

Modernity and Muslims: Toward a Selective Retrieval¹

M. Ashraf Adeel

Abstract

This article is focused on some conditions in today's world of globalized media, which are producing either an uncritical acquiescence or fright in Muslim societies as a result of the interaction between these societies and the contemporary Western powers that represent modernity and postmodernity on the global stage. The rise of fundamentalism, a tendency toward returning to the roots and stringently insisting upon some pure and literal interpretation of them, in almost all the religions of the world is a manifestation of this fright. The central concern of this article is to suggest that fundamentalism is neither the only nor the most reasonable response for Muslim societies in the face of contemporary modernity. Muslims need to adopt an independent and critical attitude toward modernity and reshape their societies in the light of the ethics of the Qur'an, keeping in view the historical link between Islam and science in as much as Islamic culture paved the way for emergence of modern science during European Renaissance. The necessity of a pluralistic or contextualized modernization of Muslim societies is discussed along with the need for the removal of cultural duplicity in the role of the West in relation to Muslim societies. All this leads to an overall proposal for modernization which is given towards the end.

M. Ashraf Adeel has held professorship in philosophy at the University of Peshawar, Pakistan; a senior visiting fellowship at Lincare College Oxford; and was the founding vice chancellor of Hazara University in Pakistan. Currently with Philosophy Department at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, his research and teaching interests include contemporary philosophy of science and language, epistemic and religious pluralism, and modern Islamic thought.

Introduction

The issue of relationship between religion and modernity is a complex one. There are those who take modernity and religion to be antithetical.² Such is not the perspective that I am taking here. Religion is presumed here to be compatible with the basic ingredients of modernity, and now postmodernity—ingredients such as universal (non-discriminatory and difference-sensitive) ethics, sociopolitical institutions based on such ethics, science and technology, and more recently, globalization. William James, Muhammad Iqbal, and more recently, Paul Hirst accept religious experience as an authentic form of experience and knowledge, which can take its place alongside of other forms of experience—experiences that are moral or aesthetic.³ In fact, plurality of types of experiences and forms of knowledge derived from them is, after Paul Hirst, taken here as an essential feature of a genuine and mature phase of contemporary modernity.⁴

However, this article is not focused on either epistemological pluralism or the nature of modernity⁵ or religion. It is focused on some conditions in today's globalized world, which are producing either an uncritical acquiescence⁶ or fright in various traditional societies as a result of their interaction with the contemporary Western powers that represent modernity on the global stage. Under the impact of the forces of modernity, which is attended by deep sociopolitical, economic, and moral discontents⁷ as well as hollow pop culture—this fright is, more than anything else, a fear of losing identity and authentic values of the tradition. The rise of fundamentalism, a tendency toward returning to the roots and stringently insisting upon some pure and literal interpretation of them,⁸ in almost all the religions of the world is a manifestation of this fright.⁹ In this article, my central concern is to suggest that fundamentalism is neither the only nor the most reasonable response for Muslim societies in the face of contemporary modernity. Muslims need to adopt an independent and critical attitude toward modernity and reshape their societies in the light of the universal ethics of the Qur'an, as well as the historical link between Islam and science, and develop their own culturally contextualized modernity. The third element required for modernization (inclusive of democratization) of Muslim societies is related to the role of the West in the Muslim societies. The West needs to view the future of humanity as interdependent and must extricate itself from its standing tradition of double-talk and duplicity when it comes to the modernization and democratization of Muslim (and other) societies.

In Section 1 below, I address the notions of modernity and postmodernity and globalization. I highlight Habermas' understanding of modernity, his presentation of the Nietzschean critique carried out by a number of thinkers, and his view that contemporary modernity is a "high modernity" rather than postmodernity. Then, I briefly discuss the notion of globalization in order to bring out some contours of our today's world as a "global village." In Section 2, I discuss the hegemonic impact of global Western media networks on the Muslim societies and the way this phenomenon is leading to fright in those societies. In Section 3, I briefly explain the traditional double-talk of Western powers throughout the twentieth century in relation to the modernization and democratization of Muslim societies. In Section 4, I offer a very brief glimpse of the universal dimension of the Islamic ethic, which can become a basis for modern social and democratic political institutions in Muslim societies. In Section 5, I briefly note the historical linkages between Islamic culture and the emergence of modern science and technology through the European Renaissance (a contribution that in fact started in Muslim Spain). And, in the concluding section, I integrate the ideas discussed earlier into a proposal for the modernization of Muslim societies.

The Crucible of Modernity, Post-modernity and Globalization: How Should Muslim Societies Respond?

Although, in this paper, I do not focus on either modernity or globalization, I nevertheless aim at underscoring the need of Muslim societies to engage with modernity in a globalized world, albeit on an intellectually equal footing and after critical analysis of the equations of give and take. Given these goals in this article, it might be of use to look at the concepts of modernity and globalization carefully right at the beginning and point to some reasons why Muslim societies cannot avoid engaging these phenomena. The questions I will address in this section, therefore, are: what is the nature of modernity and globalization and what are their paradoxes; and why do Muslim societies have no choice but to engage these contemporary phenomena? In the process, I will also touch on the issue of the emergence of postmodernity.

Let us look into modernity first. There are various perspectives to the current debate on modernity and postmodernity. The philosophical perspective on this debate centers on some of the positions developed by Jürgen Habermas.¹⁰ For him, the "project of modernity" is continuous with the

humanism of European Enlightenment insofar as human reason is considered to be the final arbiter in all matters pertaining to individual and social life, as well as an understanding of reality in general. Harbermas believes that it was Hegel who first articulated what he calls “the project of modernity.” This project is based on a metaphysics and an epistemology which has come under attack from people like Nietzsche, Adorno, Foucault, Heidegger, Derrida, and their varied followers. This metaphysics and epistemology, according to Harbermas, is an epistemology and metaphysics of objects. According to Hegel, the tool to uncover the reality of these objects both ontologically and epistemologically is reason. The key thing in this outlook is that being (the being of objects) is a manifestation of reason, and its knowledge is also possible through a person’s exercise of reason. The central notion here, according to Harbermas, is “subjectivity.” Hegel’s characterization of this notion in terms of “freedom” and “reflection” implied individualism, autonomy of action, the right to criticize (rationally) any and all, and the idealist philosophy as a way of self-understanding. It is these elaborations of subjectivity by Hegel, which turned this notion into a centerpiece of modernity. Given Descartes’ and Kant’s emphasis on a subject-centered epistemology earlier, this characterization by Hegel was obviously a continuation of the break with the medieval scholastic past, which was launched by Descartes and which culminated in Kant’s celebration of pure reason. No longer were we to adjudicate in matters of knowledge, values, reality—and even religion—except through the office of reason. Hegel became the philosopher of modernity by elaborating this subject-centered epistemology to the fullest. From now on, in this the new historical epoch, modernity was not to look to an earlier age as a source of norms. All norms were to be structured by human reason itself, the final arbiter and judge in all spheres of life.

Such a project and role for reason, according to Harbermas, implied not only subjectivism but also fallibilism, insofar as human reason can go wrong. In addition it implied universalism insofar as the norms derived from reason were considered universally applicable.

In Harbermas’s own words:

Autonomous public spheres can draw their strength only from the resources of largely rationalized lifeworlds. This holds true especially for culture, that is to say, for science’s and philosophy’s potential for interpretations of self and world, for the enlightenment potential of strictly universalistic legal and moral representations, and, not last, for the radical experiential content of aesthetic modernity. It is no accident that so-

cial movements today take on cultural-revolutionary traits. Nonetheless, a structural weakness can be noticed here that is indigenous to all modern lifeworlds. Social movements get their thrust-power from threats to well-defined collective identities. Although such identities always remain tied to the particularism of a special form of life, they have to assimilate the normative content of modernity—the fallibilism, universalism, and subjectivism that undermine the force and concrete shape of any given particularity.¹¹

Harbermas's point here is that modernity tends to subsume collective cultural identities under universal, fallibilistic, and subjectivist interpretations and, in the process, does violence to particularities. According to Harbermas, these characteristics make the project of modernity continuous with progressive humanist agenda of European Enlightenment.¹² The human as a rational subject is the unmistakable center of both Enlightenment and modernity. However, Harbermas also looks at other historical developments, like the Reformation and French Revolution, as connected with the subject-centered agenda of modernity. As described by social thinkers like Weber, Mead, and Durkheim, through these developments, reason progressively manifested itself as the sole arbiter of human affairs, and thereby, societies became progressively “rationalized” and “secularized.” Secularization, therefore, is simply a progressive application of reason to the organization of human societies and is linked with the project of modernity. This process was reinforced by Industrial Revolution and the resultant reorganization of societies under new forms of socialization.

As modernity unfolded itself as a political project through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it became associated with liberalism as the dominant social and political philosophy—though by nineteenth century, it also saw the emergence of Marxism as a political alternative for the modern age. The association with liberalism was quite natural because liberalism is based on some of the same assumptions about subject-centered epistemology that informed modernity in general. As John Gray points out, individualism, universalism, egalitarianism, and meliorism, are essential ingredient of liberalism.¹³ Individualism takes a person rather than a social group to be primary from a moral point of view; universalism is the idea of the moral unity of mankind as more primary than cultural or political and religious associations; egalitarianism asserts equality of all people in legal and political order; and meliorism is the affirmation that human institutions can always be corrected and improved. Gray's characterization of the elements of liberalism can be easily seen to be linked to the subject-centered

approach found in thinkers from Descartes through Hume and Kant to Hegel. Despite their systemic differences, all these thinkers emphasized that subject-centered reason is at the core of our knowledge of the world. This is obviously a kind of individualism in epistemology. However, this individualism of rationality does not stop rationality from being universal or universalizable. For example, one can see this point from Kant's moral philosophy which is based on universal character of the so-called Categorical Imperative.

What is rational in one case must be rational in all similar cases. So universalism is in-built into the subject-centered epistemology of modernists. But epistemic universalism quickly leads to political universalism insofar as it brings all human beings under the same moral principles under similar circumstances. Equality before the legal and political order, the egalitarian component of liberalism, then follows from moral equality of humans. Common moral imperatives imply similarity of legal and political status; otherwise, moral discrimination ensues.

Since subject-centered epistemology is based on the idea that human reason, though the sole arbiter and judge in all matters, is nonetheless fallible, all social and political institutions built by humans can therefore fall short and can always be improved. Hence, meliorism is also a natural consequence of a subject-centered epistemology.

The overall point here is that for Habermas a subject-centered reason is an essential part of the agenda of the project of modernity. He believes though that this project has come under attack from what he calls the "Nietzscheanism" of people like Adorno, Foucault, Heidegger, Derrida, and their followers. In this line of attack, Habermas sees a "particularist" emphasis that aims at challenging the universal goals of the project of modernity. While this is not the place to elaborate the ideas of these thinkers individually, it must be noted that all of them share a certain skepticism about the subject-centered epistemologies of the project of modernity. For them, these epistemologies are what Dewey called "spectator epistemologies,"¹⁴ and what more recently have been characterized as "representational" epistemologies by Richard Rorty.¹⁵ These epistemologies are not necessarily a product of modern thinking. According to Dewey and Rorty, they have been with us in different forms from the days of Plato and Aristotle.

