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Marek Hrubec (ed.)

# Between Islam and the West

*The Iranian Perspectives*

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ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑ



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# **An Introduction to the Iranian Perspectives on the Relations between Islam and the West**

Marek Hrubec

The significance of the discussion with representatives of Iranian philosophy and Islamic studies increases in the contemporary global age especially when we encounter the different philosophical and religious traditions of other cultures or civilizations much more than in the past. Moreover, the significance is highlighted by the current agitated political situation in Iran which also has its own spiritual dimension due to the political arrangement of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This collection of papers is based on the seminar on “The Intercultural Dialogue between the West and Islam” with distinguished guests from the Academy of Sciences of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tehran, all of whom are well known authorities on the subject. Reza Davari Ardakani is a philosopher and one of the leading figures who re-established Iranian science after the Iranian revolution in 1979. He has been editor-in-chief of the Farhang Journal and from 1998 also the President of the Academy. Gholamreza Aavani is Director of the Institute of Philosophy at the Academy, Head of the Islamic Philosophical Association and member of the Comité directeur of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies. Ayatollah Seyed

Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad holds the position of Director of Islamic Studies at the Academy and is simultaneously Professor of Jurisprudence and Law at Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran.

The seminar with Iranian speakers was organized in Prague, Czech Republic. They were invited to Prague by the President of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, and the seminar and other related events with them were arranged by the Centre of Global Studies, a joint centre of the Institute of Philosophy at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Faculty of Philosophy at Charles University in Prague.

The seminar attracted a much more attention than usual. It was attended not just by philosophers and social scientists but also by diplomats and politicians. One of the reasons was that it was organised during the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union when many eyes were focused on international events in the Czech Republic. This was especially the case when the new USA President Barrack Obama started to transform the American foreign policy of the “clash of civilizations” into the policy of “intercultural dialogue” with Iran, Russia etc., and international events in the European Union and particularly in the Czech Republic were expected to address the issue of a dialogue among cultures as well. In this context, the Iranian guests took the opportunity to follow and redefine an initiative of Professor Mohammed Khatami, ex-President of Iran, who established the Centre for the Dialogue among Civilizations several years ago. Activities of the Centre demonstrated the potential for dialogue and included, for example, a seminar with Jürgen Habermas in Tehran and other activities.

## **An Intercultural Dialogue**

In the seminar at our Centre of Global Studies in Prague, I introduced and framed the topic of lectures of the Iranian guests by articulating the seminar theme of a dialogue among cultures and specifying the contextual and general conditions of mutual intercultural recognition. I elucidated that we agreed to start our colloquium with the thesis that there have been frequent intercultural conflicts in the past and also in the present global context, which is characteristic of an increasing number of economic, technological and other interactions between people from different cultures. Disputes take on diverse forms from the cultivated ones to the more aggressive. While the clash of cultures and civilizations leads towards cultural polarization and violence, a dialogue between cultures attempts on the contrary to contribute to their mutual recognition.

These forms of conflict resolution did not develop as separate thought entities but stem from the real development of mutual conflict relationships between people and the requirements for their resolution. The process of misrecognition of certain groups of populations causes their justified dissatisfaction and articulation of their legitimate claims. People react critically to various forms of oppression which they face, and, in the background of their experienced reality, they articulate positive fragments of reality and try to develop them. In a relatively favorable environment, the criticism of current forms of misrecognition and attempts to overcome them may be realized in the form of a cultivated intercultural dialogue. The intercultural dialogue attempts to identify the current fruitful social norms through critical discussion and create new ones that might be shared by individual cultures in a universal way.

At the same time some types of misrecognition might be initiated by artificial conflicts which are invoked for the purpose of the legitimization of particular power structures or for the purpose of unjust economic and other interests. Despite the fact that some confrontations between cultures are fictional because they are forced upon people without any essential connection with the reality, a possibility of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' has at least a partial influence on the transformation of these conflicts into serious and real confrontations. The example of that case is the conflict between some parts of the West and some parts of the world of Islam. The relationships between people are then formed as a complex of real and fictitious conflicts.

The intercultural dialogue contains two fundamental elements. The first one is the forming of an interaction 'from below' from the perspective of various cultures and their relations within the global civilization of all the human beings. The second element is a universal agreement on certain important issues as the outcome of this type of dialogue, gradually formulated and subjected to many comments from individual cultures. In short, the objective is to reach a commonly shared '*trans-cultural*' consensus through an *inter-cultural* means in order to replace the current *trans-cultural* situation which is not universally accepted. When the dialogue involves all the culture, it is possible to say that the *intercultural dialogue* is a connection between the *cultures*, which are primarily tied to culturally defined groups of individuals, and the *civilization* in terms of the entire humanity. The significant feature of the intercultural dialogue is the effort to find certain *trans-cultural* issues which might be shared by all cultures and therefore by the entire human civilization. However, such a broad concept of the dialogue cannot in the least supplement the solutions to

all the social, economic, political and other related problems. What can be done is nevertheless to provide conditions for an important intercultural framework for working on these problems.

Because the communication does not often concern only *two* cultures and therefore a *dia*-logue in the literal sense, it is more precise to talk of a *poly*-logue. The conception of cultures in the intercultural dialogue or polylogue requires also a more exact identification of subjects of the dialogue. At least the three categories can be distinguished, although none of which have to be designated definitely and can transform in time. Firstly, it is possible to speak of *an individual* who is formed by a particular culture or *an individual* with a particular cultural identity or identities. Secondly, we may discuss *a group of individuals* specified by particular culture or *a group* with particular cultural identity. Thirdly, we can analyze *an entire culture*.

The first category of the subject is not in the centre of attention in the intercultural dialogue because the dialogue primarily follows relationships between larger cultural units than individuals. The relationships at the individual level are certainly also important though, in the conflict of entire cultures, millions of individual persons do not enter into discussion but rather the individual representatives of people who can promote their individual and group interests. Nevertheless, it is important to make sure that the individual representatives of cultures do not represent just their own view and their own culture only marginally. But also in the case when the representatives are successful in representing their culture, they should not represent only the mainstream of their culture; it is obviously desirable to acknowledge the minority streams as well. This opens the question of a dialogue within the *intra*-cultural

framework between the majority and minorities, between the poor and the rich, between men and women, and so on.

This approach makes easier a definition of the other category which is formed by culturally formed groups of individuals which includes in a more restricted sense the majority of the population of a country or a nation-state, for example, and in the broader sense, e. g., the majority of the entire Western population or the majority of the world of Islam. It can be the majority of the population of the European Union and other countries which have similarly specified cultural, economic and political systems. Of course, majorities and minorities cannot be considered as fixed and the ratio between the minority and the majority may significantly transform in time or even reverse its course.

The third category, which is formed by entire cultures or civilizations, includes the creations of culturally defined groups, from art works to various social customs and finally to the whole life in the society, which is a collection of various social, political, legal and other entities. In the wider context and from the long-term perspective, it is also possible to add population to these creations which may be considered as a cultural product of itself. Population as it stands does not perceive itself as an object but asserts itself primarily as a creating subject which gradually forms cultural customs, rules and objects in interaction with the related environment. When we talk about an intercultural dialogue we have to be aware of these distinctions.

Concerning requirements raised by the people, the important point is that the subjects of the dialogue may at the same time have two basic requirements which are often connected with legal requirements: one is the claim for their recognition as subjects with different cultural identity which will not be ig-

nored, and the second requirement is the claim that these subjects of the dialogue are recognized by others as equal to other groups.

In order to arrive at these kinds of recognition within the framework of intercultural dialogue, it is necessary to distinguish between at least four types of models of arrangement which are discussed in the dialogue. These models contain various views on cultural, political, social, and economic arrangements.

Firstly, it is possible to try to achieve the least demanding model – *modus vivendi*, which will ensure a certain consensus in the current power structure. This model is usually part of practical-political thoughts and compromises. Secondly, it may be possible to achieve the *intercultural model* which recognizes the differences of various cultures while searching for the consensus on *fundamental* values as a boundary of acceptable tolerance. This model is more demanding than *modus vivendi* because its normative conception reaches beyond the current power structure of the participants in the dialogue. Thirdly, it is possible to recognize other cultures with tolerance although, within the framework of our culture or in a narrow framework of our nation, we can have more specifically defined values which may not be shared by other cultures and nations. In relation to this, it may be said that the welfare state has been forming since the World War II as a consensus of social democrats and Christian democrats in the Western European states, and some its followers hope that it might be eventually attractive for other cultures. At the same time there are alternative political conceptions which make claims for their legitimacy. We can advocate significantly more demanding social/socialist and democratic arrangement structure than the one realized up to now in the



European Union or the USA, for example. Fourthly, within the framework of each culture, each nation or each minority unit, there are various social groups and individuals that prefer their own comprehensive model which is based on specific philosophical, religious or other views. They do not try to force this model on other communities and individuals, and they are aware of the fact that it is not shared by all the people. They nevertheless may present this model to others and attempt to make their judgments illuminating and their model exemplary.

Therefore, if we try to reach more than the *modus vivendi* (the first model), we approach the intercultural model (the second model). From this point of view, the effort to reach an intercultural consensus on certain commonly shared fundamental norms makes human rights a significant topic, as one of our Iranian authors, Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad, shows. Human rights can be considered claims that persons recognize each other in order to arrange the necessary social, economic and civic conditions of their respect or dignity. They are at the same time related to the requirements for the rules of a solidary community of people. The principal definition of these claims is a condition for realization of the human existence. People need a guarantee of at least several types of fundamental human rights for the realization of human existence. I would like to stress especially the importance of the fact that the economic, cultural, civil, political, and social rights, if presented in alphabetical order, are mutually conditioned and supported. However, it does not yet guarantee the consensus on exactly what rights to promote and what kind of relationship should exist between these rights. A typical example is the conflict between social and political rights or the conflict between individual rights and the rights interconnected with living in community. This conflict

is apparent in discussions between the North and South, between the West and the East, or between the individual states. Here it is essential to realize that ratified human rights in international documents are so far a claim which has not yet quite been achieved. That is exactly why we talk about *fundamental* human rights which should be fulfilled and achieved first. This is nonetheless a complex matter and challenging topic for the intercultural discussion.

The intercultural dialogue on human rights would not be possible without a formulation of human rights based on the values of individual cultures and a dialogue among them. Such an interpretation which is a contribution to creating 'unity in plurality' is not entirely a matter of course. The attention of most people is focused either purely on intercultural dialogue and the issues of cultural plurality or only on human rights and the issues of the universality of civilization of all human beings. The attempt to create a connection between both types of discourse may be interpreted as a part of an eradication of the frequent ideological misuse of human rights which deforms the intercultural dialogue and commonly shared human rights together with the conditions for their realization. It is well known that the Western norms were enforced in various colonialist expansions, for example, of which the European colonialism was probably the most famous for as well as its pseudo-universalism of human rights. Practices of some contemporary superpowers are, in this respect, followers of this legacy. This is the reason why to concentrate on the consensus among cultures regarding the issue of human rights within the framework of an intercultural dialogue. It may be considered a contribution towards overcoming the confrontations among cultures and to the eradication of the coercive imposing of human rights onto other cultures.

## **The Iranian Perspectives**

In this volume we offer essays which are a lengthier and more in depth version of the lectures delivered by the Iranian speakers at the seminar. All of them analyzed various aspects of mutual relations between Islam and the West, and introduce the potential for intercultural discussion and relations. Reza Davari Ardakani, President of the Iranian Academy, deals with the specific relations between Western Civilization and the world of Islam. He explains that the relations were more interactive in the past. The world of Islam influenced European culture much more in the past than in the period since the modern world of the West started to develop. Since this time the West has not been very interactive with other cultures including Islam and instead the Western techno-scientific culture has been rather more directive towards how people from other cultures live. From this point of view one of the most important historical phenomena is how cultures interact with each other. The solution of this contemporary problem cannot be based on an idea of a clash of civilizations and condemnation of each other. Islam is not against human rights and it is not a violent culture. Islam and the West may balance the situation by a mutual recognition of each other, not by violence and war but by wisdom and dialogue.

