

***On Philosophy  
Culture and Peace  
in Islam***

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# ***On Philosophy Culture and Peace in Islam***

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## ***Foreword***

The three essays in this book are about the role of Islam in the development of philosophical thought, the cultural relations between the West and the world of Islam, and the central role of peace in Islam. They were written on different occasions during the last years.

It is a matter of fact that in the past a positive mutual influence took place between both cultures and a civilized cooperation. This gives us hope for the future.

The religion of Islam recommends dialogue between religions and cultures as a way for solutions and prevention of conflicts.

This is because terror and antiterror will lead in the end to self-annihilation.

The religions from the point of view of Islam are ways that give peace a chance because their mission is to urge people to be just and peaceful.

**CHAPTER 1**  
***ON THE ROLE OF ISLAM***  
***IN THE DEVELOPMENT***  
***OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT***<sup>(\*)</sup>

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(\*) Translation revised by Prof. Dr. Ahmed Shafik El Khatib

Any discussion of the role of Islam in the development of human thought must at the outset take note of Islam's attitude towards the human mind. It is essential to acquaint oneself with this attitude in order to have a clear overview of the tremendous scope in Islam to develop human thought in general and philosophical thought in particular. We shall, therefore, present this paper in two parts:

I. The attitude of Islam towards the human mind.

II. The role of Islam in the development of philosophical thought.

### ***I. The Attitude of Islam towards the Human Mind:***

#### **1. Introduction:**

Before the advent of Islam, Arabs did not possess anything that could be described as philosophical thought. They did have some scattered philosophical reflections that we notice in the poetry and prose of their age. But these were more in the nature of "random thoughts and casual musings" as mentioned by Sharistani (1076-1153 A.D.). Thus they did not pay attention to critical thinking, nor did they counteract the superstitions and conventions of their times; they did not bother to make a critical

analysis of the notions and fantasies that were current during their age.

With the advent of Islam, a new life was infused in the Arabs: new horizons of knowledge and enlightenment were thrown open to them. Equipped with this knowledge and enlightenment, they were able to set up a vast state whose boundaries extended from China in the Far East to Andalusia (Spain) in the West. This vast nation witnessed the emergence of a great civilisation; there was a tremendous outburst of intellectual activity. Knowledge-sciences and humanities-attained its high point. Muslims made significant contributions in the realm of philosophical thought. They evolved a school of philosophy distinct from all other schools of philosophy. All these accomplishments were made possible only because of the fact that the Islamic teachings contained the necessary ingredients for bringing about such a tremendous change.

## **2. The concept of man in Islam:**

The attitude of Islam towards man was the cornerstone of this new edifice.

In Islam every human being is considered as the vicegerent of God on this earth. God has granted to human

beings a place superior to all other creatures and has honoured him in the best possible way. This special honour has many dimensions: it is a divine protection for man in order to safeguard his freedom, his mind, and his willpower; it is also a guarantee for his right to enjoy personal security, i.e. security for his own person, his kith and kin, and his personal wealth.

In substance, this honour represents real freedom. It is a conscious, responsible freedom that comprehends the importance of the responsibility it is bearing. It is the freedom referred to in the Quranic verse: "We did indeed offer the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof; but man undertook it". (Sura 33, verse 72).

While God has assigned man alone a special task and responsibility, he has on the other hand created for man this universe with all it contains so that man can carry out his material and spiritual activities. The Holy Quran refers to it in many verses such as: "And he has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth; behold, in that are signs indeed for those who reflect". (Sura 45, verse 13).

The word "reflect" mentioned in the above verse is a key word that should receive our full attention. It underlines the fact that although God has created this universe for man, man on his part should not adopt an attitude of indifference; on the contrary he has to take a positive attitude-an attitude of purpose and contemplation so that he may evolve ways by which he could make use of this universe for the benefit of all mankind. This can be possible only through knowledge, erudition, insight and experience. Such a process will lead him to material and spiritual progress. True insight will lead the believer to spiritual progress. In this connection the Holy Quran states: "Soon will we show them Our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth) and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth". (Sura 41, verse 53).

### **3. The human intellect and its functions:**

Man did not achieve this preeminence over all other creatures through anything else but his intellect: a token that distinguishes him from all other creatures. Islam always lays stress upon the intellect and enjoins upon man to rely on the intellect in all matters pertaining to his tasks and responsibility; also in matters concerning the faith; the

Holy Quran always extols the human intellect and calls upon man to abide by it and take its counsel. It is not a matter of coincidence that the Holy Quran refers to the intellect in varying terms: it refers to it as the "heart", and it refers to the people that are wise, who understand, who contemplate, who perceive, who see, who take heed, who reflect and ponder, who are aware, who remember, who are men of understanding, men endued with understanding, or men who have vision. These varying expressions in the Holy Quran have thus addressed all the functions of the human mind which Allah the Almighty has willed that every human being should make use of in this world.

Islam always addresses the human mind taking into account all its abilities and skills; it addresses the mind that guards the conscience, that perceives the truth, that is discriminating and compensates, the mind that contemplates, takes heed of all warnings and plans all actions on a sound basis.

Eminent Muslim thinkers have perceived the tremendous value that Islam has bestowed on the human mind. The great scholar Al-Ghazali (1059-1111 A.D.) says, "Verily the human mind is a minuscule model of the

divine light". And al-Jahiz (died 869 A.D.) says, "The human mind is the representative of Allah deputed to man".

Any attempt to obstruct the above explained functions of the human mind is an attempt to obstruct the divine purpose and meaning behind the creation of the human mind. It would be similar to man's damaging any of the senses that God has bestowed on him. Those who indulge in such actions have been described in the Holy Quran as more despicable than animals. "They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay, more misguided; for they are heedless (of warning)." (Sura 7, verse 179). It is from this viewpoint that Islam considers it a sin not to make use of one's mind. The Holy Quran, while narrating about the position of the infidels on the Day of Judgement says: "They will further say, "Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we should not (now) be among the Companions of the Blazing Fire!" They will then confess their sins". (Sura 67, verses 10/11).

In view of the above, the Holy Quran calls upon man in very clear terms that cannot be subject to misunderstanding to make use of all his mental faculties.

Islam thus makes the function of thinking an Islamic duty. Based on this principle Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (1126-1198 A.D.) refers to the fact that Islam has ordained that man should make use of his mind and contemplate all the creations.

While Islam considers the function of thinking an Islamic duty, it also considers this duty a responsibility that man cannot shirk. He will be held responsible for the good or bad manner in which he used his mind; he will also have to answer for all his actions with regard to his other perceptory senses. The Holy Quran says: "Every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)". (Sura 17, verse. 36).

#### **4. The liberation of the human mind:**

Based on its endeavour to bring into use all the faculties of the human mind Islam has laid great stress on removing all the obstacles that cause obstruction of the functioning of the mind.

Islam, therefore, calls for eliminating these obstacles so that the mind can proceed on the path of sound thinking and correct perception. In this connection Islam calls for following mainly four principles:

a) Rejection of intellectual servitude and blind imitation. Islam calls for perceiving and making use of our minds in contemplating on the things around us in this universe; it also forbids us acts of imitation that may impede the mind to fulfil its role. Because imitation means going astray from the right path-an act for which only animals are pardoned-such an action is not permissible to human beings who fully enjoy all their mental faculties. It is for this reason that the Holy Quran denounces the idolators for the blind imitation of their traditions and conventions that they have inherited from their forefathers. In this context it quotes them as saying, "They say: 'Enough for us are the ways we found our fathers following'. What! even though their fathers were void of knowledge and guidance?" (Sura 5, verse. 104) The Prophet of Allah (may peace and blessings be upon him) has also warned against blind imitation: "Do not imitate others in a blind manner".

b) Weeding out all forms of occultism, black magic, superstitions and fortune-telling. Islam does not permit any form of soothsaying and no human being is permitted to dominate over his fellow human beings in the name of religion. No harm nor any benefit can occur to us except

what has been willed by God, who states in the Holy Quran that he is nearer to us than the jugular vein, and that he is close to respond to those who plead to him. The Prophet of Allah says, "If you ask, ask of Allah, and if you seek help, seek it from Allah. The doctrines of Islam are clear and do not contradict the findings of any sound mind". The Prophet stood firmly against all superstitions and delusions. It so happened that on the day when his son Ibrahim died there was an eclipse of the sun and some people said that the eclipse of the sun was a sign of sharing the grief for the death of Ibrahim. The Prophet categorically opposed this and said, "The sun and the moon are two signs among many other signs of Allah;' they do not eclipse on the death of someone nor on the birth of someone".

c) Emphasizing individual responsibility: Each individual is fully responsible for his actions, and there is no inborn sin. The Quranic verses are explicitly clear on this subject. This individual responsibility is based on individual freedom as well as on mental security. Achievement of mental security is one of the primary Islamic goals. The main Islamic goals are security for religion, soul, mind, progeny, and property.

d) By proclaiming belief in the Oneness of God Islam has liberated the believer from the humiliating fear of any temporal authority and has elevated him to a position of honour. In this context the Holy Quran states: "Honour belongs to God and His Apostle and to the Believers". (Sura 63, verse 8) The Prophet says, "Seek after things without giving up your self-respect". Islam has also ordained that no obedience should be shown to any human being who is himself disobedient to God, and that a believer should speak the truth without fearing any admonition.

Thus Islam ensures the true atmosphere in which man can think, reflect and comprehend. In this way Islam keeps the human mind free from all shackles, and liberates him of all imitations that were holding him in a state of servitude. All these measures enabled man to gain two important things that he had been deprived of until then, i.e. free will and freedom of thought and opinion. This basic position of Islam towards the human mind made a tremendous impact on the moulding of the Islamic culture and thought.

After this introduction into Islam's attitude towards the human mind, we may now proceed to discuss the role of

Islam in the development of human thought in general and philosophical thought in particular.

## ***II. The Role of Islam in the Development of Philosophical Thought:***

We would like to discuss this subject from two angles: First we will refer to some of the important ideas contained in the Islamic teachings which have had and continue to have a tremendous impact on the development of human thought. Then we will discuss how Islamic thought was transmitted to Europe and the great effect it had in activating and consolidating the revival in thought and culture in the West.

### **A. The systematic aspect:**

#### **Introduction:**

We have explained above how Islam had ensured the presence of all the essential conditions for the emergence of an intellectual movement among Muslims. This movement took place and flourished in all Muslim countries and was able to take up creative relations with all the different cultures it interacted with. Muslims never rejected any culture in principle but accepted it in so far it was positive and useful. As the Holy Quran says: "For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for

the good of mankind remains on the earth". (Sura 13, verse 17) In other words, one should accept all that is positive and useful and reject all that is negative and void of any benefit. The Prophet says, "To seek knowledge is a duty enjoined upon every Muslim, male and female". And: "Wisdom is the goal of persistent search for every believer". These sayings were like lamps that illumined the minds in order to show their way to unlimited knowledge and science. The Holy Quran has highly praised in clear terms all knowledge and men of learning. The very first verses that were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings be upon him) urged him to seek knowledge. The Holy Quran considers the scholars to be the most God-fearing people because they understand the profound secrets of Allah's creations and are aware of the magnificence of this universe and the beauty of all creations. Islam has equated the ink of the men of learning with the blood of the martyrs.

The foundations laid down by Islam for the development and growth of human thought were not merely theoretical foundations. They were indeed concrete measures which were of immense fruitfulness for the Islamic society. The Islamic state was built on the

broadest base and was extremely tolerant with philosophy and philosophers. As for the examples of some Muslim philosophers who were subjected to many hardships and calamities in their lives, they were victims of political intrigues. Their plight was not due to any prohibition of philosophy nor due to any suppression of freedom of thought. Islam can confront any culture without any cause for fear as long as its believers understand the Islamic principles and goals. Islam has never been an impediment in the path of research in the natural sciences as was already witnessed in Europe in the Middle Ages. Indeed Islam has even been behind every achievement recorded by Muslim scientists.

We find in the Holy Quran numerous references that show that Islam has granted unrestrained freedom to all intellectual efforts. Following are some examples of this intellectual approach in the Holy Quran:

a) The Holy Quran presents quite accurately the opinions of the antagonists and then answers them with irrefutable explanations based on sound logic and genuine creative power. It records the views of the idolators, materialists, infidels, and hypocrites, and comments on them in a convincing manner supported by unmistakable

proofs and the most powerful arguments. For instance, when the infidels deny resurrection after death by stating: "What is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live, and nothing but time can destroy us". (Sura 45, verse 24), the Holy Quran retorts: "But of this they have no knowledge; they merely conjecture". Here the Holy Quran differentiates between conjecture and knowledge, thereby drawing our attention to the necessity that we scrutinize our opinions and judgements and that we ascertain the soundness of their sources. The Holy Quran thus urges us towards objective criticism.

The Holy Quran cautions against passing judgements on matters of which one is not fully informed so that one may avoid errors and contradictions. In this context the Holy Quran says: "And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge".(Sura 17, verse 36) When, for instance, the infidels alleged that the angels were female, the Holy Quran commented by saying: "Did they witness their creation? Their evidence will be recorded, and they will be called to account!" (Sura 43, verse 19) In other words, the Holy Quran states that if this assumption of yours is correct, it should be based on observation and scrutiny, which are the means for true knowledge and perception.

b) The Holy Quran tells us about the intellectual debate between Abraham (may peace be upon him) and his people regarding divinity. The rational arguments used by Abraham are presented in an excellent step- by- step manner. This argumentation is an ideal model for the manner in which the intellect argues, draws its conclusions, and attains certitude. The Holy Quran refers to this certitude in the following verse: "So also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude". (Sura 6, verse 75).

