasr and Bucaille has political consequences. In the former case, Sardar and his adherents compete in exerting influence on the policies of higher education in Malaysia. As for Bucaille, the *idjmālīs*’ critique of his ideas will also imply a critique not only of religious scholars, but also of the official stance towards Islam held by the government of Saudi Arabia. The almost non-existing criticism of the ideas of the IIIT can, therefore, be interpreted as a closeness in ideas between Sardar and his adherents and, at least, some of the more influential persons at the IIIT, such as DeLorenzo and Mona Abul-Fadl. In political terms the non-existing critique of the IIIT means that Sardar seems to be more interested in cooperation than in

dismissing their position as Islamically invalid. In the end, this can have to do with the increasing influence of the IIT in Muslim countries.

Typical in the views of Sardar and other *idjmālīs* is that they dismiss previous interpretations of Islam, and thereafter state their own interpretation. Such statements very often start with the words “in fact” or “thus”, and are followed by the corresponding *idjmālī* interpretation. Those words act as a marker of a different interpretation of Islamic sources or Muslim histories and historical personages, different in relation to those interpretations traditionally made. They oppose the opinion that the religious scholars are the sole interpreters of the Quran and *sunna*, and they especially serve to object to the ‘*ulamā*’ interpretation of the function of Islam in contemporary society, and their statements of the relation of Islam to modern science. In the rhetoric of the *idjmālī* standpoint, the adherents of the position deliberately construct a picture of religious scholars as a homogeneous and stereotyped group. The perception of religious scholars as closed in their interpretation of Islam is put forward in contrast to the *idjmālīs*. They strongly recommend a renewal of Islam. Therefore, the advocates of the position disregard the work of the religious scholars in their interpretation of Islam and turn directly to the primary source – the Quran – and use the *aḥādīth* as a complement to it. The traditionally educated scholars are regarded as unable to resolve the predicaments of Muslims in contemporary society. Hence, they cannot construct the Islamic framework that would bring order to societies in the world. The idea of Islam formulated by the *idjmālīs* also serves as a counterweight to the manner in which Islam is interpreted by many Islamist movements. In their view movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood is institutionalized, and Islamist movements have, in the same way as religious scholars, failed to provide the Muslims with a model that can be followed in life. In the field of knowledge, science and technology the *idjmālīs*, due to their own familiarity with these areas, regard the contribution of Islamist movements as null.

When science is discussed by Sardar, it is primarily in the sense of natural science and applied science. The emphasis on a reconstruction of the Islamic society and the reinterpretation of Islamic traditions exposes the attitude among the adherents to the function of Islam. They perceive of Islam as an objective phenomenon which is to be interpreted in the right manner, thereby revealing the true meaning of Islam. A science based on authentic Islam is not a mere alternative to, but superior to Western science, a science in accordance with the transcendental world as well as the this-worldly reality. Therefore, Islamic science is in accordance with nature. Moreover, it appears as objective, it cannot be governed by various interests, and based on the word of God, it works for the benefit of all mankind.

The new Islamic civilization outlined by the *idjmālīs* will take into account the products of Western science, but it will not use scientific methods formed in

Europe and North America as a model. They wish to combine phenomena which they consider to be genuinely Islamic with the fruits of Western society. This will develop Islamic science to a unique and independently formed science based on the values of Islam.

Underlying presuppositions and notions become visible. Sardar dislikes the difference of opinions among researchers in Europe and North America, i.e. the very fact that there are a variety of methods within every discipline. He considers this to be a weakness: expressed in Islamic terms, the science of the Western world is in a state of “difference of opinion” (*ikhtilāf*). To be in “a difference of opinion” is traditionally regarded as a situation opposed to the state of consensus in a legal question, or a consensus (*idjmāʿ*) in the Muslim community in general. This notion shows that the *idjmālīs* are aware of, and share, fundamental values in mainstream *sunni* Islam. One aim of Sardar and his supporters is to realize their conception of the unity of God (*tawhīd*) as a universal force.

#### *The social environment*

Ziauddin Sardar is familiar with the debates on science both in the Western and the Muslim world. Many of the adherents of the *idjmālī* position share this double knowledge – and experience. Most of them are Muslims of non-Arab origin living in Europe, the USA, Pakistan, India or Malaysia. The *idjmālīs* are part of a well-to-do and well educated elite in Muslim countries, Europe and North America. They have a semi-academic status, i.e. they are in most cases not intellectuals by profession, but several of them have had or have some professional relation to universities. The fleeting links to higher education has minimized their influence on educational policies. The aim of the *idjmālīs* has not been to start academic institutions carrying out Islamic science. Their task is to provide an epistemological ground for the establishment of Islamic institutions.

Sardar and several others, such as Meryll Wyn Davies, Parvez Manzoor or Muhammad Anees, more or less regularly publish works in well-known publishing houses, Muslim as well as non-Muslim. Their books and articles are therefore more wide-spread in Europe and North America than in Asia or Africa. They also lecture on matters not always specifically Islamic in Muslim and non-Muslim contexts. Their works are not available at all in certain Muslim countries, especially not in the Arabic-speaking part of the Middle East. Their ability to use all the potential provided by the information society is of great importance. The *idjmālīs* skilfully use modern means to promote their message. During the last twenty years they have explored the possible markets for their ideas. The first choice fell on Saudi Arabia, while today their strategy is to promote their message primarily in Malaysia. Muslims in Europe and North America are of continuing interest to them.

A characteristic feature is, as has been pointed out above, that the adherents of the *idjmālī* position are not religious scholars with a traditional religious education, and that most of them are trained in the natural or social sciences. The fact that Meryl Wyn Davies is a woman and a convert does not seem to affect her status negatively. On the contrary, her standing as a British woman, journalist and anthropologist who turns to Islam shows that Islam can be the redemption for people of European and North American origin. It also strengthens the moral among Muslims. It shows that Islam can be a choice preferred by well-educated persons in Europe. The *idjmālīs* do not represent popular views prevalent among the majority of the people. The urban poor in the suburbs of Teheran, Cairo or Karachi have little or no knowledge of the discourse on the Islamization of science. They share this lack of knowledge with urban and poor Muslims in the suburbs of London, Paris or Berlin. The ideas presented by *idjmālīs* are, nevertheless, better known in a European or American context due to the availability of their books, and the ability among Muslims in these parts of the world to read. Moreover, the various problems discussed in their books particularly concern well-educated Muslims living in Europe and North America, who in their active life are confronted with all the elements of modernity. The *idjmālīs* see themselves as capable of dealing with modernity. With their secular education, their social status they can interpret Islam and counteract the negative effects of modernity. In other words, the attempt to justify the authenticity of a chosen religious tradition is made in the light of modern knowledge. It is a manner of justification that is not always supported by many of the traditionally educated religious scholars – who regard themselves as the leading representatives of Islam. The way in which the *idjmālīs* constantly reinterpret Islam to justify the tradition, i.e. to keep Islam alive and to give it meaning to Muslims in everyday life, is not unique. This common phenomenon has been noticed by many scholars in the social sciences.<sup>5</sup>

One strategy of the *idjmālī* position is to discredit the existing forms of science in Western and in Muslim societies. The *idjmālī* opinion is that the present form of science in general is in a crisis. Discussions among European and American researchers in the field of sociology and philosophy on the role and function of science in society are interpreted as a legitimation for the endeavour to find a normative science based on Islam. Thus, the solution to the problems of contemporary science – and society – is to establish culturally founded forms of science. Islam, in turn, is interpreted as an order for the society as a whole and, therefore, there must also be a specific Islamic science. This is one of the most important reasons why the group name themselves the *idjmālī* group. However, it should be noted that Islamic science, in the understanding of the *idjmālīs*, does not allow a practice which can be interpreted as going against the word of God.