A number of charges have been leveled against this type of epistemology. Derrida, focusing on texts, claims that through his deconstructive approach that all texts—including those of systematic theories such as Platonism, structuralism, and phenomenology—undermine their own

ostensible meaning in many subtle ways. In this way, rational theories fail to do justice to their subject matter, and in the process of developing such “rational” theories, the theoretician does violence to a number of aspects of the subject matter. His ostensible meaning hides an alternative meaning that undermines the rationality of his project. In Derrida’s own words, deconstructive approach aims at bringing this point out:

Each time that I say ‘deconstruction and X (regardless of the concept or the theme),’ this is the prelude to a very singular division that turns this X into, or rather makes appear in this X, *an impossibility* that becomes its proper and sole possibility, with the result that between the X as possible and the ‘same’ X as impossible, there is nothing but a relation of homonymy, a relation for which we have to provide an account. . . .¹⁶

With this approach, there can be no one rational interpretation of texts. Texts lend themselves to a variety of interpretations, and they always need to be deconstructed (analyzed) in order to allow the hidden dimensions and differences of things to come into play. From this point of view, the subject-centered epistemology, in its zeal to look for the universal, does violence to the particular, the contextual, and the different.

Rorty charges that the representational epistemologies, at the heart of the modernity project, are suffering from an erroneous view of mind, which is understood as the mirror of nature. The idea that the human mind mirrors the world outside and this mirroring can be genuine insofar as we can compare it with reality outside us (the so-called correspondence theory of truth) is simply empty. One can not compare beliefs or propositions with the external world. All we are capable of doing is to compare beliefs with beliefs, and propositional contents with propositional contents. Any claims that we might make about the nature of reality itself are themselves just propositional contents or thoughts or part of a conversation,¹⁷ and there is no Archimedean point from which we can compare our beliefs or thoughts with reality *per se*.

Nietzsche himself looked at everything, including human self, as an interpretation. There was nothing with which these interpretations could be compared to check their truth. The point here, however, is not the details of this attack on modernity but its general *elan*. These thinkers despair about the possibility of capturing universal truth regarding things in rational theories. Theories hide aspects of reality in the very process of making certain aspects of reality explicit. The particular and the different can escape their net. But as far as life goes—as far as people’s “lifeworlds” go,

they are contextual and particular; they are different; they cannot be necessarily strait-jacketed into some universal frames. Hence, these antimodernist thinkers believe the project of modernity to be violent in its spirit to the particularist and contextual reality of people's worldviews and cultures.

Harbermas understands this attack on the modernist epistemology as an attack on the epistemology of objects. This epistemology aims at knowing things through objectifying them and pushing them into so-called universal frames of reason. The fault, according to Harbermas, lies with this epistemology and not with modernity itself. Harbermas proposes to replace this epistemology of objects with an epistemology of reaching mutual understanding through what he calls "communicative action." It is an action based on mutual recognition. In Harbermas' opinion, therefore, the modernist universalist reason needs to be replaced with "communicative reason" rather than despairing of modernity as a whole. For him, we are living in a period of "high modernity" rather than post-modernity. Communicative reason recognizes not only the world of objects but also the subjective and social worlds. In so doing, it does not do violence to the cultural or subjective particularities. However, some of the antimodernists consider the project of modernity not only to be pernicious in many respects but also to have come to an end. A new period of postmodernity, they argue, has already dawned on us. It is this postmodernity which is sensitive to the particular, the contextual, the different—and, hence, pluralistic and sensitive to all sorts of cultural differences.

There are a number of other stories that thinkers and analysts have told about modernity and postmodernity.¹⁸ The important thing here is to keep in view the fact that modernity did split into a bourgeois capitalist and anti-bourgeois socialist camps in the nineteenth century. In the process, it produced massive industrialization and secularization in Europe as well as America, and societies became massively urbanized. It is these societies that are the models of modernity in the contemporary world for everyone all over the globe—including the Muslim societies, which as part of the so-called third world are themselves struggling against a host of problems from poverty to political instability or autocratic governance, or both. As modernity unfolded itself in the West, Europe moved into an imperial mode and started colonizing vast regions of the globe. Colonialism became another manifestation of modernity, and the universalism of subject-centered reason was turned into an instrument for exposing the "irrationality" of the native cultures. As I discuss below, Muslims—who had paved the way earlier for emergence of modernity in Europe—encountered modernity as

a colonized people in vast regions of their native lands. Today, recently decolonized Muslim societies still labor under the yoke of neocolonialism in our globalized world. Therefore, it is to the issue of globalization that we must turn now.

Globalization like *modernity* has no fixed definition. One comes across a large number of characterizations in the burgeoning literature on the subject.¹⁹ However, a number of characterizations point out *interconnectedness* as central to globalization and then note a number of phenomena associated with it. It needs to be pointed out though that not all scholars agree that the world has already entered a new period of social organization called “globalization.” Those who dispute that we have entered a new period in human history argue that today’s interconnectedness and interdependence is not greater than the period from 1890 to 1914.²⁰ Proponents of globalization, on the other hand, point to interconnectedness of economies, cultures, information flows, and the flow of populations in the contemporary world as some of the factors that have contributed to creating a “global village.” In their view the concepts of time and space have also undergone fundamental change because of this interconnectedness of the world through technologies facilitating flow of information, people, and goods. This integration of the world, they think, has generated new global forces from politics and economy to culture and media.

As far as politics is concerned, globalization seems to have generated apparently contradictory forces. On the one hand, when the nations get interconnected and have greater interdependence, they can reinforce each other’s progress and can work to strengthen peace and prosperity because of the reciprocity of their interests. On the other hand, local self-interests can feel threatened by global integration, and as a result, conflicts can emerge and intensify. Both these trends are visible in the contemporary scene. Emergence of fundamentalism in different religions of the world is a noteworthy flight toward the local,²¹ while the appearance of supranational organizations and institutions as well as non-state actors—nongovernmental organizations working for political goals like protection of human rights and environment, for example, are taken as evidence of political integration. This is not the place to adjudicate between the contrary political pulls of globalization, but it needs to be noted that not only fundamentalisms of various kinds are a visible fact of contemporary global scene, but the opposite integrative trends have brought nation-states under considerable pressure. As Schirato and Webb say:

According to some of the more enduring stories of globalization, the increasing significance of a global economy and communication network has gone hand in hand with a decline in the nation-state. The argument is that the throng of trans- and multinational corporations, international bodies of jurisdiction and management, and the congeries of regional and international blocs means that the nation-state has lost its reason-to-be, and will necessarily wither away. What will replace it is not particularly clear. . . .²²

Whether or not the nation-state will wither away is an open question. However, there is no denying the fact that a lot of the functions of the nation-state are slowly shifting to other global or regional entities. Therefore, it is safe to say that politically we are living in an era of contradictory forces: movements toward local identities pitted against integrative trends of a global or regional scale.

Some scholars consider economic integration of the world through Internet-based financial transactions as the originating feature of globalization. For example, Armand Mattelart says:

Globalization originated in the sphere of financial transactions, where it has shattered the boundaries of national systems. Formerly regulated and partitioned, financial markets are now integrated into a totally fluid global market through generalized connections in real time. The financial sphere has imparted its dynamics to an economy dominated by speculative movements of capital in a context of constant overheating. With the expansion of the speculative bubble, the financial function has gained autonomy from the so-called real economy and supplanted industrial production and investment.²³

Of course, the scale of flow of goods and services as well as interdependence of markets and industries at a global scale is also in the background of these financial transactions. Particularly with the advent of new information-age technologies, the economy of the world is definitely a global system today in more ways than ever before. Commenting on these technologies, Schirato and Webb remark:

The world changed radically over the twentieth century, and more so over the past few decades: much of this change is associated with the development of new technologies. One outcome of this is the reduction of the effects of space and time on everyday life and on trade. Through communication technologies we talk to one another, view news and documentaries about other parts of the world and other cultures, revisit history, and

share in the cultural production of other social groups. Through other technologies we can rapidly traverse the globe physically, transmit information almost instantaneously, and send goods around the world in hours or days, rather than months. The speed of transmission, and the mobility of capital, mean that both space and time seem to have been truncated, or to have collapsed entirely. Not surprisingly, then, technology is one of the most prominent of the many areas used to characterize globalization, and the new communication technologies in particular are seen by many people as having radically changed the way the world works.²⁴

These technological developments and their concomitant political and economic changes at the global level have had their implications in the cultural field as well. However, despite the hegemonic role of American culture in the current state of globalization, there is growing diversity to what is being globalized. As Peter Berger and Samuel Huntington note: “On the cultural level, this [the challenge of globalization as continuation of modernization] has been the great challenge of pluralism: the breakdown of taken-for-granted traditions and the opening up of multiple options for beliefs, values, and lifestyles.”²⁵ The point is that in the context of dominant cultural trends, lifestyles, and beliefs, there is also a greater awareness of diversity of traditions in the globalized world. Also—in addition to global trade, travel, and immigration—this diversity is almost unavoidable in the current state of media networks because of their global reach. It is not just the jeans and burgers that have been globalized. One finds African, Asian, and Latin American cultural products and foods in most major cities of the world, particularly so in the Western cities. Also, it is not just the knowledge produced in the West which is globalized. The traditional knowledge of different cultures of the world is also flowing over to all parts of the world at a much greater pace in the world of the Internet. Western, particularly American, hegemony is a not to be underestimated in today’s world, but the flow of diverse cultures across the globe is also a steady trend. Culturally, therefore, we might be said to be living in a hegemonic world which is becoming diverse at its edges.