The Islamic culture has produced many eminent philosophers, for example Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Baja, Ibn Tufail and Ibn Rushd. Especially the ninth and tenth centuries of the Christian era witnessed excellent intellectual activities among the Muslims. While translating the Greek philosophy into Arabic the Muslims also proved their skill in assimilating it and making new contributions to it as well as pointing out its shortcomings. They were, of course, aware of the fact that philosophy is an ever-growing discipline and cannot remain stagnant. Abu Bakr Al-Razi (864-925 A.D) says in this connection: "Generations after generations

participate in building the edifice of philosophy; each generation adds something new to this edifice. No generation in particular has had the last word in the realm of philosophy. If this were to happen, then philosophy would become a frozen subject and condemned to eternal barrenness".

Muslim intellectuals rendered distinguished services in many other fields too. We may mention here as an example the science of Algebra, which was of their innovation. They had evolved it from absolute nothingness. This science still continues to carry the Arab name in Western languages. The Muslims added to the numerals that are commonly known by the name of Arabic numerals the cipher which caused a real revolution in the science of Mathematics. The logarithms were evolved by a Muslim mathematician, Al-Khuwarizimi by name, who died about the year 847 A.D.

But we don't intend to turn our attention away from the subject of our discussion in order to enumerate the vast number of achievements of the Muslim mind in the world of sciences; that would be a quite time-consuming endeavour. Neither are we here to blow our trumpets and talk about our past glories. We only want to place on

record some of the marvellous achievements in the field of knowledge that were made possible due to Islamic teachings. The fruits of these endeavours were later transmitted to Europe through the various translations that were begun to be rendered beginning from the early part of the twelfth century of the Christian era. These translations made a tremendous impact and brought about a new awakening, a fact that has been endorsed by impartial European historians.

We would now like to mention some of the important ideas introduced by Islam that had a decisive effect in the development of human thought and culture. We shall mention only three examples: 1. The principle of Ijtihad, which means independent thinking. 2. The notion of moderation. 3. The Islamic view of history. Following is a brief discussion of each of these three ideas:

### **1. The principle of Ijtihad**

Islam has emphasized the ideas of the Oneness of God and the closing of the prophethood, the latter meaning the end of the guardianship over the human mind. After the closing of prophethood and the cessation of divine revelations, the human mind had now to depend on itself for all matters regarding which there was no clear religious

text, and had to rely on its own abilities. It is from this viewpoint that the Holy Quran calls upon man to make use of his intellect and to adopt constantly an empirical approach; it also calls upon man to contemplate this universe and to acquaint himself with the men and life of the past ages. It urges him to consider all these ways of thinking as important sources of human knowledge.

Starting from this basis Islam has taken several important steps that could help in the development of thought and urge man to think and reflect in order to carry on the tasks of progress and development. Among these steps was the principle of Ijtihad, i.e. independent thinking in matters pertaining to the Sharia (Islamic law). That was the beginning of the intellectual approach among Muslims. This principle prevailed under the protection of the teachings of the Holy Quran. Ijtihad is considered the dynamic principle of Islam as stated by the famous philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (died 1938).

The toleration of Islam went to the extent of allowing the human mind and indeed encouraging it to make its own decisions even concerning religious matters about which there existed neither a Quranic text nor a Hadith of the Prophet. It granted the human intellect full freedom

and urged it to do its best. In this context an Islamic ruling was adopted that ran as follows: "If a Mujtahid (i.e. one who exercises his independent thinking) is wrong in his conclusions, he shall be granted only one recompense, and if he is right in his conclusions, he shall be granted recompense twice". It is narrated by Muad Ibn Jabal, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, that when the Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) sent him to be the governor of Yemen, he (the Prophet) asked him, "How will you settle a litigation if you are confronted with one?" He replied, "I shall settle it as ordained in the Book of Allah". Then the Prophet asked him, "What if you do not find the answer in the Book of Allah?" He replied, "Then I shall refer to the Traditions of the Prophet of Allah (may peace and blessings be upon him)." The Prophet now asked him, "And if you do not find the answer in the Traditions of the Prophet?" He answered, "I shall then use my independent thinking". The Prophet concurred with him and praised him for his fine perception.

The principle of Ijtihad (independent thinking) had a tremendous effect on the shaping and enriching of the studies pertaining to Islamic Jurisprudence. It helped in evolving quick solutions to problems that had no

precedents in the early period of Islam. It is on the basis of this principle that the four schools of Islamic Jurisprudence came into existence. These four schools still exist in the Muslim world. Ijtihad also led to the birth of a new discipline of philosophy known as the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence; it is considered to be the philosophical basis for the Islamic law. The scholar who pioneered in this field and evolved this branch of study was Imam al-Shafa'i; this took place before Islamic thought was influenced by the Greek thought.

Thus the Muslim's reliance upon his intellect in decisions on matters regarding which there is no clear edict, was the first landmark in Islam's attitude towards the human mind. It is the foundation on which the culture of Islam was ushered into this world over a span of several centuries during which it bore the best of its fruits.

## **2. The idea of moderation:**

As regards the second important Islamic idea, namely the path of moderation or the middle-path approach, we find that it pervades all the teachings of Islam. Man is made up of body and soul. Islam does not want either of these two components to prevail over the other in a manner that would disturb the balance between the two. Islam seeks to maintain a harmony or reconciliation

between the demands of body and soul. Man should, therefore, enjoy all the good things of life but at the same time he should not neglect the demands of his soul. The Holy Quran says, "But seek, with the (wealth) which God had bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget the portion in this World". (Sura 28, verse 77) And the Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) says, "Strive in this World of yours as though you are going to live in it forever and strive for the next World as though your are going to die tomorrow".

The Prophet one day heard three of his companions in conversation regarding their religious duties, and he found that they were exaggerating to the extent of nearly fully neglecting the demands of their bodies. One of them said that he spends the whole night in prayers; the second one said that he continuously observes fasting; and the third man said that he keeps away from women and has never married. The Prophet did not approve of their attitudes and explained to them that although he himself was the most god-fearing and the most pious man, he fasted and broke his fast, he offered prayers, slept and married. And that was his path to be adhered to; whoever deviated from this straight path, kept himself away from the Prophet's teachings.

This idea of moderation, which should decide about the relations between body and mind, should also determine the relationship between intellect and religion. Islam always avoids any conflict or contradiction between intellect and religion, because they both emanate from one source. God has created both in order to provide guidance to man and to show him the right path. The intellect and religion are both works of the Perfect Being, namely God. And the works of the Perfect Being cannot contradict each other.

From the Islamic point of view, it is not allowed to start from the assumption that there is a conflict between intellect and religion, and that man has to choose between them both. Because they are both essential factors that are connected with each other and do not contradict each other. Man is in need of both of them. True religion does not hinder the human mind to philosophize. On the contrary, it grants the intellect the right to think, reflect, and contemplate in the kingdom of heaven and earth. Indeed it urges him to do so. Islam considers the human mind the pivot and the essence of humanity. If the functioning of the human mind is hampered due to ignorance or negligence or shortsightedness, then the

humanity of man is violated, and he is reduced to the level of an animal.

Islam has thus ended the fictitious enmity between religion and intellect. Islam, therefore, is not in need of secularism because the reasons that led to the evolution of the concept of secularism in Europe do not exist in Islam. The popular allegation that there is a never-ending conflict between religion and intellect or between religion and science does not apply to the religion of Islam. In Islam both these components make one integrated unit.

The middle-path approach and the spirit of moderation that are embedded in the teachings of Islam have made a great impact on the Islamic culture in general and philosophical thought in particular. It is as a result of this approach that Muslim philosophers began to emphasize the reconciliation between religion and philosophy, founded on the fact that the ultimate goal for both religion and philosophy is to attain the truth. The Muslim philosophers adopted several methods in this context.

Ibn Miskawaih (died 1030 A.D.) focused the attention on the ultimate goal. He, therefore, deliberated about the idea of reconciliation between the goal of ethics, which is

a branch of philosophy, and religion, since they both aim at the happiness of mankind.

Another thinker, Ibn Hazm, paid attention to the practical meaning of philosophy and religion. He was of the opinion that both religion and philosophy seek to reform the human soul, and that there is no contradiction between philosophy and Islam.

The philosopher Al-Kindi (701 - 865 A.D.) defined philosophy as the knowledge of the essence of things. In this view philosophy cannot contradict religion because the ultimate goal for both is one and the same.

Al-Farabi (870-950 A.D.) was of the opinion that the subjects of religion and philosophy are one and the same because both impart the basic principles of all things that exist in this universe. They impart the knowledge of the first principle and the first cause for everything that exists in this universe, and they impart the knowledge of the ultimate aim for which man has been created, i.e. the ultimate happiness. True philosophy does not contradict true religion. If there is some kind of contradiction between both, it can only be due to the weak structure of a particular school of philosophy wherein the arguments that lead to certitude are still in a state of insufficiency. In the

opinion of Al-Farabi truth is one but the paths that lead to it are numerous.

Ibn Sina (980-1036 A.D.) was of the opinion that there does not exist in the domains of wisdom (i.e. philosophy) anything that contradicts religion. But if any philosopher deviates from the path of religion it is as a result of his own inability and shortcomings and not because of his preoccupation with philosophy, because philosophy does not lead to such a consequence.

Ibn Tufail (1110-1185 A.D.) has shown in his well known philosophical novel entitled *Hay Ibn Yaqzan* how man can attain knowledge of the spiritual world and of God and the immortality of the soul without the aid of any external source, only with his intellect, and that this knowledge he attains does not contradict religion.

Ibn Rushd has made a general comparison between the basic principles of religion and philosophy in spite of the differences in the methods of both. He has shown in his treatise *Faslu Al maqal* the harmony between religion and philosophy by stating, "Truth does not contradict truth, but on the contrary they concur with each other and mutually testify for each other". He has also said, " Verily, wisdom (which means philosophy) is the companion of Islam and

its foster-sister; they always go hand in hand and love each other in essence and by instinct".

Al-Ghazali (1059-1111 A.D.) has emphasized the need to maintain the unity between religion and intellect, although he does not use the word 'Philosophy' in this connection. According to him, man cannot renounce either religion or intellect. The intellect is the basis on which the edifice of religion is built, and it is impossible to imagine the latter without the first, and a foundation without an edifice is without use. Therefore, Al-Ghazali is of the opinion that they both are closely united and cannot be separated from each other. Whoever tries to destroy one of these two is, in the opinion of Al-Ghazali, either ignorant or self-conceited. He has further said that if there is no contradiction between intellect and religion, there is of course no contradiction between the humane sciences and the religious disciplines either. The inability to fuse the two together can in his opinion only be due to a lack of sense of perception and discernment.

We may now, after having surveyed the viewpoints of the Muslim philosophers of the Middle Ages concerning the reconciliation between intellect and religion, move on to consider the viewpoints of modern philosophy. Here we

should like to cite as an example the famous thinker Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). About the relationship between religion and intellect in Islam he says "The intellect and religion found themselves in harmony with each other for the first time on the basis of a Sacred Book (i.e. The Quran) revealed to a Messenger of God in a clear manner that does not permit any casuistry". And as Muhammad Abduh further points out it came to be accepted among all Muslims, excepting those who cannot be trusted neither for their religion nor for their intellect, that there are religious principles which cannot be given credence except through the intellect, such as the knowledge of the existence of God, of the Messengers that are sent by God, of understanding the meaning of the Message and endorsing it.

It has also been unanimously agreed upon that if religion conveys anything beyond human understanding, it cannot, however, convey anything that contradicts the intellect. The intellect is, therefore, the closest supporter of the religion of Islam.

It is evident from the above that Islam has always taken the clear position that there is unity between religion and intellect. Anyone who studies the history of the

development of the Islamic disciplines will note that the spirit of conciliation has by and large prevailed among the Muslims with regard to all disciplines. We notice this conciliation in Islamic theology, Islamic law, mysticism, and philosophy. The chief aim of the Arab philosophers was to present to the world a complete theory on the unity of the universe in a manner acceptable to religion and intellect. It is for this reason that they sought to reconcile the ethical, spiritual, and philosophical aspects of knowledge.

There are contemporary Muslim scholars who justly lay emphasis on the importance of the vital role played by Islam in developing human thought in general—a fact that we have already pointed out. This role is especially manifest in the excellent synthesis that the Islamic culture evolved from the positive elements of the two opposing cultures neighbouring each other, namely the Persian culture on one side and the Roman culture on the other side. The former had a mystic imprint while the latter had a rational and intellectual imprint. With the advent of Islam and its dissemination, the barriers that separated these two cultures were demolished and Islam gave to the world a new Islamic culture befitting any milieu. The

Islamic culture was forged as a universal culture because the basic tenets of Islam enable man to make use of his mind in intellectual matters and all matters concerning his life. These basic tenets also prepare man for direct contact with God. Thus the East and West converged in one culture. It was a culture that fused mystic intuition with logical reasoning in a manner that produced great Muslim mystics as well as great Muslim philosophers.

### **3. The Islamic view of history**

Several verses of the Holy Quran underline the fact that human knowledge is dependent on the senses as well as on the intellect. In other words, it rules out all other knowledge that is dependent on superstitions, delusions, divinations, witchcraft, etc.