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<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Giddens 1984:38.

Finally, the terminology, notion of history, criticism of other positions in the discourse and the *idjmālī* understanding of science reveal that the *idjmālīs* interpret Islam in an immediate relation to trends and events in contemporary society, and that they are sensitive to economical changes. They settle, as we all do, in places where it is possible to earn a living. The terminology used to formulate ideas on Islamic science reflects the context, topics and trends in current discussions in the social sciences and in the humanities. In this process, Sardar's interest in the 1970s in Third world issues and use of ideas influenced by Marxist terminology changed in the 1980s to an emphasis of Islam as the key to a successful future. The *idjmālī* emphasis on *idjtihād* (in the meaning of the lay person's possibility to interpret the sacred texts) is part of a process towards an individualization and differentiation of Muslims (this will be further discussed in the part on the discourse and modernity). A conceivable conclusion is that a consequence of their stress on the individual's personal judgement, and his or her ability to interpret the Islamic sacred sources, leads to a formation of individual interpretations of Islam that are constructed to give Islam meanings in the life styles of individuals. Nevertheless, the interpretation of Islam enforced by the *idjmālīs* is normative, and their understanding of it is claimed to be in accordance with the will of God. Normative Islam contains an ethical and moral system, especially in relation to science. Authentic Islam will bestow humanity with a morally correct science.

### Seyyed Hossein Nasr – the Traditionalist Perspective

A premise for the position of Nasr in the discourse is that "Islamic science" can cover and explain everything. There is a meaning inherent in science as well as in history and language. The purpose of science is to explain the true or authentic construction of reality, the true relation between the human world, the physical world, "higher levels of reality" and the revelation. The latter unveils a metaphysical world that becomes visible through revelation. History and language can be regarded as means to fulfil this purpose.

Nasr speaks about a Traditionalist perspective which is founded on the idea of an inner and intuitive experience available to human beings. It is through revelation that humans can find real knowledge. Without this form of personal experience scientists cannot study all aspects of reality. Science, religion, knowledge, reason and intelligence are all elements of a world perceived as an organic totality.

The presupposition that life has a purpose, that is, that human beings are part of a larger system founded on revelation, affects the use of key terms. The use of Islamic terminology is founded on a form of conceptual realism, close to Pla-

tonic realism and conceptualism. It consists of an understanding in which key words, terms and concepts are objectified. For instance, a word such as *ḥikma* has a specific, inherent meaning which does not change over time and space. The interpretations of words are conceptualized in an endeavour to strengthen the statements made within the position. The use of reason and intellect helps a scholar to view the correspondence between the words and the true reality, in other words, to guide him or her to the truth. In this perspective society is ultimately based on supposed rational and metaphysical structures which can be detected by a correct understanding of objectified words. Linked to Nasr's realism are influences from Gnosticism. Nasr is a keeper of a Gnostic heritage present in Islam.

For the advocates of the Traditionalist position, discovering the true meaning of a word is important. The discourse on the Islamization of science is for them a battle for the appropriation of correct interpretations of Islamic terms. They attempt to define and translate words in order to substantiate their statements. Nasr uses a set of non-Muslim authors and converts to Islam, mostly of a Western origin, to support his ideas. They appear frequently in the references in his works.

The conceptualized words Western or the West function in Nasr's argumentation as antitheses to Islamic or Muslim. Another aspect of the relation to the West is that Nasr and his adherents are well versed in classical philosophy. Their knowledge and interpretation of the Greek and Roman heritage is used to support their position in the discourse. Especially two words are conceptualized and treated as objective phenomena. They can both be characterized as presuppositions for the ideas of the Nasrian position. The first is *tawḥīd* (unity). The meaning of science is to reveal the unity of the world, both the physical and the metaphysical. It is a term that reveals the normative notion that Islam is an all-encompassing framework for all spheres of society. For instance, in modern Western society a phenomenon such as religion is seen as belonging to a private sphere of life. In Nasr's position, science cannot – ideally – be without a form of Islamic control. Science has a given purpose, and that is to manifest the unity of the world. The second term is *idjmāʿ* (consensus). One aspect of the critique of the West is based on the notion that there is such a thing as true knowledge. Debates – and contradictions – in Europe and North America within different disciplines and between adherents of different methodological approaches are regarded as signs of weakness. In Nasr's interpretation of the term *idjmāʿ*, in relation to Islamic science, he turns to the sources of Islam and treats them in a normative way. Such an interpretation may result in a desire to establish *the* normative, specific and authentic Islamic science. The use of Islamic terms manifests the view that the ideal Islamic world – the utopia – is based on notions of unity, harmony and balance.

The specific conceptualization of history underlines the idea that schools, and the so-called sages, are the driving forces in the history and philosophy of Islamic knowledge and science. The sages utilized to substantiate this standpoint are picked out of a collective repertoire of Islamic prototypes. The ideal and inevitable model is Muhammad. This method, or way of working, is sanctioned by Islamic traditions. In addition, one aim of the “Nasrians” is to appropriate what they consider a correct and authentic interpretation of history. This means establishing interpretations of historical and pseudo-historical personalities as historical prototypes for contemporary Muslims, substantiating and legitimating the statements on the status of Islamic science. The selection of key historical personages reveals an understanding of the present time and certain conceptions of the function of religion. Nasr also projects his ideas on the sages. True knowledge can be grasped through an inner path, not through outward actions. This inner path is manifested in the *ṣūfī* tradition. In my opinion, the usage of the term “sage” and the interpretation of the function of a sage reveals Nasr’s view that sages are those who share characteristic traits with *ṣūfī* masters, also in questions concerning who has the ability to interpret the sources of Islam correctly. However, the master does not have to be a religious scholar. In many cases these masters are also connected to a Persian environment. The choice of a sage, and the emphasis on aspects of the ideas of a sage can vary in time and space. Thus, for instance, the interpretation of the ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī is not closed. It is also a matter of unveiling different aspects of his ideas at different times. In the historiographic construction of ideas, and of the structure of a uniquely Islamic science, sages and schools are chosen carefully. They are bonds between religious traditions. The aim is to form a normative concept of Islamic science and Islamic history in general – history has a meaning. The concept of history is on a metahistoric level ideally centered around the notion that time is cyclic and that the arrivals of prophets are crucial events. A cyclic notion of history is not only related to the history of science. In practice, in the actual descriptions of the development of disciplines belonging to Islamic science, history is however viewed as linear. Sages and schools succeed each other, developing the different disciplines of Islamic science. In addition to the sages and the various schools, Nasr also uses civilisations such as the Greek or the Roman to support his statements. The Roman and the Greek heritages are sometimes used in negative, but mostly in positive contexts. These descriptions of the development of science reminds the reader of genealogically founded descriptions of the development of *ṣūfī* orders. In terms of his ideas, Nasr represents a version of Sufism based on Persian traditions, but also a form of Sufism developed in Europe.

In their critique of Western science, Nasr and his adherents compare an ideal image of Islamic science with science as actually carried out in Europe and North America. In the West, science is seen as separated from the sacred. Nevertheless,

science in the West acts as a standard of science in general. Nasr strives to present a historical bond between contemporary science in the West and the Traditionalist forms of science existing in Muslim societies. The supposed problems of science, and of the use of scientific results in Europe, are perceived as caused by the distortion of the true values and norms of Traditionalist science and society.