The point of my foregoing remarks on modernity and globalization is simply to underscore the fact that, despite many paradoxical trends, we are living in a world of “high modernity” or postmodernity which, according to a large number of scholars, is a globalized world. The question then is how Muslim societies should act in this crucible of modernity and globalization Speaking *a priori*—is it at all possible for a society to either accept or reject globalized modernity wholesale, or can it evaluate its values and

norms along with those of globalized modernity and develop a synthesis of mutually acceptable values? It is hard to imagine that any society can reject historical developments like globalized modernity wholesale. But sometimes the critiques of modernity and globalization are interpreted as if societies can avoid entering into these modes altogether. This, however, seems to assume that there are many ways for different cultures of the world to grow and go through stages of development. However, recent studies of the development of all the known cultures throughout history seem to point to the contrary. Comprehensive surveys of these cultures by anthropologist show that there are universal patterns to the growth of cultures.²⁶ Given this understanding, there is no avoiding modernity for any mainstream culture of the world, including Muslim cultures. This does not mean that all cultures will become Westernized. It just means that industry, technology, and social reorganization of societies on democratic lines within the framework of their own cultures are going to penetrate all major societies of the world in due course. It is best, therefore, for all societies to bring about the necessary adjustments in their practices in a conscious and directed fashion rather than imbibe global influences in a haphazard manner. The issue for over 1.5 billion Muslims in today's world is not to find ways to sidestep modernity or postmodernity but to adapt it to their cultural conditions and faith. They need not accept all aspects of modernity, but as they live in its globalized context, they should find ways to enter into mutual evaluation and create their own modernity, just as their ancestors contributed to the emergence of (early) modernity in Spain. In fact, commenting on Islamic movements, Peter Berger and Samuel Huntington seems to underscore that these movements are working for the same goal of alternative modernity:

Islamic movements in Turkey and all over the Muslim world clearly intend an alternative modernity: not rejecting modernity in the style of the Taliban in Afghanistan or even the militant factions in the Iranian regime, but rather seeking to construct a modern society that participates economically and politically in the global system but is animated by a self-consciously Islamic culture. A comparable Islamic movement in Indonesia—procapitalist, prodemocratic, tolerant of religious pluralism, but decisively committed to the Muslim faith—was an important factor in the demise of the Suharto regime and the election of its own leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, to the presidency.²⁷

I take the notion of alternative modernity to be the notion of a synthesis of cultural developments in different regions of the world, where culture is understood to be one's total worldview. Such an approach appears to

fit well with the contemporary critique of subject-centered argument discussed above. A reason sensitive to difference and diversity — what Harbermas calls “high modernity” in cultures — is what is needed today, and what many others have considered a characteristic of postmodernity. If Muslims insist on such an approach to modernity and bring their unique cultural values and perspective to its evaluation and critical acceptance, then they not only retrieve their own heritage in modernity but also join the global trend toward a rationality and faith sensitized to plurality and diversity. Like everybody else, Muslim societies have to coexist with others in this world, and that requires understanding and tolerance for difference and diversity.

I may add here that such a sensitized reason should be able to accommodate a variety of interpretations of modernity and its political thematic-like secularism. Reason in this mode is not meant to be universal to the point of being blind to difference. It can accommodate Charles Taylor’s communitarian critique of liberalism, as well Tala Asad’s critique of European secularism. The reason is simple. Taylor’s emphasis on community²⁸ as a counterbalance to liberal overemphasis on individualism is in line with Harbermas’s critique of subject-centered reason discussed above. The subjectivity of the individual can be viewed as continuous with the life of the community by an intention that is not separated from its social context or a process that is something like Harbermas’ communicative reason. Similarly Talal Asad’s view that secularism itself can turn into an oppressive force in the hands of the nation-state,²⁹ need not be resisted by a reason that recognizes the violence inherent in the failure of full mutual recognition. Such a rationality — that is, rationality associated with “high modernity” — is indeed a basis for both Taylor’s Wittgensteinian and Talal Asad’s religious criticism of modernity.

Managed Reality in Our Global Village and Its Hegemonic Aspect

Intercultural relations in today’s global village are among the most complex ever at all levels. The scale and intensity of interactions between local as well as global cultures is unparalleled in human history because of a deep transformation in the concept of distance engendered by the ongoing information revolution. The media and Internet have truly turned us all into next-door neighbors, though most of the time without providing us with workable ethics to conduct ourselves in relation to our “new neighbors.” We interact with this new type of neighbor in impersonal but very

complex ways and do so on a continual basis. There is no escape from each other. In the process, we influence each other individually and collectively, pleasantly and unpleasantly, or positively and negatively, in almost all areas of life. Our religions, our moralities, our politics, our economies, our science, our technologies, our dress codes, our achievements and setbacks, our pains and joys, and our virtues and crimes—all influence our new type of impersonal neighbors.³⁰ Some of this influence is shaped by our own decisions, but a lot of it is controlled by the policies and values of the media, which we are opening up to or using to communicate with others. This means that we can come to love or hate our new type of neighbors because of the decisions made by the management of our global village. If the management so desires and deems fit, it can help us look at our neighbor in a friendly light even when our neighbor is not truly friendly to our best interests, or it can put them in an unduly unfavorable light. So, in the global village, we live in a world of managed reality most of the time. The “medium is becoming the message” if we understand this cliché as involving a deliberate construction of the medium by vested interests. My basic thesis in this section, therefore, is that we are living in a world of managed reality because of the technological tools that have turned us into neighbors in our global village.

Placing this idea of managed reality in the context of contemporary philosophical debate, it might be noted that Nelson Goodman has argued that, after all, there is no such thing as reality over and above different versions of reality that we have when we work with versions of reality—that is, reality as it is understood by different individuals or groups.³¹ Of course, this kind of relativism about reality is hotly contested by the advocates of realism who believe that there is such a thing as a mind-independent reality or world out there—and that our task is to try and discover or understand it. However, the notion of the managed reality that I want to talk about is not meant to address the issues involved in the perennial debate between the realist and the nonrealist. Managed reality, as understood here, is simply the reality that we come to know after it has been filtered through the technological, socioeconomic, political, or even religious sieve of the relevant power groups. Whether or not there is an independent reality out there is a question I do not here concern myself with. Let me elaborate. It is clear that the picture of the world that filters through to us daily through our television sets is a constructed picture, and it is present throughout the globe. As Don Ihde notes:

[T]he contemporary context is one of *global communications networks*. The image technologies occur in different ways in almost all the cultural contexts of the world. In countries in which television is seen as a tool to “leapfrog” from tribal village life into the twenty-first century (India, for example), satellites beam programs into central village halls in which a single television set is watched by all. In more developed countries television plus many other communications technologies are decentralized into homes and offices. . . . How is the evening news or the MTV video constituted? In the case of the newsroom, editing is done from the spectrum of multi-screens which display, simultaneously, the multiplicity of events going on in the world (these already selected from a vast variety of sources). The technician-editor scans the compound screens and selects and moves from one to another, forming a discontinuous narrative of news fragments. The result is a “constructed” result, fragmented but deliberately designed. Similarly, the video is spliced and constructed from shots and takes, remnants from the cinema, united by the narrative of the single song being sung over the discontinuities of the images. The “reality” is a constructed, edited reality.³²

It is obvious that those who supervise editing bring their policies as well as sociopolitical, economic, and sometimes religious preferences to the process. The selecting and moving of bits from screens cannot be done in a culturally or politically neutral way. The media networks construct our reality according to their perspectives and preferences, and we receive from them a version of the world that they have arranged to appear in a certain way. The networks send out the messages that the managers of the networks choose to send out, in the images that they choose to put together. The events in the world, therefore, come to us after they have been filtered through the technical sieve of the image technologies—along with the cultural and political sieve of the owners, managers, home cultures, and conditions of the media. This later cultural and political sieve is embedded in the local power structure and its agenda. In Gramsci’s terminology, this sieve is comprised of hegemonic cultural forms, the forms that have domination in the context of a certain culture, albeit through consent and not coercion, in democratic societies.³³

This managed reality then becomes the main basis for our response to our neighbors in the global village. To our neighbor, who might belong to another major cultural tradition and be accustomed to different power arrangements, this reality may not always appear to be a correct way of representing the truth simply because her or his cultural sieve will arrange images differently. Hence, the managed reality may appear to her or him to suffer from either some or all of the following defects:

- marred by ignorance of the culture of the neighbor
- imposing a certain political and economic agenda on the rest of the people in the global village, and hence, biased
- deliberately insulting the cultural or religious sensitivities of certain neighbors

A whole lot of what goes on in the programs of global communications networks today in relation to the Muslim world is viewed in the Muslim world as suffering from all the three defects above. The Western representation of reality, insofar as it lacks the universal elements to connect with the Muslims' representation of reality, appears to be offensive and distorted to the Muslim audience. The same would be true for any Muslim version in relation to the Western audience if it had similar deficiencies. Therefore, generally, there is a huge trust deficit between the Western networks and their audience in the Muslim world.³⁴ Part of the reason for a growing mistrust has to do with the failure of the networks to show reasonable objectivity in their accounts of the United State' recent invasion of Iraq. They functioned as instruments for projecting official American announcements, which eventually turned out to be based on fabrications and lies.³⁵ Iraq is not a small story by any means. Therefore, these lies and fabrications and the media's failure to scrutinize them stand out in the popular mind and will continue to do so for some time to come.

In order to appreciate the complexities and negativity that this managed reality creates, we can look at some recent studies of the portrayal of Muslims in the Western media. Let us take up the British media first. In a recent study, Elizabeth Poole, in her chapter titled "The Effects of September 11 and the War in Iraq on British Newspaper Coverage," gives us a detailed analysis of the way the British newspapers the *Guardian* and *The Times* have covered Islam and Muslims. The years under study are 1994 to 1997, 1999, and 2003. Poole reaches the following self-explanatory conclusion:

It is clear that there is a continuation in the framework of reporting of British Muslims since 1994. The newsworthiness of Islam is consistent with previous frameworks of understanding and demonstrates how stories will only be selected if they fit with an idea of who Muslims are. Not only is there a consensus of news values but newspapers provide a particular interpretative framework for defining events. Unfortunately this means a continuation in the themes associated with the topics coverage. These being:

1. That Muslims are a threat to security in the UK due to their involvement in deviant activities.
2. That Muslims are a threat to British ‘mainstream’ values and thus provoke integrative concerns.
3. That there are inherent cultural differences between Muslims and the host community which create tensions in interpersonal relations.
4. Muslims are increasingly making their presence felt in the public sphere (demonstrated through the topics of politics, education and discrimination).

The continuation of this framework represents the unresolved anxieties around these topics and the continuing struggle of all groups to establish hegemony. Whilst the variety of coverage of British Muslims has to some extent been maintained — and there have been positive developments in the *Guardian*, with its attention to the increased discrimination Muslims experience due to September 11—this oppositional interpretation has been marginalized by the dominance of the conservative interpretative framework. The huge shift to focus on terrorism now unifies coverage within the orientalist global construction of Islam. One image dominates, that of ‘Islamic terrorism’. It would appear then that whilst Western/US driven policy is now under question for various reasons, these powerful groups have been successful in maintaining a hegemony of ideas of Islam, sustaining ‘the myth of confrontation’. For example, policy in Iraq has been under fire from various social/political groups and yet media coverage continues to offer us images of an anti-modern, political unstable, undemocratic, often barbaric, chaotic existence consistent with the now widely established foreign new framework. The representations of Muslims in the UK are now closer to the undifferentiated global aggressor that theory postulates. The more persistent the framework, the more indicative it is of an essential Muslimness and is in danger of becoming fixed. These events then define for the public what it means to be a Muslim, and then Muslims worldwide can be managed through social and aggressive policies.³⁶

I have quoted the conclusion of Poole’s study in full in order for us to appreciate fully the kind of damage that is being done to the quality of neighborly relations in our global village by this managed presentation of reality. Essentializing Islam and Muslims has become almost a pattern with Western media.³⁷ This can hardly help to win hearts and minds among Muslim audience of this media and only adds to their mistrust of the West.

