

# Islam and Modernity: A Dialogue

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The present paper aims at exploring the possibility of a meeting-point between Modernity and Islam in the context of sociology of knowledge, despite their being poles apart in their approach to knowledge, reality, and nationhood. Granted, the world-view of Modernity is narrow, extremist and fragmentary, yet Modernity may undeniably have relevance to Islam in certain respects. It may enrich its broad based culture in more than one way. The latter may welcome this enrichment and assimilate it in its ever growing organism, rejecting outright, of course, the elements that conflict with its fundamental values, emotional attitudes, social norms, or esthetics criteria. To achieve this objective, I shall briefly discuss in this paper some root notions of Modernity and those of Islam, the very opposite of each other, to facilitate their comparative study, and try to establish, in principle, a working relationship between the two, to pave the way for reconstructing the theological and legal thought of Islam, where desirable and necessary. However, all this depends on how we define modernization, as we shall see later, in the context of our culture and that of others.

Another aim of this paper is to bring to the fore the consequences of the modern desacralization of knowledge on the one hand and the relevance of religion to the spiritually starved Postmodern man on the other. Far from being an abstract concept, Modernity is a continuously moving, dynamic process. It invented, to begin with, the modern-secular, in contrast to the medieval-sacral, man. As time went on, the Secularism of the Modern man begot the spiritually homeless, restless, lonely Postmodern man. The process did not stop here. Out of the spiritually ill emerged the revolutionary Post-postmodern man, crying hoarse, as we shall see later, for a return to the Pre-modern mode of thought and behavior. This movement of Modernism through Postmodernism and then beyond, suggests and promises in so many words, a return to religion, in order to rehabilitate spiritually the self-alienated Postmodern man.<sup>1</sup>

## Intellectual Legacy of Adam

Modernity and Religion are two diametrically opposed outlooks on life. The one is known for its positivist, secular, amoral, and mechanistic world-view, and the other for its transcendent, sacral, moral, and teleological world-view. Both the outlooks are the fruits of the knowledge peculiar to them. The knowledge which advocated mechanistic world-view is the knowledge of lifeless facts yielded by sense-experience. This knowledge, on which the Godless Science/Modernity is based, is devoid of meaning and purpose. It is value-free or value neutral, given to the Big Bang theory of creation and blind evolution as its is. The knowledge which advocates a teleological world-view is the knowledge of the transcendent revealed by God to His prophets. This knowledge, on which religion is based, is meaningful and value-full. There is a purpose implicit in it which gives meaning to facts of experience and to life as a whole. Meaning, purpose, and value are inseparable dimensions of it, given to the view as it is that the world is a creation of God who created it not is sport, but to see who amongst us does righteous deeds.<sup>2</sup>

Knowledge is a powerful weapon in the struggle for existence. We need knowledge of facts as well as of values to steer through life on this planet. It was to cope with this situation that God gave Adam the knowledge of things Celestial (eschatology) as well as that of the essence of all things of the terrestrial world<sup>3</sup> (Science) where he was destined to live. This latter type of knowledge was essential for his very survival on earth. God did not bless angels with this knowledge, for they did not need it in the heavens.

Adam happens to appear on the cosmic scene as potentially a man of science, in the first instance. He was made prophet by God much later when He had pardoned him of the lapse on his part and his progeny increased sizably in number. Intellectually speaking, the importance of Adam lies in his unmistakably being an apostle of the unity of knowledge, both Celestial and Terrestrial. He combined in his person the knowledge of facts with that of values, without separating the one from the other. Human reason cannot arrive at ultimate truth without the aid of Revelation. It is Revealed Knowledge that endows a sense of

purpose and direction to the knowledge acquired by man with his own observation and intellect. It provides it with a spiritual perspective and a holistic conception of life. It is in recovering this legacy of Adam, lost to his progeny, as we shall see later, that the cure of all the ills of the Postmodern man lies.

### Root Notions of Modernity

Modernity owes its origin to the rise of science as an intellectual and social force. It is a revolt against tradition and authority of all kind, especially the religious one. It completely displaces emotion by reason. It is rationalist in the sense that it makes reason the sole authority in the pursuit of knowledge, and is naturalist in that it seeks to explain inner and outer nature without supernatural presupposition and without any reference to transcendence. Thus, it is bound by rationalism on the one hand and naturalism on the other. The world, it asserts, came into being by an accidental juxtaposition of the blind forces of nature and is evolving without any purpose or direction. It is evolving mechanically like a kite cut off from its supporting string, swaying this way or that way, as the wind blows, in the sky.

Following are some of the root notions of Modernity.

It is rooted in positivist, empirico-rationalist epistemology. It makes science the sole standard of knowledge and declares sense-experience to be the only source of the knowledge of reality. It not only separates Reason from Revelation, but refuses to accept Revelation as a source of knowledge. The epistemology on which it is based is reductionist through and through, and deprives it of a holistic view of life.

Likewise, its ontology is also reductionist. It explains all phenomena in terms of matter. It makes matter, as opposed to spirit, the standard of reality, and declares that the real is observable and the observable is real. It denies the existence of any invisible spiritual world behind or beyond the visible world of matter. This reductionist ontology renders the question of transcendence a superfluous one.

The reductionist epistemology and ontology, as described above, highlight one-sidedness and extremism as the distinguishing mark of Modernity, which render its world-view extremely narrow, fragmentary, and incomplete. Extremism, to say the least, is the bane of Modernity, depriving it of a holistic approach to life.