In the perspective of the “Nasrian” position, there is a true or genuine nature of science as well as of religion. The latter is superior to the former. The authentic forms of religion and science will not change over time and space: the essence of religion is one. Various religions are in such a perspective more or less correct versions of that essence. However, authentic religion can be more or less visible. Nasr says that some present phenomena, such as astrology or alchemy, are distorted forms of a science that he says are founded on Traditionalist values and norms. In the same sense the contemporary forms of Islam are misinterpretations of authentic Islam. Islam is not an ideology. It is superior to ideologies. Ideologies are evil and all of them – Islamism, Modernism, Communism, Socialism, Capitalism and so forth – are subordinated to Islam.

In Nasr’s position, one function of religion is to regulate all aspects of the life of the Muslim individual and the community. Therefore, science also lies within the sphere of religion. Science has to do with God, and to “perform” science can be seen as an act of worship. There is an important goal of science, says Nasr, that is forgotten today: to explain God’s world. Science is supposed to be metaphysical. The aim is to link the human world to metaphysical reality. In such a view nature has two qualities. One is physical, while the other is metaphysical. A correct science cannot just study one of the qualities, that would make science reductionist. Science should study the whole of the cosmos. The dilemma of defining what is really Islamic in science and all other spheres of life is not only a matter for religious scholars. The position of lay persons is strong, and they are given prominent roles within the “Nasrian” position. In this process they interpret classical sources of Islamic traditions, especially the Quran and *sunna*. Despite this, the position supports a form of elitism. Not everyone has the spiritual abilities to understand the inner meaning of Islam. One can note that Nasr, in a comment to an earlier version of the present text, stated that he rejects the label elitist, since it self-evident that people have different spiritual qualities, and “there is no need to cast pearls before swine”.

#### *The social environment*

The advocates of the Traditionalist position present an Islamic world view in contrast to the supposedly fragmentary science of the so-called Western world. Their ideas do not only include a view on the function of religion and science, but also an understanding of Islam which influences all actions of the Muslim individual

as well as Muslims as a community. Two fields which are particularly emphasized are morals and ethics. The societies of Europe and North America are generally said to be in a moral decline. The fact that Nasr and other adherents to the position live in Europe or North America explains their awareness of various problems in the field of science, but also in society. Ongoing debates on the function of science in Europe and North America influence positions within the discourse. One example is Nasr's use of the "environmental crisis" and the discussions concerning ecology, to support the idea that the solution of the crisis lies in the adoption of a sacred science. In the end, an adherence to the form of Islam proclaimed by Nasr will solve the dilemmas, not only within contemporary science. It will also create a world in harmony and balance. For Nasr, classical Islamic science did not involve any desire to master nature. Therefore, the balance of nature was never disturbed. Moreover, in his view, the authentic interpretation of Islam contains a righteous moral and ethic order, a view prevalent in classical Muslim theology.

The onslaught of modernism on the "Orient" is the reason for the decline of the Muslim countries. In Nasr's view the opposite of modernism is traditionalism. Therefore, Western and Eastern science can never meet. Modernizing Islam is fraught with momentous consequences. Islam will lose its status as a total body of principles. One function of the Traditionalist school is to be an antithesis, not only to what the supporters of the position perceive to be basically Western ideas, but also to other views of Islamic science and Islam in general. The fundamentalist interpretation of Islam is condemned and Nasr's position can be characterized as a form of anti-fundamentalism, i.e. a reaction to religious-political movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood. It is possible to interpret the adherence to Nasr's ideas by Turkish Muslims or young Iranians as a trend directed against the project of the fundamentalists. In the case of the Iranians the adherence to Nasr's position can also be interpreted as an expression of criticism against the contemporary Iranian regime. This criticism involves many Muslims in a European and North American environment. According to Nasr, his works are widely read in Iran. In such a context his texts can function as a source that manifests a typically Iranian tradition of Islam. However, his books are, Nasr maintains, just as widely read in Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia. This is an expression of the attraction that his ideas have, especially for those who adhere to Sufism. Another aspect of the choice to adhere to Nasr's position is that it offers the individual a package of solutions – a lifestyle – and helps him or her to come to terms with modernity. This is the case especially for Muslims living in Europe and the USA, but also in Muslim societies. One of Nasr's recent works, *A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World* (1993) touches upon the challenges of modernity. The book supports the idea that today Nasr's overall aim seems to be a form of guidance. Young Muslims are presented with a

set of ideas that have originated in the West. Nasr shows that their ideas are either false or fit in the traditional Islamic perspective. In a sense, I think the way Nasr presents his ideas to young Muslims can be seen as an example of the commodification of Islam. Nasr, like all the other exponents within the discourse, sells his perspective to young Muslims in the form of a book and they can buy it or not. In the end, the adherence to the position of Seyyed Hossein Nasr does not have one single reason, but there are many possible motives why a person can become attracted to it. However, the larger part of his advocates seems to be either of Persian origin or are converts to Islam attracted by his *ṣūfī* leanings.

The construction of a function for religion in the modern society is related to the possibility of the exponents to express their views without being subject to persecution. It is possible to link Nasr's and his adherents' interpretations of the Islamic tradition to their position as members of societies in Europe and the USA. It is, in the same way, feasible to regard "new" interpretations of the Islamic traditions as fruits of the presence of Muslims in – and confrontation with – a non-Muslim society, where there is freedom of speech. The new interpretations act as an alternative not only to modernity, but also as an alternative – and a challenge – to ideas propagated by other fellow Muslims. In Muslim countries the urge for a renaissance of the Nasrian perspective works a little differently. For him, his closeness to the former regime of the Shah gives his view of Islam a political undertone. Thus, his different interpretations of Islam are not politically "innocent", especially in Muslim countries where governments explicitly support a particular direction within Islam.

Finally, Islam is understood as an all-encompassing order. Knowledge and science are part of this superior order and are, therefore, subordinated to Islam's system of regulations. However, Nasr uses specific frameworks within *shī'ism* and Sufism in order to Islamize science. The reason for such a choice can be traced to his personal background, but also to the fact that he lives in North America. Nasr and his adherents stress that Sufism is a system able to meet the challenges of modernity and to establish the authentic Islamic order. Nasr's ideas both a result of his background and of the possibility of Sufism to function as a vehicle for personal piety well suited for life in North America. He criticizes Western society, but is also influenced by it. Nasr strives for an Islamized world and in his understanding of Sufism, it does not make claims striving towards a role for Islam in politics.

### Al-Faruqi and the IIIT – implementing the Islamic vision

The position of the IIIT is supported by Muslims from various countries around the world, many of whom have been educated in Europe or North America. They

have, during their time as students, been part of the activities of the IIIT, and after their return to their country of origin they continue to read the IIIT literature and, to some extent, to take part in conferences arranged by the IIIT. The basic reason for their active interest appears to be the belief that the survival of Islam, understood as an ideology, is at stake. In their perception, it is challenged by forces such as secularism, (natural) science and values and norms in general which have originated in the Western world. In short, they see the West as a stereotype containing an ungodly civilization challenging the authentic civilization – Islam.