If we study the verses of the Holy Quran carefully, we can trace the principles of knowledge regarding the paramount truths such as God, the universe, man, and values; we can also learn about the principles underlying practical life in this world, and we may also gain knowledge about the science of ethics. The Holy Quran also contains the method by which one can obtain pragmatic knowledge (based on the senses) and theoretical knowledge.

The Holy Quran focuses attention also on history since it considers history one of the sources of human knowledge. The Holy Quran tells us a lot about the nations of the past and urges us to take heed of the experiences of our fellow human beings of the past and the present. In this context it presents to us the principles of a method by which we can deal with the history of mankind. This method proceeds from merely collocating and surveying the events of history to the attempt to find the laws that are described in the Holy Quran as the laws laid down by Allah.

The Holy Quran also emphasizes the necessity of scrutinizing facts accurately. It says, "O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth". (Sura 49, verse 6) It has thus set forth an important principle of historical criticism. It enunciates the fact that the personal integrity of the narrator is an important factor in assessing his narration. The Muslims derived great benefit from this principle when they applied it to the traditions (hadiths i.e. words) of the Prophet. Later on, the principles of historical criticism developed gradually as a result of the application of this method.

Muslim historians acquired from the Holy Quran two main ideas that deeply influenced their writing of history. The first idea is the idea of the unity of the origin of mankind. The Quran establishes that God has created all human beings from one soul, and that he who kills a person without any justification is deemed to have committed an outrage on the whole mankind; and he who saves a life is deemed to have saved therewith all human beings. The Holy Quran seeks to make this idea a vital factor in the daily life of every Muslim. The second idea is the concept of human existence as a continuous movement in time. Thus history is a continuous and ever-growing and inevitable movement of the whole community. These Quranic ideas have been of great influence on Ibn Khaldun's (1332-1406) philosophical view of history. The famous treatise of Ibn Khaldun entitled *Al-Muqaddima*, i.e. *Introduction to History*, conveys in most of its parts the inspiration that the author drew from the Holy Quran. As is well known, Ibn Khaldun is the first philosopher of history and a unique pioneer in the field of social philosophy. He was the first thinker to attempt to determine causes and factors that influenced human societies. He grasped very ably the problems in question,

and his analyses were supported by convincing proofs. He considered the problems from different angles such as human races and their inborn traits, climatic conditions, the sources that are at man's disposal for earning his livelihood, and so on. Ibn Khaldun surveyed all these factors and explained their impact on the intellectual and physical formations of the individuals and of the society. He was of the opinion that culture and prosperity of mankind are governed by certain permanent laws.

We have thus surveyed the extent of Islam's contribution to the development and support of philosophical thought and human culture through the three concepts of Ijtihad, middle-path approach, and Islam's view of history. Needless to say, these three concepts are only a few examples among a multitude of other concepts that Islam has endowed to humanity. Now we would like to discuss the historical aspect of Islam's influence on the development of philosophical thought outside the Islamic world.

## **B. The historical aspect:**

### **1. Islamic influences on the European philosophy of the Middle Ages:**

There is no doubt that the development of human culture involves a process of give and take; there is hardly

any nation with an important culture that has not given to this human cultural heritage and received from it. It is impossible for any nation that wants to develop itself to start from scratch and to go once again through the same cycle of experiences that the nations of the past have gone through. That would be an exercise in futility. Human thought does not recognize any artificial boundaries between nations; on the contrary it cuts across all barriers and imposes itself in spite of all obstacles.

If the above statement is true, and we believe it to be so, it is then rather strange that some scholars of the West try to exaggerate the influence of Greek philosophy on Islamic philosophy, to the extent of saying that Islamic philosophy is nothing but Greek philosophy written in Arabic. Driven by their superiority complex they also refuse, in the same breath, to admit any influence of Islamic thought on European thought. We should like to discuss, while we are on the subject of the role of Islam in the development of philosophical thought, the relationship between Islamic and European thought. We shall discuss it only briefly because we cannot do full justice to this subject in a concise article like this. This subject merits full attention because Muslims were not a mere

mechanical means of transmitting the Greek philosophy to Europe. Such a statement is not a scientific fact, but it is in fact a travesty of truth.

Christian scholars of Europe were since 1130 striving to translate Arab philosophy into Latin. There were two countries that served as meeting points for the Christian world of Europe and the Islamic world, namely South Italy and Spain. In Spain a tremendous activity in the field of translation had already been started. When Toledo was conquered by the Christians they found in one of its mosques an Arabic library with a rich collection of books.

This library was a well known institution. The credit for transmitting Arab philosophy into Latin goes especially to Raymund who was the bishop of Toledo from 1130-1150 A.D and who later became archbishop of Spain. He established a Council of Translators under the chairmanship of Dominic Gundisalvi and entrusted him with the task of preparing Latin translations of Arabic works on philosophy and sciences. These translations that reached the scholars of the West formed the basis for the scholastic philosophy in Europe.

Frederick II became Emperor in the year 1220. He was in close contact with the Muslims and had great

admiration for them; he had adopted the oriental-style garment as his dress, and he also adopted many of the habits and customs of the Arabs. But more important than all this was his deep admiration of Arab philosophers. He also knew the Arabic language well so as to be able to read their works in Arabic. The Arab sciences were eagerly studied and discussed in the abode of the Emperor Frederick II in Palermo. Thus the Arab sciences became accessible to the Latin-speaking Europeans. The Emperor and his son Manfred gave translations of Arabic works on philosophy as gifts to the universities of Boulogne and Paris. And in the year 1224 the Emperor established the university of Naples that became an academy for transmitting the Arab sciences to the Western world.

It is worth mentioning here that Thomas Aquinas had received his education at this university before being initiated into the monastic order. His early education at this university was perhaps the reason for his devoting attention to the teachings of the Arab philosophers to the extent that he made an accurate appreciation of it. Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Averroes (Ibn Rushd) were both highly appreciated authorities in the Europe of the Middle

Ages. Avicennism and Averroism belonged to the most important trends of thought of the European Middle Ages.

The Christian scholastic philosophy that was represented by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas agreed in some of its viewpoints with Avicenna, especially on the theory of knowledge. These two scholars agreed with Avicenna on his viewpoint regarding the problem of universalia; they both quoted Avicenna very often as an authority regarding this point. Thomas Aquinas also took up Avicenna's view on the sharp divide between essence and existence. We also notice the strong influence of Avicenna on Albertus Magnus regarding the definition of the soul and his theory about prophethood. The opinions formulated by Duns Scotus on the subject of metaphysics are mostly based on the philosophy of Avicenna. Some scholars have called the attention to the fact that the theory of "cogito" put forward by Descartes can be found in the philosophy of Avicenna.

Carra de Vaux has confirmed the prevalence of Latin Avicennism in Europe in the Middle Ages, and that it was inclined more towards the Arab element in it than towards the Augustinism or any other shade of Christian thought of that period.

Roger Bacon was one of the great admirers of Avicenna, and he made no secret of this admiration. The views of Avicenna and al-Farabi made a great impact on the thinking of Roger Bacon to the extent that his opinions on the question of papacy coincide with Avicenna's view on the question of caliphate.

Al-Farabi's opinions have influenced the thinking of Albertus Magnus in many ways. European authors of the Middle Ages were deeply influenced by al-Farabi's treatise entitled "Survey of the Sciences". It is a work that provides a broad and clear overview of the subjects of each science that was popular during his time; it also explains the theoretical and practical benefits of science. The Spanish scholar Gundissalvus of the 12th century adapted many portions of this book in his book known under the title "Classification of Philosophy". Roger Bacon also derived great benefit from al-Farabi's book. Jerome de Moravia of the 13th century derived special benefit from this book on the subject of music.

As regards Averroes, he represented to the Western world a new point of departure for a new development. Nearly all the philosophical works of Averroes (Ibn Rushd) had been translated into Latin by the middle of the

13 th century. The French scholar Renan has proved in his book entitled "Averroes and Averroism" the prevalence of Latin Averroism in the Europe of the Middle Ages. This Averroism prevailed in Europe for many centuries and made important contributions concerning the question of freedom of thought in the European Middle Ages.

William of Auvergne, who was archbishop of Paris, was the first scholar who spread Averroes' ideas in Europe. He hailed Averroes as a genuine defender of truth; he widely quoted Averroes and considered him the teacher with the truest ideas.

Thomas Aquinas took over Averroes' exposition on the relationship between revelation and philosophical knowledge. The scholar Asin Palacios has pointed out in an analysis based on the comparative study of the works of Averroes and Thomas Aquinas, that they both agree not only generally and concerning the ideas and examples used by them, but also as regards using sometimes the same words and expressions. Asin Palacios pointed out that this is not a matter of mere coincidence nor is it possible to base it on the assumption that both scholars consulted one common source; it is only due to the fact

that Thomas Aquinas acquainted himself with the viewpoints of Averroes and made use of them.

The influence of Averroism continued to exist in Europe until the 17th century. It was the prelude to the rationalistic school of thought that prevailed in Europe during the Renaissance.

As regards al-Ghazali, the great Muslim scholar, his influence on European thought was also felt directly and sometimes indirectly, and as we shall point out, the same is to be said about his influence on modern European philosophy. Al-Ghazali's influence extended through the work of Raimund Martin entitled "Pugio Fidei" first on Thomas Aquinas and later on Pascal. Raimund Martin's book was based mostly on arguments taken as excerpts from Al-Ghazali's book "Tahafut al-falasifa" (i.e. The Breakdown of the Philosophers).

The objections raised by Thomas Aquinas concerning the theory of the unity of intellect and his objections to other theories are the same as those raised by Muslim scholastic theologians. Thomas Aquinas acquainted himself with these objections through the works of Al-Ghazali.

The impact of Islamic philosophy on European thought becomes evident from the above. We have depended in the above presentation mainly on European authors.

We would also like to refer in this context to the research done by a contemporary Spanish scholar, S. Gomen Nogales, on the subject of the relationship between Islamic philosophy and European philosophy in the Middle Ages. He stated that he is fully convinced that there is a direct influence of Islamic philosophy on Europe in the Middle Ages. He says that he indeed would go further and say that but for this influence of Islamic philosophy on Christian philosophy it would not have been possible for the latter to take those great strides that we notice in the works of the prominent scholastic thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas; at least it could not have taken those strides with such speed but for this influence. Nogales further says that the inferences that he has drawn from his comparative study of the Islamic and Christian philosophy of the Middle Ages confirm the prevalence of certain trends of thought in Europe of that period that are similar to what is prevalent in the Arab philosophy of that time.

When we trace back some concrete points and theories of the Christian thought of the Middle Ages we find that they lead us to Arab authors. Nogales firmly and positively concludes that Islamic philosophy had a decisive influence on Western thought during the Middle Ages. Because Nogales had confined himself to the Middle Ages, his findings did not cover the modern period. This subject has not been adequately dealt with so far.

## **2. The Islamic influences on modern European philosophy:**

However, if it is evident that Islamic philosophy influenced European philosophy in the Middle Ages, and when we consider the fact that the latter has in turn influenced modern European philosophy, we may then say that there exists at least an indirect influence of Islamic philosophy on modern European philosophy; this, of course, does not rule out the possibility of a direct influence as well.

In the following we would like to point out some aspects of the influence of Islamic thought on modern European philosophy, and we hope that this subject will receive the attention it deserves. The first influence in the modern period is that of Al-Ghazali on Descartes.

Al-Ghazali evolved the Methodical Doubt as a means to achieve philosophical certitude. His work entitled "al-Munqidh min al-dalal" (The Saviour from Misguidance) essentially deals with the details of this method. He totally and categorically rejected the unquestioning adoption of any tradition or concept and also rejected intellectual servitude. He emphasized the necessity for independent thinking in the search for truth. He embarked on a critical evaluation of the human heritage of knowledge and took an attitude of skepticism about all knowledge ranging from knowledge gained by perceptions through the senses to intellectual knowledge. He then discussed the problem of certitude and the question of faith and the problem of distinguishing between the knowledge that man gains while he is awake and the knowledge that he gains during his dreams while sleeping. Finally he discussed the problem of the metaphysical skepticism stating the idea of a deceitful Satan or a misguiding creature. At last he achieved philosophical certitude; it was an irrevocable certitude that he has described as the return of trust in the intellectual principles. Al-Ghazali attained self-knowledge and knowledge of God through an intellectual method and not

through mysticism, as alleged by some. It is, however, not our intention in this paper to discuss the details of this method any further.

The Methodical Skepticism evolved by Al-Ghazali had a farreaching effect on the philosophical thought that emerged later on and was given expression to by Descartes, who is described as the father of modern philosophy. The steps taken by Al-Ghazali in his methodical skepticism were the same that were taken by Descartes after a lapse of nearly five centuries. Descartes' method was hailed as a new achievement in the world of philosophy.

In a dissertation submitted to Munich University in 1968, I have made a detailed comparative study of al-Ghazali and Descartes; it was later on also published in Arabic. It clearly emerged from this study that there is an almost complete conformity in the basis of their thought and philosophical method. I had limited myself in this comparative study to the philosophical aspect only and, therefore, have not gone into the historical aspect in order to trace Descartes' direct dependence on al-Ghazali. But in 1976 a scholar was able to find material proof in the library of Descartes for the fact that Decartes had indeed

acquainted himself with Al-Ghazali's thought, and that he had been greatly influenced by him through reading a translation of al-Ghazali's abovementioned book. The scholar Othman Al-Kaak, a Tunisian historian, mentioned his findings in a paper that he submitted to the Meeting on Islamic Thought in Algier in 1976.