The extremist mindset of Modernity separates epistemology from ontology — knowledge from being — and thus takes a truncated, piecemeal view of reality. It is unable to see things in totality and, therefore, fails to properly construct the essential connection between being and knowledge on its own, i.e., without conceiving of the world as creation of a transcendent power.

The empirico-rationalist knowledge, the mother of science and Modernity, is open-ended. It is subject to change, addition, and modification in the light of future research. Ours is an age of explosion of knowledge which demands nothing short of openness to change, rapid change, all-round change in individual attitudes, social behavior, economic pattern, political setup and, particularly, in educational planning. It is in the readiness to adjust to new conditions of life that the inherent dynamism and activism of Western Culture consists. Needless to say, it makes a virtue of a necessity, for there is nothing stable, secure and abiding in its structure or outside it which may give it "a foothold in a world of perpetual change,"<sup>4</sup> and direct the process of change in accordance with it. Life is not all change and flux. It has within it elements of permanence also but there is nothing permanent in the ever changing structure of Modernity, born of extremism as it is.

Modern society is ethnocentric. Ethnicity is "a state of mind in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state."<sup>5</sup> The prejudices of color, race, language, and territory determine the structure of a nation which, in turn, give rise to chauvinism and jingoism — unwarranted pride in one's own nationality and unjustified hatred for other races and nations. Since ethnic nationalism promises subjugated people their liberation and reformation, it has come to be the new god of modern society. But, by placing ethnicity above humanity, it restricts the social horizon of the ethnic group

Modernity has its center in man. It is a humanistic movement in the sense that it puts human interests above everything else. It is man himself who is the measure of all things, source of all knowledge and values. It

promises the richest possible unfolding of man's potentialities. However, the man Modernity talks tall of is not the universal man descending from Adam. It is the ethnic man born in Renaissance, cut off from the rest of humanity by the physical barriers of color, race, language, and territory.

The project of Modernity promises good life here and now. It concentrates itself on the cash-value of today and is content with it, for it does not and cannot visualize any world beyond this world.

### Intellectual Roots of Islam

Islam is a polity based on an ethical ideal. This ideal, based on the idea of "One God" as it is, determines the cognitive, affective, and conative orientation of Muslims, and inspires and molds their lives in accordance with it. It conceives of man not as mere body, nor as mere spirit, but as an embodied spirit. God created his body from clay, and then breathed of His spirit into him.<sup>6</sup> It is this coexistence of matter and spirit, with a belief in their actual inseparability, that forms the basis of life in Islam and provides a sure foundation for its transcendent morality. "The ultimate Reality, according to the Qur'an is spiritual and its life consist in its temporal activity. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, the secular. All that is secular is, therefore, sacred in the roots of its being,"<sup>7</sup> asserts Iqbal, with all the force at his command. "There is no such thing," he continues, "as a profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realization of spirit."<sup>8</sup> This sacral view of matter strips science, the mother of Modernity, of all its naturalism, amoralism, secularism, and positivism.

Let us now turn to the intellectual roots of Islam.

Ontologically speaking, Islam takes, in a way, a dualist view of reality. The real is not one, but two. It is spirit as well as matter. But it does not separate them from each other for it is in their union that we see signs of God both in anfus (self)<sup>9</sup> and afaq (universe)<sup>10</sup>. This matter-spirit ontology of Islam is the very opposite of the monistic ontology of Modernity which restricts reality to matter only and becomes a stranger to a holistic view of life.

In Islam, it is ontology that begets epistemology, as opposed to Modernity wherein empirico-rationalist epistemology creates a somatic ontology for itself. Since Islam takes a dual view of reality, it does not and cannot restrict its epistemology to any one source of knowledge. It uses sense-perception (basr<sup>11</sup>) for obtaining knowledge of things concrete, intellection (fuad<sup>12</sup>) for obtaining the knowledge of things abstract and intuition (qalb<sup>13</sup>), besides revelation (wahi<sup>14</sup>), for obtaining the knowledge of things spiritual. Islamic epistemology is comprehensive and many-sided. It is an integrated whole of sense-perception, intellection, and intuition under the umbrella of revelation.

The comprehensive ontology and epistemology of Islam make it a moderate and balanced ideology, doing justice to all the three aspects of man — thought, feeling, and action. The extremist Modernity conceives of man in terms of thought — inductive intellect — only, doing grave injustice to other two aspects of his being — feeling and action. It is an expression only of a part of his nature, as opposed to the whole man. In Islam both thought and feeling lead to action, and there too pointed emphasis is on moderation. "Eat and drink, but do not exceed (the limit of moderation)."<sup>15</sup> "And those who, when they spend, are neither prodigal nor stingy and there is a firm (moderate) position between the two."<sup>16</sup> Moderation is the general ethical principle of Islam. Nay, it is the very quintessence of Islam. So much so that the Qur'an calls the Muslim community "a community of middle path" (ummatan wusatan),<sup>17</sup> a community given to the middle-wayness in all matters of life.

In Islam, epistemology is a part of ontology, as opposed to Modernity which separates them from each other. Since God is the creator of the world and the source of all our knowledge about it, Reality is at once being as well as knowledge. The knower and the known are not two separate things. They fuse into one in the act of knowing. Thought stripped of the modern positivistic rationality is, indeed, what Iqbal calls, "a greeting of finite with the infinite."<sup>18</sup>

Modernity, as we have said in the very beginning, is a revolt against tradition and authority of all kind. It is obliged to adore change as its professed ideology. As against this extremist position, Islam strikes a balance between tradition and change. It lays as such emphasis on conserving its culture as on its reconstruction to cope with the changing conditions of life. Life is continual growth. Shariah law has always kept pace with it through the exercise of *ijtihad* (individual judgment) and *ijma'* (consensus of the learned), as borne out by its long history of selective adoption and assimilation of elements of other cultures. The eternal, in Islam, "reveals, itself in variety and change."<sup>19</sup> Its inner intensity and breadth knows no bound. Only we have to reopen the gate of *ijtihad*, closed more than a thousand years ago.