Adherents to the ideas of al-Faruqī and the IIIT stress the significance of the Quran. It is superior to all other sources. They clearly state that the role of Muhammad is supplementary to the Quran. In their rhetoric, the Quran functions either as a source of knowledge or as a support of specific statements. Such ideas on the status of the Quran and the role of Muhammad are, of course, not unique. They are common to the other positions in the discourse as well, but also to interpretations of Islam derived from al-Afghānī via al-Bannā and Sayyid Qutb to Fazlur Rahman, and to those loosely composed ideas on the function of Islam gathered under the heading of *salafīya*. Al-Faruqī and the adherents to the IIIT disapprove of ideas connected to Sufism. In their perspective, a strong adherence to mysticism ignores the realities of contemporary society. Modern society is complex, and has to be analysed by means of a concrete reading of the Quran and the *sunna*. In recent publications from the IIIT this is described as a Quranic methodology. It is used in establishing an Islamic society based on the principle of *idjtihād*. A complement to this is their interpretation of the history of Islam: in history one can find prototypes. They are used as models for other Muslims to copy. Some examples of such ideal historical personages are Ibn Khaldūn, al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Taymīya. All of them are presented in general terms and are used in support of various statements, in the same way as references are made to the Quran. This is done despite the claim that the intellectual heritage of Islam must be studied thoroughly in order to constitute a foundation for the Islamization of knowledge project. One aim for the use of the Quran and of historical personages is that adherents to the IIIT desire to liberate themselves from what they perceive as the conventional ways in which the religious scholars study the sources of Islam. In the opinion of al-Faruqī and the advocates of the IIIT, Islam must be reinterpreted to fit contemporary society. In the end, history and its gallery of characters have an objective. History contains a model for actions and concrete ideals of morality and ethics. History is also part of the revelation, and the Quran understood as the word of God represents the objective truth independent of time and space. It is a frame of reference for history in general.

The approach of the IIIT contains a selective attitude to history. The adherents see Muhammad's lifetime as an era of perfection. A correct comprehension of the

most perfect time – the later part of Muhammad’s life – can serve as a foundation for the creation of a contemporary Islamic society. The early history of Islam and to some extent the history of the traditions until the 13th century is treated as a sacred history. This view embodies a mythological perception of historical events and important Muslim individuals. It forms an ideological relation to history, that is, constructs a normative history from which the individual as well as society can derive examples to follow in their respective practices. The two most significant historical prototypes are Ibn Khaldūn and al-Ghazzālī. Contemporary scientists can learn from historical prototypes such as these. They are models for the scientist emphasizing the ethical and moral aspects of scientific work. The historical prototypes mastered religious traditions and sciences, a competence that the advocates of the IIT consider to be necessary in the present situation to form an Islamic science. History contains a normative framework for contemporary Muslims, which also includes what forms of science which are ethically and morally legitimate. One important aspect is a conception of history as a means to find a balance in life, in a condition defined as a state of anxiety and lack of balance.

A supplement to the study of the intellectual heritage of Islam is the study of the intellectual traditions of the West. For the adherents of the IIT, the solution does not lie in a repudiation of all that is perceived as Western. Ideas such as the theory of evolution and Darwinism are rejected. However, many of the scholars active at the IIT are influenced by modern thought in the field of social science. A problem in making a characterization and analysis of the development of the ideas of al-Faruqī and the IIT is that the opinions of the adherents are not homogeneous. Scholars active at universities primarily in North America, and at the IIT in Herndon, are well aware of the scholarly traditions established in the various disciplines of the social sciences. There is a gap between them and scholars active in the natural sciences at universities in Muslim countries, especially in their understanding of the role of science in society. Scholars in North America and Europe are more inclined to interpret Islam independently of earlier interpretations. Their aim is to make revelation rational and all-encompassing, at least on the level of the individual in a non-Islamic environment. In *sharī‘a* there is no precedent for the situation in which Muslims are minorities in their countries of residence.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, this condition is a premise for the rethinking of Islam as carried out by al-Faruqī and the IIT. The stress on the responsibility of the individual can be traced to al-Faruqī himself. Due to his education and early research interest one could assume that he has been influenced on this matter by similar discussions within Christianity. The implementation of the Islamic vision is seen as an individual responsibility. Yet, the interpretations are also influenced

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<sup>6</sup>See Zebiri 1995:255. For an overview of the position of Muslim populations under non-Muslim rule. See Lewis 1994:1–18.

by the surrounding society and new forms of Islam appear in order to meet new realities. Their understanding of Islamic science is, therefore, in many ways close to the approach represented by Ziauddin Sardar. IIIT Muslims active at universities in Muslim countries also make interpretations of Islam, but in their striving to form an Islamic science they primarily lean towards conventional ways of interpreting Islam and, therefore, they come close to the understanding of the relationship between Islam and science held by Maurice Bucaille. However, scholars in Malaysia often interpret Islam in the same manner as those in Europe and North America. Yet, the situation within the IIIT, with a variety of opinions, does not seem to affect the organization negatively. Some officials at the IIIT regard the openness within the organization as a necessity.

The elaboration of notions on Islam and science among adherents to the IIIT is influenced by the ideas set out by al-Faruqi primarily in *The Islamization of Knowledge*. This book has left a clear mark on the works by advocates of the IIIT. It is treated as a source book. The ideas in the book and its terminology are frequently used in books published by the IIIT. In a sense the influence of the book and the heritage of al-Faruqi can be judged as negative. Because of the status of this work and the general status of al-Faruqi, it has been somewhat difficult to develop the ideas further. Al-Faruqi is seen as an ideal person, a role that was strengthened by his assassination. He has been “iconized”, and if we study recent publications on the present status of the Islamization of knowledge project on the ideological level not much has happened since the start. However, for the moment the organization is in a transitional period. The decision to stay in North America and to start a “School of Islamic and Social Science” will probably be a starting point in breaking away not only from al-Faruqi, but also from the legacy of al-Afghānī, Hasan al-Bannā and Sayyid Quṭb. This is underlined by the objectives recently expressed by al-Alwani. He wishes to establish a situation where Muslim intellectuals themselves take part in analysing various Muslim reform movements. The presupposition for such an undertaking is that reform movements cannot solve the predicaments of the Muslim countries. The key to success lies in the involvement of the intellectuals in the process, for example in interpreting the Quran. It is obvious that the adherents to the IIIT prefer a situation where knowledge of contemporary society is as important as knowledge of the religious sources. In the end, Islam is all-encompassing. Hence, they support the idea that lay persons take the position of interpreting the Quran in order to explain its meaning in the modern world.

The interpretations of Islam within the position are in a sense radical. In their writings, those who are active in the IIIT network are not forced to interpret the Islamic tradition in a certain way, that is, in accordance with a framework established by religious scholars. The interpretations of Islam produced by advocates of the IIIT can be characterized as anticlerical. Political alliances can define the

borders of the interpretations. Due to their education, social position and economic status, several of the supporters have an influence on Muslim societies. Their status seems to be high, especially among Muslims in North America. In al-Faruqi's and others' work of interpreting the religious tradition they have endeavoured to conceptualize Islamic words. They constantly strive to elaborate on the Quranic text and the sayings of Muhammad in order to find "the true meaning" of the words. The aim is to substantiate the project that they call "the Islamization of Knowledge". In a first phase the institute and its global network of branches has been established. In a second phase the aim is to establish a higher institute for teaching Islamic social science.

#### *The social environment*

A clear majority of the adherents to the IIIT are academicians. Most of the young men and women are educated at various natural science departments. However, several of the leading authors, researchers and others active at the IIIT headquarters in Herndon do not have any particular grounding in the natural sciences. Of course, this is due to the fact that the organization stresses the Islamization of the social sciences, but it also reveals a gap within the IIIT in the understanding of science and its role in society.