There are some other aspects of al-Ghazali's philosophy of which we find echoes in the thinking of other modern philosophers besides Descartes. For instance, al-Ghazali's elaborate criticism of the principle of causality and his ascribing of the relationship between cause and effect to habit, and his considering it as a relationship in time between two things, this laborate criticism can be found some centuries later in David Hume's philosophy. David Hume has not added anything new to this theory. The scholar Renan has therefore observed: "Hume has not said about the criticism of the principle of causality anything more than what al-Ghazali has said".

It is possible to make many more comparisons between other Muslim and European philosophers of the modern period. Spinoza, for instance, has been influenced either directly or through Ibn Maimoon (1135-1204 A.D.), who himself was deeply influenced by Islamic philosophy as is

clearly evident from his book entitled "Guide to those who Went Astray". Yet another example is that of the philosophical group Ikhwan al-Safa (Brothers of Purity) who emerged in Basra in the 10th century A.D. and produced a huge encyclopaedia about all branches of human knowledge. These philosophers in Basra were the pioneers for those philosophers of the age of enlightenment in the 18 th century who produced similar encyclopaedias. Last but not least Ibn Khaldun's ideas on the philosophy of history and social philosophy later became most fruitful in Europe.

### ***Epilogue:***

After we have now pointed out the position of the intellect in Islam and the role of Islam in the development of philosophical thought, we would like now at the end of this paper to draw attention to the following facts:

1. Any discussion about Islam should draw a clear line of distinction between two aspects: a) Islam as a religion with its teachings that has proved to the world, throughout many centuries, its effectiveness and its influences. b) The present cultural situation of Muslims.

The principles of Islam in developing and safeguarding human thought still remain valid and competent to fulfil

the same role they have fulfilled in the past because Islam is not impervious to progress and innovation. On the contrary, it is a religion that comprehends life in its fullness, and calls for constant change and progress in life. But at the same time it points to the fact that no principles, however sublime and lofty they may be, can be realized without the human will realizing them.

This is a Quranic principle. The Holy Quran says, "Verily, never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls)". (Sura 13, verse 11).

2. We should not allow ourselves to continue the polemics between cultures. Indeed, the dangers that are encompassing us today are not dangers that encompass a particular culture but dangers that encompass mankind as a whole. It is, therefore, imperative for all cultures to strive hard to increase mutual understanding. I believe that the time has come for the scholars of Europe to look at Islam and the Islamic culture in a just and objective manner, without letting themselves any longer being influenced by their old and new misconceptions. It is only through such an attitude that it would be possible to have a fruitful dialogue between the Islamic and European cultures.

**CHAPTER 2**  
***CULTURAL RELATIONS***  
***BETWEEN THE WEST AND***  
***THE WORLD OF ISLAM***<sup>(\*)</sup>

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***Cultural Relations  
Between the West and  
the World of Islam:  
Meeting Points and Possibilities of  
Cooperation on the Academic Level***

***I. Introduction***

Today we all know that, faced with world-wide political and ecological problems which demand urgent solution, we stand in need of dialogue between the West and the world of Islam at a deeper level. This means, not only talks between well-intentioned individuals, but co-operation, especially on the academic level. Today we understand that the unity of our world and its chances of survival, in other words, the chain linking the nations of the world, is only as strong as its weakest link. What is to be done about this?

The dialogue that has taken place so far between the West and Islam has many of the characteristics of a monologue. In many respects this has given both sides the impression that a real dialogue is scarcely possible. They lie, as it were, at opposite ends of the chain mentioned above.

What does this mean? Does it mean that there is an insurmountable obstacle between them?

The impression that dialogue came about only under the pressure of material circumstances (oil and new-found wealth on one side, technical superiority and political supremacy on the other) cannot be dismissed, although both sides felt that solutions founded on a material basis needed to be complemented by solutions on an ideological level. However, opinions are divided on this. Both sides feel that their best intentions are, to a greater or lesser extent, misunderstood. At the least, they have the feeling that too few solid bridges exist between the Western and Islamic worlds, if in fact there are any at all.

The language of the cultures, in any case, is not identical with the (spoken) languages, or at least it cannot be expressed in them, owing to the complexity of the cultures. Apart from this, the modern technological world is spreading out everywhere with its pressures to conform, and so is causing the language of individual cultures to die out.

In many respects it is replaced (at least this is the hope in the post-modern age)<sup>(1)</sup> by a genuine descendant, in the shape of the language of science, coupled with attempts,

such as those of the eminent contemporary orientalist, W. Montgomery Watt<sup>(2)</sup> to pursue a so-called meta-science. However, these metascientific endeavours take place at present only incidentally, as it were, or, in a certain sense, only at the margin of affairs. They are attempts to include the old cultural values and ideas within a new scientific language.

The differences between cultures are not as fundamental as they may appear. For this reason, people should never give up the attempt to get to know each other. That the various worlds and peoples within humanity should get to know each other is even, from the Islamic point of view, the reason for their existence. According to the Qur'~an: 'We...made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other' (Q.49:13).

Thus none of these groups has been really given preference in any way, and the same ultimate goal is held before each. The Qur'án reminds us time and again of the fundamental equality of all human beings, and in this connection preaches the doctrine of the One God. In the next verse, it reveals to us the goal of humanity, namely that belief in this One God should not only be preached by the mouth, and that it should not be spread through

violence, but that it should be believed only with a sincere heart (Q. 49: 14).

Thus, when we closely examine this task, i.e. the call for all people of different cultures to understand and get to know each other, it is rightly understood not only as an obligation, but at the same time as offering us an opportunity. It is the opportunity to establish one's own roots more deeply through sincere encounter and through efforts to understand others. This understanding and knowledge become available only as a result of these efforts, since thought and action go together like the palm and the back of the hand. The road which leads to this knowledge may possibly be a long one.

As a Western Muslim who is acquainted with both worlds has rightly said, our world desperately needs the hope of Islam<sup>(3)</sup>. He describes the Islamic people as witness to a hope, which can lead the modern world out of the dangerous deadend into which it has strayed, because, for Muslims, God stands at the centre of life, in place of materialism, hedonism and technology<sup>(4)</sup>. His view is that if modern man could understand the Muslim, 'he could perhaps begin to understand himself before he staggers towards self-destruction'<sup>(5)</sup>.

However, it is our opinion that this call to understand others for what they really are, and at the same time to understand oneself, applies equally to the Muslim, because self-destruction threatens all who do not really submit themselves to God.

## ***II. Cultural relations between the West and the world of Islam***

As already stated above, the language of science can replace the languages which, taken by themselves, often only result in confusion. This language of science can be used as a means of communication in dialogue between different cultures. This, however, applies only when this metascience is practised objectively and without hubris,<sup>(6)</sup> in other words, reasonably, without any polemical, missionary or ideological tendencies.

Science has to create knowledge<sup>(7)</sup>. But does it always create meaningful or useful knowledge, and what exactly is meant by this? We can say that it should remove misunderstandings, replacing them with real understanding. First steps in this direction are to be found on both sides of the dialogue, but where?

It is well known that understanding another culture demands a basic specific training, coupled with an

education which is the product of a specific culture. This further means that education in this sense is only possible where there is a culture which still practises its function of caring, where there is a living culture, in other words, where the cultural heritage has become a genuine possession. The problem is that the specialist training may have been acquired, but that the necessary (culturally based) education is often either missing or defective. In this way opinions arise which are often nothing but a mixture of one's own misunderstandings and errors that have been picked up from other people. This does not rule out the possible existence at the same time of well-intentioned attempts to develop understanding and to make concessions, for whatever reasons, which have so far remained mainly untested. Understandably, academic work of this kind can lead only to confusion, as far as academic goals are concerned. Yet these goals are quite clear: we have to hold on to the truth and to allow ourselves to be led by the truth. That means we must always strive to find creative solutions.

Thus today in our developing world-society the question of the truth of religions is at last being raised

more objectively reference is made, for example to the fact that:

The boundary between true and false today, even as Christians see it, no longer runs simply between Christianity and the other religions, but at least in part within each of the religions. The principle here is that nothing of value in the other religions is to be denied, but neither is anything of no value to be uncritically accepted<sup>(8)</sup>.

In this connection, it is also quite rightly demanded that 'the primary aim must be to broaden our horizon of understanding and information'<sup>(9)</sup>. The same book also states quite correctly:

The things one hears or reads in the media about Islam like the things intellectuals generally have to say about it, are alarming. Alarming in a double sense: first, because of the bias and prejudices that these judgments betray, and second because of the demonizing accent with which they are rendered<sup>(10)</sup>.

We would like to add to this by pointing out that from the academic point of view, as is wellknown, we can question to what extent such a demonization can be accepted-in the last resort it will rebound upon its authors. Today as never before, the spirit of tolerance is thus

absolutely necessary. It must precede the spirit of genuine understanding. Tolerance makes it possible to push forward to the real experience. It is a kind of spiritual armistice.

Tolerance between religions is very difficult to achieve. Although we have now reached the point where the common Abrahamic inheritance of the three monotheistic religions is emphasized, the religions' claim to absolute validity is still misunderstood. However, (and this is in accord with Islamic doctrine), each of these three religions can lay claim to the truth, in so far as they follow the true revelation. Thus it is an absolute obligation for every Muslim to give equal recognition to all divine Messengers whom God has sent since the creation of Mankind. For the true Muslim, religious tolerance is a principle of religion.

In this connection, I should also like to quote Nicholas of Cusa who displayed an exemplary tolerance, when he wrote more than five hundred years ago that he read the Qur'an with the intention of:

examining the book of Mohamed on the premises of Christ's Gospel, and demonstrating that also in this book is contained what would be very much confirmed by the Gospel, if it needed attestation<sup>(11)</sup>.

He did this because he was sure that when we look at the three Abrahamic religions we have to proceed from the consideration that they all contribute to the absolute truth of the one religion. In this he put forward the same view as the Qur'an, which says that all religions are united in the one religion, which has been the religion of God since the creation of humanity.

In this respect it is important to see that this one religion of God demands the same from all people, i.e. submission to God. This is why all true Muslims are in agreement when it is demanded of contemporary Muslim society that it accepts its special role within our world in the spirit of Islam, because this is what God expressly demands of them, and what they strive for. They all hope, in the words of another Islamicist:

that contemporary Islam will find a structure of society and government through which it can fulfil its role in the world as 'a witness for justice' (Q. 5:8) without losing its identity, and as a factor working with others towards the realization of the universal solidarity of all people and towards the realization of a social order in which all citizens are essentially equal before the law and enjoy equal rights in their daily life, and where tolerance is not

only practised, but the irrevocable human rights of all are unreservedly recognized<sup>(12)</sup>.

While the West, when considering structures of state and society, proceeds from secular points of view—particularly sociological and political ones—the attitude of Islam is, in this sphere too, basically religious: it maintains that a renewal of religious life is necessary for the establishment of a just social order. This view, after all, is in accordance with the latest findings in the field of the philosophy of culture, according to which every culture is rooted in religion, and therefore derives its life from it.

To summarize; having briefly introduced the general problem, attention must now be drawn to the fact that both worlds, the Western and the Islamic, are unequivocally united in their demand for a just social order. As we have tried to demonstrate, there is no doubting that this task is given to both as a joint task.

There are already many examples in history of fruitful cooperation between them, both on the general cultural level and on the academic level. From the historical point of view, what they have in common is more than what separates them, and this should give us grounds for hope.

In connection with the frequently discussed question of Islamic education, I should like to quote the German Orientalist Johann Jakob Reiske (d. 1774) who has been called 'the Martyr of Arabic literature', because of his scholarly work, to which he devoted himself<sup>(13)</sup>. More than two centuries ago he wrote:

Whoever values the history of literature will be astonished to find out how many men in the Orient were versed in all kinds of literature at a time when our Europe was covered by a black night of ignorance and barbarism; and he will recognize with pleasure the contribution each of them has made to the increase of education and culture<sup>(14)</sup>.

It is only since the Enlightenment that efforts have been made to study Islamic culture objectively. At this time it was seen:

The Crusades made the Franks aware of a superior culture; contacts with Muslims in Spain and Sicily transferred to Christian Europe Arabic tradition and the further development of the scholarly heritage of classical antiquity; from the end of the eleventh century translations enriched scientific, medical and philosophical studies<sup>(15)</sup>.

From the historical point of view, cultural relations between the West and Islam can be summarized as follows in three stages.

### **a) The first stage**

This is characterized by the West being influenced by Islamic culture during its Golden Age.

Since the time of the rule of the 'Abbasids, Muslims have been very open-minded towards other cultures. For example, Ibn Rushd declared that it was an Islamic duty to study the books of classical antiquity. He said:

"When we read the books of earlier thinkers, we see their thoughts in these books. If there is something there that corresponds to the truth, we accept this and rejoice over it... And if we find something in their thoughts that does not correspond to the truth, we call attention to it and warn against it:<sup>(16)</sup>

The encounter between the Islamic East and the West took place for the most part, as is known, in Spain and Sicily. The influence of the East on the West was exercised mostly on two levels during this Golden Age: firstly on the theological plane, where it aroused a negative reaction in the form of the most vehement polemics and calumnies, and secondly on the scholarly plane, where it produced, on the contrary, very positive effects. Frederick II, who was crowned as Emperor in 1220, and who was an admirer of Islamic culture, founded

the University of Naples, where Thomas Aquinas was later to study. He donated Arabic books to the universities of Paris and Oxford. His son, Manfred, followed him in his endeavours to transmit the fruits of Islamic culture to the West. Above all, Raymond, Bishop of Toledo from 1130 to 1150, must be mentioned in this connection. He was responsible for the foundation of a centre for translation under the direction of Dominic Gudisalvi, and caused many Latin translations of Arabic works on philosophy and science to be made. Among other works, the Qur'an was translated for the first time in 1143.