Modernity conceives of nation in terms of the unity of color, race, language, and territory. As opposed to this narrow ethnic conception of society, Islam, to begin with, conceives of society as a vast human brotherhood. We are all descendants of Adam and are brothers unto one another: the whole world is a family of God. This is the most general side of the emotional unity of mankind. At a lower level and in a less general sense, we happen to be Muslims, Christians, or Jews. Muslims all over the world recognize one guidance: the Qur'an; and look towards one person as their leader: Prophet Muhammad (SAAWS), have one goal: to attain the pleasure of Allah (SWT); and are collectively called Ummah in this special spiritual sense. Ummah is above earthly fetters; but it lives on earth. The earthly accidents of color, race, language, and territory split the parent culture of Islam into various cultural sub-groups. There are signs of God, says the Qur'an, "in the variety of languages and colors."<sup>20</sup> Islam does not want to reduce the world to a desert of cultural uniformity or to a state of colorless cosmopolitanism. It recognizes the diversity of cultural sub-groups within Ummah, on the basis of the language they speak, the race they descend from, the territory they belong to, and the color of skin they happen to have. But these are not units of ultimate value in Islam. They are meant "for facility of reference only."<sup>21</sup> without "restricting the social horizon"<sup>22</sup> of the cultural sub-groups. "O Mankind," says the Qur'an, "Lo! We created you from a male-and-female couple, and made you into tribes and groups so that ye may be known one from the other."<sup>23</sup> Earthly accidents give the Ummah a name in local habitation, for purposes of identifying its various cultural sub-groups.

Muslims are an Ummah, not a nation in the ethnic sense of the word. Nation is earth-rooted; Ummah is above earthly fetters. But though Islam condemns ethnicity, it adores patriotism — love for one's people and country. It enjoins upon Muslims to serve and defend their country against aggression even at the cost of their lives. Patriotism is radically different from ethnocentricity. The latter is an absurdly extravagant pride in one's people and country, with a corresponding hatred for other nations and countries. It is a crime against humanity. But the former is a social and moral virtue and a duty in a religious sense.

Just as Modernity has its center in man, so religion has its center in God. The center of interest of both is man and his betterment, but they look at it from different angles: the one from the vantage point of man, the other from the vantage point of God. The one is known for its humanist tradition, the other for its humane tradition. The humanism of the one is intellectually conceived; that of the other is emotionally aroused. The idea of one God is Islam entails not only the idea of one humanity but is also "inseparably linked up with a humanism and a sense of social order and economic justice."<sup>24</sup> The following Surah bears it out:

Did you see the one who repudiates the faith? He it is who maltreats the orphan and does not exhort (others) to feed the poor. Woe betide those who (although they) pray, are (yet) neglectful of their prayers; those who (pray for) show (and even) refuse (the use of) utensils (to needy people)."<sup>25</sup>

Modernity has nothing to do with the emotional humanism of Islam, nor does Islam has any concern with the intellectual humanism of Modernity.

The positivistic Modernity is outright this worldly. As against this, the transcendent Islam is partly this worldly and partly other worldly. It occupies a middle position between these two worlds. It is not other-worldly, for it does not advocate renunciation of this world. At the same, it is not this-worldly, for it does not make this world an end in itself, as does the positivistic Modernity, but insists on its having a transcendent value. The importance of this world consists in its being a place for doing good deeds and that of the other in its being a place for getting reward of deeds, good or bad. The general thrust of the teaching of Islam is on carrying out the commands of God here and now. This emphasis on one's "conduct in this

world," Fazlur Rahman calls "Islamic" variety of "positivism."<sup>26</sup> It is in this sense, he continues, that Islam, from the very beginning, "is not an other-worldly, but this worldly religion."<sup>27</sup> But "Islamic positivism," he goes on, is quite different from the one preached by Modernity, which denies transcendence and seeks to base moral values on an empirical foundation."<sup>28</sup> Thus Islam promises good life in this world as well as in the world to come, as opposed to Modernity which restricts it to this world only.

An eight-point description of the mind of Modernity and that of Islam shows that they are poles apart from each other so far as last six points are concerned. No compromise is possible between them on these points. As regards the first two points, Islam may accommodate Modernity's narrow and extremist views of knowledge and reality in its borad-based frame-work of values, after striping it of its positivism and secularism.<sup>29</sup> It may further seek to reconstruct its theological and legal thought in the light of modern knowledge, as stressed by the Muslim modernists Jamaluddin Afghani (d. 1879), Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), Iqbal (d. 1938) and others. The modern Muslim, writes Iqbal, "has to rethink the whole system of Islam without completely breaking with the past."<sup>30</sup> He cautiously advises him "to approach modern knowledge with a respectful but independent attitude and to appreciate the teachings of Islam in the light of that knowledge."<sup>31</sup> He advises the modern Muslim at another place to watch carefully "the progress of human thought, and to maintain an independent critical attitude towards it."<sup>32</sup> He even hopes that "the day is not far off when Religion and Science may discover hitherto unsuspected mutual harmonies."<sup>33</sup>

What is Modernization?<sup>34</sup>

We have seen in the preceding pages what Modernity is, and we have also seen what Islam stands for. Muslim modernists have also stressed, stated above, the need and urgency of reconstructing the medieval deductive ilm al-kalam (theology) and fiqh (jurisprudence) in the light of modern inductive knowledge. What they have not emphasized so far is the long overdue all-round education of ulama in the ideology of Islam as well as in that of Modernity along with the impact of the explosion of knowledge in recent years on our social life, so that they may recognize change as something desirable and that society can and should be changed, and may reopen the gate of absolute ijihad closed more than a thousand years ago. Education of the ulama alone on the lines suggested above will unlock the door to modernization in the world of Islam. This is because lay Muslims with liberal education could speak for themselves only, but could not, by themselves, lay the foundation of a new Islamic theology and jurisprudence in the light of modern knowledge.