From its start in the beginning of the 1980s the organization of the IIIT has expanded. The institute in Herndon has constituted, and still constitutes, a centre for the IIIT and its expansion world wide. The stronghold of the organization has since the start been in North America. During the 1990s the IIIT has established subsidiary offices in many Muslim countries, primarily in order to distribute books. It also cooperates with organisations such as the Islamic Foundation in England. The IIIT has, principally during the 1990s, become a global organization. In a recent issue of *AJISS*, al-Alwani also called for a global mobilization in order to rethink and rebuild the basis of human society.<sup>7</sup> This is a project which is of concern for non-Muslims as well as Muslims. The intention is to halt the destruction of humanity. This is the explicitly expressed overall aim of the IIIT's "Islamization of knowledge" project. The emphasis on knowledge, science and education is enforced by an underlying view that these are cornerstones in the build-up of a society. The idea is that if society is founded on an Islamically righteous knowledge, manifested in science and education, the perfect world order will be restored, that is, a world in accordance with the values and norms which were present in the Muhammadan society of Medina. In the rhetoric of the advocates of the IIIT the desire for an Islamic society is expressed by the term "*ummatism*". Muslims constitute, in this approach, a unity. Key terms such as "*fitric*",

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<sup>7</sup>Al-Alwani 1995:100.

“*tawhidic*” and “*ummatic*” are combined with Latin terms or/and terms such as “*paradigm*” and “*hermeneutic*” in order to form an Islamic social science. In a science based on the principles of *ummaticism* various scientific disciplines will ultimately serve the same goal. Such ideas express an ideal of a unitive science. The responsibility of the individual Muslim scientist is to serve the *umma* and promote the divine pattern of science, that is, a lifestyle implementing the Islamic vision. The latter describes the eagerness of the IIT to create a space for Islam as an order in contemporary society. One point in this idea appears to be that a society founded on *ummaticism*, instead of a defective ideology, will immediately become a successful and righteous society. The notion is that once a society is based on the authentic message of God, this society will turn into perfection. Such a notion can be described as both optimistic, deterministic and teleological in the sense that its proponents see the world as being in a state of continuous development aiming at a perfect condition. This idea is not new. It has been promoted within the Islamistic movements which in a 20th century context can be traced back to Sayyid Qutb.

At the moment, the organization seems to be economically and politically secure due to support from countries on the Arab peninsula and in South East Asia. A tendency is now to develop a stronger link between the IIT and South East Asian countries, especially Malaysia. On the one hand, it is possible that the wish to continue to have the headquarter of the IIT in Herndon and the establishment – and strong standing – of the IITM are signs of a tendency towards a split of the organization. On the other hand, the IIT is strengthening its relation to the Middle East. One example is the connection with al-Azhar in Cairo. This can be an indication of the institutionalization of IIT ideas in line with the *sunni* establishment and a concentration of the activities of the American wing of IIT towards the Middle East. Nevertheless, the spread of the IIT shows the global ambition in the Islamization of knowledge project. Herndon, Virginia, may seem to be far away from Islam and Muslims, but modern society and the possibility to travel and communicate makes the location of the centre in the United States less problematic. In order to safeguard the political independence of the organization, the location in Herndon is even an advantage. Incorporated in a place with political freedom, it gives the possibility to interpret Islam outside the control of a repressive state. The recent ideas to start a school of Islamic and social sciences also fit in the academic environment of North America where a religious foundation for academic institutions is conceivable and in fact common. The economical alliances with certain states constitute a framework for the interpretations of Islam, and the IIT can be seen as proclaiming a form of “mainstream Islamism”. It is a form of Islamism that wishes to Islamize society, but not in a violent manner. The IIT is not in favour of pluralistic and democratic systems such as those found in Western Europe. In discussions concerning political science I

found that the form of society strived for is based on a conceptualization of the Islamic term *ash-shūrā*. In a society based on the concept of *ash-shūrā*, human beings are not equal in terms of legal rights. Attention has mostly been drawn to inequality between the sexes and the legal rights of religious minorities. The ideal is to restore *sharīʿa*, and thereby give society what is seen as the authentic law. Notably, on matters concerning equality between the sexes the IIIT strives to change the situation in Muslim societies – one of the most prolific researchers in the organization is a woman, Mona Abul-Fadl. The endeavour to improve the conditions of Muslim women in general leads to new interpretations of the Quran which are politically sensitive in the eyes of regimes in Muslim countries, but the location of the IIIT in Herndon will make it possible for the researchers there to continue to produce radical interpretations. It appears that those interpretations influenced by the European and North American environment will promote a process of differentiation.

According to al-Faruqī and the adherents of the IIIT, the sciences, and the world in general, are now fragmented. Human beings are therefore in need of a global system founded on a total view of the world. Islam appears not only as a matter concerning Muslims, but as a force that needs to be established globally in order to save the entire world from destruction. As for science, the major contemporary problem is that it does not study all of reality. Science is limited, incomplete and hypothetical. This means that if we search for a full understanding of reality we have to develop new ways of explaining phenomena in the world. In the opinion of the IIIT, it is a fact that the predominant mode of contemporary science is based on false presuppositions regarding the construction of the world. Therefore, science draws the wrong conclusions. Today's science is not only incomplete, it also involves research that goes against the teachings of the Quran. Research in opposition to what the adherents perceive as the meaning of the Quran – and Islam – will not be approved of. It seems likely that ideas on the true and authentic meaning of the Quran will change over time. Therefore, sciences that are not approved of today may be sanctioned tomorrow and vice versa. Revelation is above reason, but both science and revelation strive toward the same goal. Both science and Islam are in the service of God. Linked to this understanding is the opinion among advocates of the position of the IIIT that science is bound to a certain culture. In their opinion, science cannot be transferred between different cultures. In their view, Islam is defined as a homogeneous culture that is distinctly different from the West. Islam and the West are presented as generalized stereotypes, that are said to be in opposition to each other. In general, the critique of the West is directed towards the supposed lack of ethics and morality in Western society. However, criticism is also directed against Muslims, Muslim countries and the fragmentation of Islam. The aim of the strategy of the IIIT is not only to legitimate the Islamization of knowledge project, but also to

put Islam together. The latter should be made by establishing Muslim societies based on *sharīʿa*. Islamic law is understood as a natural law, and a society cannot be complete without the implementation of natural law as ordained by God. In order to accomplish the venture of the IIT the key component is *idjtiḥād*. This is an instrument used by lay persons within the organization to bridge the gap between the modern world and Islam. Scientists are a vanguard in the endeavour of the IIT to create an Islamization of knowledge, and in the end an Islamic society. *Idjtiḥād* is fundamental in this process of reinterpretation, whether one is a *sunnī* or a *shīʿī* Muslim. In implementing *idjtiḥād*, the IIT concentrates on reinterpreting Islamic terminology. In my understanding the way the interpretation of various Islamic terms is carried out can be characterized as eisegetic. Contemporary conditions are crucial in al-Faruqī's and the IIT advocates' understanding of the meaning and purpose of Islamic terminology. The reinterpretation of Islamic terms should form the basis for the individual's pattern of behaviour. Therefore, all actions taken by an individual are seen as religious acts, and should be performed in accordance with the normative understanding of Islam as claimed by the IIT. The use of *idjtiḥād*, the history of Islam and its gallery of characters, as well as the general statements of advocates of the IIT in order to create an Islamization of knowledge, reveals their idea on science. In their opinion there should exist *one* form of science. A social science based on the authentic Quranic ethic and morality will form methods that always strive for the betterment of the society as a whole.