Gholamreza Aavani analyzes relations between Islam and the West as well but he is more focused on the opposite direction of influence between these cultures than Davari is. He demonstrates the influence of the Islamic world on the world of West and on global civilization in general during the long historical development of Islam. The world of Islam created a unique culture which included various ethnic groups in many geographical zones like other religious cultures such as Christi-

anity, Hinduism or Buddhism. An example of the fruitful influence of the Islamic intellectual life and science on the Western ones is the European use of Arabic numerals which have been considered more amenable to various mathematical operations. European culture also inherited Greek philosophy and science not directly but through Muslim scientists and their own development of Islamic philosophy and science. In general Islam has made an important contribution to Western culture and also to the long-term development of global civilization.

The paper of Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad offers an analysis of the specific and relevant disputed issue with particular reference to human rights in the West and Islam. He describes the philosophical and spiritual origins of the term human rights and explains how the legitimacy of human rights was originally based on the dignity of man as the principal phenomenon which is characteristic to human beings. The principle of dignity could be a common shared value by all people everywhere. One of the most illuminating parts of the essay is an analysis of the historical sources of human rights in Islam. The sources are seen here as the origin of the main difference between Western and Islamic interpretations of human rights, e. g., in the case of the discussion on an individualistic form of human rights. Philosophical and mystical principles on which human rights are founded in Islam are important here. From this point of view, while Islam stresses social dimensions of human life such as a responsibility for good and bad deeds and sees individuals as social beings within a community in the Islamic culture, human rights in the West are considered more in the context of political and commercial life.

Of course discussions in political philosophy and political theology have a special relation to political reality. Important

public intellectuals try and are expected to influence politics and their intellectual interventions have certain political consequences. It is also the case of the Iranian authors whose essays are published in this collection of papers. They play a significant role in contemporary political discussions. But of course when we analyze and evaluate political practice, we should not mix philosophers and social scientists with politicians. Their theories are not copied and applied in exactly the same way in politics; there is a division of labour. Moreover, if we can apply Hegel's metaphor about Minerva's owl to the political situation that takes place in Iran now we could say that it is too early to articulate what consequences the events will cause. However what is clear now is that the solution cannot be enforced on the Iranian people; an intercultural empathy has to be used. The collection of papers is published in order to give readers a chance to recognise the ideas of the Iranian authors without any prejudices and to understand a bit more about contemporary intellectual life in Iran.

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# **Relations between the Western Civilization and the World of Islam**

REZA DAVARI ARDAKANI



I am pleased to deliver a speech on Islam and the West in this meeting. Before dealing with the relations or the confrontation of the world of Islam and the West on each other, let's have a glance at the historical background of the East-West confrontation, which goes back to the era of Homer and Thucydides. In the Aeschylus' tragedy, *The Persians*, there is an obvious confrontation between the West and East. It is noteworthy that Herodotus reports the Iranian-Greek war on the basis of the above play. Moreover, historians after Herodotus take poetic story as authentic historical interpretations. Nearly 2000 years later, as of the 17 century A.D., as stated, those anecdotes of Aeschylus and Herodotus are considered and quoted by a great number of historians and reiterated by certain scholars and writers.

You may all have heard that in the Battle of Marathon, liberty defeats despotism. Such a statement sounds like the ones we hear nowadays, and it is, in essence, the brief political understanding of the above Greek poet. Throughout the play, there is a confrontation between Greece and Persia or Asia and the West. As already stated, perhaps for the first time, the term 'liberty' is used in its political sense in the era of Aeschylus. Herodotus and Aeschylus have repeatedly shown their joy as Athens liberates itself from the dominance of Persia and King Xerxes.

This liberty is not the opposite point of slavery, as we know that the Greeks did not oppose slavery; Aeschylus and Herodotus themselves neither thought nor were afraid of being enslaved by the Persians, since despite its outcome, the battle would not result in the slavery of the defeated. This liberty was a new concept that was to become the basic concern of politics and the ultimate ideal of life after 2000 years.

By the end of the epoch of the Greeks' cities, and during the next 2000 years, the confrontation between liberty and despotism has left no trace in history. Then in the modern Europe, the confrontation is manifested in the literature and politics, where it is refreshed and has gotten a new sense and status. Presently we take the confrontation of the West and the East for granted. As long as we discuss the impact of the Western civilization on Islam and the whole world, such a confrontation has already been accepted. Yet if we are ignorant about the history of such confrontation and its dimensions, we may fail to comprehend the problem truly. The new relations between the West and the East and Islam are the continuation of the ones that once existed between Greece and Persia. The relation between Europe and the Far East may have been somehow influenced, interpreted and formed by the background of the relation of Iran and the West. The relations between Islam and the West, in turn, has been perceived and interpreted on the basis of the confrontation that the new West has learned from Aeschylus and Herodotus.

As you already know, Muslims began to show interest in the Greek sciences from the 8 century A.D. (2<sup>nd</sup> century A.H.) onward; they translated their medical, philosophical, astrological and mathematical works into their own language.

You may wonder why the Iranians were the first to pave that way and why the other nations did not have any interest in that

matter. An Iranian like me may guess that the paradigm of the relations between Iran and Iranians with Greece and the Greeks may have played a role in this respect. Nevertheless, several centuries after the Iranians, the Spanish Muslims turned to philosophy and the Greek sciences as well. On the other hand, the Arabs and the new Arabic speaking nations showed no desire in that direction. In spite of prestigious background of Egypt in science and culture, and the fact that Alexandria was the focal point of the Greek sciences and philosophy, for a long time, the Egyptians did not pay due attention to the existing great treasure of science in Alexandria.

In the historical interaction of cultures, it is noteworthy that there are cases where scientific materials are accessible but are not utilized by people anymore. Paradoxically, in other occasions, one can find people who are seeking knowledge wherever possible.

As far as I know, when the question of the influence of Europe in the world of Islam is set forth, people usually do not ask the reason why Muslims had such an interest in the Greek science, which itself had been stagnant and isolated for centuries; and how they devised a new era of science and philosophy. Here, it is hard to talk about the influence of Greece. The Greek science and thinking was important, but if it were not because of the power of the awakened desire for learning in Muslims, such science and thinking would have no impact, as it was the case elsewhere before that time or after it.

The Muslims had such a concern and appetite for the Greek science and philosophy that they succeeded in translating, researching and contemplating on a significant part of works in the Islamic world. If we take the transfer of Greek sciences and philosophy as an influence, then we may as well say that

the outset of the clear influence of Europe in the world of Islam roughly coincides at the early stages of the Middle Ages. At the time, Europe took the Greek science more or less seriously, whereas Muslims expanded and advanced the Greek and Indian sciences so much so that the Europeans could do nothing but to take advantage of it. The Muslimized Spain, the major scientific society next to Iran, became the focal point of translating Islamic sciences.

Surprisingly, those translators were among the same Christians who did not tolerate Muslims' sovereignty in Spain, and in 1492 A.D., overthrew them with an unprecedented violence and killed or scattered both the Muslims and Jews.

One of the effects of the transfer to and translation of Islamic sciences in Europe was that science moved out of the church, and the teachers and students, who were all the staff of the church, left the monasteries and began teaching in different organizations, which were later turned into universities. This impact occurred in a situation where some sort of Islam phobia existed in Europe. This had begun since the time when Spanish Muslims were defeated in their attack to the North (732 A.D.) and were stopped there. Such Islam phobia lasted for over 1000 years and manifested itself in different ways. Presently, one can find its explicit reflection in the politics and strategy of the West. Among its argumentative and theoretical forms, Islam phobia can be seen in Huntington's clash of civilizations. Such a phobia is not a psychological matter, rather the outcome of a theoretical and historical confrontation whose background goes back to 2500 years ago. In the world of Islam, however, Christianity phobia or Europe phobia has never had any place. Muslims did not show any interest even about the events in Europe or the West. Properly speaking, in the Eastern part of

the world of Islam, no interest was shown to sciences, literature and philosophy of the Islamic West. In the books and scientific, philosophical and historical works of the East of Islam, even the Crusades did not take place nor can we find any trace of the philosophy and science of the West (Andalus). It was as if the West was viewed as a land belonging to others. Our Philosopher, Sohrevardi, has a work titled "The Story of the Western Exile" which takes place in Morocco (The West of the world of Islam, in the Girvan City).

Regardless of these points, the relation between the West of Islam with its East was in one direction. The Westerners knew everything about the events that took place in the East, whereas the Easterners did not even know Averroes. Ironically, that philosopher had an influence in the philosophy of the West rather than the Islamic Philosophy. This influence was more obvious than the influence of his oriental counterparts in the philosophy of the Middle Ages.

Islam and the West generally had one directional relation throughout the Middle Ages. In literature, philosophy and science of the Islamic era up to the new era, there is no trace of the familiarity of Muslims with the philosophy and culture of Europe. Yet, the Middle Agers were familiar with the important scientific and philosophical works of Muslims and absorbed them. In the new era, it is apparently the other way around.

Islamic countries turn to Europe since they need the European weapons and industry. The Europe's modern view of the whole world, including the parts related to Islam, changes and it regards the whole non-Western world as the object to its own deeds and views, and as a package of raw materials and historical matters. Now Europe is not only well aware of the East and the world of Islam but also it reports and interprets its history,



as it is argued that the East is incapable of expressing itself. In such circumstances, the world of Islam, just like other non-occidental worlds, confronts certain problems.

Actually this is the historical case of being in non-Western world. In such a situation, the world of Islam has no choice but to define its existence with relation to the West.

At the time, the nations and countries had their own distinct problems but with the advent of modernity, those problems remained unsolved, and other problems were created for each and every country. The world of Islam did not have any problems pertaining to poverty, diseases until it sensed the existence of the new world. This does not imply that Islam did have access to science and technology, and that there were no cases of poverty or diseases in that world. Poverty, disease, ignorance, etc, have always existed everywhere to some extent, but these turned into problems when man himself began to confront and eradicate them, as he found himself capable of solving such problems. That happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. We know that Marx referred to poverty as social problem. Muslims began to familiarize themselves with historical issues as they interacted with the West. At least they realized that being deprived of new weapons, sciences and industry of Europe was a weakness for them, and that they could do nothing without those facilities. If there was no base, in the world of Islam for phobia from or having enmity with the West at that time, now Muslims had to examine the dominance of the West. That was a raw experience for a long time as Muslims did not really know how to react to the phenomenon of the dominance of Europe. To them, dominance merely had something to do with military or political affairs, and they were willing to confront it by means of politics and arms.

Europe, in turn, believed that it had the right to dominance, and not until recently has it bothered itself about the West-East encounter. To the West, the whole regions and nations outside the Western world were unfamiliar with science and culture. Ernest Renan has stated that Muslims are incapable of entering the world of science. One could have asked him, if it were so, how could Muslims provide Europeans with their achievements in philosophy, astrology and medicine? Orientalism offers an answer to this question: "The Muslims who translated the Greek sciences and learned them, did not add anything to them, rather like a true trustee, they preserved them and then returned them to their original owners, namely Europeans." Obviously, this is not a good answer, and Europe itself was not satisfied with this baseless justification which is devoid of historical evidence.

Now, other contemporary occidental Islamologists do not focus on the enmity of Islam with science. Instead, they refer to despotism, corruption of governments and lack of freedom as the root causes of the backwardness of the world of Islam. Such a justification seems to be true from political standpoint, though it is a sort of deliberate fallacy, and is not in essence much different from the response already mentioned.

Is the question whether the world of Islam has not developed at the expected rate, and whether liberty and development have not been realized? Then the absence of liberty and lack of development plan are the repetition and assertion of the claim, not an answer to the question posed. Such rhetoric is the reiteration of Ernest Renan statement, but with softened and more polite words. In such a mentality, Muslims are far from socio-economical development, and it is not clear how they can achieve that goal. Apparently, here the relation between the

world of Islam with the West has not been set forth properly. Once, the world of Islam used to learn science and philosophy from Europe. Recently, however, the West's influence has been mainly martial and political. This time, Muslims have found themselves in need of the weaponry and industrial products of the West, without asking themselves and knowing what they could learn from that world. They were the consumers of the Western products over two hundred years without reflecting about the manner in which the West succeeded in creating and advancing new science and technology, and asking why is that others are unable to do so.