Now a word about the meaning of modernization coupled with a definition of it which may fit in our framework of values. We are living in an age of explosion of knowledge. Since knowledge is the root of culture and culture is the fruit of knowledge, any change or increase in man's knowledge of himself or his environment directly affects culture and provides an impulse to adjustment to it. This process of social change initiated by it is called modernization or social reconstruction. However, modernization is not a straight path. It cannot take place in one go, nor can it take place rapidly and smoothly. It is a lengthy and tedious process. Man — the subject of modernization — has a nataive tendency to cling to the old and familiar as well as to the new and novel, giving rise to a tug of war within himself. He has to carve out his way between these two opposing tendencies carefully and cautiously. Thus it is within the framework of the tension between conservatism on the one hand and liberalism on the other that all modernization takes place.

Let us now define modernization. E. Vojas, for one, defines it as "a process of manifold interrelated changes in the economic, social, political, and cultural fields through which less developed societies acquire the characteristics of more developed societies."<sup>35</sup> The emphasis here is on rapid and all-round change and on the transference of institutions from the less developed to the more developed societies. This is a culturally colored definition and does not suit our purpose. It is a definition of Westernization rather than that of modernization.

A rather general and culturally neutral definition of modernization, equally applicable to both developed and developing societies, is that of Prof. C. E. Black. He defines it as "the dynamic form that the age-old process of innovation has assumed as a result of explosive proliferation of knowledge in recent centuries. It

owes a special significance to its dynamic character and to the universality of its impact on human affairs."36 He conceives of modernization as a multi-dimensional process" by which historically evolved institutions are adapted to rapidly changing functions that reflect the unprecedented increase in man's knowledge."37 This definition has an edge over others. It regards modernization as a multi-dimensional complex process, gives historical evolution its rightful place and rejects reductionism outright. The pointed emphasis it lays on the transformation instead of the transference on institutions, makes room for diverse developments to take place, as different societies set out to modernize themselves in the context of their own cultural framework. Above all, it resolves the opposition between Modernity and tradition, by assigning a key-role to historical evolution. "Modernization," Black continues, "must be thought of not as a simple transition from tradition to Modernity, but as a part of an infinite continuum from the earliest times to the indefinite future."38 Needless to say, it is Black's moderate and comprehensive views of modernization that suits our purpose. It makes room for integrating modern knowledge, after carefully sifting it, into the cultural framework of Islam, as opposed to blind wholesale adoption of it. Cultural borrowing is a selective process. A growing culture does not resort to uncritical wholesale adoption of a foreign culture. It adapts it to its own requirements.

### Modern Islam in Search of a New Ilm al-Kalam

The Qur'an regards nature, both *anfus* (self) and *afaq* (world), as a vital source of human knowledge. It recurrently invites us to think and reflect over the phenomena of nature, e.g., the sun, the moon, the variety of human color and tongues, the alternation of day and night, the lengthening of shadows, the mountains, the clouds, etc., etc., and see signs of the transcendent in them. This intellectual exercise stressed by the Qur'an was the *al-kalam* (theology) of the early days of Islam. With the passage of time, the scepter of knowledge passed from the hands of religion to those of philosophy. Thus *al-kalam* abandoned the natural logic of the Qur'an and structured itself anew on the speculative Greek philosophy, during the reign of the Abbasid caliphs, to keep pace with the time. As a science, the one aim of *al-kalam* is to present the teaching of Islam in the idiom and diction of the time, e.g., religion, philosophy or science. It is a dynamic, not a static science and moves with the spirit of the time. It grows stale and worn-out, as soon as the time of which it is the product, changes into a new one. Ours, as we know, is an age dominated by science and technology. The crying need of this age is to re-structure the medieval deductive *ilm al-kalam* on the inductive knowledge made available by science, to which I shall turn now.

It was Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), the founder of the Muslim University, Aligarh, who genuinely felt the need of replacing the old *ilm al-kalam* by a new one. He declared: "today we are, as before, in need of a modern *ilm al-kalam* whereby we should refute the doctrines of modern sciences or undermine their foundations or show that they are in conformity with the teaching of Islam. While I am endeavoring to introduce these sciences among the Muslims, it is my duty to defend the religion of Islam and to reveal its original face."39 He laid the foundation of this new *ilm al-kalam* on the criterion of conformity to Nature and compatibility with reason.40 A true religion can neither be against Nature, nor against reason. "Religion," he argues, "is the word of God and Science is the work of God," and so they can never be antagonistic to each other.41 Much against what he affirmed above, he placed "science on a somewhat higher pedestal than religion"42 and made reason, as against revelation, the overriding standard. To assert the autonomy of Nature and that of the laws which govern it, he denied the efficacy of prayer (*du'a*), rejected the doctrine of miracles, and identified God with the first cause of Science.