Let us turn now to two publications from the American media as they covered Islam prior to 2001. In a comprehensive content analysis of ar-

ticles carried by *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines on twelve Muslim countries from 1991 to 2001, researchers Shahzad Ali and Khalid conclude the following in their recent article:

This article has presented a content analysis of 218 articles of twelve Muslim countries which appeared in two leading US news magazines; *Newsweek* and *Time* during period {1991–2001}. These twelve Muslim countries were placed in three categories; United States allies (Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey). United States enemies (Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Libya) and neutral countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan [sic]). The result of the study indicates that 1943 articles about 35 Muslim countries and Islam were published in 1098 issues of the both magazines during the specified period of eleven year, (1991–2001). It was also found that cumulative coverage of all twelve Muslim countries in both the magazines was comprised of 899 articles. Out of these 899 articles about twelve Muslim countries, the content analysis of 219 articles were undertaken. Overall it was found that proportion of negative coverage (3553 sentences, 30.77%) was greater as compared to proportion of positive coverage (1460 sentences, 12.64%). The both magazine, on the whole, carried 11546 sentences about twelve Muslim countries. Moreover, . . . [t]he first hypothesis stated that the proportion of negative coverage of all twelve Muslim countries will be greater than the proportion of positive coverage. This hypothesis was accepted. The data indicated that all twelve Muslim countries received 30.77% (3553) negative coverage while the ratio of positive coverage was 12.64% (1460) sentences.³⁸

The coverage of Islam in the Western media on both sides of Atlantic, therefore, is managed through certain generalizations that place Muslims in a negative light in the global village. Hence, the managed reality in today's global village is playing a huge but negative role in attempting to bring the neighbors together. It is actually pushing them away from each other by continuing in its failure to bridge the trust gap. This hegemonic role of the Western media networks³⁹ is resented by many in the global village, and such resentment is by no means confined to the Muslim world.⁴⁰ Recent surveys have shown that anti-Americanism, for example, is on the rise almost globally. Obviously, the information revolution and its technologies are neither value-neutral nor free from cultural clash in their impact.

This hegemonic role of the Western media has various aspects to it obviously. It is hegemonic over other media of the world; it naturally has hegemony over the way Westerners think; and it sets itself up in a hegemonic role over the way Muslims (and other peoples) think by trying to manage

reality for them. The first and the third aspect reflect the overall hegemony that the Western powers have exercised in relation to the Muslim societies or other societies of the world in general. And such hegemonic agenda is still unfolding in the perception of many throughout the world.⁴¹ Therefore, many societies, including some traditional or conservative religious groups within the West, look at the modernization process with great suspicion and feel threatened by it insofar as it seems to be tied up with the neo-colonial agenda of Western powers and capitalism, or what is sometimes perceived as decadent secular values. What is unfortunate for many non-Western cultures of the world is the persistent perception that modernization was colonialism yesterday and is neocolonialism today. In the global village of managed reality, this perception is being accentuated by the all-powerful Western media networks, which can be hardly challenged by the local media, and hence, appear to be the neocolonial instruments of control over non-Western cultures. The result is the ongoing reaction and fright in all the societies where people are returning to what they perceive as their roots, and fundamentalism is on the rise.⁴²

My focus in the previous paragraphs has been on the media, but globalization is obviously not confined to this area alone. Management of the global village is driven by the Western hegemonic agenda at many different levels. The prevalent economic world order is heavily tilted in favor of the West and is contributing in a huge way to the increasing inequality between the haves and have-nots of the world. The Muslim world is also an unfortunate victim of this exploitative order. Willy Brandt's Independent Commission on International Development Issues argued in its 1980 report that in order for us to survive "immense risks threatening mankind," we need to take urgent measures to address the problems of growing income disparity between the North and South, and increasing poverty as well as financial and economic instability around the world.⁴³ More recently, Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz has also argued for an urgent correction in the ways in which globalization is being handled to further enrich the rich. In a poignant remark, he says that the two-dollar-a-day subsidy that a cow in Europe receives is more than what half of the world population is forced to subsist on.⁴⁴

As a result of this grave disparity between the developing and the developed world, as well as the internal systemic weakness of the developing countries of the Muslim world, the scientific and technological gap between the two sides also keeps growing. Production of scientific knowledge and technology at the local level requires long term and sustained

political as well as educational investment. The Muslim countries have come out of the clutches of colonialism only recently and still lack the right environment for such investments.⁴⁵ This absence of the right environment is both a cause and an effect of lack of appropriate levels of modernization in these societies.

So the economic, scientific, technological, and information gap between Muslim societies and the West is tremendous and growing. Hence, in the global village of managed reality, the overpowering and hegemonic position of the West naturally produces the reactions of fright and acquiescence noted above. The only real way out of this dilemma for developing countries of the Muslim world (and other countries) seems to be the acquisition of the ability to make free and independent choices and decisions as cultures and societies. Such an ability basically requires the acquisition of modern scientific and sociological knowledge as well as technology. It is exactly in the sense of acquiring this knowledge and building their own culturally contextualized institutions around it that Muslim societies need to modernize. They cannot and should not turn into copies of the Western cultures because they will lose their identities in the process.

That is obviously not in the interest of a pluralistic world order—so critically important from the point of view of what Habermas calls “communicative reason,” a reason sensitive to differences of cultures and values. But, as just noted, such acquisition of knowledge is a long-term process. Meanwhile the hegemonic pressure of the developed world continues.

It must be added that without appropriate levels of scientific and technological knowledge, the Muslim (and other non-Western) societies cannot produce their competing versions of managed reality. The images bombarded on the citizens of developing nations are mostly either Western or local. But the local media simply lacks the capacity for a global reach. This means that our global village has to live with just one version of managed reality, and this version produces either fright or acquiescence in its recipients in the Muslim world—as well as the rest of the developing world and conservative sections of the West itself.

Double-talk of Western Powers Regarding the Modernization and Democratization of Muslim Societies

Historically, the Western powers have not remained consistent in their desire for the Muslim societies to modernize and democratize. In fact, depending on the colonial or neocolonial need of the moment, the Western

powers have either supported the forces of reaction or modernity in the Muslim world. One can notice this simply by casting a cursory look at the short-term approach adopted by the Western powers in relation to such modernist leaders of the Muslim world as King Amanullah of Afghanistan, Mohammad Mossadegh of Iran, Jamal Abdul-Nasir of Egypt, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan. Britain and United States are known to have used different tactics—including mobilization through bribes and other means, and in some cases, inciting conservative clerics to launch reactionary movements against modernization and democratization efforts. King Amanullah's program of modernization in Afghanistan in the early part of twentieth century was derailed by forces of tribalism and conservatism not without foreign involvement through the so-called Great Game being played in Central Asia by Britain and Russia, in which Russia was also perceived by the Muslim world as part of the West. There is no question that had Amanullah succeeded in his reform and modernization effort in the period from 1919 to 1928, the history of Afghanistan and the entire region would have been radically different.⁴⁶ This was an historic opportunity for the Afghan society to move into modern world by means of Amanullah's comprehensive reforms. But the short-term (and short-sighted) colonial goals of Western powers dictated policies that led to the derailment of modernization in that unfortunate society. Even today, we are in the grip of the consequences of that failure at modernization.

Another glaring case in point is the way democracy was derailed in 1953 by the United States in Iran by removing Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh from power through a CIA-led conspiracy.⁴⁷ This case is an eye opener in the sense that it led directly to the establishment of one of the worst oppressive regimes in the region under the Shah of Iran and ultimately, after twenty-five years, to the Iranian revolution of 1979 spearheaded by clergy. Mohammad Mossadegh was a popularly elected prime minister, *Time Magazine's* man of the year in 1951, who was overthrown by the joint efforts of Britain and United States for short-term economic considerations regarding oil. Democracy didn't matter then. To get a sense of how CIA's lead man Kermit Roosevelt, a grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt, conducted this operation in Tehran, let me quote from Stephen Kinzer's excellent book on the subject:

Roosevelt spent his first two weeks in Tehran conducting business from a villa rented by one of his American agents. Decades of British intrigue in Iran, coupled with more recent work by the CIA, gave him excellent assets on the ground. Among them a handful of experienced and

highly resourceful Iranian operatives who had spent years assembling a clandestine network of sympathetic politicians, military officers, clergymen, newspaper editors, and street gang leaders. The CIA was paying these operatives tens of thousands of dollars per month, and they earned every cent. During the spring and summer of 1953, not a day passed without at least one CIA subsidized mullah, news commentator, or politician denouncing Prime Minister Mossadegh. The prime minister, who had great respect for the sanctity of free press, refused to suppress this campaign.⁴⁸

The US involvement in the matter has finally been officially acknowledged by Secretary Albright in a speech in 2000.⁴⁹

One hardly needs underline that had Mossadegh's democracy been strengthened in Iran in mid 20th century, the region would have presented a totally different look in today's world. Amanullah and Mossadegh's cases are not exceptions. In fact case after case, the Western powers have tended to engage in double talk regarding modernization and democracy in the Muslim countries. They claim to stand for modernity and human rights but actually follow their governing colonial or neo-colonial agenda of the moment in a very short-sighted manner.⁵⁰

This double-talk of the West continues even today. The story of Afghanistan is a classical lesson in the way Western imperial powers in pursuit of their conflicting agendas have and can destroy a nation. The then Soviet Union and the United States fought out their war in 1980s on the Afghan soil and used local politicians and warlords in the name of either totalitarian socialism or *jihad*, as the case may be, to destroy completely the fabric of that society. The country has been completely devastated by now at all levels—including its environment, agriculture, towns, villages and cultural resources.⁵¹ In addition, it is this conflict between two Western powers which directly produced men, materials, and environment for Jihadist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 and, subsequently, on other Western powers as well as Muslim countries. The fact that Jihadists have nothing but destruction to offer to Muslim societies and to the world at large should be taken as the single most important dimension of the outcome of imperialist tussles on Muslim lands.⁵² The moral bankruptcy of Western powers' double talk can ultimately combine with other factors to produce only such a destructive outcome. This fact is also tellingly exemplified, probably more so than anything else, by the story of Palestinian people. Not even the worst repression of the Palestinian people seems to have moved Western powers out of their moral stupor and dis-

sembling talk in this matter—and of course, this has produced terrifying consequences for the entire world.

Overall, therefore, Muslim (and other developing) societies have not been treated with any degree of consistency by the West as far as the issue of democratization and modernization is concerned. In our global village, such treatment of neighbors can produce direct results in our own homes. Somehow, we need to break the hold of ethnocentricity on our minds and rise to a humanistic level of universal ethics in order to produce uniform standards for the treatment of all our neighbors. Double talk has to go as a first step toward the integration of humanity under modern and pluralist civic and political standards and values. Those who hold the reins of power in the West must bring their policies in line with their claimed ethical paradigm of standing for modernity (read high modernity) and human rights. This ethical shift in the policies of Western powers is an absolute requirement for the modernization of non-Western societies. Without fulfillment of this precondition, the perception in the Muslim and the rest of the non-Western world that the West's real interest is neocolonial, particularly the control over oil and resources—and it is only paying lip service to the cause of modernization in the Muslim and other societies, will persist and ensure the inequalities that presently exist between the West and the rest of the world.