These translations, which were studied by Western scholars, formed the basis of scholastic philosophy in Europe, as has been well established. The scholar Carra de Vaux recognised the predominance of Latin Avicennism in the European Middle Ages. In his work, *Averroes et Averroism*, the French scholar Renan proved the predominance of Latin Averroism in medieval European thought. His researches prove that this school of thought made important contributions to freedom of thought at this time.

The influence of Averroism persisted in Europe until the seventeenth century, and this led to the introduction of rationalism in Europe during the Renaissance<sup>(17)</sup>.

## **b) The second stage**

Since the time of Napoleon, the Islamic East, for its part, has come to know the West, but with little success. There followed the age of colonialism. In the nineteenth century efforts to understand the West were intensified.

## **c) The third stage**

It is an established fact that in the present age Western civilization and technology have been adopted in the Islamic world as well as everywhere else. This process, however, has not been complete. As far as the humanities are concerned, there exists an attitude of unconditional acceptance, as well as one of total rejection. Recently, however, attempts have been made to find a middle way between these two attitudes in the shape of critical, scholarly endeavours. Critical discussion and argument with the West are naturally linked to a thoroughgoing Islamic self-criticism, and can in no way be separated from this.

As we have already mentioned above, dialogue between Islam and the West has so far been regarded as unsatisfactory. That is why I recently described it as a 'dialogue between mutes'<sup>(18)</sup>. This critical exchange with European civilization began as long ago as the turn of the

century<sup>(19)</sup>. As has been aptly remarked: "the ambivalence of the advance directed towards Europe was (henceforth) to be clearly felt. If there are no firm limits to the influence of Western culture, does that not constitute a risk"?<sup>(20)</sup>.

It was felt

"that in gaining everything that was to be gained in political strength and material well-being through the process of modernization there nevertheless existed the danger of losing something crucial -one's religion, one's whole historical heritage, and thereby one's cultural identity".

Surprisingly enough the West, in the words of P.Antes, also now speaks of the '(re) discovery of Muslims.. (which) calls into question our ideological concepts and equally our model of history'.

The same scholar points out that, as he says, the West's so-called 'progress':

"has become a new kind of doctrine of salvation, which combines the Europeans' (and North Americans') former Christian idea of mission and the classical claim to

absolute validity, presented now in secular garb, according to the- slightly changed- slogan: there is no salvation outside our life-style! Behind all this, there is a one-dimensional model of history, according to which only one form of development is conceivable, whose essential stages cannot be felt out or skipped over, and whose most-developed end we are. Anybody who is not the same as us, is-according to this way of thinking-regarded as backward" ...<sup>(21)</sup>.

The same author, who is thus recalling the Darwinian model of development, but applied to history, then quotes in this connection a Persian writer, M.Minowi. In his opinion, there are:

"two fundamental concepts of freedom: the Western one consists of creating more and more needs; while the other one, in contrast, represented by the traditional spirituality of the East, is based on the idea that Mankind must get rid of more and more needs, in order to become independent, internally and externally<sup>(22)</sup>.

The Western partner rightly demands this attitude of openmindedness in order to arrive at a fruitful dialogue-but this is of course easier to demand than to obtain, and would bring decisive consequences in its train.

### ***III. Meeting points and possibilities of academic cooperation:***

If dialogue is to have any meaning and is to be continued, then- and this should have become obvious from the arguments given above - the least that we can expect is that the still subconscious discrimination against Islam should stop. It should not continue to be excused by criticizing the world of Islam. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that Islam is misunderstood not only in the West, but also in its own camp. Islam shares this situation with all other religions. Efforts to research Islam on the academic level, as impartially and as free from prejudice as possible, are therefore of the utmost importance.

Research into Islam must above all be related to the present time. In other words, it must be open-minded and capable of solving actual problems and tasks in a creative way in the spirit of Islam. Though this programme is admittedly ambitious, it is nevertheless the only possible programme for Islamic research which aims at real progress, and which seeks to create genuine knowledge. In connection with this programme, we can rightly demand from Western Islamicists who can only study Islam 'from the outside' (even if they don't admit it), that they try to

present it, in accordance with the demands of modern scholarship, in the way that Muslims themselves understand it in the best sense. For example, it is not correct or scholarly to write that Muhammad wrote the Qur'an. Instead, it must be stated that, according to Muslim belief, Muhammad caused the Qur'an to be written down, based on the revelations given to him personally.

Apart from the fact that a large number of Western intellectuals still accept such false ideas of Islam and continue to allow them to circulate as genuine, instead of suppressing them serious contemporary students of comparative religion are already convinced that scholars who concern themselves with religion have to recognize:

"whether the beliefs of this or that religion are correctly or incorrectly understood. They do not state whether the religion is true or false. This does not come within the framework of their scholarly researches at all"<sup>(23)</sup>.

We have already said that in the West too it is being emphasized that even:

"the more objective research of the last 150 years.. has not entirely succeeded in rectifying the picture of Islam held by contemporary observers in the West. Especially in

a world where contacts between Christians and Muslims are becoming more numerous and important, efforts should be made to uncover the historical causes of the prejudices which we may still foster unconsciously"<sup>(24)</sup>.

The same scholar has rightly recognized that nowadays in any case:

"in the old distortion of fact is seen a lack of education, and that hostile expressions of opinion that are lacking in understanding will meet with violent criticism"<sup>(25)</sup>.

As we have already pointed out, we think that this attitude of misunderstanding can only be removed by an attitude of understanding; in place of a distorted picture must come a true picture, free of misrepresentations. Consequently, if we want to remove misunderstandings and prevent their recurrence, then we must take pains to come to a genuine understanding. How can this happen?

As Carlyle has already said, the main goal of the two great religions of Christianity and Islam is fundamentally the same, as Islam itself teaches. In Carlyle's own words: 'Christianity also commands us, before all, to be resigned to God'<sup>(26)</sup>.

It is, however, precisely this central idea of Islam, submission to God, which is subject to the greatest

misunderstandings. Etymologically, 'Islam' has the same root as the Arabic word for peace: 'salam'. This is no coincidence, because Islam is inseparably tied together with the will for peace.

It is one of the most puzzling paradoxes of world history that the great world religions, which by their nature call all people to peace, are on the contrary misused to unleash senseless wars, because they are misunderstood. This has continued right up to our present enlightened time. The cause of this is not really that the principles of the various religions are being defended, but rather that selfish aims are being protected under the cloak of religion. For true religion, by calling for submission to God, does indeed call people to struggle, but to struggle for self-control, to struggle for justice and a true peace; above all, it calls for a struggle for truth.

Understood in this sense, 'the "war propaganda" of (Christian) medieval times'<sup>(27)</sup> as W.M. Watt calls it, which is still at work right up to our own time, has however become outdated and useless. Apart from this, it can cause incalculable damage.

The Islamic world, which, as a matter of principle in accordance with the command of its religion, now as in

the past recognizes Christianity as being essentially authentic, parries these attacks with polemical arguments, which also partly date from the Middle Ages. This theatre of polemic is performed without enthusiasm by those who see that today's reality demands a realistic solution of its problems, and moreover one that is produced jointly by both camps. Thus the Islamic world recognizes, for example, that it cannot solve the new and most important problems, above all those of a sensible and selective adjustment to modern civilization and technology, with outdated answers taken from theologians of former times—and even less with a simple acceptance of modern Western ideas. For its part, the West recognizes the necessity of co-existence and pro-existence, in other words, of genuine co-operation with the Islamic world. There are frequent efforts to let the old warcries die away and finally to recognize Islam, in Carlyle's words as a 'fundamentally true religion'. However, just as in Carlyle's work, we still detect in many others a tendency which is opposed to these efforts and which is even incomprehensibly linked to them. This tendency sees Islam basically as a hostile religion, and regards everything that Islam represents in a negative light. In this way, even Carlyle for example.,

seeks to conquer Islam, as if he were storming an enemy fortress<sup>(28)</sup>.

In this he is following the tradition of a long line of theologians, which extends from the Middle Ages right up to our present time, who stood for the warlike motto that one must study Islam thoroughly in order to fight against it successfully. As many as 800 years ago it was felt that mere insults and calumnies were not enough. This is why Peter the Venerable commissioned a translation of the Qur'an, because as he said, for the purpose of mission one must really know the ideas of one's enemy<sup>(29)</sup>. It was the Enlightenment that first freed the study of the Arab world from the confines of theological ways of thought<sup>(30)</sup>. Nevertheless, 600 years later Hadrian Reland still showed missionary attitude; at least he speaks about it, but possibly not willingly. However, he already demands that Islam be studied and presented objectively. One should not try to understand Islam through the books or statements of others. One should make the effort to study Arabic works oneself, and endeavour to see with one's own eyes what Islam is actually about-Islam is a religion which is widespread in Asia and Africa, and which is also the religion of many people in Europe. If one believes that

God has given everybody reason, how could one deny that all these people and their scholars possess this gift? That is why as many as three hundred years ago Reland demanded that Islam should not only be studied through its original sources, but should also be presented in the way it is taught in Muslim schools and mosques<sup>(31)</sup>. But let us return to the present.

In the words of the well-known contemporary Islamicist, W.M. Watt, 'Instead of regarding Islam only as a threat and starting from this premise in studying it, the West should rather attempt to look at Islam objectively and to recognise its positive possibilities'<sup>(32)</sup>.

He also says, however, that Islam should not be underestimated. In this connection he states quite correctly that one cannot say 'what Islam is without considering its potentialities.. Islam is one of the contestants, (in the struggle for the dominance of a single religion), a serious rival of Christianity and humanism'<sup>(33)</sup>.

As he goes on to say, quite correctly, there is a danger that in the enthusiasm of the struggle Islam will not be judged objectively and its potentialities will be falsely assessed. He says that fear may damage intellectual judgement and he gives a warning against this; he states:

'when it threatens our conception of our 'religion' in the world (whether that religion' be Christianity, humanism, or some other),.. how shall we be able to judge it (i.e. Islam) objectively and assess its possibilities?'

He does not remain subject to these fears. He admits to an optimistic way of thinking, and points out that Islam expresses a vision of the world and of life, which is not far removed from that of Christianity and Judaism<sup>(34)</sup>.

It seems quite credible that he is sincere when he asserts that:

'today we stand at the beginning of a new process of giving a rational, intellectual formulation to the essentials of the religious message contained in the Qur'an<sup>(35)</sup>.

The programme that he outlines, as somebody who views Islam from the outside, does not necessarily have the same attraction for a Muslim who is concerned to live Islam, and for whom Islam is a living religion and not only an object of study. For a faithful Muslim this 'life of Islam' cannot be explained 'in modern terms' as demanded in the programme of this scholar, referred to above<sup>(36)</sup>.

However, this should not prevent the Muslim from understanding, as far as possible, the distinct quality that

has developed historically, and the way of thinking of his Western partner in dialogue.

It is only when one continues to make the effort to understand one's partner in dialogue in spite of all difficulties, and not merely to present one's own viewpoint, that co-operation between both partners can become really fruitful; because, notwithstanding the fact that the ways of the religions are different, yet they both lead, as we hope, to the same goal. The same goal can be viewed from different standpoints. We should never lose sight of the goal of the One Religion in our efforts to find the way. As has been truly said, 'in the One God is founded the unity of Mankind and the equality of all human beings before God'<sup>(37)</sup>.

Therefore one is quite right to argue in the West for the following proposition:

"(There can be) no peace between the nations of this world without peace between the world religions. How much death, misery, devastation, mankind could have been spared if, in place of enmity, reconciliation had been preached and practised in the name of religion: that reconciliation which is demanded in the scriptures of Jews, Christians and Muslims<sup>(38)</sup>.

And I should like to add: how much misery misery and devastation could we still avoid in this way? Above all, it is necessary that preaching and practice should be one; that, in the words of the Qur'an, we do what we say, and we say what we do (Q.61: 2-5).

As has been vividly expressed, the 'theme that stands at the centre of Islam' (or to put it better, its truth) is like a jewel, and 'Islam is indeed like a shrine, whose purpose is to hold and preserve it'<sup>(39)</sup>.

The same author says that, 'Our de-Christianized Europe should contemplate the theme that is at the heart of Islam, in order to find once more a truth which it never should have denied'<sup>(40)</sup>.

I should like to add to this that there are no modern terms for a Muslim which could accurately or approximately describe this jewel which Islam holds and preserves. This jewel is realized in the submission of the faithful human being to God. Words cannot really 'comprehend' it, for is not religion, as already said, 'something quite other'?<sup>(41)</sup> Does not religion open up for the human being who submits himself to God a completely new dimension, which is not accessible to the intellect alone?

In conclusion I should like to point out with le Gai Eaton that the inability of the Westerner to understand the Muslim corresponds to the inability of the Muslim to understand the Westerner<sup>(42)</sup>. But over and beyond that, it must be said that if we aspire to fulfil ourselves to the utmost and to understand ourselves, then we must attempt really to get to know the other partner, whom we don't understand. Our chance of survival lies in this.