In the world of Islam, science and freedom are praised a lot; in this world, there are great scientists as well, but a system for science and research has not been set up as needed. Obviously, when science does not have its right status, the expected benefits are not obtainable. Yet, in recent years research has been developing in general, and in biomechanics and biotechnology in particular, our country has had important advancements. The underdeveloped world considers external barriers in the course of the interpretation of this trial, and for instance, the colonial wrath is a barrier to development in their view, while the principle of development is asserted and is thought of as the basic principle dominating history, and this is a case in point in accepting the principle of modernity and Western values.

In such circumstances, claimants should show what tradition is a barrier to development and how it is so. Another important point is that the Renaissance in Europe was a comprehensive intellectual, scientific and artistic change, not a change caused by certain people in a part of the European community, which would result in changes whose outcome would be the creation of science and culture. Reform may have laid the

ground for the Renaissance of science, culture and art, but it has not been the cause of that effect. You know that arts, politics, education and new physics were created concurrently with the Reform in the Renaissance; in other words, they were not their effect. Webber's essay on the "Protestant Ethic and the spirit of Capitalism" merely proves the compatibility and relativity of these two phenomena. It cannot be deduced from Webber's statement that capitalism is the outcome and subordinate to the Reform. It is illogical and baseless to think of the weakness of the world of Islam as the outcome of religious belief and dependence on the old traditions that should be changed, because in that case, it is proven that development calls for incredulity.

Evidently, every belief may not be used as the basis of science, research and development. On the other hand, with no belief and love, one cannot create science or any other foundation. The influence of the West has had negative and positive dimensions, but the positive effects are more perceptible. Yet if we examine them carefully, the negative effects may be more than the positive ones. Certainly, nobody could have stopped such influence. Principally, if someone claims that what is now known as the world of Islam, is formed so due to its relation with the West, such a statement may not be regarded baseless or pointless. But if we go as far as to say that the ideal of the world of Islam is Westernization, we would go to extremes. Yet, it cannot be denied that the acquaintance of Muslims with the powerful Western world has affected their own impressions of themselves. In that encounter, should they have discovered the essence and origin of the power of the West, they would have had a different relation with it, but would look at the West in terms of its technology, military and political power. This view would not be wrong but in some case it would act as a barrier

to them and would not let them ask about the conditions under which they could have technology, weaponry and political power.

Science, technology, military and political power are all parts and aspects of an interrelated whole. This is evident but what is hard to comprehend and perhaps to achieve is the manner and condition under which such a united whole is created. Would it possible to have technology and political power merely by means of learning sciences and technology; or would it be possible for the state or government to develop science and technology in any way and everywhere it chooses? As already mentioned, this point has been noticed.

There are some who believe that the traditions should be moderated in order to pave the way for scientific, economic and political development. Still there are others who state that there is no opposition between political and scientific advancement and religious traditions, and that Islam has always placed emphasis on love of science and dignity of man, and in view of certain Muslim scholars, recognition of human rights. There are cases where these two groups may have encounter with each other or different political stances, but in principle, they are not much different with each other; that is, they both believe that Islam is in harmony with development policies. There are still others who argue that such views are oriental interpretations or upside down orientalism. Meanwhile, there is no doubt that the issues of the world of Islam are set forth with relation to the dominant cultural and technological powers of the West. The history of this matter in our country and other Islamic countries goes back to 200 years ago. However, the important political event of the recent decades is that a major part of the West's political and ideological attitudes, particularly

that of the U. S. A., has depended on the world of Islam and its political and cultural events. This is not reversing the previous condition rather it is its intensification.

The policy of the clash of civilizations, depicted in the works of Bernard Lewis and Huntington, is a case in point to this claim, which is not a good signal to the world's future policy.

Most people believe that such views are a report and description of the present cultural and political situation of the world; while the existing situation was created concurrently with the advent and manifestation of such views, and these two are interrelated, and strengthen and weaken together. I hope that the manner of such strengthening and weakening would not be horrible and would lead to peace, liberty and justice.

If I am not mistaken and the history of East-West confrontation does go back to Iran-Greek wars, the Iranians revived Greek science and philosophy one thousand years later, after the Hellenic epoch. Despite the believers of the clash among civilizations, the recent confrontations may be an introduction and a precondition to the affinity between Islam and new European civilization, and the present dangerous trend may end in peace. I am not so optimistic to have such far-reaching expectations and rejoice however the duty of philosophy is to consider and identify possibilities. The possibility of understanding and affinity between the Islam and the West is not less likely than the possibility of the clash among civilizations, particularly because the clash among civilizations is an ambiguous term as wisdom and sagacity prefers dialog to war.



**The influence of Islam  
on Global Civilization**

GHOLAMREZA AAVANI





Islam is both a religion and the creator of a world civilization. It is a religion based on a Divine revelation to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, believed by all Muslims to be the last prophet of God sent to humankind in this cycle of human history. It is also a world civilization, in the sense that like all other religions of the world such as Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism it has produced and cultivated a unique culture and civilization, embracing many ethnic groups and cultural zones, coming at the end of the other religious civilizations. It has had great impact on them and in its turn the Islamic civilization has been somehow influenced by them.

There are some points which might help us in a better understanding of Islam as a world civilization. First, we should bear in mind that Islam is a universal religion, accepting the validity and authenticity of all Divine revelations and sacred books before it. It is not moreover an autochthonous religion based on the salvific monopoly of a certain race, ethnic group or geographical zone. It takes upon itself the protection of all the “people of the Book” and that is why it is perhaps true to say that in the traditional Islamic world devotees of other religions have had a more or less peaceful coexistence with Muslims, and this might explain why they have been most instrumental in

conveying both the heritage of their respective civilizations to Islam and in transmitting Islamic culture and civilization to others as we observe in the translation movements both from and into Arabic, the sacred language of Islam, and it might also explain why some minorities such as Jews have chosen Arabic instead of Hebrew as the language of philosophical, scientific and even religious discourse as the Spanish Jews in Andalusia.

Islam created a civilization that was able to establish itself in the middle belt of the ancient world over a millennium. It was able to produce great intellectual figures in the fields of science, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, technology, arts, crafts architecture, literature, statesmanship, commerce and navigation which not only for many centuries made it a leading light in global civilization, but also induced many changes in other cultures and civilizations particularly the western.

Due to the emphasis of the Quran and the prophetic traditions on the significance of knowledge of any kind and that it should be sought and mastered, no matter from whatever source it comes, Muslims considered it a pious duty to search for knowledge in all cultures and climes and to seek wisdom “ even unto China “ as the Prophet ordained. So there was a tremendous intellectual activity in the Muslim world as is well attested by Ibn Nadim, the compiler of the famous *Fihrist* or *The Catalogue*, which is a bookseller’s manual of available books in tenth century Baghdad. *The Catalogue* is noteworthy from many respects including the information it conveys concerning the very extensive translation activity of Greek astronomical, mathematical, medical, philosophical and scientific works, among many other disciplines. Apart from the pre-Socratics, Plato and Aristotle, translation of the works of philosophers such as Theophrastus, Proclus, Alexander Aphrodisias, Porphyry, Ammo-

nus, Themistius, Epaphroditus, Simplicius, John Philoponus, Gregory of Nyssa, Theon of Smyrna and some neo-Platonists are mentioned among many others. A brilliant concatenation of the works of Aristotle, together with commentaries is mentioned. It could be safely said that Aristotle was for the first time studied wholesale in the Islamic world, because in Greek Byzantium, since scholars were more inclined to Plato, they had no use for Aristotle for their theological purposes, and again in Alexandria more attention was paid to his physical treatises, and in the Latin west he was almost unknown but for the translation of two of his logical works by Boethius. Muslim philosophers, such as Averroes, knowing no Greek, were able to make a deep etymological study of certain Greek words such as being (to on) and nature (Physis) by collating different translations.

Alexander after conquering Egypt and Asia up to India made Hellenism a universal phenomenon and Greek into the lingua franca of the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East which itself was the cradle of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism and later Christianity and Islam) and this geographical propinquity between Hellenism and the Abrahamic religions made them share a common heritage in succession.

In the pre-Islamic era, apart from Alexandria and Byzantium, there were other main seats of Greek learning and Christian theological schools, of which one can mention Antioch, Edessa (also called Ruha), Nisibis, Qinnisrin and Raas al-ayn and in addition the city of Harran, which was the inheritor of the old Babylonian and Hellenistic cultures, where the theological debates along with the translation of Hellenic and Hellenistic cultures took place. When these centres were incorporated into the Ummayyad and Abbasid Empires, Muslims had easy access to an enormous treasury of ancient and classical sources.

Another Great centre of learning, famed for its medical, astronomical and philosophical studies was the city of Jundishapur in southern Iran, founded probably by Shapur I and enjoying an international acclaim for its Persian, Indian and Syriac-speaking Christian scholars. When in 529 A.D the Academy of Plato was closed down by the edict of the Emperor Justinian, the scholars took refuge at the court of Anushirawan, the Sassanid King, and they are said to have taught in Jundishapur until in 632 he made a peace treaty with Justinian, one of whose articles stipulated that the refugee philosophers, among whom figured Damascius, Simplicius and others, should pursue their philosophical studies unmolested. Some translations of the works of Aristotle into the Middle Persian, or Pahlavi, are attributed to scholars in Jundishapur. Moreover this university was well-known for its great hospital and even the court physicians of the Abbasid Caliphs were chosen from among its alumni.

Even if sporadic works of translation were made during the Umayyad and early Abbasid period, by scholars such as Ibn al-Muqaffa' "The logician" who translated some of the logical works of Aristotle from Pahlavi into Arabic, the serious work of translation seems to have been initiated in Baghdad during the reign of Harun al-Rashid who commissioned his court physician Ibn Masawaih with the task of translating ancient medical works into Arabic. A even more serious step was taken by the Caliph Ma'mun, who established the Bayt-al-Hikmah or the House of wisdom which undoubtedly was the best centre of translation in the ancient world. It was patronized by the Caliph and his cultivated Persian Viziers such as the Barmakids and the Naubakhtis who financed amply their scholarly projects and supplied them with letters of recommendation to secure the best manuscripts. Apart from Ibn Masawaih whom al-Ma'mun

appointed as the first head and director of Bayt-al-Hikmah, we have the names of other translators and their translated works of which we mention only the most distinguished ones for brevity's sake. They, together with their works are mostly mentioned by Ibn-al-Nadim in his *Fihrist*: Yahya (Yuhanna) Ibn-al-Bitriq, Hajjaj Ibn Matar, the illustrious Hunayn Ibn Ishaq, his son Ishaq Ibn Hunayn and his nephew Hubaish and his pupil Isa Ibn Yahya, Ibn Na'imah al-Himsi (d.835) Abu Bishr Matta Ibn Yunus (d.940), Yahya Ibn Adi (d.974), Qusta Ibn Luqa, Abu Uthman al Dimashqi (d.900), Abu Ali Ibn Zura' (d.1008) Hasan Ibn Suwar (d. circa 1017) and Thabit Ibn Qurra of Harrani, to name only the most distinguished of them.

Almost all translations were done by Syriac-speaking Christians who were quite familiar with the translations already rendered from Greek into Syriac, but having found older and better manuscripts, they tried to produce much more exact and reliable translations than those available in the Syriac. A letter from Hunayn, perhaps the most distinguished of those mentioned above, explains how they acquired and collated the manuscripts and after establishing an *editio-princeps*, found the best translator from among those who had mastered the subject and then edited the text by collating it with the original edited Greek manuscript.

This immense translation movement brought about a vast philosophical literature and a galaxy of philosophers and scientists which were unrivaled in the age in which they flourished. We will first give a short synopsis of the historical events which led to the presence of Muslims in both Spain and Sicily, before considering in detail the influences of these philosophers and scientists on world civilization, focusing in particular on their impact on the physical and intellectual sciences, philosophy, and other elements of culture broadly considered.

## **Muslims in Spain**

In July 710 A.D. a party of Muslims crossed the strait of Gibraltar (probably named after Tariq the general leading the group) and in the following year (711 A.D.) it was reinforced by an army of 7000 men, who were able to defeat the Visigoth king Roderick. By about 715 with little resistance they were able to conquer the main cities of Spain or entered into treaty relationships with the local rulers.