Universal Islamic Ethics and Modernity

Muslim societies also need to realize that acquiescence and a fear-driven flight toward fundamentalism are not the right kind of response to modernity. Modernity with its social, political, and epistemic values is one of the biggest developments of human history and is ultimately based in and derived from all the major cultures of the world in one way or the other. It is not an isolated phenomenon that emerged only in the West. It could not have emerged at all without the base provided to it by the medieval Muslim society and earlier cultures in both East and West. This is not the place to get into details of what Muslims contributed toward the emergence of modernity, or what India, China, Greeks, Romans, and many other societies did. The general point that needs to be emphasized is that some of the great values of modernity are a collective achievement of humanity. Its universal orientation in ethics, which is the foundation for modern political institutions and human rights, is present in Confucian, Indian, and Islamic cultures, as well as other cultures. In addition, there is quite a bit of credible analyses of archaeological and anthropological data, which has shown

that there are universal patterns to the development of cultures throughout human history. Cultures move through various levels of development and sophistication in a cumulative fashion. There is no evidence that only one culture can spearhead all levels of development. Different levels have been initially achieved by different cultures, and then other cultures have moved to those levels in a systematic and cumulative pattern.⁵³

Therefore, there is some reason to believe that all cultures of the world would sooner or later realize their own forms of modernization. I say “their own forms of modernization” to emphasize the fact that different cultures remain different even after passing through the same level or stage of development. They do not become the same as another culture simply by reaching equivalent stages in social formations and development.

What needs emphasis here is that Muslims have to rise to a better level of interaction with modernity than reacting to it by either feeling threatened by it or simply succumbing to its pressure. They need to adopt what Pakistani philosopher Muhammad Iqbal calls an “independent and critical attitude” toward modernity and its intellectual, political, social, and technological heritage.⁵⁴ The point is not that of rejecting modernity out of hand by identifying it with secular depravity, as the fundamentalists do,⁵⁵ or to become parochial in an evaluation of modernity by using nonuniversal standards of judgment. The point seems to be that Muslims, as well as all other societies, will have to adopt vigorous but universal (read nondiscriminatory) standards in evaluating modernity. I am reiterating here the statement I made in the previous section regarding the necessity of a profound ethical paradigm shift in Muslims’ attitude toward modernity and all other societies.⁵⁶ All societies have to be accepted on an equal footing with each other and with Muslim societies. Islamic ethics, in fact, are exactly the same as universal-humanist ethics—and all parochial interpretations of it in terms of both law and morality are based on narrow views of the Qur’an and the life of the prophet of Islam.

That the Qur’an and the life of the Prophet have a universal nondiscriminatory ethical message is hardly denied by any Muslim. However, over the centuries, various legal injunctions derived from the universal ethics of the Qur’an have been allowed to be less than universal because of the social, political, or even administrative and defense exigencies of the times.⁵⁷ Some orthodox laws about women, non-Muslim minorities, and apostates are cases in point. These laws appear to be based on a parochial approach to a modern sensibility. In fact, there is no ethical bases in Islam for these exigencies. These laws are based on the social, political, and ad-

ministrative, as well as defense, needs of the medieval Muslim societies. Muslims are expected to live by *ijtihad* and *ijmah*—that is, creative and critical thinking and the consensus of the community, as far as their policies and laws go.⁵⁸ That means that new generations must continuously review the laws and interpret the Qur'an and life of the Prophet afresh when necessary. This is because the Qur'an stands for universal ethical standards, including justice, and allows for no discrimination against any human being whosoever. Due to various historical interpretations and cultural practices prevalent in Muslim societies, the universal ethics or humanism of the Qur'an are sometimes lost sight of by Muslims as well outside observers. Also, there has been no living Islamic law for many centuries in most of today's Muslim societies⁵⁹. That means that there has been no evolution in the law through a legislative or interpretative process or through both.⁶⁰ This has caused the erroneous belief among many Muslims that Islamic law or Shar'iah is a finished product given to us once and for all from a remote past and that the responsibility of the Muslims in today's world is to find ways to implement that given law. This belief is dangerous and erroneous. It is dangerous because it has led contemporary fundamentalists to make claims that they want to implement Shar'iah in their respective societies—meaning thereby that laws developed by early generations of Muslim jurists are a given and meant for all times and there is nothing more to be done by new generations of Muslims. Such a position effectively locks Muslims in their early history and militates against the dynamic spirit of Islam. It is erroneous because all law, as matter of course, requires interpretation in new times and climes and as the requirements of times change, newer interpretations have to be introduced in the best interests of the universal ethical ideals of humanity enshrined in the great religious and non-religious documents of the world.

The most fundamental assumption of Islamic ethics happens to be the idea that all human beings have been bestowed with an ability to distinguish right from wrong and chose between them. This is what the Qur'an calls "the Trust":

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. He was indeed unjust and foolish. (33:72)

The seat of this Trust⁶¹ is human heart or *fu'ad* (plural *al-af-i-dā*). The Qur'an says:

It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections [*al-af-i-dā*]: that ye may give thanks (to Allah). (16:78)

From this seat of intelligence and affections come our approval or disapproval⁶² of right or wrong. And for the Qur'an, there is no other criterion of moral judgment for God except righteousness:

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 [recognize] each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (49:13)

This is the universal foundation of Islamic ethics. Nothing except righteousness (or its absence) can count at the primary level in ethical evaluation. Muslim societies will have to bring these universal foundations of Islamic ethics into the focus of their sociopolitical attitudes and institutions as well as the legal provisions in treatment of all human beings. These ethics can provide a powerful basis for restructuring Muslim societies and their institutions on modern lines. Without these ethics of Islam being in sharp and central focus, modernization cannot take hold in Muslim societies regardless of whether it is brought from without or initiated from within. Muslim societies need the deep realization that it is their own ethics that call for modernization—on a nondiscriminatory and democratic basis—of their institutions and attitudes. The ethics required by modernity are already present in Islam.

That historically this ethics did not always reflect in all the political and social institutions of Muslim societies is in large part due to historical circumstances of these societies. For the better part of Islamic history, Muslim societies have been ruled by kings and dynasties whose political-vested interest did not match the requirements of Islamic ethics. They were always more interested in perpetuating their own or their dynasty's rule than in establishing equal political and civil rights for the masses based on Islamic ethics.⁶³ A lot of jurists who served these dynasties were also motivated by the perpetuation of the status quo rather than rule through the consent of the people.⁶⁴ There is no wonder, therefore, that universal Islamic ethics never got properly channeled into political and social institutions in Muslim societies. Had its political and social implications been understood properly and made the basis for governance in the Muslim world, things would have been totally different today. The contradiction between

Islamic ethics and dynastic rule, for example, is so blatant and clear that one wonders how dynastic rule and kingship ever got institutionalized in the medieval Muslim societies to begin with.

Historically the dynastic rule that persisted for centuries in blatant violation of the ethics of Islam was replaced in most of the Muslim societies by the worst form of governance known to humanity—that is, colonial rule. Here, we have a situation where Muslim masses were systematically subjected to exploitation and humiliation for no reason at all except that their dynastic rulers were too weak (and depraved) to stand up and defend their lands. The colonial powers, as Edward Said argues⁶⁵ for example, were interested in exploitation and psychic destruction of the people in the Muslim lands rather than contributing to their societies and institutions. A lot of the times, Muslims were portrayed as ignorant fanatics face to face with the civilized world. (Churchill in his day, for example, frequently refers to Muslim tribes as “savages” and “fanatics.”⁶⁶) Under these historical circumstances, it is obvious that the masses in the Muslim world have never been allowed a genuine opportunity to construct their sociopolitical institutions on the basis of their own ethics. Therefore, Muslim societies need not take the dynastic or colonial past as reflecting their true ethics and can move forward to capture the universal ethical spirit of the Qur’an and create fresh democratic political institutions that are truly reflective of equal rights for all. Such institutions are naturally going to be Muslims’ way of participation in modernity, without becoming Westernized.

Islam and Science and Technology

There are at least four levels at which science and technology relate to Islamic societies. First, there is a deep and underappreciated historical link between Islam and modern science and technology. Second, even in the popular perception in the Muslim world, science and technology are not viewed as antithetical to religion. Third, scientific study of nature is directly encouraged by the Qur’an as a way of understanding God’s signs in nature. Fourth, Muslim societies should not accept only an instrumentalist view of technology, but instead, they should continually adjust and review their attitude to the relationship of science and religion.

First, a few words about the historical link. There is at least one school of science historians and thinkers who strongly believe that modern science owes its emergence in the West primarily to the influence of Islam. Robert Briffault,⁶⁷ George Sarton, Montgomery Watt, and John Hayes, among others, believe that without the contributions of Muslims and Arabs

to mathematical, methodological, and practical levels, the emergence of modern science in the West would have been impossible. Such historians argue forcefully and with extensive evidence that the Renaissance was a direct result of Arabic influence in Cordova, a place where many Arabic books were obtained for translation into Latin by Europeans and where a lot of European scientists received their training as students. The universities that were established in Europe were based on Arabic learning and used books that were obtained in Cordova and translated from Arabic into Latin. Jews that came from Cordova with William of Normandy to England established a school of science at Oxford and taught Arabic science there. It was under their successors that Roger Bacon later studied both Arabic and Arabic science. In Robert Briffault's own words: "It was under the influence of the Arabian and Moorish revival of culture, and not in the fifteenth century, that the real renaissance took place. Spain, not Italy, was the cradle of European rebirth."⁶⁸

However, this fact has been systematically minimized by Western historians from the earliest days to our times. Briffault notes this point with characteristic force:

The fact has been set forth again and again. But it has been nevertheless stubbornly ignored and persistently minimized. The debt of Europe to the 'heathen dog' could, of course, find no place in the scheme of Christian history, and the garbled falsification has imposed itself on all subsequent conceptions. Even Gibbon treated Islam depreciatingly, an instance of the power of conventional tradition upon its keenest opponents.⁶⁹

Lest someone think that Briffault is too outdated a source to quote in support of my claims, let me point out that many very recent studies by a group of scholars have successfully established that the most important development in Renaissance science—that is, the Copernican Revolution—was a direct product of astronomy and science as it was developed in the Muslim world. George Saliba, a leading member of this group of scholars says:

Between the years 1957 and 1984, Otto Neugebauer, Edward Kennedy, Willy Hartner, Noel Swerdlow, and the present author, as well as others, have managed to determine that the mathematical edifice of Copernican astronomy could not have been built, as it was finally built, by just using the mathematical information available in such classical Greek mathematical and astronomical works as Euclid's *Elements* and Ptolemy's *Almagest*. What was needed, and was in fact deployed by Copernicus (1473–1543) himself, was the addition of two new mathematical theo-

rems. Both of those theorems were first produced some three centuries before Copernicus and were used by astronomers working in the Islamic world for the express purpose to reform Greek astronomy. In other words, the research that has accumulated over the last forty odd years has now established that the mathematical basis of Copernican astronomy was mainly inherited from the Greek sources—mostly from Euclid and Ptolemy—except for two important theorems that were added later on by astronomers working within the Islamic world and writing mainly in Arabic. Furthermore, the same recent findings have now demonstrated the context within which these theorems first appeared in the Arabic astronomical sources, namely, the context of criticizing and reformulating the Greek astronomical tradition. We also know that the works containing such theorems were mostly produced during the thirteenth century and thereafter. Accounts of such works have been detailed in various publications.⁷⁰

The theorems that Saliba is talking about are Urđi’s Lemma and Tusi Couple.⁷¹ These theorems and the work of Ibn al-Shatir were absolute essentials for reforming the Greek astronomy, and there would have been no such thing as the Copernican Revolution without them. That is why Saliba calls Copernicus “the last Maragha astronomer,” referring to the famous Maragha observatory established by Nasir al-Din al-Tusi in 1259 in Iran.