### Maurice Bucaille – reinforcing the power of the Quran

The books written by Maurice Bucaille have been published in numerous editions, and are sold in Muslim countries as well as among Muslims in Europe and North America. There is no doubt about the impact of Bucaille's ideas on the young generation of fairly well-educated Muslims. This is not to say that they all support his views, but discussions on his books may, if nothing else, force them to react to his ideas. In general, the support of Bucaille's position rests on a desire among many Muslims to find a critique of Christian civilization, a critique showing that ideally Islam as a social order is superior to the existing type of societies in Europe and in North America. In addition, Christianity is by many Muslims seen as related to the earlier colonial powers which are still oppressing Third World countries. The involvement in Middle Eastern politics by the remaining superpower, the United States, is seen as a modern form of crusade. In this perspective Bucaille contributes to the criticism of the Western world. The main aim of his project is, however, to show the superiority of the Quran over the Bible. His position can, if it is put in a general framework of a Muslim cri-

tique of the West, have the function of a liberation theology, i.e. Islam as a representation of an ideology creating a freedom of thought and a liberation from Western domination.

From Bucaille's texts it is difficult to point at clear influences from any of the available traditions that have developed throughout the history of Islam. However, the ideas on the Quran and the interpretation of Quranic verses fit well in an apologetical frame. Apologetic interpretation is often practised by institutionalised religious scholars, and by various representatives of the official al-Azhar policy. Bucaille has not developed the apologetical genre in any specific direction. Bucaille never makes any distinction between *sunnī* or *shī'ī* Islam. Therefore, his approach to the Quran appears acceptable to a majority of religious scholars in Muslim countries. His view can even be seen as illustrating the typical view on the relationship between the Quran and the Bible, both in the *sunnī* and the *shī'ī* traditions. Yet, the way in which Bucaille represents the relationship between the two books is new, in that he uses the field of natural science as a kind of framework for making judgements on the validity of the texts. Natural science is linked to Islam. The so-called facts of natural sciences, seen the model of knowledge in general, will fit with the statements of revelation. The objective is to legitimate Islam as the comprehensive order for reality. The explicit meaning of verses of the Quran can be re-established by the use of a set of fixed "facts" of science. Therefore, "facts" in natural science appear, in Bucaille's understanding, as ultimate truths. A paradox is that the "facts" of science are superimposed on the Quran. In Bucaille's comprehension of the "facts" of natural sciences they should, on the one hand, embody absolute truth, and on the other hand, be subordinated to the word of God as manifested in the Quran. A central problem in Bucaille's ideas, often pointed at in the critique of his position, is the process whereby newer scientific research overthrows and/or develops earlier results: today's established "facts" may not be "facts" tomorrow. Therefore, the interpretation of verses in the Quran may have to follow the development within certain fields of science.

As has been stated above, Bucaille's apologetic argument has similarities with arguments presented by some religious scholars. In general, Muslims can feel a familiarity with his notions, and they can share his paths of association. Bucaille relies on the strong position of the Quran. His approach to the Quran is characterized by his use of a philosophical realism towards the terms in the text. In Muslim countries a reason for his popularity is the intelligibility of his statements for a non-specialized audience. One could even state that there is a demand for Bucaille's ideas, especially when they are expressed in the language of the status symbol "science". His way of arguing, but also his popularity as such, are incentives for his cooperation with Muslim scholars of such varying approaches to Islam as Muhamed Talbi and 'Abd al-Madjīd az-Zindhānī. Bucaille's

status is also strengthened by the fact that he is a French convert and a former professor in medicine. His specific aim also makes him refer to both Muslim and Christian sources to support his statements. References to Christians are mostly to clerics who are critical of the official interpretation of Christianity, and who therefore can be used to strengthen Bucaille's proposition that the Quran is superior to the Bible. It should be noted that Bucaille refrains from using religious scholars and their understandings of the relationship between science and religion. In a manner typical for European and North American converts, he turns directly to the Quran in order to interpret it. He can also be placed in the mode of interpreting the Quran that starts off with al-Afghānī and others. However, his books are generally free from any hints about his ideological affiliation. His explicitly stated admiration for the Saudi government, and his presence as a chairman at conferences in Saudi Arabia point to an affiliation to the official *wahhābī* inspired form of Islam. Concerning the relationship between Islam and natural sciences it is also possible that the ideas of Bucaille and Keith L. Moore, in cooperation with various religious scholars have influenced the official Saudi policy. In addition, the Saudi government appears as financial sponsor for the publication of his books. However, Bucaille also has supporters in all Muslim countries and among Muslims in Europe and North America. There is a wide-spread tendency for Muslims – converts or not – who are active in non-Muslim environments, to become popular among larger groups of Muslims. Bucaille is also appreciated among religious scholars. They can refer to a French convert as an authority in order to convince Muslims of the applicability of Islam in the contemporary world as a whole. The message in Bucaille's books is in accordance with the general assertions on the relationship between Islam and Christianity made by Muslim religious scholars. The general character of Bucaille's statements, his few references to conventional Muslim sources, and the fact that he is making his interpretation of Quranic verses in relation to a new field – natural sciences – attract a large audience. His books function as reference works for Muslim scholars. They construct their own ideas on the relation between Islam and science on the framework offered by Bucaille. In their eyes, he is a famous scholar with a good reputation who can serve to legitimate their statements on the true relationship between Islam and science: to show that the Quran is the word of God and that Islam is a universal order. In a world which they see as fragmented and in a general disorder, Bucaille's message brings order and hope into their construction of reality.

Bucaille's picture of the West as materialistic and atheistic is supplemented by the idea that since the 19th century science has been in opposition to religion. The ideas of Darwin and the theory of evolution are strongly condemned. For Bucaille, the challenge to the role of religion in explaining the origin of mankind is a threat to his understanding of the correct position of Islam. For him, the almost

classical dichotomy between faith and knowledge does not exist in the ideal world. It is a false dichotomy, based on an incorrect comprehension of the nature of reality. Science and religion are, Bucaille maintains, complementary to each other. Religion should, however, be superior to science. Yet, as has been stated above, the position of science and religion in relation to each other is to some extent problematic. Bucaille uses “facts” of contemporary science as starting points to understand the meaning of the Quranic verses. This approach can be designated as a form of *eisegesis*. The somewhat enigmatic character of the Quranic text is well suited for an eisegetical approach. In order to appropriate the meaning of the book, Bucaille and his advocates also use the trust that people have in natural sciences in order to legitimize the superior status of Islam. The major aim of Bucaille’s project is to demonstrate the authentic and true nature of the Quran and Islam by referring to scientific results. The text of the Quran is rational and objective, i.e. revelation is a rational and objective force which cannot be limited to a certain time or place. Its validity is eternal, and scientific discoveries in the future will further reveal the secrets of the text. Accordingly, the rationality and objectivity of the revelation make it possible to associate it with modern science. A problem with this approach is that in modern times there has been a tendency to equate rationality and objectivity with science. That is, Bucaille maintains, the cause of the predicaments of the contemporary world and of the development of such forces as atheism and materialism. In order to bring the world into a state of balance, harmony and unity, the significance of the revelation must come into play. However, Bucaille states that all verses in the Quran cannot be explained by science and that it is a religious book. He has developed a criticism against those of his supporters who see scientific statements in every verse of the Quran. He shares this critique with many religious scholars, and Bucaille’s standpoint has been appreciated by several such scholars. It is possible to interpret Bucaille’s critique as a result of the criticism that has been directed against his own position.