## Notes

1. See also on this topic, Hans Küng, et. al., *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism*, translated by Peter Heineg, (London: Collins. 1987), 54 (German: Christentum und Weltreligionen, Munchen/ Zurich: Piper, 1984).
2. W.M. Watt, *What is Islam?* (London: Longman Group/ Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1968.), 214ff.
3. Charles Le Gai Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man* (London: Allen \* Unwin, 1985), 56ff.
4. Francis Edwards, in: *The Times*, 1980.
5. Le Gai Eaton, *op. cit.*, 58.
6. See also W.M. Watt, *op. cit.*, 216.
7. in: H. OJ. Greschat, *Was ist Religionswissenschaft?*. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988).
8. H. Küng, *op. cit.*, xviii.
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12. A. Th. Khoury, *Toleranz im Islam* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1982), 185 (also quoted by P. Antes, *Ethik und Politik in Islam*, 79).
13. J. Füek, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa* (Leipzig": Harrassowitz, 1955), 124.
14. J.J. Reiske, in: J.B. Koehler, *Abulfedae...* (Lipsiae (Leipzig), 1766) 239r (Endrees, *op. cit.*, 13).
15. Endress, *op. cit.*, 14.
16. *Fasl al-maqal*, 13, in: *Falsafat ibn Rushd* (Cairo: 1968).
17. See also: Mahmoud Zakzouk, *On the Role of Islam in the Development of Philosophical Thought* (Cairo: Dar al-Manar, 1989), 34ff.
18. Mahmoud Zakzouk, *Al-Islam fi tasaw wurat- al-gharb* (Islam in the eyes of the west) (Cairo, 1987), 17.
19. Rotraud Wieland, 'Islam und kulturelle Selbstbehauptung', in: W. Ende and U. Steinbach, *Der Islam in der Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 1984), 55.
20. Ibid.
21. P. Antes, *Ethik und Politik in Islam* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1982), 12 f.
22. (M. Minowi), in: Antes, *op. cit.*, 13.
23. H.- J. Greschat, *op. cit.*, 23.

24. W. M. Watt, *Der Islam*, B. I. (Stutthgart: Kohihammer, 1980), 17.
25. *Ibid.*, 38.
26. T. Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, 1890 ed., 52. (W.M. Watt, *What is Islam?* 6).
27. W.M. Watt, *op. cit.*, 1.
28. *Ibid.*, 2.
29. J. Fück, *op. cit.*, 4 f.
30. *Ibid.*, 97f.
31. G. Pfannmuller, *Handbuch der Islamliteratur* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1921) 3 f.
32. W. <. Watt, *What is Islam?* 5f.
33. *Ibid.*, 4.
34. *Ibid.*, 6.
35. *Ibid.*, 225.
36. *Ibid.*, 226.
37. H.Küng, "Christentum und Islam", in: *Islam und der Westen*, vol. 5, no.3 (1985), 9.
38. *Ibid.*,
39. Olivier Lacombe, "Sagesse chrétienne et sagesse d'Orient", in: *Lumen Vitae*, VI (Brussels, 1949), 699.
40. Le Gai Eaton, *op. cit.*, 13.
42. *Ibid.*, 15.

**CHAPTER 3**  
***PEACE FROM AN ISLAMIC***  
***STANDPOINT***  
***World peace as concept and necessity***<sup>(\*)</sup>

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## ***Introduction***

When we talk about the subject of peace, we are talking about something which concerns us all. But what actually is peace? We can best think about it by truly seeking it.

Peace always has to be created anew, for without it life would cease. Muslims strive for it as the highest goal which Islam impresses upon them. In doing so, they come into conflict with all human beings who pursue other aims. However, their religion obliges them to pursue their goal in a peaceful way. Defence is permissible for them, but not aggression.

According to the Islamic view, peace is at one and the same time an achievement of man and a gift of God. Seen from the human point of view, this means that he has to bring his thought and action into harmony, into accord. In this way integrity develops. This is the fertile soil which enables peace to grow.

Looked at from this angle, peace is, in the final analysis, the goal as well as the fulfillment of human life. As such, it is also a great deal more. It is the salvation of every human being who seeks peace. As far as that goes, it is something which every human being has to create for

himself or herself, namely through his or her devotion to God. Peace, from an Islamic point of view, is an attribute of God. God, says the Qur'an (59,23), is "the Source of Peace". The Arabic word for peace, *salam*, also means salvation.

As I shall hereafter elaborate in detail, peace is, for every human being who seeks it, both the goal and the path toward that goal. General experience teaches that the human being who bears peace within him can also create peace in the world around him. This is explained by the Islamic doctrine that, in the last analysis, all human beings are related to one another: they all belong to the huge family of mankind and all share the same line of descent from the first couple. Therefore, he who seeks peace seeks it both for himself and for his fellow human beings. As long as he seeks peace only for himself, he will lose his way to the goal of peace. For peace is the way towards the spiritual unity of human beings. They are unable to achieve that on their own. God, who desires the salvation of all human beings, directs them in this. This direction begins with the call to peace. For this call comes from God.

"God", it is written in the Qur'an (10,25), "doth call to the Home of Peace".

This appeal for peace is directed towards both the individual human being and all human societies. Peace enables an individual human being to achieve tranquillity of soul and human societies to live in concord with one another.

From the Islamic point of view, there is only one God for all individual human beings. This one God desires the salvation of all human beings without any discrimination. He has created them so that they may travel the path of peace to him. This path is straight. He wants human beings to develop their humanity. When God summons human beings to the path of peace, he is summoning them to himself.

The path of peace under the direction promised by God means, according to the teachings of the Qur'an, service to the divine creation which was created for us (cf. Qur'an 45, 13). This is the true destiny of mankind, which is why it is only in performing this service that human life acquires meaning and purpose.

However, he who devotes himself to the material things of this world or seeks to rule over them as if they were a goal in themselves, dissipates his strength. He is therefore unable to find any real inner peace. Thus he is also unable

to create peace in the world around him. He remains on the surface of life, which quickly passes, and he passes away with it. Even the whole gamut of religious ritual would not be enough, on its own, to save man. Rituals are intended to remind man that he is the shepherd of creation.

The actual divine service is the devotion with which the shepherd looks after the creatures that are entrusted to his care. Every human being is summoned to be a shepherd in this way within his sphere of responsibility. There is a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, where he speaks about the circles of human responsibility. It reads:

"Every one of you is a shepherd and responsible for his flock. The head of the government is a shepherd and responsible for his subjects; the man is a shepherd for his family and responsible for the members of his family; and the woman is a shepherdess in her house and answerable for her flock; and the servant is shepherd as far as the property of his master is concerned and responsible for it<sup>(1)</sup>".

The word *islam*, which derives from the same root as the Arabic word for peace, means devotion. It means the devotion of believers to God. Religious belief enables the

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(1) Fath al-Bari bi sharh sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 2, Cairo 1389 H., p. 380.

human being to meet his true responsibility. For in believing he entrusts himself to divine leadership and help. In doing so he is empowered to perform creative acts. Instead of being aggressive and destructive, he becomes peaceful and constructive, because he helps to promote peace.

Islam teaches that the way of peace is straight. Even a short deliberation can give an indication of this.

Every human being who strives for peace can only really do so if he leaves space for it. This means that he has to allow his fellow human beings and the world around him to follow the same goal and that he also has to help them on their way towards it. If he does not do this, he immediately abandons the path of peace.

As this thought shows, peace is not only the *aim*, one which, in the final analysis, is common to all human beings and towards which Islam points the way. Peace is, from an Islamic point of view, at the same time also the only way towards peace for humanity.

It is in order to keep to this path and not go astray upon other paths, that Muslims pray every day. Every Muslim turns round five times at the end of his prayers and utters the salutation "Peace be with you!" saluting first the right

side of the world and then the left side of the world with the same words. Muslims also greet each other generally in this manner. It is true that one has to make an effort to work for peace and that self-discipline is required. Yet the difficulty of making the necessary exertion is matched by a corresponding human capacity. Islam does not believe that one should demand too much from man. But it teaches that the greater the exertion, the greater the profit which is drawn from it. When peace is seen to be what it really is, namely salvation, how can one not strive to achieve it? Yet it is also more than that, it is namely the condition of life in our world.

### ***1. Peace as the condition of life in our world***

If we look at present-day life, we can see that the problem of peace now preoccupies or at least concerns more or less the whole world. Everyone tends to agree that it is worth striving for and even necessary. Unfortunately, however, the way human beings act is usually anything but peaceful. However, as we have already mentioned, unjust and aggressive action cannot produce peace. Purely theoretical considerations, which are not followed by corresponding action, also cannot come up with peace. The more we want to analyse what peace is and how it can

be attained, the more it seems to elude us. As already mentioned, this is what happens when we do not make the effort to translate our thought into appropriate and feasible action. Yet if we do, we may find, for example, that, what seems to be a sacrifice, subsequently yields a profit and enrichment. From an Islamic point of view, if one wishes to develop one's reason, it is necessary for action and thought to be as closely connected as possible.

Yet for this one needs faith. It is written in the Qur'an (26,226) that people without faith, "say what they practise not".

Only independent thought, following the trail of reality, enables man to translate his thinking into action and to behave in accordance with his words. His words follows the deed.

When we talk of peace today-for example, in terms of the conclusion of a peace treaty, state of peace, peace process or inner peace-it often proves, if one tries to achieve it, to be rather intangible or fleeting and unstable. For peace requires a balance which is difficult to achieve. The only form in which peace still appars as a constant today is peace as the gift and promise of God.

Islam sees the central human task as being that of gaining the love of God and thus peace. Therefore, when we speak about peace, we come to the question of the development of man. The main obstacle standing in the way of peace today is the problem of the difference between the poor and the rich parts of the world, as far as opportunities of development are concerned. As is recognised almost unanimously today, the problem of peace involves the question of how we can ensure that as many people as possible in all parts of the world have the freedom and thus the chances of development that they need.

Muslims make a contribution to the peace effort in trying to follow the teaching of Islam.

In fact, generally speaking, when we look more closely, the subject of peace, like that of life itself, is inexhaustible. It has something to do with both the unity and the variety of human existence. As an aim, peace unites man's deepest desires and highest strivings. However, with the help of God, it also reveals to each human being his own way to achieve it, which he then has to struggle for to follow through his own personal efforts, in accordance with his talents. The same applies, in a figurative sense, to the

various religious, national and cultural communities, and in fact to every community. And today the emerging world community is striving for peace.

As far as the problem of the differences between human communities is concerned, Islam teaches that variety makes unity possible. For this is where man's task lies, which is why in the Qur'an it is written: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other". (49, 13).,

Above and beyond all differences, the human being who recognises himself knows himself in other human beings. This enables him to engage in creative work with others, and to be genuinely tolerant and ready to try to understand others. The whole creation reveals itself to anyone who recognises himself as one of its creatures. He or she sees the various paths followed by human communities as paths towards a goal which is basically the same. The whole of creation points towards this path. It is a straight path, and yet it is manifold. For it is always being walked on anew. Every generation has to find its own new solutions to the problem of peace. Hope lies in the regeneration of the world, which thus becomes

possible. Islam teaches this continuous new beginning, which is why the new moon, as a symbol of the new beginning, has become the symbol of Islam. As such, considered as a goal, peace has a clearly delineated outline. Yet when we speak of the way towards it, it often becomes hidden and all too often unrecognisable.

It is due to this fact that people make statements such as the unattainable dream of and desire for peace is as old as mankind itself. It can only be striven for in an experimental manner, with varying degrees of success. It cannot be aimed at directly. Yet that applies to all ideals. This does not make them less worth while. For where would we be without them? Or perhaps we should ask more concretely: 'Where are we without them?' All those who place peace beyond our reach as something unattainable for man have not understood the real nature of peace. For, in reality, it is something which is as necessary for life as the air we need in order to breath. Without peace, life ceases. This, at any rate, is the situation from the Islamic point of view.

The present-day world situation has made us clearly aware of the necessity of peace. If peace is the central demand of religion, then this message, which is common

to all religions, has become a very real necessity for us today. This demand requires that human beings, in peaceful cooperation and mutual tolerance, create chances for everybody, especially the poor and the oppressed, thus creating a peaceful world. In view of the development of our present world society, the standpoint that peace is but a pipe-dream, a fiction which has nothing to do with reality, is no longer sustainable. In the same measure-this much has also become clear-peace is not to be found in a peace process which might proceed quite automatically of its own accord. On the contrary, it is a task which has to be mastered by all of us together. It has today become clear, at least to all clearthinking people with a sense of responsibility that senseless wars, aggression and the desire for expansion, just like passivity and apathy, are increasingly destroying not only our chances of peace, but also the world itself. For this reason we must finally learn to act in accordance with our knowledge and to intervene in this process of destruction, so that we might be able to bring it to a halt.

Today, the whole world is ruled by means of our very highly developed scientific knowledge and technology, and we are always pushing further an further into outer

space. Yet at the same time there is a very real danger that the world is slipping from our grasp. For we still know far too little about human beings themselves. Science still has much to investigate in this area. Nevertheless-and this is important-these investigations have to take the right direction. It ought to be a case of emphasizing human reason as a creative inheritance and thus guaranteeing and deepening respect for human life. Experimentation with nature, which has been so successful but which has also destroyed so much life on earth, has increasingly become an experimentation with mankind itself. In this way the last bastion of nature is being stormed, which contains the possibility of peace among human beings and for the world, for this earth which has almost been exploited to destruction.