Now it is hardly possible to underestimate the significance of Copernican Revolution for modern science. If the foundations of this revolution were laid by Muslim scientists, then modern science in many ways is a by-product of Islamic culture as well. Scholars listed in the above quote from Saliba and many others are systematically engaged in the task of delineating the history of science in Islam and its influence on the modern science. For our purposes here, it is enough to conclude from this recent work in the field that Briffault is not outdated in his claim that Renaissance (emergence of modern science) owes its very existence to the world of Islam.

A lack of appreciation of the historical link between Islam and modern science in the West is also fully paralleled by today’s Muslim societies. Both the traditional religious seminaries (*madrassahs*) and modern universities in the world of Islam are more or less devoid of any systematic courses of study in history of science and technology, which emphasize Islam’s role in the emergence of modern science and technology.⁷² As a result, neither the modern educated nor the traditionalists have a good grasp of the fact that one major component of modernity—that is, modern science and technology have their roots in their own classical culture. This igno-

rance and its perpetuation through lack of credible courses and research on the subject are almost beyond comprehension. However, it does exist. As a result, the new generation is not growing with the right kind of attitude toward modernity in the Muslim world. Modernity is identified with the West—and then with the depravity of the pop culture in the West. Science and technology rarely emerge in the consciousness of ordinary folks at the mention of modernity.⁷³

It should go without saying that this anomaly needs to be corrected both in the Western conception of the history of modern science and in the historical understanding of the Muslims of their own past. The persistence of deliberate misrepresentation in the West and systematic ignorance in Muslim societies creates the space in which both sides can focus on the negative in each other and engage in mutual demonizing. The West and the world of Islam need to realize, at the deepest level possible, that they more than any other culture of the world perhaps, are directly responsible for the achievements as well as ills of modernity. The contemporary environmental crisis, the abuse of and the potential for abuse of new technologies, and the mindless pursuit of wealth by the corporate world at the cost of the poor communities throughout the world are some of the grave ills of modernity. Great achievements in areas such as health and education, and sociopolitical rights and democracy are some of the positives of the modern world. Insofar as Islamic culture paved the way for the emergence of modern science, technology, and commerce, it must share both the blame and credit for their outcomes for humanity. However, if the Muslim world and the West do not have a correct historical understanding of each side's role in the emergence of modernity, they'll forever suffer from a distorted view of each other.

The second point that needs to be made here is that, although science and technology are rarely linked today with Islam in any deep historical sense by ordinary folks in the Muslim world, they still do not look at them with suspicion. In the popular perception in the Muslim world, science and religion are not antithetical. People do have a great admiration for modern science and technology and believe them to be generally consistent with their faith. While there can be an occasional reaction against some scientific ideas, there is no systematic official opposition of any scientific theory by the religious establishment. As a whole, therefore, the religious establishment seems to be far more accepting of scientific ideas in the Muslim world than it is in the West.⁷⁴ This, I believe, is a happy reflection on the overall culture of Muslim societies and points toward the psychological

space in modern societies for the acceptance of one of the most important ingredients of modernity.

This generally positive attitude of Muslim societies toward science and technology relates to my third point mentioned above—that is, the encouragement in the Qur’an for the study of nature. This is not the place to go into details of the Qur’anic worldview. It suffices to note that the Qur’an describes its own verses and the phenomena of nature both as “signs” (*ayat*) of God. Therefore, equivalence is established by the Qur’an in the study of its own verses and study of the phenomena of nature. Both are supposed to open up one’s heart and mind to the Truth (*al-Haq*)—that is, God.⁷⁵ The text of the Qur’an and the texture of nature are linked in the Qur’anic metaphysics through the being of Truth that both embody. Science is only a way of studying or grasping that truth as far as humanly possible.

It is because of this worldview of the Qur’an that science both cannot and has never been systematically opposed in Muslim societies. As I mentioned above, George Saliba and others have recently established the indispensability of Muslims’ contribution toward the emergence of Renaissance science. Hence, the culture of Islam in the Middle Ages was particularly conducive for the development of scientific ideas and new technologies, and this same environment can be regenerated in Muslim societies with proper effort and investment.

This brings us to my fourth and last point in this section. Muslim societies today need not take only a naive view of modern technologies. These are not value-neutral problem-solving instruments. While there is no question that modern technologies play a tremendous role in our lives and address a wide range of problems in our lives, they do have their own metaphysical underpinnings and ethical implications. This is obvious from the ethical problems that have arisen for all societies in areas like information and medicine. The Internet and genetic engineering are revolutionizing our control over health, life, medicine, surgery, distance, and the flow of information. This has brought us face to face with huge moral issues in bioethics cyber crime, including the exposure of children to pornographic materials on the Internet or the possibility of their sexual exploitation by predators in cyberspace. These problems know no boundaries and are being faced by all societies in today’s global village. Like other societies Muslims are also trying their best to deal with these issues as best as they can in the light of their religious, spiritual, and ethical values. There is an urgent need, however, for an institutionalization of this process of dealing with these problems resulting from the use of modern technologies. Even as Muslims

modernize by imbibing new technologies, such institutionalization at the state level, along with the necessary legislation, can help Muslim societies manage these issues effectively and in accordance with their values and religious understanding.

The Overall Proposal for Modernization

The points that emerge from the preceding sections are:

1. In our global village today, the reality appears to be managed mostly by the Western media networks representing the hegemonic and neocolonial agenda of Western powers. Muslim and other developing societies have little power to match this Western-managed reality with their own alternatives. As a result, their members are either overwhelmed and acquiesce or feel threatened and adopt a rejectionist attitude toward modernity or postmodernity, which they identify with the Western representation of reality through the media and pop culture.
2. The global rise in disparity between the rich and poor has turned into a real crisis. In the present conditions of the world, where half of the world population lives on less than a two-dollar-a-day subsidy that a cow receives in Europe, how can one expect the huge populations of the developing Muslim world to believe that the West is playing fair with them in the current economic order. Western hegemony and domination has very concrete day-to-day consequences for the “wretched of the earth” in today’s world.
3. Western powers have offered a systematic double-talk as far as modernization and democratization of the developing Muslim (and other) societies are concerned. Throughout the twentieth century, they have derailed democratization and the modernization processes in the Muslim societies time and again in order to pursue their own governing agenda of the moment. Hence, there is a trust deficit between Muslim societies and the West when it comes to believing the West’s claims of working for modernization and democratization of these societies. An ethical shift in the Western attitude toward Muslim societies is a precondition for any process for the modernization of Muslim societies to go forward.
4. Within the Islamic tradition, we do have a universal ethics available that can be made a foundation of sociopolitical reorganization of Muslim societies on modern lines with a guarantee to all citizens of equal rights and liberties. This would mean the end of military dictatorships or monarchies or other forms of despotism in the Muslim world. The West and Muslim societies need to stand for such changes firmly on the basis of universal ethical principles.

5. There is a deep historical link between modern science and technology and Islamic civilization, which provided the foundations for their emergence through Muslim Spain and Sicily. Also, the overall cultural attitude of Muslim societies toward science is quite accepting, and the Qur'anic worldview also encourages scientific study of nature.
6. Both the West and Muslim societies suffer from a deep misconception or ignorance, or both, about the historical link between Islam and modernity, especially its science component. This has resulted generally in a narrow view of the capacity of Muslim societies to achieve and practice modern science and technology—as well as sometimes the possibility of modern institutions on both sides for creating space for mutual demonizing. If this situation is corrected, a better outlook and mutual appreciation of a common heritage can open new avenues for modernization.
7. An ongoing critical evaluation of the metaphysical and ethical implications and consequences of modern technologies is a basic need of all in the global village, including Muslim societies. Each culture needs to address this issue from its own angle so that a diversity of ways for dealing with technologies is available to humanity.

In this kind of a complex situation, one is a little puzzled by the calls to modernity or postmodernity coming from both the West and the Muslim world itself, though for different reasons. In case of the West, there is very little credible evidence that modernity in the Muslim world is its real agenda. In case of the voices of modernity within the Muslim world, what is puzzling is the focus of all the major thinkers. They almost all focus on the issue of the modernization of the religious form of knowledge and its interpretation.⁷⁶ There is very little attention paid to modernization of a sociohistorical form of knowledge based on the universal ethical teachings of the Qur'an, or on readopting of scientific form of knowledge at a comprehensive and deep cultural level. There has to be a deep change of outlook both in the West and in the Muslim societies—a sort of paradigm-shift—in order to expand the process of modernization for the Muslim world in a directed way.

Some basic questions that may be asked here, however, are as follows: Why should Muslim societies modernize and why should the Western powers help them modernize? These are very broad questions and cannot be fully answered in the scope of a short article like this one. However, I have been working in this article with the assumption that it is in everybody's interest to help modernize the developing societies of the world in keeping with the universal principles of their traditions. Such pluralistic

modernization can ensure greater prosperity for all, and it is as important for the survival of human family, as biodiversity is for the survival of our biological world. Developed, diverse, and vibrant modern cultures on the globe will definitely enhance our overall happiness as well as prosperity and growth. The history of humankind does not have a diversity of cultures in place for nothing. Despite peoples' prejudices toward each other over the millennia, they have always learnt from each other and have progressed not in isolation but through mutual influence.

If this assumption is correct, then it is absolutely reasonable to work both in the West and the developing societies (including the Muslim society) for the (pluralistic) modernization of the later. Humanity can succeed in creating a vibrant and balanced global village only by ensuring both development and diversity in it. That is possible only through diverse cultural paths to modernization based on universal ethics and the absorption of modern science and technology in all the cultures. On the one hand, Islamic societies do have the ethics as well as the historical and cultural background for restructuring their sociopolitical institutions—and, on the other hand, they have the ability to expand their scientific and technological knowledge. However, as I hinted earlier, there seems to be a total absorption among recent Muslim thinkers with the reinterpretation of religious forms of knowledge rather than working in a balanced way on the ethical and scientific forms as well. Also, the West is not clear in its moral commitment to the goals of diversity and the universal development on the globe, at least not in practice. This situation on both sides needs to be rectified urgently in order to cause a paradigm shift of the response to the needs of humanity.