#### *The social environment*

Unlike many converts Bucaille does not use a Muslim name. It appears that he has nothing to gain by using a Muslim name. Several French converts have also kept their original names. It is much more important for Bucaille’s status among Muslims that he is a well-educated physician and white European who has chosen Islam as his way of life. However, Bucaille’s significance also concerns the shaping of identity among Muslims. He strengthens – under the banner of scientific objectivity – their conviction that Islam is an authentic revelation and that it contains an order for the individual as well as the society. In such a conception, Bucaille is a living example of the truth and superiority of Islam. Due to lack of

information, the precise reasons for Bucaille's conversion cannot be analysed. However, as a convert he switches worlds, and on the individual level his apologetical approach can be seen as a defence for his choice of Islam. Furthermore, in his books he often expresses a criticism of the clergy of the Catholic church. In the critique of the Church, Bucaille supports his argumentation by references to Teilhard de Chardin. The intention seems to be to show how the critics of the Church were right. One can trace a bitterness against the Catholic Church which he seems to think has accepted the secularization of the European society. The conversion to Islam also makes Bucaille somewhat odd in the eyes of many people. In my discussions with colleagues in Islamic studies it seems that Bucaille is not regarded as sufficiently interesting, that is, he is not worth studying.

Bucaille's ideas are not institutionalized in any formal organization. His interpretations of the Quran are not easily placed in a particular theological school of Islam. However, Bucaille has chaired a Saudi based organization focused on the miracle, the wondrous nature (*i' djāza*), of the Quran. He appears, except from the connection to Saudi Arabia, to be independent. The ideological link to Saudi Arabia is strengthened by the publication in that country of a version of one of Bucaille's advocates, Moore's *The Developing Human*, with az-Zindhānī's "Islamic additions". The cooperation between religious scholars and scholars in the field of embryology at the King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah can be seen as an attempt to show that the Quran contains statements on embryology. The book is a result of their endeavour to demonstrate the scientific achievements and the rationality of Islam. The aim is to underline Islam's capacity to deal with all aspects of life, and to show that Islam is a rational force – not a teaching in opposition to science, but superior to it. The objective of the book is also to show the agreement between the Quran (and the *ahādīth*) and contemporary science, especially embryology. The ideas on the "miracle of the Quran" have a long tradition. In the history of Islamic theology the term "miracle" mostly refers to the inimitable nature of the Quranic language. A modern tendency is to stress *i' djāza* as having a more general meaning as the wondrous nature of the Quran. Miracles are no longer a matter of grammatical subtleties. Instead, the wondrous nature of the Quran primarily consists of its accordance with contemporary science.

In Bucaille's project, science has a complementary and legitimizing function. His notion of the Quran as the final revelation is complemented by an almost canonical model of science. The aim is to establish the position of Islam as an all-encompassing order, but also to confirm the notion of Islam as the final and most perfect revelation. Science is a tool subordinated to revelation in a process aiming at re-establishing Islam in its righteous role. Not only the natural sciences, but also the social sciences and the humanities, share that specific purpose. In Bucaille's and his adherents' view, science is supposed to work in accor-

dance with God's plan for the universe, which is seen as a teleologically organized whole, not the outcome of a series of random events. Hence, Bucaille has a teleological understanding of reality, where Islam is God's instrument to produce order in the creation. The teleological direction of the world means that the world cannot turn back. This understanding is expressed in the term "creative evolution".

### Final remarks

The discourse on the Islamization of science among Muslims, mainly in Europe and North America, appears as an arena where participants can, independent of repressive states and environments ruled by religious dogmas, express their personal ideas on Islam. Those ideas are, on the one hand, forged within the context of various traditions in Islam, and, on the other hand, responses to specific social contexts. In this discourse, ideas and opinions change over time. The shifts are due to situations in which new interpretations of the sacred sources and a sacred history are put to test – Islam versus reality. The result is a shift of the border lines of the discourse. New interpretations are then formed into the larger framework of Islamic traditions. In this perspective Islam does not contain closed perceptions of phenomena in society. Consequently, the ideas on Islam are in the discourse formed in a continuous process trying to maintain the notion of Islam as an all-encompassing order. Understood in this way, "Islamic science" cannot take the form of a finally defined entity. Instead, the comprehension of Islamic science will be forced to change, and research in areas that today are perceived as against Islam may be permitted in the future. The discourse does not exist in a vacuum, it relates to other discourses in society. The idea of Islam as all-inclusive has political consequences, even when that is not the intention. The discourse on the Islamization of science can therefore appear to be politically sensitive. The statements on the function of Islam in a society may go against the aims of the political leaders. However, it is also possible that political leaders try to take control over and use the views expressed in the discourse. The sometimes close relation between participants in the discourse and governments indicates, on the one hand, that there is a political side of the discourse influencing the positions. On the other hand, it is possible that the lack of deeper political and economical analysis of contemporary conditions can be seen as a way of avoiding conflicts with presumptive sponsors.

All four positions stress that science must be practised in a morally and ethically correct manner, i.e. in accordance with what they define as "Islamic values". However, contemporary science is seen not only as fragmentary. It is also a threat to the view of Islam as all-encompassing. Both science and Islam carry

knowledge. In the discourse, “Islam” is presented as a superior form of knowledge with the ability to fully explain reality. In the participants’ understanding, life has an inherent meaning. Human beings should work in accordance with God’s plan for the universe. Therefore, science is assigned metaphysical aspects. Returning to Weber, religion and science are subordinated – and incorporated – into the all-embracing religious vocation. In opposition to the West, with its secularism and the process of modernization, an Islamization of science can be termed a reenchantment of both religion and science – a protest against the irreligious form of science.<sup>8</sup> The reenchantment of religion and science can be seen as a characteristic trait of Islamic modernity. Darwin, the theory of evolution, and related discussions in biology, physics and medicine are all seen as threatening to the claims that participants in the discourse ascribe to Islam. Moreover, they appear not only as threatening phenomena, but also as symbols of evil, or, at least, symbols of something profoundly wrong. They are explicit symbols of error and corruption, of forces that marginalize and set limits to the scope of Islam. In all four positions the participants intend to show that the knowledge of Islam is still valid. Interpreted in this manner, the discourse can be seen as dealing with a sphere – science – that has been chosen in order to define the scope of Islam, especially in a situation in which there is no single authority making statements on what is Islamic or not. Likewise, the interpretations of Islam in the discourse both replace an absent authority and express a desire for an infallible authority. Notions on authority relate to the overall presupposition that is clear in all four positions, the struggle to bridge the gap between Islam and science (knowledge and faith). The participants in the discourse endeavour to show that Islam is rational in the same sense that Muslim thinkers have since the time of al-Afghānī. This rationality means that Islam is coherent and compatible with science, not in contradiction to it. In this view there is no dichotomy between reason and revelation. It is therefore not problematic to subordinate science to the superior order of Islam. One effect in the process of accommodating Islam to modernity is that the participants do not seem to be against modernity as such, but against certain parts of modernity, especially secularism. The latter is, of course, an ominous force in the eyes of Muslims involved in the discourse. In addition, the idea that the discourse is tied to modernity and the shaping of a uniquely Islamic modernity stresses the idea that modernity can – and will – exist in multiple forms. Since the ultimate goal of each of the participants is to establish authoritative understandings of Islam, the Quran, history etc. which can have normative functions, the result will be as many Islamic modernities as there are positions within the discourse.

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<sup>8</sup>Weber 1991 (1919).