In 750 the Muslim political hegemony shifted from the Umayyads in Damascus to the Abbassids who made the newly-constructed city of Baghdad their new capital. In the brutal massacre of the Ummayyad princes, one, called Abd-ar-Rahman managed to escape to North Africa whence he was invited to Spain to become the first of the Ummayyad dynasty of Cordova. The Ummayyad princes were able to extend their jurisdiction to Spain except for the more adamant tribes and districts in the north of modern Spain. Ummayyad Sovereignty reached the peak of its power in the reign of Abd-ar-Rahman III (912–61), who by the time of his death had unified the greater part of the Iberian Peninsula. But by the beginning of the tenth century the Ummayyad state disintegrated into thirty independent “party kings” (reyes de taifas) and in 1085 the city of Toledo was captured by the Christian army. The Muslims appealed to Almoravids (al-Murabitun), the Berber rulers of North-West Africa who defeated the Christian army and ruled the Islamic Spain (Andalusia) from 1090 to 1145, when they were succeeded by another Berber dynasty called Almohads (al-Muwahaddun) who ruled over the Islamic Spain until 1223. Thanks to the rivalries and dissensions among Muslim rulers, Christian sovereigns were able to capture Cordova in 1236 and Seville in 1248. The last stronghold of Gra-

nada, famous for its architectural monument Alhambra, was conquered and incorporated into the United Kingdom of Aragon and Castile in 1492.

### **Muslims in Sicily**

In 652 A.D. Syracuse was seized and soon the Muslim fleet was able to attack the Byzantine fleet. In 827 the Aghlabid rulers of Ifriqiyya (North Africa), invaded Sicily. Palermo was captured in 831, Messina about 843 and Syracuse was finally occupied in 878 and the occupation of the island, except perhaps its northern regions, was complete by about 902. However, when the Aghlabid rulers were defeated by the Fatimids in 909, Sicily became a Fatimid province.

In the first half of the eleventh century, some Norman knights, including Robert Guiscard, settled in Southern Italy. After defeating the Byzantines, he invaded Sicily together with his brother Roger and succeeded in occupying the entire land by 1091. Roger's son, Roger II (1130–54) and the latter's grandson Frederick II of Hohenstaufen were very influential in transmitting Islamic sciences and culture to the extent that they have been called "the two baptized sultans of Sicily." Their courts were the meeting places of literary men, scholars, religious savants and philosophers, some of them unrivalled in their age. Three of the Norman kings of Sicily even assumed Arabic titles. Roger II called himself al-Mu'taz billah, William was al-Hadi-bi-amri-llah, and William II was al-Musta'izz billah. These Arabic titles even appeared on their coinage and inscriptions. Roger's mantle, preserved in the Vienna Museum, is that of an oriental emir, with embroidered kufic inscriptions.



The Islamic element is more evident in the financial administration of the Sicilian court where different financial departments were modeled on the different Arab Diwans and where even Fatimid Coins were in circulation. The Norman kings took over some features of the Muslim art of war and employed Muslim military engineers, recruited Muslim soldiers and adopted their art and architecture of fortification.

A lot of guesswork has been done, especially by Muslim scholars about the influence of the Christian Crusades on European culture and civilization. After the seizure of Toledo (1085) and Sicily (1091) by the Christian forces, the background was set for a wholesale attack to capture Jerusalem. The whole of Christendom was unified for fulfilling what they considered to be a sacred task and the holy war of Christians against Muslims known as the Crusades were begun. The first crusade (1095–99) ended in the conquest of the Holy Land and the election of Godfrey of Bouillon as the *Advocatus* of the city. It was followed by a second (1145–49) and a third crusade (1189–1192). Even a crusade was launched to capture Egypt (1217–22) which, of course, failed.

### **The Physical Sciences**

Most scholars are of the opinion that the influence of crusades on the West was more military and cultural, and possessed less of an intellectual nature. However, Islamic presence in Spain and Sicily from the eighth century onwards and the European presence in the Levant during the crusading period led to the adoption of many features of the Islamic culture.

Even if Islam started among Bedouin Arabs, it was also the religion of the town-dwellers. In other words, it was also the re-

ligion of civilized and urban life. As such it promulgated a life of aristocratic culture in all its vigor and plenitude as we see in Islamic Spain, which set an exemplary model to be emulated by other nations of Europe.

Commerce and trade are two distinctive features of Islamic civilization. It is even said that Islam spread to some regions such as East and West Africa and especially to South-East Asia through businessmen; Islamic civilization not only caused a burgeoning of commerce in Europe, but also functioned as the intermediary between the East and the West. Travel was made easy and a sort of free-trade contributed to the material prosperity of the Western man.

Muslims also devised more refined methods and systems of agriculture in Spain. The irrigation system was improved and modeled on the one prevalent in the Middle East. Many new plants, some of which have Arabic derivations were introduced into Islamic Spain, following the improvement of irrigation. There are moreover many Spanish words pertaining to irrigation which have an Arabic derivation. Again with the cultivation of mulberry trees the silk industry flourished; flax was cultivated and linen was produced and exported.

The science of mineralogy was again developed in Spain. Mines such as iron and copper ores were quarried and exported to Europe and so was the cinnabar from which mercury was extracted. There are also accounts of the production of gold, silver and lead, and also of the extraction and exportation of precious stones. The European textile industry demands the supply of alum which was imported from Egypt.

The Fatimids, the rivals of the Abbasids in Baghdad, for their expansionist ambitions needed timber and iron for their ships, which they imported from Italy, and this encouraged the Italian

merchants to travel to Egypt and finally through the Red Sea, Yemen and the Persian Gulf to India or through Eastern Europe, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Central Asia to China.

In the wake of commerce and trade there flourished in Europe the art of ship-building, seafaring and navigation of which Europe borrowed many elements from Muslim navigators. Prior to the Muslim conquest of Spain, Medieval Europe scarcely knew anything about India and beyond and mistakenly believed that beyond Christendom, the rest of the globe belonged to the Muslim realm. Through contact with Muslims Europeans gradually turned into a great naval power, able to discover the Cape of Good Hope and finally the new American Continent.

Muslims, generally speaking, transmitted to Europe three inventions which caused a great upheaval in Western Culture; the indian decimal system in arithmetic together with the discovery of the cipher (derived from the Arabic *ḥifr*); the use of the mariner's compass in navigation, which reportedly they borrowed from the Chinese (which however, has recently been cast in doubt); and the use of block and moveable type for the purpose of printing, which finally led to the art of modern printing by Gutenberg. The Europeans also borrowed knowledge of gun powder and used it for artillery.

Muslims were also instrumental in preparing more accurate navigation charts. The Arab geographer Idrisi, living in the court of Roger II of Sicily and by his patronage, produced the most complete description of the world known to Muslims up to that time and produced seventy maps (ten for each of the seven climes). His book of geography and cartography came to be known as »The Book of Roger«.

As the result of these inventions and discoveries there ensued a more pleasant and luxurious lifestyle than what we wit-

ness in the so-called Dark Ages. There was a proliferation of luxury goods, such as sumptuous textiles, linens, woolens and silks. The techniques of the ceramic industry developed and the art of tile-painting was introduced from the Middle East. The art of jewelry developed to a great extent; again the art of wood-carving and ivory-carving and inlaid work flourished considerably; a grandiose style of architecture as witnessed in the extant monuments of Islamic Spain was developed in which the horse-shoe arch was frequently used.

The impact of the Crusades on medieval literature is also evident in epic poetry such as the twelve poems having Godefroi de Bouillon as their theme, in the so-called *Chansons de Geste*, the Crusade songs and poems, in histories and chronicles and the Romances. The troubadours are traced back by some scholars to the Hispano-Arabic culture and to the court poetry in Arabic in the Iberian Peninsula.

### **The Intellectual Sciences**

The Islamic Sciences are usually divided into transmitted and intellectual sciences. The former, comprising sciences such as lexicography declension, syntax, history, jurisprudence, Hadith transmission and Quranic exegesis enjoyed a glorious existence, and in some instances reached the acme of perfection, in the Islamic period of Spain, but waned to extinction after Christian reconquest. But the so-called intellectual sciences such as philosophy, mathematics, physics, astronomy and others were the focus of much attention and concern after the reconquista.

In the Middle Ages before the scholastic period, little was known about Greek philosophy and science in the Latin West.

All that was known about Aristotle, for example, was the Latin version of *The Categories* and the *De interpretatione* of Aristotle, by Boethius, which together with the Latin translation of the *Isagoge* of Porphyry by the same author constituted the staple stock of logical studies. With the Christian conquest of Toledo in 1085, and the possession and access to its great library, there started the great translation movement into Latin of the great masterpieces of philosophy and science, comparable to that which took place in Baghdad about three centuries earlier. This stupendous translation movement was directed by Raymond (1126–51) the archbishop of Toledo, in which the works of Aristotle, Alfarabi, Averroes, Avicenna, Alghazali, Ibn Gabirol, al-Kindi, Maimonides, Avempace and many others were translated. Among the more well-known translators one can mention Dominicus Gundissalinus, John of Spain (Johannes Hispanus), Avendehut (probably Ibn Daoud), Gerard of Cremona (d.1187), Alfred Sareshel (Alfredus Anglicus), Daniel of Morley, Henricus Aristippus, The Jew Solomon, Herman Germanicus and Michael Scot.

To give but one example, one of the most prolific of these translators was Gerard of Cremona. Fortunately we have a list of his works drawn up by his pupils and appended to his translation of Ptolemy's *Almagest* (1175). He had rendered into Latin seventy one works mentioned in the catalogue, besides, perhaps, a score of other works, Three of these works are logical, several are mathematical and the list includes works on astronomy and astrology, but the longest list of all in the catalogue is medical; Avicenna, Galen, Hippocrates and others.

Michael Scot, another well-known translator first appears at Toledo as the translator of al-Bitrogi's *On the Spheres*. By 1220 he had rendered into Latin Aristotle's *On Animals*, but he is

mainly responsible for the translation of Averroes' philosophical works into Latin, which he rendered both in Toledo and in Sicily, which was another main centre for the translation movement. Some of these translators did not know Arabic and used intermediaries, especially Jews, who played the same role in Toledo as the Syriacs had played in Baghdad. Some of the well-known Jewish translators are: Master Andrew, Petrus Alphonsi, John of Seville, Avendeuth, Solomon and others.

Contemporary Jews in Europe were either Sefardi, whose language of communication was Arabic like the Jews of Spain, or those who spoke other European languages and who were known as Ashkenazi. Sefardi Jews were conversant with other great centers of learning, such as Cairo and especially Baghdad, and were very instrumental in the translation movements. Europeans were also well acquainted with many schools of thought such as Mu'tazalites and Ash'arites (loquentes), of whom there were no Latin translations. The transmission of their ideas, no doubt, can be traced back to Jewish intermediaries. Jews were important in another important respect in that they translated the philosophical or scientific works first into Hebrew and then into Latin and in certain cases in the reverse order. Again, some of the works translated were by the Jewish authors, such as Maimomides, Ibn Gabirol and others. We are not going to mention here the details of the translated works into Latin, but suffice it to say that all the masterpieces in science and philosophy which were the mature fruits of Islamic civilization were translated into Latin in a full sweep. Simultaneously an attempt was made to translate the Greek authors, not through the Arabic intermediaries, but directly through the Greek originals, which allowed the medieval Europeans to rediscover their ancient classical heritage.

## Islamic Science and Western Culture

Prior to the great translation movement there were sporadic attempts at incorporating Islamic sciences. A significant example is the case of Gerbert of Aurillac, who became Pope Sylvester (999–1003). He was much interested in Islamic sciences, studying mathematics for three years in Catalonia (967–70) and probably also astronomy, and mastered them to such an extent that he was far ahead of any other mathematician in Medieval Europe. He devised some teaching aids for the exposition of the Ptolemaic conception of the Universe, was familiar with the use of the astrolabe and introduced a new form of abacus for calculation, which might be considered as the first recorded use of the decimal system in Europe.

Before the use of the Arabic numerals, the Europeans had employed the Roman numerals which were not amenable to most mathematical operations. The effective introduction of Arabic numerals is generally attributed to the publication in 1202 of the *Fiber Abaci* of Leonardo Fibbonacci of Pisa, in which the author showed how the use of “ten signs” simplified the arithmetical operations. Use was made of zero in the decimal system. The English “Cipher” and “Zero”, the French “chiffre” and the German “Ziffer” are all related to Arabic Sifr, which means “empty”.