Another outstanding Muslim Modernist of the Indian subcontinent is Iqbal (d. 1938). He also wrote a new *ilm al-kalam*, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*,43 but he did not repeat the mistake which Sayyid Ahmad Khan committed, in his enthusiasm for science. On the contrary he made revelation, as against reason, the overriding standard. Nevertheless, he recognized reason as a source of the knowledge of religion and for using it in ordering our lives. Not content with it, he goes so far as to say that "religion stands in greater need of a rational foundation of its ultimate principles than even the dogmas of science."44 Islam is not only not incompatible with science, but is the only religion which religiously calls upon man to use his reason and investigate Nature. There is, indeed, some truth in his assertion that "the birth of Islam ... is the birth of inductive intellect."45

Iqbal's epistemology is a reflective synthesis of thought and intuition. He does not see any opposition between them, for they operate, as with Abduh (d. 1905), in different spheres, at different levels. They must not only not conflict with each other, but must positively cooperate in human advancement. They must "complement each other, for they spring from the same root."<sup>46</sup> There exists an "organic"<sup>47</sup> relationship between them, and so neither can dispense with the other. This gives a special "spiritual meaning to physical science. "The knowledge of Nature is the knowledge of God's behavior."<sup>48</sup> Nature is to God, what habit is to man. Reason lays its hand on the external aspect of reality, intuition on its internal aspect. The one externalizes knowledge, the other internalizes it, and it is from the union of the two that genuine knowledge emerges.

Iqbal structured his new *ilm al-kalam* on an intellectual-cum-spiritual foundation. He gave it the much needed inductive bent. But as Fazlur Rahman rightly laments, his legacy has not been followed so far.<sup>49</sup> "His Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam has remained a purely personal statement of the Islamic Faith and has not so far been able to function as a datum-line from which further development could take place."<sup>50</sup>

### Modern Islam in search of New Fiqh

Just as Kalam (theology) is the doctrinal side of Islam, the sum of its basic beliefs and dogmas, so all practical affairs of public nature fall within the purview of Islamic fiqh (law.) Sociologically speaking, neither Kalam nor Islamic fiqh has kept pace with the changing time. This has created a "distance," even a "cleavage" between the old cultural attitudes and the new social realities which W.F. Ogburn calls "cultural lag," and which we have to overcome or at least to shorten without further loss of time. Culture is essentially an adaptive mechanism. It makes possible the satisfaction of human needs, both spiritual and physical; if it does not, it loses not only its vigor but also its hold, as is the case with the present day culture of Islam.

It is in law rather than in theology that the Muslim mind found its earliest and most highly developed expression, making it what H. A. R. Gibb calls "one of the most brilliant essays of human reasoning." Two things lie at the root of the Islamic conception of law: first, that it is essentially and fundamentally religious; second, that it embraces the spiritual as well as temporal aspects of life. It must have its basis in Divine revelation — the Qur'an, the uncreated Word of God, and in Sunnah, the sayings and doings of the Prophet. These are the two "material sources or roots"<sup>51</sup> of Islamic law. Although law in Islam is Divine in origin, yet the action inspired by it is human. The humanity of this act, as of others, lies in the intention (*niyyah*)<sup>52</sup> with which it is done. The two aspects of law — Divine and human — taken together constitute the philosophy of law in Islam. The law is morally binding upon man, for the source of moral obligation, as of the law itself, is Divine, not human. Notwithstanding this, the exercise of judgment on the interpretation, application and implications of law, as also on the objectives of it (*Maqadis al-Shariah*) and on the intentions of the Shariah obligations (*Asrar al-takalif*), is human. We cannot understand the content of revelation without calling reason to its help. Revelation "is not above reason, as reason is not above revelation."<sup>53</sup>

Shariah law connects man, God, and society together. Although it is immutable and eternal in content, yet it is variable in the method of applying it to the conditions and problems peculiar to a particular time and place, inviting one to resort to *ijtihad*, "the principle of movement in the structure of Islam."<sup>54</sup> This is but a necessary corollary of its being comprehensive in character and universal in application. With the termination of the institution of prophethood for all times to come, the task of interpreting and applying the Shariah law to new conditions of life has become a religious responsibility of the Muslim jurists. The early jurists of Islam fully realized their responsibility and there grew up as many as nineteen schools of fiqh from the middle of the first century of Hijra down to the beginning of the fourth, in order to meet the spiritual and physical needs of a growing civilization. Of these, four schools of Sunni fiqh<sup>55</sup> — the Hanafi, the Shaf'ai, the Hanbali and the Maliki — earned name for their juristic insight, for "they gradually passed from the deductive to inductive attitude in their efforts at interpretations."<sup>56</sup> These medieval schools of fiqh no longer satisfy the needs of an age dominated by science and technology. We now need a new fiqh reconstructed on an inductive basis. This reconstruction is the price of survival which must be paid in this age of explosion of knowledge and no growing culture can afford to neglect this need without running the

risk of extinction. "All civilizations," Observes F. Schuon, "have decayed, only they have decayed in different ways; the decay of the East is passive and that of the West is active. The fault of the East in decay is that it no longer thinks, the West in decay thinks too much and thinks wrongly. The East is sleeping over truths, the West lives in errors."<sup>57</sup>

We have so far insisted on the need and urgency of ijthad to make the Shariah law move with time. Far more important than this is the strategy which should be adopted in order to safeguard ijthad against error and omission, as far as possible, so that it may deliver the desired goods. By strategy I mean the hermeneutical method suitable for a religiously oriented intellectual enterprise. This method — for the process of interpretation — as recommended by Fazlur Rahman, consists of a double movement of thought: "First, one must move from the concrete case-treatments of the Qur'an — taking the necessary and relevant conditions of life of that time into account — to general principles upon which the entire teaching converges. Second, from this general level there must be a movement back to the specific legislation, taking into account the necessary and relevant social conditions now obtaining."<sup>58</sup> Based on this hermeneutical method, ijthad may give us "a viable Islamic set of laws"<sup>59</sup> to regulate our lives in modern conditions of life. Keeping itself within the two-fold movement of thought, it will not over step the proper limit of reform nor it will destroy the Islamic framework within which it has to function.