Endnotes

1. This article has benefited from comments from George Rudebusch, John Lizza, and anonymous referees.
2. The European Enlightenment is considered responsible for emergence of modernity in Western circles. A lot of eighteenth century intellectuals representing Enlightenment take a rather dim view of religion and consider it detrimental to the free and autonomous exercise of human reason or subject-centered reason—a defining feature of Enlightenment and, of course, modernity. For a discussion of Enlightenment and its attitude in this regard, see Guenter Lewy, *Why America Needs Religion: Secular Modernity and its*

- Discontents* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), ch. 2.
3. William James provides us with possibly the best analysis of the authenticity of religious experience in *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1978); see lectures 16 and 17 especially. Muslim philosopher Muhammad Iqbal takes a similarly positive view of the authenticity and autonomy of religious experience as a source of knowledge in *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore, Pakistan: Kazi, 1999), especially ch. 1 and 2. More recently the British philosopher Paul Hirst has enumerated seven basic forms of experience or knowledge as basic to human civilizations in *Knowledge and the Curriculum* (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1974). His list includes religious experience as an autonomous form. The other forms that he notes are empirical, ethical, aesthetic, mathematical, philosophical, and sociohistorical.
 4. In “Religion in Modernity as New Axial Age: Secularization or New Religious Forms,” *Sociology of Religion* 60:3 (1999): 303–333, Yves Lambert provides us with helpful analysis of recent trends as far as the relationship between religion and modernity is concerned. He argues that modernity produces secularization as well as new religious forms. He correctly notes that great religions of the world have adapted to modernity and a new pluralistic role for religions in contemporary societies cannot be ruled out. In his own words, “we are left to wonder whether or not we might be in the middle of an evolution toward a third threshold that could define as ‘pluralistic secularization’ in which the religion has the same ascendancy on society and life as any other movement or ideology, but can also play a role outside of its specific function and have an influence outside of the circle of believers as an ethical and cultural resource. . .” (326).
 5. Without going into an explicit discussion of the nature of modernity, as is clear from section I below, this article works with Harbermas’ characterization of modernity. It may be added here that Karl Jasper’s characterization of modernity is similar in important respects. Jasper notes four basic features of modernity: modern science and technology, a craving for freedom, emergence of masses on historical stage (nationalism, democracy, socialism, social movements), and globalization. See Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953). In elaborating Jasper’s characterization, Lambert (Lambert, “Religion in Modernity”) notes that primacy of reason is a feature of modernity presupposed by Jasper. Lambert also emphasizes development of capitalism and functional differentiation as aspects of modernity.
 6. The term *acquiescence* in this context needs to be clearly defined. What I mean by this term is as follows: If under the pressures of contemporary historical situation of the world a Muslim society accepts Western modernity or major parts thereof uncritically—that is, without proper evaluation in the light of Islamic values and ethics—then such an acceptance is acquiescence. The idea is that cultural give and take between the Muslim societies and the

West needs to take place in a somewhat directed fashion. Instead of following the West in all directions in a thoughtless fashion, Muslim societies need to understand the contemporary Western modernity intellectually and then accept only those elements which suit some (of its own) universal standards of ethics, knowledge, and views of reality.

7. In *Why America Needs Religion*, Guenter Lewy argues that secular modernity is responsible for the decline of the institution of the family and the emergence of underclass in America. His book points out the negative consequences of a secular approach to moral concerns of a society.
8. For a helpful characterization of fundamentalism let me quote Karen Armstrong's summary of Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby's analysis given at the outset of their monumental six-volume Fundamentalist Project. "They [fundamentalist movements] are embattled forms of spirituality, which have emerged as a response to a perceived crisis. They are engaged in a conflict with enemies whose secularist policies and beliefs seem inimical to religion itself. Fundamentalists do not regard this battle as a conventional political struggle, but experience it as a cosmic war between the forces of good and evil. They fear annihilation, and try to fortify their beleaguered identity by means of a selective retrieval of certain doctrines and practices of the past. To avoid contamination, they often withdraw from mainstream society to create a counterculture; yet fundamentalists are not impractical dreamers. They have absorbed the pragmatic rationalism of modernity, and, under the guidance of their charismatic leaders, they refine these "fundamentals" so as to create an ideology that provides the faithful with a plan of action. Eventually they fight back and attempt to resacralize an increasingly skeptical world." See Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Ballantine, 2001) xiii.

In the context of Muslim societies, all the groups who insist upon implementation of traditional Shari'ah in Muslim societies are fundamentalists insofar as they motivate their support for Shari'ah by literal and traditional interpretations of the religious texts. These interpretations are traced back by them to the earlier generations of jurists and are presented as the only authentic interpretations. Alternative interpretations of the religious texts for juridical purposes, i.e., for the sake of modernizing Islamic laws in the light of contemporary developments are considered deviant, misguided, and heretical. This characterization of Islamic fundamentalism is quite broad and includes both politically motivated Islamists and a lot of *ulema* (traditional scholars) in the world of Islam.

Most of these people take their attitude towards Islamic law as natural and based on a traditional methodology which takes the religious texts related to law literally. This methodology fails to prioritize various values of the Qur'an, as noted by Ismail al-Faruqi (see his "Towards A New Methodology For Qur'anic Exegesis", *Islamic Studies*(1962)) [Please provide volume number and page numbers.], and, hence, can end up creating a huge clash

between modern sensibilities and the kind of laws they recommend under Shar'iah.

It must be added that here we are working with the assumption that all traditions are open to multiple interpretations. One can "return" to a tradition for interpreting it afresh for his or her times or one can "return" to it for insisting on the truth of some outdated interpretation of it. It is the second sense of "returning to the roots" that I have problem with. One of the ways in which the advocates of this second sense of returning to a tradition justify their attitude is that they claim their interpretation to be pure and literal. Otherwise, in the strict epistemological sense, there is no such thing as a pure and literal interpretation. All are tainted by the psychology of the interpreter and his or her historical setting. (Again see al-Faruqi's article on methodology of interpreting the Qur'an for an understanding the difference between interpretations that fail in important respects methodologically and the ones that wouldn't.)

9. Karen Armstrong makes this point forcefully in *The Battle for God* by placing the role of modernity in a historical context. She says "[t]he unification of Spain, which was completed by the conquest of Granada, was succeeded by an act of ethnic cleansing, and Jews and Muslims lost their homes. For some people modernity was empowering, liberating and enthralling. Others experienced it—and would continue to experience it—as coercive, invasive, and destructive. As Western modernity spread to other parts of the earth, this pattern would continue. The modernizing program was enlightening and would eventually promote human values, but it was also aggressive. During the twentieth century, some of the people who experienced modernity primarily as an assault would become fundamentalists." (4).
10. See Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity-An Incomplete Project," in *Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look*, ed. Paul Rainbow and William M. Sullivan (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 141–56 and *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987).
11. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 365.
12. See Habermas, "Modernity-An Incomplete Project," 141–56.
13. See John Gray, *Liberalism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 82.
14. John Dewey, "The Quest for Certainty," in *Pragmatism, Old and New: Selected Writings*, ed. S. Haack and R. Lane (New York: Prometheus Books, 2006), 393.
15. See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), ch. 4 in particular.
16. Nicolas Royle, *Deconstruction: A User's Guide* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 300.
17. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 170–71.

18. For a comprehensive overview of various aspects of modernity, see Matei Celinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avante Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Post-modernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987). For another view that we have not yet entered postmodernity and are still living in a period of high modernity, see A. Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990); for the view that we have already entered postmodernity, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1990).
19. See Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* and Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity* above and Eleonore Kofman and Gillian Youngs, *Globalization: Theory and Practice*. (London: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 1996) and D. Held, A. McGrew, D. Goldblatt, and J. Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999).
20. See, for example, P. Hirst and G. Thompson, *Globalization in Question*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999).
21. See S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996) and Paul Hopper, *Living with Globalization* (Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers, 2006).
22. Tony Schirato and Jenn Webb, *Understanding Globalization*, (London: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2003), 104.
23. See Armand Mattelart, , *Networking the World, 1794–2000*, trans. Liz Carey-Libbrecht and James A. Cohen (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
24. Schirato and Webb, *Understanding Globalization*, 46.
25. Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington, *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27.
26. For an insightful survey, see Peter N. Peregrine, Carol R. Ember, and Melvin Ember, “Universal Patterns in Cultural Evolution: An Empirical Analysis Using Guttman Scaling,” *American Anthropologist* 106, no. 1 (March 2004): 145–49.
27. Berger and Huntington, *Many Globalizations*, 24.
28. Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
29. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003). 6.
30. For an analysis of the reach and impact of globalization, see Axel Dreher, Noel Gaston, and Pim Martens, *Measuring Globalization: Gauging its Consequences* (New York: Springer, 2008).
31. Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1978).
32. Don Ihde, “Image Technologies and Traditional Cultures,” in *Technology and the Politics of Knowledge*, ed. Andrew Feenberg and Alastair Hannay (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 154–56.

33. oseph Femia, "Hegemony and Consciousness in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci," *Political Studies* 23, no. 1 (1975): 29–48.
34. Recent surveys have all reported growing mistrust between Islam and the West. Most recently, The World Economic Forum, in collaboration with Washington's Georgetown University, launched its report *Islam and the West: Annual Report on the State of the Dialogue*. It described "an alarmingly low level of optimism regarding dialogue between Islam and the West," said the chairman of The World Economic Forum, and "a majority believed the interaction between Western and Islamic communities is getting worse" (*The Irish Times*, 22 January 2008).

It must be added that we do not have comparable Muslim versions of Western reality available, simply because—al-Jazeera and al-Arabiyya being relatively new in the field—there are no comparable global Muslim Media networks around. In fact, one is surprised to learn that the English programs of al-Jazeera are "all but banned" in the United States—the largest exporter of Western versions of reality to the Muslim world (Rachel Maddow Show, MSNBC, April 16, 2009). However, if comparable Muslim versions came to be and suffered from the same deficiencies as the Western ones, they will produce the same kind of trust deficit.

35. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence available all over the place by now that Bush Administration lied profusely regarding the link between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, as well as about Hussein's program for making weapons of mass destruction. For an overview, see "Bush Administration's Lies about WMD Unraveling," Dissident Voice News Service Compilation, updated June 3, 2003, www.dissidentvoice.org/Articles5/DVNS_Iraq-WMD-Lies.htm.
36. Elizabeth Poole and John E. Richardson, eds., *Muslims and the News Media*. (London: I. B. Tauris & Company Ltd, 2006), 101–102.
37. See Elzain Elgamri, *Islam in the British Broadsheets: The Impact of Orientalism on Representations of Islam in the British Press* (Dryden, NY: Ithaca Press, 2008), 214.
38. Shahzad Ali and Khalid, "US Mass Media and Muslim World: Portrayal of Muslim by 'News Week' and 'Time'(1991–2001)," *European Journal of Scientific Research* 21, no. 4 (2008), 576–77.
39. The issue of media hegemony has been focused upon in Lee Artz and Yaya Kamalipour, eds., *The Globalization of Corporate Media Hegemony* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003). The expanding corporate hegemony of global media networks across continents is examined here in a number of casestudies that show various ways in which local cultures are appropriated to further the interests of global capitalism. In the case study of Africa, for example, Lyombe Eko remarks: "Indeed, African television represents hegemony at its finest—absent alternatives—local audience willingly consent to global media standards." (207). Earlier Lee Artz underlines the issue of hegemony in global media networks by saying that "[t]hree concepts—globalization,

media hegemony, and social class—provide the necessary framework for understanding contemporary international communication.” (3). It appears, therefore, that whatever the details of interactions between local media and commercialized global media networks, hegemonic role of the later is an undeniable fact.