Man is-in contrast to the rest of nature-a creature that has to create peace if it wants to live. Today we are more or less aware of that fact, yet in thinking about the goal of peace we frequently forget that peace also has to be the way to achieve peace: Everything points to the fact that the lack of peace in our world is threatening to destroy the world completely and that only our united efforts to achieve peace can save it.

The key word for us all here is the word justice. And with justice we touch upon the word truth. For what is truly just?

Efforts to achieve peace can begin anywhere, even with the attempt to understand the concept of 'peace'. After all, we have a word for peace in all languages. Whether we say peace, *paix*, *Friede* or *salam*, we mean the same thing. It is the same for us all. Yet it is often almost impossible to discover what this word actually means. The aim of modern technology and science is to comprehend and analyse objects and from that starting position to govern. With these methods they increasingly occupy even language itself. Yet reason, the organ of the spirit in man, seeks more than that. It wants to listen to what is true and lead mankind toward the truth. The human being has to be truthful in this sense, in order to be able to create peace and to create in peace, so that he needs not only the sciences but also religion in order to be able to arrive at the truth.

At the very latest, this becomes clear when we want to speak about peace for mankind, because for mankind peace is a vital necessity. In this way we can comprehend the necessity of peace as an object. Yet we still do not

have it within our sight For peace is more than just something which is vitally necessary for us.

The actual state of affairs is really very simple. Through our injustice we make peace more and more impossible. In striving to dominate and exploit others-in the last analysis a pointless activity-we drive peace away.

Unfortunately, even religions are all too often used as a means of dominating others, in order to gain worldly power and prestige for themselves. Has that not been going on too long already? We need religion. But we have to understand it correctly. According to their aims, religions should be instruments of peace and compete with one another in educating people to live in peace. On this head the Qur'an says: "Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). [...] Only those are Believers who [...] have striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of God: such are the sincere ones". (49, 13.15).

Religions should call upon to compete with one another for good deeds, not for power. Islam teaches that it is the just and merciful acts which lead us to the experience of peace and through which we can further the cause of

peace. Purely theoretical analysis, without any corresponding action, cannot help us to find the way to peace.

Contemporary German peace research characterises peace quite rightly as a fundamentally human problem. Its philosophical importance has only recently become evident. On the other hand "its status as a principle of thought and action has still received very little attention at all"<sup>(1)</sup>. In the view of German peace research, world peace has become "a condition of life in the age of science and technology".

Already *Kant* says, peace is what humanity should strive for with all its might, since the practical reasons for accepting the rational principles of 'God' and 'Immortality' are stronger than those for doubting them<sup>(2)</sup>.

## ***II. The Islamic Concept of Peace***

Only the language of peace, i.e. a truly just action and the striving towards it, can lead to the rational

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(1) J. Ritter (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Vol. 2, Darmstadt 1972, p. 1114.

(2) R. Eisler, *Kant-Lexikon. Nachschlagewerk zu sämtlichen Schriften und Briefen Kants* (reprint of the 1930 Berlin edition) Hildesheim 1946, p. 171.

development of man and to understanding among human beings and productive collaboration between them. It is the only language which is truly understood universally, for it speaks the words of justice and of its necessary complement, mercy. And since human beings can never be perfect, however hard they may try, they need this complement.

From an Islamic point of view, we do not choose peace; rather, peace chooses us. Yet we can decide to follow the path toward peace, decide to act justly. Justice in the eyes of Islam, is one of the attributes of God. The religious history of mankind clearly demonstrates how this is to be understood.

According to the teaching of the Qur'an, man was created for paradise, the Garden of Peace. Yet he had to leave it because he did not obey God. Even today, when we spend some time in a peaceful place, we compare it with paradise. Paradise is not lost. The divine revelations show the way back to this place of all-embracing harmony to all those who seek the path. This is the path which the sincere man follows. He is God's representative on earth.

God calls human beings to the place of peace. He helps them along the path if they have faith in him.

Whoever sets out upon the path of God receives from him his *sakina*, which means the tranquillity of his presence (Qur'an 9,26.40). This *sakina*, peace in the heart of the believer, strengthens him in his faith. Thus it becomes possible for him to make greater efforts towards justice and peace. "It is He Who sent down Tranquillity". says the Qur'an (48,4) "into the hearts of the Believers, that they may add Faith to their Faith".

Throughout the history of mankind, all the various written statements on the subject of peace have taught that it is a spiritual talent, which is acquired through personal effort. It is something with which individual people or human communities, or whole nations or cultures are endowed.

From an Islamic point of view, religion has always, ever since the very beginning of humanity, been the act of man surrendering to God, i.e. Islam (Qur'an 3,19).

One common characteristic of peace that emerges from all these statements is that it tends to be more difficult to achieve with worldly privileges than without them. In the last analysis, the question of peace decides what a human being is.

Islam teaches man that the source of peace is to be found not outside of himself but primarily within him. It teaches him to strive for independence and a critical attitude in his thinking. In this way he develops his intelligence. This is the divine spirit with which man was endowed upon being created (Qur'an) 15,29) and it exists in potential form in every human being. It is this which makes it possible for him to decide to seek peace and, furthermore, to create peace. If we think about our experiences in an intelligent way and critically examine them, we see that peace cannot be found in the external world. However, as soon as we experience the world and ourselves not as a simple material fact but as creation, then the world of peace opens up to us. Material possession of the whole world could not, on its own, lead to peace. Peace is something which, from an Islamic point of view, is actually lived by the human being, or as the Qur'an puts it: "[...] in heaven is your Sustenance, as (also) that which ye are promised". (51,22).

For, after all, one might well ask: what does man live from? Just as the earth needs rain in order to bring forth fruit, the human being needs peace in order to live, peace which comes to him from above, if he gives it the chance

to do so. From a Qur'anic standpoint, man lives through the peace of heaven. This is just as true, says the Qur'an (51:23), as the fact "that ye can speak".

In actual fact, human language is what has long distinguished man as an exceptional being in creation. This fact is not at all as self-evident as we might perhaps think it is, simply because we are so accustomed to speech. Like reason itself, language can convey certainty about the existence of the truth.

Convinced of the truth, man recognises everywhere in the world as well as within himself the divine signs of which the Qur'an speaks (51:20-22 etc.) For God speaks to the human beings who are ready to listen to him. Through his words, which cannot be limited (Qur'an 18, 109), he leads people along the path which leads to him and thus to their actual home, to peace.

Yet the Qur'an also stresses the fact that it is by no means enough to listen. One must also develop one's own power of reason and use it independently. Only by using his freedom in this way can man arrive at the decisive perceptions possible through his intelligence. This enables him to act in a conscious, responsible, and thus creative manner.

Which is why the famous Islamic thinker *Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali* says: "Only he who owns fire can warm himself with it, not he who has simply heard of it"<sup>(1)</sup>. If we choose peace as a goal, the reality of peace itself, then the way to peace opens up to us.

### ***III. The Islamic Path to Peace***

For a long stretch of the path to peace man is led through many trials and temptations. The human being is confronted with "evil and [...] good" (temptations) (Qur'an 21,35). One has to face these trials with patience and by continuing to strive for truth. Then they make the human being stronger.

The love of the creator for his creation and especially for human beings is revealed in human beings who follow the path to peace. Like divine signs, we can discover the traces of peace everywhere in the world. The witnesses of peace appear wherever the various cultures of mankind have formed human societies. The roots of these cultures were the religions and that is why these cultures were able

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(1) Al-Ghazzali, *Die Nische der Lichte*. Aus dem Arabischen übersetzt, mit einer Einleitung, mit Anmerkungen und Indices, ed. A. El schazl; (Philosoph. Bibliothek 390) Hamburg 1987, p.39.

to establish order in their societies.

The Qur'an teaches that the creation arose already ordered. It also indicates how the creation is conceived from both its beginning and its end. Within this creation man has a very special position. In contrast with the rest of creation, every human being is free to decide whether to fill this position or to reject it.

If he accepts it, then he declares himself ready to exercise the rights and obligations which go with it. In leading his life, he is responsible to God. His freedom increases, when he acts in a responsible manner and decreases, when he acts in an unscrupulous way. Freedom of course does not mean choosing something arbitrarily. For freedom would then have no purpose. Through making intelligent decisions, and with the help of his freedom, man can arrive at the highest place within the Creation. He can become the vicegerent of God. Yet if he makes the wrong decision, he may fall very far indeed, even to that place where peace no longer exists.

In the Qur'an it is written that one should turn with one's own inner self to the religion created by God (cf. 30,30-32) The true religion is to affirm creation and oneself as part of that creation. Pure faith is faith in a God

of all mankind. The creation was created by him and lives through him.

Human beings were created so that they could get to know one another (Qur'an 49, 13). He who recognises himself as a creature of God can be just towards his fellow men. For he can love them like himself. In this way he creates peace both within himself and around him.

The secret of justice is that God, in his mercy, perfects it where it needs to be perfected on account of man's weakness. In this way peace arises.

God, who is infinitely greater than man, creates peace. Peace rests on his justice. As it is written in the traditions of the Prophet<sup>(1)</sup>, God forbade himself injustice, which is why he also forbids it to man.

The Islamic concept of justice cannot lead to simple legalism, for in its complementary mercy it serves at the same time to keep the way to peace open for others. This means that, under certain circumstances, man has to give even his enemies the chance of peace, namely, in the case where they show themselves ready to make peace, which

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(1) Sahih Muslim (ed. M.F. 'Ab al-Baqi), Cairo 1955, vol. 4, p. 1994.

is why it is written in the Qur'an (8,61): "But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in God".

Yet even then, when the enemy shows no willingness to make peace and when it becomes necessary to fight in defence of our rights, one must still be careful to make no moral transgressions. For the way of peace allows only thoroughly moral behaviour. "Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors". (Qur'an 2,190).

This is why the Prophet Muhammad reminded his troops of their piety before every battle, forbidding them to massacre, to mishandle or to kill the defenceless, for example the aged, women or children. He forbade every form of inhumanity, even towards prisoners.

Yet the fight against the enemy does not end with the war of defence. The highest aim of muslims is to fight against the enmity within the enemy. For peace, once it has been found, is sought more and more. In this way a commitment to peace becomes increasingly possible. Muslims therefore also plead that God does not make them a temptation for the enemy (cf. Qur'an 60,5). For it is of course, as we all know, unfortunately true that people

who tend toward peace often become the object of the aggression and complexes of violent people, if they do not protect themselves from the latter.

Yet muslims are being told by their religion to never give up hope. Their hope is that they will reach the homeland of peace. "[...] Truly God is Free of all [...]. It may be that God will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies. For God has power (over all things)' And God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful". (60,6 f.).

Muslims are allowed to be quite tolerant towards all men regardless of their faith. The Qur'an (60,8) says, "God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: For God loveth those who are just".

In this verse tolerance is raised to the position of the sister of Justice. Since tolerance is the fruit of mercy, which represents the other side of justice. Justice is a necessity, for justice wants man to develop well and supports him in doing so.

The Islamic concept of justice emphasizes the importance of active involvement, since this is the only

way towards real peace. Yet this involvement is always linked to the awareness of the fact that peace is only to be gained with the help of God. Man needs God's leadership on his way towards peace.

On this straight path towards peace there is one valid principle which allows man's contribution to the establishment of peace. It might be called the principle of moving 'from the inside to the outside'. Usually it is called human freedom. Peace cannot be imposed from outside. It starts within a man and through the exemplary behaviour of this man it has an effect on the world around him and within his sphere of responsibility and influence.

There are limits to the will for peace, but no limits to justice. It is unjust to make friends with enemies who seek to destroy us. It is unjust towards ourselves and also supports the injustice of our enemies. Would we be doing them a favour if we supported them in their injustice? That is why the Qur'an (60,9) says: "God only forbids you, with regard to those who fight your for (your) Faith, an drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong".

It depends on us, whether we want to have peace or not. If we want to have peace, then we have to avoid every intolerance. For this destroys peace and leads people astray to inhuman behaviour.

It is true that peace, if it is to be attained, demands a great deal of us and perhaps even more. It demands our whole commitment. Only that enables us to avoid demanding too much from other people or other groups of people, so that they collapse under our demands and thus become our victims. As the German writer *Heinrich Böll* once expressed it: "How peacefully a person or even a nation or a group behaves, depends on what one demands of him"<sup>(1)</sup>.

This thoughtful writer also once asked himself: "To whom does the earth actually belong? If it is created, whom is it created for?"<sup>(2)</sup> From the Islamic point of view, too, it was created for all human beings without exception.

We have to consider this. Since the disastrous consequences of the arms race have been recognised and

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(1) H. Böll, *Ein-und Zuspruche*. Schriften, Reden und Prosa 1981-1983, Cologne 1984, p. 56: "Wie friedlich sich ein Mensch verhält oder auch ein Volk oder eine Gruppe, hängt ja von dem ab, was man ihnen zumutet".

(2) *Op. Cit.* (n.6) p. 53: "Wem gehört diese Erde eigentlich? Wenn sie geschaffen ist, für wen ist sie geschaffen?"

disarmament has finally begun after the end of the Cold War, one ought to try to prevent an arms race from occurring anywhere in the world again. For have we not recognised that the earth's reserves have already been used up too much in this way? Does this not also overtax the earth's peace reservoir? If we want to promote human rights and development at one end of the earth, we ought not to neglect the other end of the earth, in the Third World.