It should be mentioned also in this juncture that Muslims were the inventors of the science of “algebra” which derives its very name from the Arabic “aljabr” and was the title of a book by the famous mathematician al-Khwarazmi (from whose name is also derived the name “algorithm”). It is also the title of another book by the famous poet, astronomer, mathematician and philosopher Umar Khayyam, who, under the patronage

of the Seljuk Malik Shah, instituted the Malikshahi calendar, which was more accurate and far ahead of the Gregorian calendar.

Mention must be made of the advances made in astronomy in the Islamic Civilization. For example we may cite al-Farghani from Transoxiana. The twelfth century Latin version of his *Elements of Astronomy* influenced European experts in that science. Al-Battani, another eminent Muslim astronomer, made accurate astronomical observations and compiled a catalogue of fixed stars. His great treatise known in Medieval Europe as *De Scientia Stellarum*, influenced European astronomy until the Renaissance. Great advances in making accurate astronomical observations were made by establishing observatories in main Islamic cities such as Baghdad, Cairo, Rayy, Maraghah and Samaqand. The influence of Islamic astronomy can be again witnessed in the fact that at least some astronomical tools and gadgets bear names of an Arabic or Persian derivation. Muslim scholars again took successful strides in the science of optics. Ibn al-Haytham (Latin Alhazen) with rare skill combined the experimental investigation of optical phenomena and the analysis of results by mathematics. His influence continued through Robert Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, John Peckham, Witelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Johannes Kepler.

The Muslim influence in European culture is also evident in medicine which can only be illustrated here by a few examples. Al-Razi (Latin Rhazes) has been acclaimed as the greatest clinician of Islam and the Middle Ages. His medical encyclopedia *al-Hawi* (Latin *Continens*) was a major medical text and reference book in the Medieval Period. He was also known for his specialized work on measles and smallpox. Another major work in medicine was *al-Qanun* (*The Canon*) of Avicenna which



had an important influence upon European medical theory and practice for six hundred years until the dawn of Modern Medicine.

In Spain the medical tradition was maintained by the Zuhr family, of which the most distinguished member is Ibn Zuhr (Avenzoar). His *Kitab al-Taisir*, containing many excellent clinical observations was translated both into Hebrew and Latin and was also influential in European medicine.

Finally we must mention the significant textbook in medicine compiled by the famous philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes). His *Kitab Kulliyat fi-l-Tibb (Colliget)* was an encyclopedia in anatomy, physiology, pathology and diagnosis.

### **The influence of Islamic Philosophy**

Europe was not the direct heir of the Greek sciences and philosophy. They were transmitted to Europe through Muslim scientists and philosophers of whom we shall here mention the most important.

The first Muslim philosopher who was to be known by the Christian world was al-Kindi, who was of Arab extraction. The Middle Ages was acquainted only with a portion of his extensive writings. His treatise *On the Intellect* was the focus of much attention in Medieval Europe, because, in elucidating the function of the intellect, it shed light on the nature of abstraction and hence the nature of Universals.

The next great philosopher is Alfarabi with whom the scholastics were familiar through the translation of some of his books, especially *On the Intellect and the Intelligible (De Intellectu et Intellecto)*, and his treatise *On the Enumeration of Sciences*. He is

well-known through his metaphysical distinction between essence and existence, which was much admired by the scholastics, especially St. Thomas Aquinas. His theory about the nature of prophecy and its relationship to philosophy was also known in the scholastic period. The fourfold division of intellect in Albertus Magnus (1 – Intellect in potency 2 – Intellect in act 3 – The acquired intellect or intellectus adeptus 4 – Agent intellect) can be traced back to Farabi.

Two of the greatest Muslim philosophers whose writings had a far-reaching impact in Europe are Avicenna and Averroes. Avicenna, unlike Averroes, was a great help for the scholastic theologians in reconciling reason and revelation and in combining the natural and philosophical explanation of being with an equally natural and philosophical doctrine of salvation. The translation of his magnum opus *al-Shifa (Sufficientia)*, comprising all the branches of philosophy, was a major textbook in the scholastic period.

Avicenna passed to the scholastics certain notions and distinctions which were to exert an enduring influence in European thought. One can mention for example his precise analysis of the essence-existence distinction, his theory of the self-evidence of the notion of existence and its primacy over quiddity, his conception of transcendentia (being (ens), thing (res), necessity (necesse) and unity (unitas) and so on), which were all introduced into scholastic metaphysics. Avicenna's metaphysics is also significant in another respect. By emphasizing that only "being as being" is qualified to become the proper subject-matter of the first philosophy and not God or the first principles and causes, as the earlier commentators had surmised, he was able to separate ontology from theology by separating the *Metaphysica Generalis* from *Metaphysica Specialis*, a distinc-

tion which was introduced for the first time by Avicenna in the mainstream of philosophy.

Avicenna is also well-known for his proof of the existence of God based on the necessity-contingency distinction. As a matter of fact, the five ways for proving the existence of God (the 'quinta via' of Thomas Aquinas) and the precise elucidation of all their metaphysical presuppositions are to be found in the works of Avicenna, especially in his *Sufficiencia*.

The most famous Muslim philosopher in the West of Islam and in Spain was without doubt Averroes (1126–98), who was known in the west as "the Commentator". He wrote three kinds of commentary on Aristotle's works, short commentaries or compendia; middle commentaries which expanded Aristotle's doctrine in some detail; and the greater commentaries in which the text of Aristotle was given in lemmata which are followed by an extensive and detailed commentary. Most of these commentaries were translated into Latin and Hebrew and at a time when most of the works Aristotle were not available in Latin or Hebrew, the translation of Averroes works, especially the greater commentaries, made the texts of Aristotle available to European scholars.

To Averroes was attributed the theory of "monopsychism", which denies the existence after death of the individual soul, and which was severely criticized by St. Bonaventura and St. Thomas Aquinas. He also came to be known and criticized for the "double truth" theory which is not found literally in his extant works but was attributed to him by his followers in the University of Paris, who come to be known as "Latin Averroists". Finally it should be noted that certain misinterpretations made by Averroes were of great importance in the influence of Islamic ideas on the West. For example, Averroes' Averroes wrongly

believed that Avicenna considered being to be an “accident,” and this blatant misunderstanding was noted by scholastic philosophers as St. Thomas Aquinas.

## **Conclusion**

These are many other facets of Islamic Culture and Civilization which have affected other cultures, Eastern and Western. For example, one could speak about the impact of Islam in the domain of arts, such as music, calligraphy and architecture to name only the most significant. One could again elaborate on the esoteric teachings of Islam, such as Sufism, and their reciprocal impact on other religions. But it should be considered that in these fields, a lot of research has yet to be done in order to get clear-cut solutions to these queries. Nonetheless, the influences of Islamic thought and culture on the sciences and on philosophy, especially in Europe where they were to have a crucial role in the development of modern global civilization, are clear and indisputable.

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# **Human Rights in the West and in Islam**

MOSTAFA MOHAGHEGH DAMAD





The term “human rights” as it is used today, does not have a long history in the literary and legal tradition of the West. After reviewing the school of the greatest philosopher of the era of enlightenment, namely Kant, who more than any other philosopher took man and his grandeur as the origin and criterion of practical philosophy, we will be surprised to find no trace of the term “human rights” in his works.

Actually, this term was created in the context of a socio-political movement in France, thereby preserving its original meaning and political content up to now, without which this expression would not make sense. In practice, human rights are manipulated in the domain of certain states, and are used as a means to impose their opinions and authority. But objectively, the legal outlines compiled under the umbrella term “human rights” include these rights:

the right of living, right of freedom, right of equity, right of pleading for justice, right of security against abusive authority, right of security against torture, right of dignity and reputation, right of asylum, right of minorities, right of social life, right of thinking, faith and speech, right of religion, right of participating in public gatherings, economic right, right of ownership, right of working, right of sharing the material and spiritual af-

fairs, right of having a family, right of women, right of education, individual's right of living, and the right of shelter.

Obviously, the main principle for being able to enjoy these rights is that they should not contradict other human rights.

These rights may be logically classified into the following:

#### *Individual's rights*

These include the right to security and defense against other human beings and the state, the right of living and enjoying physical health, the right of having faith, morals as well as the right of ownership.

#### *Political rights*

They comprise the right of participation in political and social affairs, and they include freedom of the press, freedom of the sciences, freedom of education and research, freedom of gathering and forming societies.

#### *Primary social rights*

These encompass the right to work, social security, cultural and social development, etc.

This was a brief list of the terms that are generally known as human rights. With respect to the Islamic World, in "the International Conference of Islamic Scholars" held in September 1991, it was concluded that from the outset, Islam has mentioned clearly twenty individual human rights, among which are the right of living, right of security against invasion and persecution, right of asylum, right of minorities, right of faith, right of social security, right of working, right of education and right of spiritual enrichment. Yet, even though practically these values

are inferred as rights, in Islamic jurisprudential terms they are regarded as jurisprudential and moral obligations.

In other words, a Muslim is obliged to fulfill these duties, some of which are obligatory while others are preferably observed. That is to say that, in Islam, instead of the question of “right”, the question of obligation is set forth. It is from these obligations that we derive the above mentioned rights.

In this way, Christian scholars have been able to infer the rights for those who benefit from such moral behaviors through their traditional ethics. The same is true with the Jewish tradition whose Bible is claimed to contain the origin of human rights.

As far as human rights are concerned, the followers of these three religions namely, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, give priority to the equality of all human beings in front of God. But, in fact, whatever the followers of these faiths regard as “human rights”, they are the values that are generally known as moral values. This means that such rights do not entail civil sanction or any reward or punishment, unless they endanger human lives and properties.

In contrast, those human rights as interpreted and formulated in 1789 in France were intended to be turned into positive laws; they were meant as a means of political power, and guarantee their universal civil sanction.

Here, we are going to express the principal difference of human rights as a product of the historical, political and intellectual tradition of the West from the beginning (the age of Greek philosophers) up to the present day, and also the views of Islam in this respect.

### **Some points about the term “human rights”**

The term “human rights” poses the question, why and in what sense “human” is the focal point of this term. It is not possible to mention all the historical and social reasons to answer the question just raised. But it should be noted that in the eighteenth century the Western World, rather the Western countries, came to the conclusion that peaceful life of the humans is possible only when man is not judged by features such as: religion, political stance, race, skin color, sex, social position, relation or wealth, and that they should have no identity except his/her humanity or as we, the disciples, term it, that they should see their identity in humanity for humanity’s sake, and not identify themselves as a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew, a secular, a black, a white, a rich, a poor, a sage, an ignorant, or as the ruler and the subordinate. As soon as man was defined in this way in the phenomenon of human rights, his rights were defined differently. Here, the ‘right’ is the most natural and primary claim, it is present spontaneously in the existence and nature of each individual, which has been given to him by no one and which cannot be taken from him by anyone. This right does not refer to any person but stands for issues like life, freedom, equality, etc. There are, in contrast, rights of the children, the parents, wife, and husband and vice versa.

The question that is raised now is whether the legitimacy of religious duties and the rights derived from them are provided by the origin of revelation or a particular source of law-making. What is the source of the legitimacy of human rights, Islamic laws, Christian or other laws? These have a spiritual origin. Therefore, where does its legitimacy stem from? The legitimacy that would have civil sanction and the rewards and

punishments resulting from it. This legitimacy should conform to these limitations. Where is the source and reference of this legitimacy? To prove this case, the founders of human rights neither wanted nor were able to refer to any religions or sources. Otherwise, the question of man would not have become humanity for humanity's sake. They had to find the legitimacy and civil sanction of these rights in man and his substantial necessities, as it was created in the philosophy of the age of enlightenment.

They took the dignity of man as the most important and clearest phenomenon of a typical human being, which could function as a major principle and be accepted unanimously by all humans anywhere and at any time. As all religions confirm, dignity is a characteristic that can be found in all human beings. This means that human dignity is a primary principle, not a right, it is something which is part of man's nature.

But a further step was necessary that would give general credit to this individual aspect. The phenomenon of equality fulfilled this duty. The equality accepted by all humans was a dignity that was able to persuade all people to the necessity of preserving their substantial needs, and prove the right of questioning those who deprive the people of their rights.