#### Postmodern Islam in Search of a Methodology for Recasting Modern Value-free knowledge into Islamic Framework of Value

The reconstruction of theological and legal thought on an inductive basis, as we have seen in the preceding pages, was the main problem of the Modern Islam which is as yet unsolved. The problem of the Postmodern Islam is radically different from that of the modern Islam. It is the reconstruction not of the old ilm al-Kalam and fiqh in the light of modern knowledge, but the reconstruction of the much-coveted modern knowledge itself in the light of the norms laid down by Islam. Modernism lacks morale and ethic which alone could give it strength. It failed to develop in the Muslim world for this very reason. It could not grow and flourish in spiritual soil. Muslim modernists gave serious thought to it and resolved to make good this deficiency of modern knowledge. To begin with, they established, under the inspiring guidance of Isma'il R. Al Faruqi, an International Institute of Islamic Thought, at Herndon, Virginia (USA), in 1981, with the sole purpose of sacralising the Western secular knowledge which ushered in the Postmodern era of research in the word of Islam. A year later, Al-Faruqi streamlined the intellectual basis of the project and published it under the title Islamization of Knowledge: General principles and Work Plan which laid down in clear terms not only the future plan of the Institute to Islamize knowledge, but also that of the American Journal of the Islamic Social Sciences, first published in 1983. The task before us is to restructure modern social and natural sciences in the light of Islamic ontology, epistemology, cosmology, sociology, and axiology, already discussed under the head "Intellectual Roots of Islam," the sum and substance of which is as under:

Ontologically speaking, it is God who created the world ex-nihilo and is still sustaining it. Life has a transcendent value. It has an other-worldly orientation with a marked emphasis "on one's conduct in this world."

Man is the crown of creation and the moral agent of God (khalifa) on earth. He is under obligation to structure his conduct on transcendent morality and spread the culture of Divine amanah (trust) and Khilafa (vicegerency), to ensure peace in the world.

He is to live in this world under the sovereignty of God and in accordance with His Will. God's Will is of two kinds: the one we call the moral law, the other the natural law. The one is realized in freedom, the other is realized necessarily. The one can be broken but cannot be changed. The other can neither be broken nor changed. They coexist with each other. They are a priori and lend unity to the cosmic order. The entire creation is an integrated whole, for it is the creation of one and the same God.

In Islam, reason is an ally, not an enemy of revelation. Without reason, the truth of revelation cannot be understood. It is reason that sees the signs of God both in anfus (self) and afaq (world). Knowledge is a



unified whole of reason and revelation. It is on this integration of the two that the Islamic epistemology is based.

Truth is not made, as the pragmatists think. It is already there. It is one, not many. Moral law and natural law both point to one and the same truth — the will of God. Since truth is one, knowledge of it is also one. Unity of knowledge necessarily follows from the unity of truth.

Human life is an indivisible whole. We cannot split it into "the way of God" and "the way of the world." Shariah law embraces all things, spiritual as well as temporal, for it is structured on the indivisible unity of life. This cultural monism is of the essence of Islamic sociology on the individual plane.

On the social plane, the cultural monism of Islam rests on the indivisible unity of humankind. "One God, one humanity" is the corner stone of its sociology. Local barriers of color, race, language, and territory do not affect this emotional unity.

In short, unity of God, unity of cosmic order, unity of knowledge, unity of truth, unity of life, unity of humankind and, above all, transcendent morality, are the cardinal principles in terms of which we have to recast the modern value-free knowledge into the Islamic framework of value.

I turn now to the movement of Modernism, through Postmodernism to Beyond Postmodernism, the characteristic features of which are progress, nihilism, and resurgence of religion, respectively.

#### Modernism: Progress

Modernism had an unshakable faith in the full possibilities of science. It was optimistic not only about the present but also about the future of mankind. It believed that science will solve, one by one, all of man's problems, and usher us into an era of peace, progress, and prosperity, vitally connected as it is with industry, democracy, and expansion. The dream, however, did not materialize. The two devastating world wars have considerably weakened the idea of progress. Modernity fought against itself in fighting against fascism in Germany and Italy on the pretext of defending Western democracy, for both fascism and democracy are the product of Modernity. In Vietnam too, the same atrocities were committed in the name of democracy. Science is the proud achievement of human mind which aspired to be a blessing for humanity, but, instead, it has become an efficient engine for destroying it. Why? Because the knowledge, which we call science, is secular and value-free. It is stranger to moral or ethic of any sort. It was the absence of moral restraint and rectitude in the culture born of it that gave the modern world a free hand to misuse knowledge and bring bad name to it.