In the use of the term the West one can trace a form of “occidentalism”. The portrayal of societies, sciences, life styles and the role of religion in Europe and North America is very negative. A stereotyped description of the societies of Europe and North America is constructed. In the discourse it functions as evidence showing that the ideal image of an Islamic society is superior to the practices of the West.

The subordination of science to Islam is conveyed through the conceptualization of Islamic terminology. The philosophical realism that forms one foundation for the discourse is of particular significance. Terms such as “science”, “Islam” and “knowledge” are conceptualized and become tools in an encounter with ideas that one dislikes. Concepts are seen as having specific, given contents and are mobilized as a contrast to opposing opinions. Accordingly, in the discourse certain words, names, histories, terms etc. signal ideological affiliation. It is significant that these ideas do not have to be fully verbalized. By means of a field of common knowledge and associations the meaning is clear to the participants without any further elucidation. In a sense, understanding the non-verbalized language which expresses certain norms and values is a requirement for taking part in the discourse. The stress on the possibility to counteract modernity through a reinterpretation of Islamic words is fairly new. The challenge of modernity makes it a 20th century phenomenon. Nevertheless, in the history of Islam discussions and conceptualizations of terms among religious scholars have been concerned with the understanding of the Islamic terms. These discussions have been an exclusive preoccupation for religious scholars. Today’s attempt to construct an Islamic science is a matter for people who are not such scholars. However, there are signs that this state of affairs will be challenged in the future. Religious scholars aim at regaining their lost position as the sole interpreters of the sacred sources.

Using the terminology of Berger and Luckmann, one can state that in order to sustain their world picture, the participants in the discourse develop procedures of reality-maintenance.<sup>9</sup> A problem illustrating the procedures is whether it is possible to appropriate Western science without adopting Western values. The latter will, in the understanding of the participants, be a threat to the relevance of Islam. The solution can be characterized as a “dewesternization” and “objectivation” of science in order to construct an Islamic science, which however will still be related to science as found in Europe and North America. The process of “dewesternization” of science is placed in a pattern which fits in a theological tradition discussing the miraculous nature of the Quran, creating a form of local tradition showing the relevance of Islam in a local context. Accordingly, statements on science that supposedly can be found in the Quran serve as evidence of its status

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<sup>9</sup>Berger & Luckmann 1985:167.

as the Word of God. The underlying premise is the desire to construct a good match between the ideal understanding of Islam as an all-encompassing order and Islam as actually practised by Muslims. The aim of the participants is to fill a gap in the everyday world experienced by Muslims.

There is basically a tension between two answers to the question who has the right to interpret Islam. One is represented by the participants in the discourse and another by traditionally educated religious scholars. The participants in the discourse stress the right of the individual to interpret Islam. This approach intends to give Muslims an opportunity to live an Islamic life in a non-Muslim environment. The processes of liberalization and individualization in modern society also affect the answer to who will have the right to interpret the sacred sources. Thus, one root of the discourse can be traced to the participant's disengagement from dominant and controlling structures. In earlier Muslim societies, they would not have been allowed to act as independent interpreters of the Quran. This relates to the discussions on the discourse as a response to a contemporary social environment.

The notion of Islam as universal and the implementation of an Islamic science have an effective impact on Muslims all over the world. The participants use different means of distributing their message in modern society. The themes of the discourse can be discussed independently of a specific context. The disengagement of religion from time and space is connected to global changes. In relation to other religions, especially Christianity and the Creationist movement within Christianity, the participants in the discourse have a partner. The links to the New Age phenomenon also support this idea. Elements within Christian Creationism as well as the New Age movement represent a backlash against modernity, more or less in the same manner as in the present discourse. In a general perspective lay persons in various religions attempt to answer similar questions. This leads to increasing similarities between the ways in which links between science and faith are discussed in different religious contexts. The ways of answering questions and solving problems within Christianity or Islam are motivated, justified and carried out according to the specific conditions found in each religion. The answers to the perceived predicaments and limitations of contemporary science as formulated by certain conservative Christians, New Age spokespersons and participants in the Muslim discourse presented in this work are clearly reminiscent of each other. Therefore, the discourse on the Islamization of science is not unique. However, such tantalizing links and similarities are a matter for further research. It is important that the discourse be seen as a part of a global process. The participants use all means at their disposal to express their message. Their respective manifestos on Islamic science can also be characterized as a commodity made available to Muslims. It is a form of "package solution" to the predicaments of the world, presented to Muslims in Malaysia as well as in

London or New York. It is largely a matter of individual choice (and social environment) whether this commodity is bought or not. The global aspect of the discourse thus contains a commodification of Islam. At the same time, the construction of a specific Islamic science can be characterized as an attempt to localize knowledge. It is obvious that an Islamization of knowledge creates epistemological problems, and the problems involved in constructing a specifically Islamic form of science are presumably a symptom of these epistemological difficulties. The fact that most participants live in a European and North American environment brings out the idea that new forms of Islam appear outside the main areas of this religion. Moreover, the participants in the discourse simultaneously hold the idea of a universal Islam to be propagated globally, and the need for a specific Islamic science within the local *umma*. Therefore, the discourse can be seen as a form of localization of Islam, a construction of locality based on the possibilities of modernity and globalization. The access to information and the recent results of science are limited in most Muslim societies. A common phenomenon is that certain books are quoted for their support of specific views of the exponents, regardless of the broader ideological foundation of the quoted writer. The best example is the use of Alexis Carrel, a former minister in the Vichy regime. Another example is Bucaille's references to the Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin. To a certain degree the large number of references to Maurice Bucaille can also be seen in this perspective. In most books the main references are to a specific group of authors that all support the ideas presented in the book. They are supplemented by a number of quotations and references to persons strengthening the position. Thus, references are to a high degree merely used as name dropping in order to support a given view.

In sum, it has been stated that the construction of a uniquely Islamic knowledge is a result of Muslims trying to shape an Islamic form of modernity. The idea to present Islam as an all-encompassing order superior to science is made in order to show that an authentic understanding of reality can be reached only through an "Islamization of knowledge", a knowledge not limited by theories, methods or perspectives. One can apply Giddens' idea of an "ontological security".<sup>10</sup> The aim is to create a safe and secure world. The disembedding of the individual, and forces breaking up and dissolving the norms and values of Muslim societies are opposed. One objective of the participants of the discourse is to build a universal, collective – and imagined – identity in order to overcome a perceived threat. The proposed collective identity affects both the private and the public sphere. In a larger perspective the discourse on the Islamization of science is part of a project in which the aim is to Islamize the private and public spheres. These should not be autonomous realms. However, in this discourse ontological

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<sup>10</sup>Giddens 1984:92ff.

security does not only concern the social reality of the lives of human beings. It also takes the transcendental parts of reality into consideration. The world and the hereafter are seen as part of an organic totality in need of balance and harmony, that is, a form of ontological security for the individual. This is not just a problem to Muslims. In the end, all people need to become Muslims. In this view the predicaments of the world as well as of science can only be solved through the establishing of the rational and natural form of everyday life, life style and society – the Islamic society. This idea is paralleled by an understanding of the world as an organic totality, a universe where every part has a specific function, and where there is no separation between humankind and the rest of nature.

Although the four positions are engaged in heated discussions, there are many common points between them. They use similar materials – the epoch of Muhammad, the language of the Quran, and so forth – to construct four versions of a distinctly Islamic modernity. The debate continues, new material is added as proponents of each position contribute to the debate. Such trends and changes within the Islamic discourse as well as similar discussions in other religious contexts make further research necessary. The present thesis will hopefully have started digging in the virgin soil of this discourse, so that the path has been prepared for future scholarship.

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