It is not only the question of accepting this general principle but its civil sanction, which secures the active aspect against dignity and equity. That is to say that dignity and equity is something inherent in humans. The physical aspect is the implementing aspect that should be directed from the top and another aspect. Only the phenomenon of justice has been shared by all humans. It addresses in general the owners of authority as well as all humans who somehow, even at a small scale, have the status of superiority to others.

This was a brief account of the philosophy of human rights evolution, its content and its civil sanction. Now, let us see why there exists a difference between what the West understand from man and eventually his rights and what religions, particularly Islam, pose as human rights. The root of such difference appears to lie in the perception or rather in the method of applying the two distinctive pictures of man in the Western World on the one hand and in the Semitic religions on the other.

In the Semitic religions, as the Holy Koran depicts: God is at the center of the worldview. Man, in its true sense, is the one who bases and realizes his existence, intellect and acts on sincerity and devotion to the unique God. On this basis, the source of man's dignity is his sincere attention to God and the pure virtue of this human being in view of God.

As it is stated, the most dignified man to God is the one with the greatest virtue. The Western worldview of man is in contrast with this one: The thought and intellect of the West gives centrality to man; the notion that man is the criterion for the measurement of everything is a philosophical principle dating back to the era before Socrates. The Greek mythology and then their whole philosophical schools had this principle as the origin of their movement. The Greek gods, its universe and incidents, either positive or negative, revolve around the pivot of man and his demands. Gradually, this notion stemmed from those who were not Jews and followed other religions and the tradition of European Christianity. Nevertheless, the theo-centralism was replaced by human-centralism, and thus in this sense, God was the source of addressing man and his demands.

The notion of sin as a substantial aspect of man, and the belief in the necessity of avoiding sin, culminates in a theological mechanism that necessitates the sacrifice of man's God within

the framework of Jesus Christ. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ for saving man from sin is actually something at the service of man and in this sense it is human-centered, without having any advantages for God or Jesus Christ. As a consequence, the theo-centralism of Semitic religions is replaced by human – centralism of the West.

Yet, man is depicted differently in Islam. That is, man has been created with a nature moving towards uniqueness, (religion-natured), and theo-centralism is the principal element of his existence. In other words, in contrast to the human-centralism in the West, theo-centralism is dominant in Islam. Obviously, throughout history, the Church has repeatedly strived to limit human centralism by imposing the Church's principles and commands. Ultimately, however, the power of human-centralism succeeded in freeing Western man from these obligations and limitations.

The impact of the theo-centralism in the Semitic religions, particularly Islam, and human-centralism in the Western culture with respect to the human rights are as follows:

Human rights as derived from religions, consider these rights in the framework of the divine will and command, and thus cannot ignore all credits and aspects. When one talks about human rights in Islam, man is not absolute. It is man who is related to God. The same applies to Christianity; whereas human rights fail to give way to any limitations whatsoever.

This distinction has brought about debates between the advocates of human rights in its Western sense, and the followers of the schools such as the Catholic Church and Islam.

The boundary line existing between absolute human rights and human rights limited by religious obligations has been discussed formally between Muslims and Christians in different times and places.



The philosophical and verbal aspects of human rights have just been briefly stated. Now, let us have a look at the historical trend of codes and laws related to human rights in the West, and then touch on the current status of human rights in the West.

### **Philosophical and mystical principles of human rights in Islam**

The origin of the principal difference between the views that Islam and the West's have of human rights lies in their sources. In Islam, human rights are founded on philosophical and mystical principles, which are necessarily in accordance and coordinated with religious laws. The following is a brief account of these principles:

*1. The principle of man's dignity:* In the Holy Koran, man is regarded as a creature endowed by God with dignity (I have given dignity to Adam's children, Asra, 70). Such a dignity is a theoretical value that can have practical aspects later on. Man's dignity from the point of view of the Koran is not a credential but a real affair, indicating that in an existential dimension, man is prominent and credited. That is to say that man is the supreme creature of the universe. That is the reason why God, after the creation of man, states to Satan that, "why did you not prostrate yourself to what I created with my own two hands?"

This theoretical dignity can carry along with it valuable and practical generousities. For the sake of this dignity, all the ethical and legal education should be in full conformity with it. As soon as one accepts that man is a dignified and precious gem,

one automatically believes that not only freedom and security are his rights, but also that they should be so arranged and interpreted as to confirm with his dignity.

2. *The principle of man's demanding for God:* In principle, man demands for God. Man feels God at the bottom of his heart though he does not see his face. Man's God demanding is not unconscious, nor is it compulsory. One should not think of God as an unknown thing that he cannot find. Man looks for God as an entity that is familiar to him and by whom he is fascinated. According to a law of wisdom, man's existence is not separate and independent, but it is thoroughly dependent and linked. Yet this linked existence is not connected to another being with a linked existence; it is linked to an independent entity. Man is nothing more than the very dependency and linkage. It should not be deemed that man is a creature capable of praising God, but that man's relation with God is rooted in man's intrinsic flaws and his mere need of God: O men, you are the ones that have need of God;

هَلْ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا لَآءِ قُفْلًا مُتَنَاسًا نَّالَاهُ يَا أَيُّ

In this verse, both truths are included: firstly, that man's existence is not independent; and secondly, that man's connection is only to God, not to any creature whatsoever.

As a result, any legal order and arrangement for man should conform to his God-demanding spirit. Those legal teachings presupposing separate existence and independency for man, or relating him to someone other than God, do not stem from the source of truth. Of course, those who have not believed in this source, are often prone to error in adaptation, otherwise they

know that man is a dependent creature. Pagans too are fond of something or someone and trust in it or him. Here, the difference is that they have chosen something other than God, as an independent creature, and have slipped into wrong ways at the adaptation stage.

*3. The principle of man's immortality:* A further advantage of Islamic human rights is that here man never vanishes. This claim may be realized through reasoning or citation. The Holy Koran regards man as a creature possessing soul, who is believed to enter another world after leaving this world, and will enjoy eternal life there. Wisdom, too, considers man as having abstract soul, and states that this soul is immortal. From the perspective of wisdom, it is only man's body that dies, and death is simply the separation of the soul from the body. And when according to God's will, this separation ends, the soul will be united with the body appropriate for the next world.

This principle has been adopted by all humans; and the existing differences are the outcome of mal-adaptation. All human beings demand longer life, and make every effort to live a little bit longer. This reveals that man looks for immortality by nature. However, in the course of adaptation, some believe that eternity belongs to this world, whereas both man and the present world are only passengers. Of course, man reaches his mid-abode after death and then moves on to the big resurrection. In contrast, the world goes straight ahead to the big resurrection. The Koran regards the whole universal system as moving like man, towards God. The universe also goes towards doomsday to testify in favor or against its passengers, that is either to complain about their deeds, or to intercede for them. It is cited in our traditions that the present world and its elements

witness our deeds and complain or intercede for us. Thus, all humans are doomed to mortality, but some think of the present world as being eternal, and do not know that eternity belongs to the soul only, not to matter; and that whatever remains eternally from them, does not include the material things of this world or the wealth.

This foolish idea has been urging the materialist and layman to become rich so that he can have access to eternal life by his fortune, and to destroy or control death. The Holy Koran considers this idea false and unripe, and reveals the pure eternity: Whatever is at your disposal is doomed to die, and whatever is at God's disposal lasts forever.

قَابِ اِذْ لَدُنَّ عِزِّ مَوْءَدْفِنِي اِذْ لَدُنَّ عِزِّ مَوْءَدْفِنِي

#### *4. The principle of eventual peace for man*

It might be assumed that eternity means reaching the peaceful abode, however, these two are different. One may think of an eternal creature which never reaches its abode, and is always astonished and wandering. The Holy Koran uses a delicate metaphor to indicate that there is an aim in the universal system: They will question thee concerning the Hour, when it [universe] shall berth.

اِهْاَسْرُمْ نَايِيْ اِهْاَسْرُمْ نَايِيْ اِهْاَسْرُمْ نَايِيْ

According to this interpretation, the whole universe resembles a ship moving in the ocean of nature. This ship is not likely to move forever; sooner or later it should drop the anchor. In other words, it may be inferred that the universe will stop moving one day, and will reach its destiny, which is the doomsday of

the universe and man, when man meets God. Accordingly, one of the terms used instead of paradise is Eden, which means the peaceful abode.

5. *The principle of the world of being and man's generic relation*

Man, the unique eternal gem, has an everlasting connection with all elements of existence. That explains the impact of his deeds on his life and soul. Man's speech, writing and behavior affects his temperament: these are either enlightening or darkening. For the same reason, one can find no legal rule that is not somehow related to man's temper and destiny. With the acceptance of this principle, one can no longer claim that man is free to do anything he wishes on his own.

The effect of different foods are different. The true words differ from the false ones. Each of these have different outcomes. Sin, for instance, takes the brightness off the heart's mirror and replaces it with darkness: No indeed; but what they were earning has rusted upon their hearts

نَوْبَسْ كَيْ اَوْنَاكَ اَمْ لِمَهْبُولُقْ اَيْلَعَنْ اَرَلْبَالْ كَ

When the heart's pores are covered with specks of dust representing sins, and the dust is not removed, the heart gets dark gradually, and one loses his senses of sight and hearing. Even the good and bad memories affect man's soul. An indecent and sinful look at someone covers the heart with dust. On the face of it, man's eyes, ears and tongue are apparently active, but in reality, they are not. The Koran refers to the eyes but clearly this is only a symbol, and not the only one; the same is true with ears, the tongue as well as other organs: It is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts within the breasts.

ايف ايت ال اُبُولُ قُلْ اِيْمَعَتَ نَكَدْ وَ رَاُصْبَا اِيْمَعَتَ ال اِهْنَاَفْ  
رُوْدُصْلَا

On the same basis, God sends his message and true words to people, yet there are some groups who do not hear and comprehend them. This verse from the Haj Chapter stands for many other verses which call sinners blind, deaf and dumb. Thus, in the divine view, man's actions have profound impacts on his soul, so much so that in some cases these actions do not conform to or resemble his appearance.

### **The history of human rights in Islam**

To grasp the history of human rights in Islam, one should divide it into the following parts, and study them independently: 1) the period of the creation of human rights in Islam, and 2) the period of compilation of human rights in Islam.

In relation to the first part, it should be noted that the collection of Islamic laws comprises the verses of the Holy Koran, the prophet's statements, and his deeds and advices. Consequently, the citation of typical verses and traditions would suffice in this part.

1. In one of the traditions, it is stated that, 'believers' friendship, kindness and empathy resembles a unique body in which the pain and injury of one organ causes pain and fever in other organs signifying their sympathy and empathy”.

اذا دحاولا دسجلا لثم امهفطاعت و امم حارت و امهداوت ايف انينموملا لثم  
ايمحلا و اهرسلاب دسجلا رياس اهل ايعادت وضع انم ايكتشا

This tradition has got this point in it that in a religious society, members resemble a body whose organs have kindness, sympathy and sentiment. The balance of values of the individual and society is emphasized. From the point of view of Islam, values and roles and social creativities are rooted in individuals, and therefore, individuals' developments are among the major aims of their lives. Yet the value and nobility of the society is never ignored. To sacrifice society for the individual is illogical and in the direction of destroying the values. Sacrificing the individual for society is equally destructive and damages the values and stops the development of man.

2. There is another tradition

اطخسلا و اضرلا اسانلا اعماجى امنا

saying that the satisfaction of the community reflects the firm foundation of unity and integrity; it is the basis of democracy in Islamic political thought. Without community's satisfaction, the political system loses its legitimacy.

نُودُبِعَافِ لِمُكُّبَرِ اِنَّ اَوْ ءَدَحِ اَوْ ءَمُّ لِمُكُّتَمُّ اِهْذِه سَنَا

3. Surely this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord; so serve Me.

It is implied in one of the verses that in the followers (اتم) theory from the viewpoint of Islam, the individual, in terms of perception, will, freedom and his belief in high values, accepts the totality of society, nation and followers, and devotes or sometimes sacrifices himself to save them. This is the highest stage of man's freedom.