#### Postmodernism: Nihilism

Postmodernism is a continuation of Modernism. It is a logical consequence of the latter's desacralizing knowledge on the one hand and the explosion of secular knowledge in recent years on the other, with the result that it is in a state of flux all the time. Modernity is the name of novelty and change. There is nothing secure, stable, and permanent in its structure. This insecurity of Modernity ushered us into an age of Postmodernity, the distinguishing features of which are "nihilism,"<sup>60</sup> loss of spiritual center, as H. Smith defines it, and "alienation,"<sup>61</sup> split between man's mind and spirit, as Neibuhr explains it. Modern man was materially well-off, Postmodern man is spiritually homeless, insecure, and lonely. Machines were and ought to have remained our good servants, but unfortunately they are more and more becoming our bad masters making us strangers to ourselves. The greatest problem of the Postmodern man is to find a way of preserving the humanity of man and preventing the erosion of spiritual and moral values in an age dominated by science and technology. Prof. S. M. Vujica rightly observes: "A purely scientific civilization, destitute of ideals and values, devoid of the humanizing and mellowing influence of religion, philosophy, and arts, would be as cruel for the soul as the pre-scientific civilization was for the body."<sup>62</sup> Whatever else science might be able to do, it cannot heal the wound of the soul. What the Postmodern man needs today, writes Harold Urey, "is a great prophet who can accept the facts of science and at the same time give the inspiration to fill the great spiritual void."<sup>63</sup> This is the only cure of the "nihilism" and "alienation" the Postmodern man is suffering from.

## Beyond Postmodernism: Resurgence of Religion

Just as Postmodernism was a continuation of Modernism, so what is described as Beyond Postmodernism is a continuation of Postmodernism. It is a desperate attempt to regain the spiritual center lost in a thoroughly secularized world. It is a consequence of the ever deepening feeling that the future of humanity lies not only in conquering nature outside ourselves, but also that within our own selves. It basically affirms the spiritual dimension of man to fill the great vacuum created by the loss of faith, without in any way belittling the temporal aspect of his being. It is a burning passion to recapture the intellectual heritage of Adam — integration of science and religion — lost to his progeny, as presaged in the very beginning of the paper.

The growth of positivism and secularism was the result of the aggressive epistemology of the West. But with all its imperialistic designs, it failed not only to erase religion from human memory, but also to lessen its significance. This is the considered opinion of H. Smith, the author of *Beyond the Postmodern Mind*, as also of C. Geertz, E. Gellner, B. Wilson, P. Berger and their teachers E. Durkheim and M. Weber, the well-known anthropologists and sociologists of religion. The work of these people pinpoints two main things: "First, instead of diminishing in importance as a result of the encroachment of science and technology, religion has become highly differentiated and functional. Second, religion is responsible for the ultimate meaning of life."<sup>64</sup> The resurgence of religion in agrarian as well as industrial societies is "one of the most significant features of Beyond Postmodernism."<sup>65</sup> Islam is no exception to it. It will not be far from truth to say that the religious phenomenon may play a vital role in determining the complexion of the coming 21st century.

## END NOTES

1 For a better understanding of the development of Modernism through Postmodernism to Beyond Postmodernism, cf. Smith, Huston., *Beyond the Postmodern Mind* (New York: Crossroads, 1989)

2 Qur'an: Al-Mulk 67:2

3 Ibid, Al-Baqarah 2:31. Here is a detailed interpretation of the ayah: "He taught Adam" — among other things — "the names of all things" of the world in which his lot was cast. Now, names are of two kinds: proper and common. Proper names are non-connotative. They are not given because of any essential attribute inherent in the object named. They denote individuals, but connote no attributes. For example, Karachi, Lahore and Aslam and Ahmad are names of individual cities and persons which serve the purpose of identification. Common names which God taught to Adam are denotative as well as connotative. They are given because of the attributes which essentially belong to the objects named. They not only denote individuals of a class, but also connote their attributes. For instance, the essential attributes of man are animality and rationality. We identify man as a species because he possesses those attributes. Thus when God taught Adam "the names of all things," He presumably made him conversant with the essence of things of the world where Adam was destined to live. God did not bless angels with this knowledge, for they did not need it in heaven. It was the knowledge of the things of world which give Adam a position higher than the angels and in deference to which they had to prostrate themselves before him. God gave this knowledge to Adam as a tool to control his environment. But He presumably did not give him knowledge of each particular thing of the world. He gave him intellect, analytic as well as speculative, in order to serve as the source of the knowledge of the concrete and the abstract respectively, which in turn gave him knowledge of "all things" of the world. "The first thing that Allah created was intellect," the Prophet (SAAWS) is reported to have said. Cf. Siddiqui, B. H., *Knowledge: An Islamic Perspective* (Islamabad: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1991).

4 Iqbal, Allama Muhammad., *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1986)

5 Encyclopedia Britannica, volume V, "Nationality"

6 Qur'an: As-Sajda 32:7-9

7 Iqbal, Allama Muhammad., op.cit., p.123

8 Ibid, p. 123

9 Qur'an: Ha-Meem Al-Sajda 41:53 & Al-Dhariyyat 51:21

10 Ibid., Ha-Meem Al-Sajda 41:53 & Al-Dhariyyat 51:20

11 Ibid., Al-Mulk 67:23

12 Ibid., Al-Mulk 67:23. It is used in a double sense of mind and heart.

13 Ibid., Al-Shu'ara 26:89; Al-Saaffaat 37:84; Qaaf 50:33.

14 Ibid., Al-Mulk 67:23. The Qur'an mentions sama' (hearing), basr (sight) and fuad (mind, heart) in seriatem as three sources of knowledge. Wahi (revelation) is three by the Prophet and heard and obeyed by the believer. Sama' in the ayah refers to wahi which the Qur'an gives first position in its epistemology.