While Noam Chomsky’s *Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003) gives only a general portrayal of America’s ongoing hegemonic tendencies in the context of Iraq war, it may be noted that in this war global media networks were also used by the Pentagon for its hegemonic purposes through embedded reporters who generally could give only the American or Western version of events. This has been highlighted in various studies. An example is Dr. Olugbenga Christopher Ayeni ‘s discussion concluded by the following remark: “The coverage of war has changed forever with the new found role for reporters at the frontlines as embeds, getting real life images from the battle ground and giving new meaning to war news. As part of that, we have the overriding influence of Hollywood make believe and the overbearing role of the government propaganda machinery. The face of war coverage will change for the better, especially from the government hegemonic position while it will bode ill for the audience who will have to settle for less than objective and balanced news.” See “ABC, CNN, CBS, FOX, and NBC on the Frontlines” in *Global Media Journal*, http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/dialogue/gmj_dialogueTOC.htm.

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is another media network, which is comparable in its reach to the U.S networks. Its coverage of major recent events like the Gulf War and Iraq War has not been tellingly different than that of the U.S. networks. BBC went along with the official British story in matters like the justification for the attack on Iraq, just as the U.S. networks went along with the official Washington story.

40. For an insight into the global rise of anti-Americanism, see chapter 7 in *2005 Trends*, Pew Research Center’s report, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/206/trends-2005>.
41. The colonial history is too fresh for anyone to forget. Also neocolonialism continues unabashed throughout the non-Western world.
42. To get a sense of the rise of fundamentalism worldwide, the publications of the Chicago University Fundamentalism Project need to be looked into. Particularly relevant is G. A. Almond, R. S. Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
43. The full report is available on <http://www.stwr.org/special-features/the-brandt-report.html>.
44. Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

45. For a general overview of why Muslims lag behind in science and technology in today's world, see Aaron Segal, "Why does the Muslim World Lag in Science?" *Middle Eastern Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (June 1996): 61–70. The overall output of the Muslim countries in scientific research today is among the worst in the world.
46. See Leon B. Poullada, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan: 1919–1929; King Amanullah's Failure to Modernize a Tribal Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973); Also see Iraj Bashiri, "Afghanistan: An Overview," 2002, www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/Afghanistan/AfghanOverview.html.
47. For details of this conspiracy, see Stephen Kenzler, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (Somerset, NJ: Wiley, 2004).
48. Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley Sons, Inc., 2003), 5.
49. In a speech before the American-Iranian Council in March 2000, then Secretary of State Madeline Albright admitted, "In 1953 the United States played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran's popular Prime Minister, Mohammed Mossadegh. The Eisenhower Administration believed its actions were justified for strategic reasons; but the coup was clearly a setback for Iran's political development. And it is easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs." Medea Benjamin and Caroline Kornfield, "Let's Learn from the Death of Mohammed Mossadegh," www.commondreams.org/views05/0304-21.htm.
50. It must be noted that even as I now write, Western powers are supporting a number of dictators and kings in the Muslim world—in order to protect and enhance their neocolonial interests.
51. The spectacle of devastation in Afghanistan is truly unprecedented in today's world. A vast majority of towns and villages throughout the country have been either partly or almost wholly destroyed by the past thirty years of warfare and strife. Reconstruction effort, however, is dismally ill-suited for the needs of this unlucky country.
52. This fact should not be lost sight of that the imperial tussle between the superpowers (the United States and Russia) constitutes an important backdrop for the emergence of some major manifestations of terrorism.
53. See Peter N. Peregrine, Carol R. Ember, and Melvin Ember, "Universal Patterns in Cultural Evolution, 145–49.
54. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, vi.
55. For example Syed Qutab's *Milestones* identifies modern societies in this fashion. See Chapter 3 of his *Milestones* for a characterization of modern and ancient non-Islamic societies, <http://www.globusz.com/ebooks/Milestone/index.htm>.
56. As has been noted, Muslims either adopt a rejectionist attitude toward the modern secular values or acquiesce to it uncritically. The shift required is

- from these attitudes to an attitude of critical evaluation in the light of universal ethics in order to adopt from modernity what fits ethical standards and reject what does not.
57. This mistake is similar to what the West has been doing in its treatment of the Muslims and other developing societies (or minorities in their own midst) insofar as it deviated from the standards of the universal human rights espoused in today's world.
 58. For an insight into this process see Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History* (Karachi, Pakistan: Central Institute of Islamic Research, 1965). Islamic methodology of law making expects Muslims to live by *ijtihad* and *ijmah*. It may be added that fresh interpretations of a tradition have to come from the community, its legislatures, and scholars—and are generally viewed as reformist. That is not a flaw in itself. Although, it is widely known that Rahman's views were taken as "subversive" by Pakistani religious scholars, their actions are once again not an argument against the scholarly validity of his views. Indeed, this fact goes to show that the entrenched traditionalists among religious scholars have generally adopted a rejectionist attitude toward modernist interpretations of Islam.
 59. Although Saudi Arabia and Iran are not dynamic in the sense of possessing mechanisms for changing traditionalist interpretations of law, neither country has Islamic legal systems in place. Indeed, they are imitative and bound to tradition.
 60. Here one might ask as to whether it is the lack of evolution that has led to the belief about the nature of the law, or the belief about the nature of the law that led to the lack of evolution? It is actually the lack of evolution. In this regard please see Rahman's *Islamic Methodology in History* for an alternative view about the nature of law. He argues that the earliest generations believed in a more dynamic view of the law, as well as the Sunnah of the Prophet. More recently, Wael B. Hallaq has argued systematically about the evolution of Islamic Law in its early four formative centuries. See Wael B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), particularly ch. 2 and 3 where he traces the emergence of prophetic authority.
 61. For an interpretation of trust as (moral) responsibility or choice, see Abdullah Yousaf Ali's commentarial notes 3378–3379 in *The Meaning of the Holy Quran*, 11th ed. (Beltsville, MD: Amanda Publications, 2004). The word *trust* in the translation of the quoted verse is interpreted by most authorities as referring to this ability to choose between good and evil. Also, the verse is about mankind as a whole and as such is talking of a universal trust. Hence, if the authorities like Abdullah Yousaf Ali are right in taking this trust as moral choice, then the verse says that it has been given to all human beings and the rest of the nature does not possess it.

Secondly, for ethical systems, which argue that humans possess this ability to choose ethically, this ability has to be conceptually the most fundamen-

- tal thing because the rest of the ethics—that is, ethical behavior—is contingent upon it.
62. This claim is a direct logical consequence of the idea that humans have the ability to choose between right and wrong. According to most philosophers, ethical approval and disapproval involves affections. (See, for example, Hume’s position in C. D. Broad *Five Types of Ethical Theory* [London: Routledge, 1962], 85). The affections of approval or disapproval are at the basis of ethical choices or our ability to choose. Since the Qur’an places intelligence and affections in *fu’ād*, it follows that *fu’ād* is the source of such approval or disapproval.
 63. For some insight into the intricate relationship between the early kingships and evolution of religious law, see M. Q. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under Early Abbasids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunni Elite* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 1997).
 64. It needs to be understood that the Qur’an is explicit on the nature of rule in Islam when it says: “[They] conduct their affairs by mutual consultation” (42:38). Most modernists take this to be the Qur’anic basis for democratic rule, or rule by the people. For an excellent discussion of how modernists interpret *shura* (consultation), please see Fazlur Rahman’s article “The Principle of *Shura* and the Role of the *Ummah* in Islam,” in *State, Politics, and Islam*, ed. Mumtaz Ahmad (Indianapolis, IN: American Trust Publications, 1986), 90–91, 95. See also John O. Voll and John L. Esposito, “Islam’s Democratic Essence” *Middle Eastern Quarterly* (September 1994), www.meforum.org/151/islams-democratic-essence.

In addition, it needs to be mentioned that the great early jurists undoubtedly were often at odds with the dynastic rule. However, given their times and historic conditions, they could not have obviously seen the modernist implications of the rule through *shura*. In general, however, the politically powerful tried to influence the law in its formative years. (For a more informed and detailed discussion see Wael B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*, ch. 8)

65. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books Edition (New York, Random House Inc., 1979), 31–49 where Said characterizes the attitude of the colonists toward the Arab-Oriental.
66. W. S. Churchill, *The Story Of Malakand Field Force* (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2006).
67. Robert Briffault, *The Making of Humanity* (London: G. Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1928). See Briffault’s chapter on *Dar ul Hikmat* for an extensive catalog of Muslims’ scientific and cultural contributions toward the emergence of modernity. Also helpful are John Hayes, ed., *Genius of Arab , Civilization: Source of Renaissance*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983) and Montgomery Watt’s *A History of Islamic Spain* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2001).

68. Briffault, *The Making of Humanity*, 188.
69. *Ibid.*, 189.
70. See www.columbia.edu/~gas1/project/visions/case1/sci.2.html. Also, for a detailed discussion of the whole influence of Islamic sources and the so-called Tusi and Urdu theorems that made Copernican Revolution possible, please see George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), particularly 201–209.
71. For details of these theorems, see Chapter 4 of Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*.
72. For a good overview of the situation, see Segal, “Why Does the Muslim World Lag in Science.” Also, in my search for courses in major universities of the Muslim world on the history of science and technology in Islamic culture, I did not find any. There might be some in some universities, but I could not find them.
73. This observation is based on my own life experience in a Muslim society. Young people in the universities hardly think of modernity as also linked historically with Islam.
74. One needs look only at the intense opposition that evolution theory faces from the creationist in the United States.
75. See the chapter on “Nature” in Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur’an* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1989).
76. As far as one can tell, major Muslim writers of our time have not explored the issue of the autonomy of ethics from religion. Their discussions of the ethical teachings of the Qur’an take ethics only as a consequence of the religious principles of the Qur’an. While there is no doubt that the Qur’an establishes a close linkage between religion and ethics, the ethical teachings of the Qur’an are philosophically not dependent on its religious teachings. Hence, these teachings can stand on their own, and their validity can be judged purely as an ethical system. Overemphasis on any one component of the Qur’anic worldview generates both intellectual and practical problems. A balanced emphasis on the ethical teachings will lead to their application to religion-based laws in order to round them out to universal standards.