4. In the Islamic worldview, the right to freedom and will is man's undeniable right under every condition, and man cannot be deprived of it. The Koran verses clearly point to these views:

Surely we guided him upon the way whether he be thankful or unthankful

أَرُوْفَكَ اٰمًا وَّ اَرْكَا۟شِ اٰمًا لَّيْبَسَ لَهَا نِيْدًا اَنْ اَ

So let whosoever will believe, and let whosoever will disbelieve.

رُفَكَ يَلْفَ اَآشِ اِنَّمَا وَّ نَمُوِي لَفَ اَآشِ اِنَّمَا ف

5. In Islam's political thinking, it is not only a matter of automatic reaction of individual or society to turmoil or the phenomenon of tyranny that necessitates the respect to human rights. It is so analyzed because man believes in his need for development. Man's high destiny and dignity is termed as the owner of the God's soul in the Holy Koran:

I breathed My Spirit in him

اِيْحُوْر نَمِ اِيْفُ تُخَفَان و

6. From an Islamic perspective, ignorance of man's position and status and of his high value is the source of all injustice, tyrannies and lack of proper cognition of the self, without which man will remain ignorant about his responsibilities: The worst ignorance for man is his inability to recognize the value of the self.

اِردق فِرعِعالِ اِنَا الِهَجِ عِرمَلِ ابِ اِيْفَكَ



7. In Islamic texts, despite the worldly charms and conventional classifications, a great emphasis has been put to man's value and dignity: Imam Ali addressed his governor in Egypt, "be respectful and kind to everybody, since all people are humans or are your co-religionist".

قُلْ خَلَا أَيْفَ كُلِّ رِيظَنٍ وَإِنْ يَدِلَا أَيْفَ كُلِّ إِخَا أَمَّا أَنْفَن صَمِنْ أَمِنَاف

8. Humans' creation and nature are identical:

Who created you of single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered a broad many men and women.

كَتَبَ وَ أِهْ جَوَزَ أِهْ نَمَ قَلَّخَ وَ دَرَجَ أَوْ سِفَنَ نَمَ مُمْ كَقَلَّخَ إِذْ لَأِ يَذَلَا  
ءَأَسَنَ وَ أَرِيثَكَ أَلْ أَجَرَ أَمْ هُنَمَ

9. The verse: "Mankind were only one nation, then they fell into variance" denies differences and unjust discrimination.

أَوْفَلَتَّخَافَ دَرَجَ أَوْ هَمَّ أَلْ أَسْ أَدَلَا نَأَكْ أَمْ

10. In the perspective of the Holy Koran, differences are not based on values but merely related to the complexities of the creation system and agent of knowledge and man's intellectual development: O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another.

مُمْ كَأَنْ لَعَجَ وَ إِيْثُنْ أَوْ رَكَذْ نَمَ مُمْ كَأَنْ قَلَّخَ أَدَلَا سَأَنَلَا هِيَّ أَيْ  
أَوْفَرَا عَتَلَلْ لَأَبَقَ وَ أَبُو عُشْ

11. To condemn any type of unjust discrimination among humans, the honorable Prophet stated that, “surely, you have only one God and one father”. You are all the ancestors of the Adam and he was created of earth.

... إِبَارَتِ نَمِ إِمْدَاً وَ إِمْدَالِ إِمْكَلِكِ دِحَاوِ إِمْكَابِ إِنَا وَ دِحَاوِ إِمْكَبِرِ إِنَا إِسْأِنِ لَاهِيَا

12. The value and place of any person in society is ultimately related to his deed.

هُنَّيْهَرَ تَبَسَّكَ إِمْبِ سِفَنَ مُلْكَ

13. Islam denies ambition based on wealth and force and condemns it. The Holy Koran refers this indecent feature to snobs and states:

نَيِّبَ ذَعْمُ بِنُحْنِ إِمِّ وَ أَدَالِ وَا وَ أَلِ إِمِّ أُرْتَكَا نُنْحَنَ أُولَاقِ وَ

14. In proper Islamic judgment, equity should even cover the visual looking at people. Imam Ali once told the judges: “you should regard justice even when you look at the prosecutor and the defendant”

إِرْظَنَلَا وَ إَهْظَحَلَلَا إِيْفِ إِمْنِ يَبِ إِسْأِ وَ

15. In Islam, the criterion of equity is justice and truth. Imam Ali has said: “All people should be treated justly. In brief, treat everybody as equal.”

ءَاوَسِ قِحَلَا إِيْفِ إِكْدِنَعِ إِسْأِنِ لَارِمَا إِنْ كَيْلِ وَ



هتداب ع اهل اهداب ع زم هداب ع اجر خيل ادم حم بثعب اهل ان اف

The humans who lose their dignity, because of their needs, are warned not to be other's slaves because they have been created by the God.

ارح اهل اكل ع ج دق و كيري غ دب ع نكت ال

21. The word, "don't oppress and don't let others oppress you"

نومل ظت ال و نومل ظت ال

is one of the major humanitarian slogans, that has been presented by the Koran for eradicating the traces of aggression.

22. The denial of obligation is one of the clear legal notions that not only sanctions freedom deprivation of man, but is now being practiced as legal principle in trials: *ني دل ايف ه اركا ال* There is no obligation in accepting a religion.

### **The history of human rights compilation in Islam**

In the initial years of the descending of the Holy Koran verses, the compilation of human rights in Islam began. The depiction of issues bearing on human rights was compiled in divine verses prepared by Hakim. Hence we may relate the compilation of human rights in Islam to the second decade of the 1st century A.H. (Hijra or Muslim era) or the second half of the 7th century A.D. In contrast to the literature of human rights in the West, the Koran is one of the old documents on human rights.

The compilation of the preaches, views and traditions of prophet of Islam was another landmark in the history of human rights in this religion; and the basics and stems of human rights were set forth in tradition books, and like other fields of Islamic sciences, a firm foundation was provided for Islamic scholars to conduct researchers and analysis in this area. The 3rd century A.H. witnessed the advent of hundreds of books on various subjects of faith and under different titles, elaborating on the principles of comprehensive Islamic thinking, regarding man's culture and civilization including human rights.

Fortunately, most of these books containing the deeds and speeches and views of the prophet on Islamic affairs have been preserved. Now, we have access to a great portion of this cultural heritage of the dawn of Islam.

The next step was the purgation of existing literature on narrations by Islamic scholars, which was another cornerstone in the development of human rights. At this juncture, the narrations were specified and classified in chronological order and thus the issue of contradiction was clarified.

The beginning of the compilation of religious Jurisprudence and Ethics (two major fields in Islamic sciences) and their development in the 3rd and centuries A.H. resulted in the presentations of Shaykh Toosi, in which the issues were discussed on the basis of reasoning.

The following stages of development may be traced in the works of Mohaghegh and Allamah Helli in the 7th and 8th centuries A.H. This trend was continued throughout the 13th and 14th A.H., when Islamic Jurisprudence flourished, and human rights were discussed in Islam more deeply and comprehensively in various classifications and traditional categories of Jurisprudence.

It should be emphasized here again that Islam consists of religious rules and ethics, mysticism and philosophy, which constitute a great part of our faith. In Islamic mysticism, man has a high position, a view which affects Jurisprudential implications. And philosophical and mystic principles govern man's and society's existence.

In our era, the great jurists like the late Imam Khomeini opened new ways in the domain of Jurisprudence, which not only add mystic aspects to man's value and personality, but also includes the elements of time and place in Jurisprudence leadership which allows experts to interpret religious texts according to the demands of contemporary man.

### **The historical trend of human rights compilation in the West**

It is now necessary to mention briefly the declarations so far issued on human rights.

#### *Declaration of Human Rights, France*

The first declaration of human rights was issued after the French Revolution in August 1789. This declaration consisted of an introduction and 17 articles; and was reflected in France's Constitution which was sanctioned later; and also had its impact on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

This declaration was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations as Resolution No 217. In this declaration, human rights were no longer limited but took a legal status and

universal aspect. Every state has been obliged to respect these rights. The declaration comprises an introduction, a pact and 30 articles.

*European pact of supporting human rights and political freedom*

This pact was sanctioned in Rome on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1950. And until 1966 protocols were continually attached to it. The pact consists of 66 articles, and is one of the most comprehensive texts relating to human rights. This pact which has been endorsed by the Council of Europe Members, says that human rights have civil sanctions, and the European member states have guaranteed their implication. In this pact, the establishment of a court-house has been predicted, to consider the complaints on the violation of human rights regulations

*European Social Charter*

This charter was approved in Turin on October 18, 1961, and its objective has been to let the nationals of European countries enjoy equal social life regardless of their race, color, sex, religion, and political views. The charter has a rather economical intention in that it promotes the standard of living and improvement of both urban and rural life in European nations.

*Pact of supporting human rights in America*

The American countries have sanctioned several declarations and pacts. The following are cited as examples:

- Human Rights Commission that began its operation in 1960.
- The American Pact of Human Rights sanctioned on November 22, 1969.
- American Declaration of Man's Rights and Duties sanctioned in Bogota in 1948.

*International Pacts of Human Rights*

The two pacts sanctioned on December 16, 1960 by the General Assembly of the United Nations are complementary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from legal and political points of view. One of these is about urban and political rights composed of an introduction and 53 articles; and the other relates to economic, social and cultural rights, comprising an introduction and 31 articles.

**Human Rights: A Political Lever in the Contemporary West**

It appears as if the West considers human rights just for itself, not for the manipulated and oppressed nationals of other countries. Even if the West states something about human rights in the Third World, that is not devoid of political bias. The presence of the West's political objectives behind the disguise of human rights in Iran is quite tangible. This has led to a lack of trust on the part of the Third World nations.

Despite the sanction of rules and the dissemination of the above mentioned declarations, and after so many years have passed, it has been repeatedly noticed that the superpowers in the west justify their most disgusting deeds in African, Asian and Latin American nations by the excuse of the dissemination of the principles of humanity and civilization. The dark stains of old and new colonisms have not to be forgotten by the states of these regions including my own country, Iran, that have suffered for more than a century. Islamic countries are still being plundered in a colonistic fashion; and everyday, their material and spiritual resources are being ravaged under the disguise of some excuse; at the same time the West does not stop us-



ing its human rights slogan, merely because the West assumes that human rights belongs only to the West. The silence of the Western communities with respect to the crimes and violation of the rights of the Palestinians by the Zionists, as well as their support for the Zionists justify our claims. The West is also the pioneering supporter of the establishment of this focal point of corruption and riot. The West ignores with satisfaction the napalm bombs that are dropped on women and wandering children of Palestine. And when it offers a peace plan, it is not a just and reasonable one to secure the rights of the oppressed Palestinians; instead it is only concerned about the racist Zionists. In other words, the West is intrinsically on the side of race discrimination: this mentality does not conform to the world-view about human rights.

## **Conclusions**

The concept of human rights has taken an individual form. In contrast, Islam considers man as a social being who is strongly associated with his society. Human rights in the West are a commercial-political lever.

Prior to anything else, man must look for freedom within himself and avoid immoral ways of life. This has been emphasized in the schools of religion, particularly in Islam.

Islam regards man responsible for his deeds, and Islamic mentality takes into consideration social aspects of life such as encouraging good deeds and avoiding bad deeds; at the same time it takes inner aspects of man very seriously, and aims at the creation of stable man.

## سمینار گفتگوی اسلام و غرب

دکتر مارک هرابتس ( ویرایشگر )  
دکتر رضا داوری اردکانی  
دکتر غلامرضا اعوانی  
آیت . . . سید مصطفی محقق داماد

گفتگوهای موثر و مفید نمایندگان فلسفه و مطالعات اسلامی جمهوری اسلامی ایران به خصوص در زمانی که ما بیش از پیش با فلسفه و سنتهای مذهبی متفاوت در فرهنگها و تمدنهای دیگر مواجه هستیم، باعث ارتقاء فهم موضوع در جهان معاصر گردید.