15 Ibid., Al-A'raaf 7:31

16 Ibid., Al-Furqaan 25:67

17 Ibid., Al-Baqarah 2:143

18 Iqbal, Allama Muhammad., op.cit., p.5

19 Ibid., p.117

20 Qur'an Al-Room 30:22

21 Iqbal, Allama Muhammad., op.cit., p.126

22 Ibid., p.126

23 Qur'an Al-Hujuraat 49:13

24 Rahman, Dr. Fazlur., Islam (London:Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966) p.12

25 Qur'an Al-Ma'un 107:1-7

26 Rahman, Dr. Fazlur., 'Roots of Islamic Neo-Fundamentalism', in Stoddard, P.H. (Ed.) Change and Muslim World (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981) p.25

27 Ibid., p.25

28 Ibid., p.26

29 It was Iqbal who first laid stress on subjecting modern knowledge to this process, in a letter to Khwaja Ghulam al-Sayyadain, in 1936, and gave it the name of "muslimization of knowledge." Cf. Ghulam al-Sayyadain, Khwaja., Iqbal's Educational Philosophy (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1965) pp.144-45. Later, Isma'il R. Al-Faruqi renamed it as "Islamization of Knowledge," in his book Islamization of knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan (Pennsylvania, International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1983). Islamization of knowledge is now a popular movement in the world of Islam.

30 Iqbal, Allama Muhammad., op.cit., p.78

31 Ibid., p.78

32 Ibid., p.xxii

33 Ibid., p.xxii

34 The terms "Europeanization" and "Westernization" were first used for what we call "Modernization" today. But soon they lost their appeal mainly because of their ethnocentric import. Modernization apparently does not smack of ethnocentrism and so it is being used today all over the world without any misgiving. But to say that it is completely free from ethnocentric import is not very true. Modern culture has its center in the ethnic man. It is not easy for it to root out the "pressure" of this "cultural compulsive" from its "mindset" and become stranger to itself. "All social thought," writes V.F.V. Calverton, "is colored by such compulsives and those who think they can escape them are merely deceiving themselves by pursuing a path of thought that is socially fallacious." (Calverton, V.F., *The Making of Man*, New York: The Modern Library, 1931, p.28) The foundation of the modern industrial society was laid by the eighteenth century Industrial Revolution in England. But the process of modernization did not actually commence before the year 1789, the year of French Revolution, which C.E.Black considers to be "the base year" and "milestone" in the history of modernization. It was French Revolution, he continues, that "contributed both ideology and institutions that were widely imitated" and served "as a germinal stage of political modernization." (Black, C.E., *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study of Comparative History*, New York: Harper and Row, 1967, pp. 107,108)

35 Vojas, E., "Problems Connected with Modernization of Underdeveloped Societies" in Desai, R. R., (Ed.) *Essays in Modernization of Underdeveloped Societies* (Bombay: Thacker and Co., 1971), pp. 493-504.

36 Black, C. E., op.cit, p.7

37 Ibid., p.6

38 Ibid., p.54. This is what Iqbal has stressed in the following couplet:

(One is the [changing] time, one is the [evolving] life, and one is the [expanding] universe also; it is the ignorance [of the function of historical evolution] that opposes tradition to Modernity.)

39 Cited by Fazlur Rahman, op.cit., p.217

40 Khan, Sir Sayyid Ahmad., *Maqalat-e-Sir Sayyid*, vol. III (Lahore: Majlis-e-Taraqqi-e-Adab, 1961) p.17

41 Khan, Sir Sayyid Ahmad., *Akhri Mazameen* (Lahore: n.d.) p.84

42 Qureshi, Dr. Ishtiaq Hussain., *Education in Pakistan* (Karachi: Ma'aref, 195) p.68

43 The contents of the book are: Knowledge and Religious Experience; The Philosophical Test of the Revelations of Religious Experience; The Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer; The Human Ego — His Freedom and Immortality; The Spirit of Muslim Culture; The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam; Is Religion Possible?

44 Iqbal, Allama Muhammad., op.cit., p.2

45 Ibid., p.101

46 Ibid., p.2

47 Ibid., p.4

48 Ibid., p.45

49 Rahman, Dr. Fazlur., op.cit., p.226

50 Ibid., p.226

51 Ibid., p.68

52 "Actions," said the Prophet, "are to be judged by intentions." Bukhari, translated by Abdul Hakim Khan, (Lahore:1982) vol. I pp.94 & 119; vol. III p.53

53 "Revelation though above any reasoning, is not above reason." Arberry, A. J., Revelation and Reason in Islam (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957) p.34

54 Iqbal, Allama Muhammad., op.cit., p.117

55 Imam Abu Hanifa (d. 767) introduced the positivistic principles of ijihad (individual judgement) and istihsan (equity) in Islamic jurisprudence. Jurists were divided into two groups during his time: traditionalists and innovators. Imam Shafa'i (d. 818) struck a balance between them, despite his marked leaning towards hadith. Imam Malik (d. 798) laid stress on the role of Custom obtaining in Medina and invoked the authority of ijma' (consensus). Imam Hanbal (d. 855) adhered to the literalist interpretation of hadith, allowing marginal role to ijma' and qiyas (analogical reasoning).

56 Iqbal, Allam Muhammad., op.cit., p.131

57 Schuon, F., Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts, translated by D. M. Matheson (London: 1954) p.22

58 Rahman, Dr. Fazlur., Islam and Modernity (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982) p.20

59 Ibid., p.20

60 Abu-Rabi, Ibrahim M., "Beyond the Postmodern Mind," review article in The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, vol.7, no.2 (Herndon: The Association of Muslim Social Scientists and The International Institution of Islamic Thought, 1990) p.253

61 Ibid., p.244

62 Proceedings of the Eight Session of the Pakistan Philosophical Congress, (Karachi: 1961) p.171

63 Ibid., p.172

64 Abu-Rabi, Ibrahim M., op.cit., p.247

65 Ibid., p.255

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