Islam teaches that the earth was created for all human beings, regardless of their race, their creed or their sex. The gift of creation is there for all human beings, so that they can enjoy, honour and care for it. In this way they develop as persons. All people have a right to this self-development. And whoever tries to hinder one part of the human race from exercising its rights and from developing, hinders himself in the same way in his own self-development. Islam teaches human rights and also the performance of duties and thus freedom as a way to becoming a person which is why, in his religion, the muslim should not submit to any authority or power other than that of the creator. The creator, however, allows him to grow as a human being, to practise humanity and thus choose to follow the way of peacefulness.

Only religion makes this possible. The way to peace is distorted by this world if one does not want to look out beyond it. Moreover, the world takes prisoner whoever submits to the world. Islam, however, teaches the freedom of man and his creative potential not as a way of salvation itself. It teaches that the human being attains freedom and gains his creative abilities through inner peace. Inner peace makes it possible for a man to avoid becoming dogmatically rigid in his conceptions. Instead, he makes an effort to be independent in his thought and actions. This means being open and truly tolerant towards the world.

Instead of regarding one's own world as absolute and wanting to dogmatically fix what are claimed to be entirely different characteristics of worlds, cultures or even religions, one should try to focus on the constant change taking place within these worlds. Every generation brings people into the world, who in their thought and actions practically represent a new beginning. It is for this reason that mother and child have long been the symbol of the new beginning in the thought of many peoples. People are neither responsible for what their ancestors did, nor can they be praised for it. Yet they need the chance to be able to contribute something positive themselves. As far as

that goes, they are-if we allow them to be so-the hope of this world. At all events, it is our task to educate them to become so. This needs an effort towards objective thought, which does not let itself be influenced by prejudice.

Islam, as it is the intention of these reflections to show, not only presents no obstacle on the path to world peace, but is, if correctly understood and lived, a religion which expressly calls for peace in the world and also requires that one dedicates oneself to it totally in order to achieve it. Furthermore, it teaches the way to attain it. Muslims want peace. The Islamic world sees the roots of its culture in Islam. This culture was a leading power in the world for many centuries and provided the West itself with many decisive impulses. The goal of the Islamic world is to take root in its religion. For it alone teaches how to find the way to peace and to humanity, which modern ideologies certainly promised but were unable to show. The peace which Islam gives its believers is experienced as a living power deriving from God himself. This becomes clear in the fact that it allows people to grow and helps them to become responsible people. The world thus becomes the place where man becomes man.

Instead of finally becoming exhausted with the lack of success of all his efforts and despairing at the injustice which he has experienced in this world, man should turn to his creator and serve him, in this world. Yet God compels no-one to make this decision. He wants man to turn to him of his own free will. In so doing man thus also turns to peace.

It is true that the path can be very long. There are no shortcuts. Yet from the Islamic point of view it is the only way. This fact also becomes clear from the idea of the creation. According to Islamic teaching, the world is not subject to arbitrariness and constraint, but to the order of the Creator's plans. If we travel the path of peace, we help to set up the original order of creation. From this point of view the order of the world and its peace are in our hands.

The family of mankind is now urged to fight dangers which threaten us all, and to work for world peace. As far as the role of religions is concerned, they should see their task in creating world peace. Peace is the love of God, his Justice and Mercy. What else do they strive for? Therefore, if we all try to make a contribution to world peace, we are making a contribution to a just order of the world. For in an intelligent and just world order, peace simply arises within the world.

The main problem in our developing world society is the question of how we can exercise power without violence. For since we are now all sitting in the same boat, so to speak, every act of violence hits back at us sooner or later.

According to one tradition, the Prophet Muhammad, too, spoke about the fact that mankind has to develop some kind of communal solidarity if it is not to be destroyed<sup>(1)</sup>. In one parable he describes how all mankind finds itself in one ship. After all, the earth carries them as if in a ship through space. As if it were a vision, he demonstrates the threat to mankind in the degrading divisions of humanity into the people in the upper part of the ship and the people in the lower part of the ship. The people on the lower deck eventually become tired of always having to fetch the water from the upper deck. So they decide to bore a hole in the bottom of the ship, in order to get water from there. In doing so they of course endanger the whole ship. The Prophet proposes that the people above help the people below, in order to prevent them from destroying the ship. Otherwise they will all be lost. The hole in the ship reminds us of the hole in the ozone layer, which is threatening our world now.

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(1) Fath al-Bari, op. cit. (n.1) Vol. 5, p. 132.

Only through solidarity of action can peace be saved for the world. This, at least, is what Islam teaches, which teaches mankind the highest values. Only in this way can one solve that problem which is today known as the social question. The question is already being asked in the Qur'an: "And why should ye not fight in the cause of God and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)?- men, women, and children [...]". (4,75). The Qur'an makes it very clear that whoever does not do that, whoever behaves indifferently and impassively towards his fellow-men and thus despises their dignity as human beings is without doubt on the wrong path. He belongs, as the Qur'an puts it, to "those straying in Evil" (26,224). In the final analysis, such people despise not only the rights of their fellow human beings, but also their own rights. One of the characteristics of justice is that not only every human being needs it and seeks it, but it also needs and seeks human beings in a certain way. Justice needs man to act on its behalf and then it is also there for him.

Islam summons man to this active commitment to justice. The human being who entrusts himself to the leadership of God will of course be led by him. Yet this man should, as the representative of God, use the reason

given to him by God to think and act within the prescribed general guidelines. We have to look after the creation, which has been given to us, if we do not want to lose it.

Our responsibility is in the first place to our fellow-human beings. For every human being is important for humanity, which is why the Qur'an says that when we murder another human being it is as if we had murdered the whole of mankind (5,35). For in this way we have extinguished humanity. On the other hand, if we keep another human being alive, we have kept the whole of mankind alive. If we think about the unique value of every human life in this way, we arrive at exactly that attitude which peace requires from mankind. For in this case we can see that our fellow human being is just as important to us as we are to ourselves.

In allowing us to be free, God made us responsible for ourselves, thus giving us the responsibility for our fellow human beings and our environment as well. For we are all part of one creation in the same way. This means that no artificial idealistic varnishing of reality is required from us. On the contrary, what is required is a realistic and vigorous attitude to life. The precondition for this is that we have our feet firmly on the ground of reality. And it is

exactly that of which the Qur'an speaks, when it says: "If ye will aid (the cause of) God, He will aid you, and plant your feet firmly". (67,7). The lever with which man can, if he wants to, change the world and make it a juster place is the rational will to peace, which itself creates peace.

There are various levels of committed action in the cause of justice and parallel to them are the levels of the strength of faith expressed in it. One tradition of the Prophet Muhammad says that "Whenever one of you sees something evil, he should change it with his hand. If he is unable to do that, then he should do so with his tongue (with words)' if he cannot do that, then with his heart (with his intentions). Yet the last is the weakest form of faith"<sup>(1)</sup>.

And evil, i.e. iniquitous acts are described in another tradition as "that which disturbs your soul and of which you do not want other people to know"<sup>(2)</sup>.

There is a still higher level of faith than the avoidance of evil. The greatest happiness belongs to those who can reply to the evil which is done unto them with good and who can thus make a friend of an enemy: "Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is

(1) Sahih Muslim, op. cit. (n. 5), Vol. 1, p. 69.

(2) Sahih Muslim, op. cit. (n. 5) Vol. 4, p. 1980.

better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were the friend and intimate! And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint,-none but persons of the greatest good fortune". (Qur'an 41m 34-35). And in another place in the Qur'an it is written: "On no soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear". (2,286).

God requires humaneness from man, a behaviour which corresponds to his dignity. That entails a great deal. It means, for example, that one does what one says. One must keep to one's word once it has been given. Thus contracts with non-Muslims must in all circumstances also be fulfilled. Justice is impartial. If, for example, Muslims ask other Muslims for support in their wars, help must be given "except against a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance. And (remember) God seeth all that ye do". (8,72).

In general, the humaneness called for by Islam consists in the fact that, in principle, one respects every human being. In this connection it is said that the Prophet Muhammad once stood up when a funeral procession was passing in order to pay his respects to the deceased. When somebody told him that the deceased was a Jew, he

answered: "Is he not a human soul? When you see a funeral procession you should always stand up"<sup>(1)</sup>.

Every act of peace, even the smallest, helps, for it is a praise of the Creation, a 'yes' is said to it. Which is why the Prophet Muhammad said: "Do not despise even the smallest deed, even if it consists in meeting your brother (your fellows) with a friendly countenance"<sup>(2)</sup>.

A friendly face comes from an open and peaceful heart, which is far removed from arrogance. "God has told me", said the Prophet Muhammad on another occasion, "that you should be humble, that none of you should raise himself above the others and none should treat the others unjustly"<sup>(3)</sup>.

#### ***IV. World Peace and Islam***

If we summarise our reflections about peace, we may say that, from an Islamic point of view, peace can be represented in the form of three interlocking circles. The first circle, the peace which a human being has within himself, is made possible by the second circle: peace with God in his faith. Both make the third circle possible: peace

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(1) Fath al-Bari, p[. cit. (n.1), Vol., 3, pp. 179 f.

(2) Sahih Muslim, op. cit. (n.5), Vol. 4, p.2026.

(3) Sahih Muslim, op. cit. (n.5), Vol. 4, p. 2199.

with his fellow human beings and the environment. All three circles of peace influence one another. For according to Islamic doctrine, faith is kept by the person who acts in an impartial, correct way, i.e. one who seeks peace with the world around. The idea of world peace implies that all the nations of the world should have the chance to live in peace and thus to work together to create peace.

Muslims, too, see the necessity of world peace and would like to work towards it, so that it might come about, If we should succeed in preventing certain groups, religions or peoples from becoming the victims of aggression and expansionism, then the first step towards world peace will have been taken.

In other words, the condition for world peace is that every human being on earth is granted the right to his life, his religion, his property, to the freedom to use his intelligence and to the protection of his family.

We can learn to grasp the value of peace, if we take a lesson from history and see that wars are unable to solve any problems. They can only create new problems; at best, they can delay the solution of problems in a costly way, although they can perhaps also make the solution of some problems impossible for ever. For this reason, the hate and

complexes of earlier ages should not be reactivated over and over again. Instead, one should decide to follow some strategy of positive thinking, which finds constructive solutions.

Today we are faced with new generations and new worlds, which are neither responsible for the injustices of earlier times, nor deserving of praise for the positive achievements of previous generations. What they need from us is for us to not deny them the chance to build a fruitful life. Time after time, new peaceful solutions have to be found for new situations.

The Islamic world too needs the chance to be able to become active for peace, and it is prepared to work together with all the powers of peace in the world. Basically, Islam recognises all revelatory religions (Qur'an 42, 13 etc.) and can therefore live in co-existence with other religions. It is also prepared to work together for peace with them, if it is given the chance.

Islam, too, takes the view that peace can be secured through the free self-development of human beings and nations and wishes such selfdetermination for all people. Many efforts are being made from all sides towards peaceful solutions of the world's problems. Yet the

credibility and ability to inspire confidence in the existing international peace institutions will remain considerably impaired, if they cannot demonstrate that they are seeking an impartial justice. There is certainly an international law, but it should not only be proclaimed, but also practised.

Yet one has to admit that generally, almost everywhere in the world, this is unfortunately not the case. The law should not just be on the side of the wealthy countries. If it is, then that should be explainable. Only in such a way can one distinguish it from the law of the jungle, where strength, but not justice, triumphs. The complicated nature of the world peace problems cannot be ignored, yet our task will in the end become impossible if we do not at least make a visible attempt to solve the problems in an impartial and just way. For example, on the basis of the present state of world politics, every war of aggression, regardless of who is responsible for it, should be made impossible or be punished. The same goes for wars of expansion into so-called occupied areas.

The violation of human rights all over the world should be forbidden as a matter of principle and in cases where it occurs be punished. Rich and poor countries should be

subject to international law in the same way. Islam also teaches that the guarantee of international human rights is the basis for peace. The basic rights demanded by Islam for every human being are: his right to life, to religion, to his own use of his intelligence, to his family and to his property.

From an Islamic point of view, all religions should be seen as and practised as that which they are intended to be: languages and instruments of peace, which should work together with all peaceful powers in the world.

As a way to peace, Islam teaches not only to get the benefits of human rights but, in connection with this, also the consciousness of responsibility in exercising general human duties.

From a quite general point of view, every human being who looks on while crimes are being committed against humanity, for example genocide, without at least protesting about the fact is, according to Islam, an accomplice to the crime. In this way, world peace becomes impossible. Religions should work together for peace instead of fighting one another.

I would therefore greatly welcome it if we could make the effort to extend the scope of this conference about

world peace to a constant international action for world peace. The first basic principle should be to strive for credibility and trustworthiness in all efforts for world peace. In working together for world peace one should try to involve not only specialists, scholars, politicians and representatives of the religions, but also for example Nobel prizewinners, experts from the media and wellknown writers. At present there is talk of extending the World Security Council. So that Muslims also have a chance to work towards world peace, I would propose that they receive a permanent place in the World Security Council. They should be represented by an Islamic country which is chosen by all the other Islamic countries. The Muslims represent one-fifth of the world's population. They thus have the right to be able to speak for themselves.

Instead of looking for monocausal explanations for the problems of the Islamic world and blaming Islam for them, one should make a more detailed examination. The Islamic world shares many of its problems with the rest of the world. At any rate, as my talk has tried to show, Islam is a religion which strives for peace and promotes peace.

All nations of the world must be able to contribute to world peace, if it is to come about.