این مجموعه برگرفته از مباحث سمینار "گفتگوی بین فرهنگی میان غرب و اسلام" است. این سمینار با شرکت میهمانان برجسته از فرهنگستان علوم جمهوری اسلامی ایران شامل رضا داوری اردکانی رئیس فرهنگستان علوم، غلامرضا اعوانی مدیر موسسه فلسفه در فرهنگستان علوم و رئیس انجمن فلسفه اسلامی و آیت . . . سید مصطفی محقق داماد مدیر بخش مطالعات اسلامی فرهنگستان علوم و استاد فقه و حقوق دانشگاه شهید بهشتی تهران که همگی دارای تالیفات شناخته شده ای در خصوص این موضوعات می باشند، برگزار شد.

سمینار با حضور سخنرانان ایرانی بنا به دعوت رئیس آکادمی علوم چک و با مشارکت مرکز فلسفه آکادمی علوم چک و دانشکده فلسفه دانشگاه چارلز، توسط مرکز مطالعات جهانی آکادمی علوم جمهوری چک در پراگ پایتخت جمهوری چک برگزار گردید. سمینار مورد توجه خاص قرار گرفت و در آن نه تنها فلاسفه و اندیشمندان علوم اجتماعی، که دیپلمات ها و سیاستمداران حضور داشتند.

در این جلد، مقالات ارائه شده توسط سخنرانان که در آن جنبه های روابط دو سویه میان اسلام و

غرب را تحلیل و ظرفیتهای موجود در روابط و گفتگوی میان فرهنگها معرفی گردیده، ارائه می نماییم. در تمامی مقالات ابعاد مختلف روابط متقابل بین اسلام و غرب و معرفی ظرفیت های گفتگوهای درون فرهنگی و ارتباطات مورد تحلیل قرار گرفته است.

در ابتدای این سمینار مارک هرابتس، مدیر مرکز مطالعات جهانی آکادمی علوم چک، به معرفی و طرح موضوع مقالات میهمانان ایرانی در خصوص گفتگوی میان فرهنگها پرداخت و در ادامه مفاد و شرایط شناخت گفتگوی دو سویه بین فرهنگی را تشریح نمود.

وی کنفرانس را با این فرض افتتاح نمود که تماسهای بین فرهنگی رایج در گذشته وجود داشته است و اکنون نیز این امر در جهان کنونی که مشخصه آن رشد شاخصهای اقتصادی، فنی و دیگر اقدامات درونی میان مردم با فرهنگهای مختلف است وجود دارد.

منازعات مختلفی برای سلطه بیشتر یکی بر دیگری در گرفته است. لکن در حالیکه برخورد میان فرهنگها و تمدنها آنها را به سوی تضاد و قطب بندی هدایت می کند، برخلاف آن گفتگوی میان فرهنگها به بارور ساختن شناخت و همکاری متقابل کمک می کند.

رضا داوری اردکانی در سخنرانی خود به موضوع رابطه خاص میان تمدن غرب با جهان اسلام پرداخت. او توضیح می دهد که روابط در گذشته بیشتر دارای تعامل درونی بوده است. ایشان معتقد است فرهنگ غرب تا پیش از دنیای مدرن کنونی و آغاز دوره پیشرفت تاثیر بیشتری را از جهان اسلام پذیرفته است. از این زمان دنیای غرب با فرهنگهای دیگر از جمله اسلام ارتباط نداشته و در عوض فرهنگ تکنولوژیک غرب بیشتر مورد توجه زندگی مردم جهان با فرهنگهای مختلف بوده است.

از این منظر یکی از پدیده های مهم تاریخی این است که چطور فرهنگها با یکدیگر تعامل دارند. حل این موضوع در جهان معاصر نمی تواند بر اساس تئوری برخورد تمدنها و محکومیت یکدیگر شکل

گیرد. اسلام مخالف حقوق بشر نبوده و فرهنگ خشونت آمیز نیست. اسلام و غرب می توانند وضعیت را از طریق شناخت متقابل یکدیگر بوسیله خرد و گفتگو و نه از مسیر خشونت و جنگ متوازن کنند. غلامرضا اعوانی دیگر سخنران ایرانی روابط میان اسلام و غرب را به خوبی تحلیل نمود. ایشان بیشتر بر جهات مختلف تأثیر پذیری این دو فرهنگ از یکدیگر تمرکز نمود. اعوانی به اثبات تأثیر جهان اسلام بر دنیای غرب و به طور کلی تمدن جهانی در طول دوره تحولات تاریخی در اسلام پرداخت.

جهان اسلام فرهنگ بی نظیری را که در برگیرنده گروه‌های مختلف اقلیت در مناطق مختلف جغرافیایی با فرهنگ‌های مذهبی دیگر مانند مسیحیت، بودایسم، هندویسم خلق کرد. یکی از ثمرات تأثیر علوم و حیات فکری اسلام بر غرب که یکی از آنها اروپا است، این بود که اروپاییان اعمال ریاضی مختلف را به عنوان تابعی از ارقام و اعداد عربی شکل دادند.

همچنین فرهنگ اروپایی وارث فلسفه و علم یونانی است که نه به صورت مستقیم لکن بوسیله دانشمندان مسلمان از طریق علم و فلسفه اسلامی تحول یافته است. به طور کلی اسلام کمک مهمی به فرهنگ غرب و همچنین توسعه تمدن بشری داشته است.

مقاله آیت ا.م. محقق داماد معطوف به تحلیل مناقشات خاص و وابسته میان اسلام و غرب به ویژه در خصوص منشاء حقوق بشر بود. ایشان به تشریح منشاء فلسفی و معنوی حقوق بشر پرداخت و توضیح داد که چگونه حقوق بشر در اصل بر پایه شان و مقام انسان به عنوان سرمایه ای که مشخصه وجود بشر است مشروعیت پیدا می کند. اصل شان انسانی می تواند بعنوان ارزش مشترک میان تمامی مردم در همه جا قرار گیرد. یکی از بیشترین بخشهای تالیفات محققین به تحلیل منابع تاریخی حقوق بشر در اسلام پرداخته است. این منابع نشان می دهند که تفاوت اصلی میان تفسیر اسلام و غرب از حقوق بشر در مباحث مربوط به فردگرایی در حقوق

بشر شکل می گیرد. در اینجا اصول و قواعد فلسفی و شرعی که حقوق بشر در اسلام بر پایه آن شکل گرفته بسیار مهم است. از این منظر در حالیکه اسلام بر ابعاد اجتماعی زندگی بشر مانند مسئولیت در خصوص کردار خوب و بد تاکید نموده و فرهنگ و حقوق بشر اسلامی اشخاص را مانند یک عضو جامعه در چارچوب فرهنگ اسلامی می داند، حقوق بشر در غرب بیشتر جنبه های تجاری و سیاسی را مورد توجه قرار داده است.

## Entre l'islam et l'Occident. Les perspectives iraniennes

Marek Hrubec (ed.)  
Reza Davari Ardakani  
Gholamreza Aavani  
Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad

En cette époque de globalisation, le débat avec les représentants de la philosophie iranienne et des études islamiques devient de plus en plus important, surtout quand on se confronte plus souvent à des traditions philosophiques et religieuses différentes provenant d'autres cultures et civilisations.

Cette collection d'articles est fondée sur le colloque « Le dialogue interculturel entre l'Occident et l'Islam », donné par nos chers invités de l'Académie des Sciences de la République Islamique d'Iran à Téhéran, qui sont tous des experts reconnus dans le domaine. Reza Davari Ardakani est président de l'Académie des Sciences. Gholamreza Aavani est directeur de l'Institut de la Philosophie à l'Académie et président de l'Association de la Philosophie Islamique. Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad est directeur des études islamiques à l'Académie, en même temps que professeur de jurisprudence et de droit à l'Université Shahid Beheshti à Téhéran.

Le colloque avec les conférenciers iraniens a été organisé à Prague, en République tchèque. Ils ont été invités par le président de l'Académie des Sciences de la République tchèque. Le colloque et d'autres événements liés ont été organisés par le Centre des Etudes Globales, un centre commun de l'Institut de la Philosophie de l'Académie des Sciences et de la Faculté des

Lettres de l'Université Charles à Prague. Le colloque a attiré beaucoup d'attention. Parmi les participants, il y avait non seulement des philosophes et des experts en sciences sociales mais aussi des diplomates et des politiciens.

Ce volume offre des essais qui représentent une plus longue version des conférences prononcées au colloque. Tous ensemble, ils analysent les différents aspects des relations entre l'Islam et l'Occident et introduisent un espace pour le débat et les rapports interculturels.

Marek Hrubec, directeur du Centre des Etudes Globales auprès de l'Académie des Sciences, introduit et encadre les articles des collègues iraniens en articulant le thème du colloque - le dialogue entre les cultures - et en spécifiant les conditions contextuelles et générales de la reconnaissance mutuelle interculturelle. Il ouvre le colloque en affirmant que des rencontres interculturelles ont été fréquentes dans le passé comme dans le contexte global d'aujourd'hui, caractérisé par le nombre croissant d'interactions économiques, technologiques et autres, entre des peuples de différentes cultures. Les disputes prennent des formes variées, des cultivées aux plus agressives. Si le choc des cultures et des civilisations entraîne la polarisation culturelle et la violence, le dialogue entre elles, au contraire, contribue à leur reconnaissance mutuelle et à leur coopération fructueuse.

Reza Davari Ardakani parle des rapports particuliers qui existent entre la civilisation occidentale et le monde islamique. Il explique que, dans le passé, ces rapports ont été plus interactifs. Le monde de l'Islam influençait la culture européenne dans une mesure beaucoup plus large dans le passé que dans la période depuis le développement du monde moderne à l'Occident. A partir de ce moment, l'Occident a cessé d'être interac-

tif par rapport à d'autres cultures, y compris l'Islam. La culture technoscientifique a été plutôt dominatrice de la façon de vivre des peuples différents. De ce point de vue, le phénomène historique crucial, c'est la façon dont des cultures interagissent. La solution au problème d'aujourd'hui ne peut pas se fonder sur l'idée du choc des civilisations et de la condamnation réciproque. L'Islam n'est pas opposé aux droits de l'homme et ne représente pas une culture de violence. L'Islam et l'Occident peuvent balancer la situation actuelle par un effort de reconnaître l'un l'autre, non pas par la violence ou la guerre mais par la sagesse et le dialogue.

Gholamreza Aavani offre lui aussi une analyse des relations entre l'Islam et l'Occident mais se concentre plutôt sur l'autre direction de l'influence entre ces cultures. Il met en relief l'influence qu'avait le monde islamique sur le monde occidental et la civilisation globale en général au cours de la longue histoire de l'Islam. Le monde islamique a créé une culture unique qui, ainsi que les autres cultures religieuses – le christianisme, le hindouisme ou le bouddhisme, embrassait de différents groupes ethniques sur de multiples territoires géographiques. Un exemple de l'influence fructueuse de la vie intellectuelle et la science islamiques sur celles de l'Occident est l'usage des chiffres arabes, jugés plus appropriés à toutes sortes d'opérations mathématiques. La philosophie grecque, fondement de la culture européenne, a aussi été transmise non pas directement mais à travers des savants musulmans et leur propre développement de la philosophie et de la science islamiques. En général, l'Islam a contribué considérablement à la culture occidentale et, à la longue, aussi au développement de la civilisation globale.

L'article d'Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad offre une analyse de divers enjeux spécifiques et pertinents, se référant



particulièrement aux droits de l'homme en Occident et dans le monde islamique. Il retrace les sources philosophiques et spirituelles de la notion des droits de l'homme et explique qu'à l'origine, sa légitimité dérivait de la dignité de l'homme, phénomène principal qui est propre à tous les êtres humains. Le principe de la dignité peut être la valeur commune, partagée par tous les hommes dans le monde entier. La partie la plus éclairante de l'essai, c'est une analyse des sources historiques des droits de l'homme en Islam. D'après l'auteur, ces sources sont à l'origine des différends entre les interprétations des droits de l'homme en Occident et en Islam, par exemple en ce qui concerne le débat sur la conception individualiste des droits de l'homme. Ce qui joue le rôle important ici, ce sont des principes philosophiques et mystiques qui sont au fondement des droits de l'homme dans le monde islamique. Sur ce point, l'Islam met l'accent sur les dimensions sociales de la vie humaine, telles que la responsabilité de ses actes, bons ou mauvais, et voit l'individu comme un être social dans le contexte de sa communauté, tandis qu'en Occident, les droits de l'homme sont plutôt perçus dans le contexte de la vie politique et commerciale.

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