

# ALIGARH MOVEMENT: STORY OF A GENERATION AND SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE ISLAMIC MODERNISM

Ibrahim Kalin

Islamic modernism, of which the Aligarh movement is a part, represents one of the most active and colourful periods of Islamic history. The subject, that is Islamic modernism and the courses of the Islamic thought in the modern period, has its problems and ambiguities. It is still not clear what meanings the term 'modernism' conveys in Western and Islamic contexts; alongside modernism, what meanings the terms 'modernity' and 'modernization' have; whether the contemporary Islamic thought is a product of its own tradition or of the Western modernism or a mixture of the two and so and so forth. These questions which can be multiplied point to the necessity of a proper method and set of definitions for the study of modern Islam. With out a convenient methodology and contextualization, evaluation of the ideas and movements right from the attempts in the Ottoman state down to the intellectual modernism and Westernization in the subcontinent would remain incomplete.

As agreed upon, it is methodologically impossible to separate the life and work of Syed Ahmad Khan from the history of Aligarh due to two main reasons. Firstly, it was Syed who first thought, planned and carried out the Aligarh educational reform movement together with its sub-institutions such as M. A. O. College, M. A. O. College Educational Congress and Aligarh. Secondly, the passing away of Syed in 1898 signifies the beginning of the process of fading away of the most radical modernist and rationalist ideas of Syed from Aligarh. Furthermore, the educational and reformist ideas of Syed's colleagues who had been intimate supporters of him through out his life have never been as much radical as Syed envisaged with a few exceptions. Finally, the moment Aligarh was taken over by a traditional scholar points to the end of Syed's period whose influence was to appear time to time in the posterity down to Iqbal.

The Mutiny of 1857 was a turning point not only in the modern history of Indian Islam but also in the course of Syed's life. His dormant or at least latent feelings of being loyal to the British Rule became explicit after the Mutiny. He denounced the Mutiny as a justified Muslim reaction and considered it as one of the worst events Indian Muslims could ever suffer from. He wrote a book, *Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind*, to explain the conditions and reasons of the Mutiny wherein he accused the both sides. This reaction was the starting point of Syed's intellectual and political loyalty to the British Rule and culture which was to result in repudiation of and kind of resistance or counter-movement whatsoever coming either from Muslims or from Hindus. Considering the political favouritism of the British for the Hindus and the decadent situation of the Muslims<sup>37</sup>, Syed tried to bring about a *modus vivendi* between the rulers and the Muslims in order to improve the political, cultural and educational level of the Muslim population. In line with this out and out loyalty, Syed rejected and acted even against the moderate opposition movements such as the Indian National Congress (founded in 1885) and the National Muhammadan Association (founded by Amir Ali in 1887) both of which were meant to be an official forum to express the demands of the Muslims for the Government. His loyalism led him to the extreme of depicting the British Rule in India as the most wonderful phenomenon the world has even seen. This was justified in his mind by the fact that loyalty to the British Rule springs not from servile submission to a foreign rule, but from genuine appreciation of the blessings of a good government.<sup>38</sup> This staunch political loyalism sent Syed to the point of denouncing the leadership of the Ottoman state over Muslims as the Caliphate. He even went further and reacted against Pan-Islamist ideas and attempts issuing either from inside or outside India. At this point Syed's stance concerning the leadership of the Caliphate was really unique and syncretic, because, historically speaking, the reign of Abdul al-Hamid II was marked by an all-inclusive Pan-Islamist foreign policy which was in line with the common sentiment of the *ummah* at

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<sup>37</sup> Disadvantageous situation of the Muslims of India over against the Hindu community became clearer, as Fazlur Rahman mentions, when some Hindus demanded the replacement of Hindu language with Urdu as the official vernacular after the Mutiny. See F. Rahman, "Muslim Modernism In the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent" in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. XXI, 1958, p. 86.

<sup>38</sup> Speeches and Addresses relating to Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (Aligarh, 1888), pp. 24-31; quoted in A. Ahamd, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan (1857-1964)*, p. 33.

that time. Such rigid attitudes of Syed and its repercussions on the Muslim community of India and other regions were to be one of the main reasons of the severe reaction of the ulama and their declaration of Syed as '*kaafir*'.<sup>39</sup>

What Syed was bearing in his mind was not a mere political activity devoid of intellectual and theological basis –a point common to all modern reform attempts and movements within the Islamic world. Equivalent of Syed's loyalism in political domain was an uncompromising modernism in intellectual sphere. He urged the Muslims to reinterpret the old traditions and religious beliefs in the light of the eighteenth century empiricism and of the latest developments in natural sciences. He set out to bring about a rationalist/empiricist theology based solely on positivistic understanding of science and this was really a new phenomenon in the Islamic world. Syed's rationalism, though similar in some respects, differed from the Mu'tazilites' in its emphasis on empirical and methodological principles of science.<sup>40</sup> Philosophically speaking, to give a rational foundation to religion by appealing to the empirical findings and principle of natural sciences was something novel and to a certain extent peculiar to Syed's modernism.

Having based his whole speculative studies on a purely rationalist theology, Syed declared that religion and science are in full agreement in every respect. The word of God, that is the Revelation and religion cannot contradict the work of God, that is nature. It is not possible that what He declares be opposed to what He has created, or vice versa. "In some places we have called the speech of God *word âf gâd* and have called what He has created *vark âf gâd* and have said that agreement between the word and work

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<sup>39</sup> Apart from Jamaluddin Afghani's verdict about him as '*dabri*' (materialist), Indian ulama under the leadership of Moulve Imdad-ul-Ali and Moulve Ali Bukhsh got a fatwa from the ulama of Mecca declaring Syed as '*kaafir*'. The style of expression in the fatwa is worth quoting. 'This man is misguided and misleads others; in fact he is the Khalifa of Satan for he intends to mislead the Muslims and his mischief is worse than that of Christians and Jews. May God punish him. The (Muslim) ruler of the place should punish him. Hali, *Hayat-i Javid*, p.254; quoted in Shan Muhammad, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, 1969, p.72. Strange enough, Syed's reaction to this verdict was very smooth.

<sup>40</sup> Syed's own statement of this combination (infact misleading oversimplification) reads as follows: Philosophy will be in our right hand, natural science in our left, and the crown of 'There is no deity save God, Muhammad is the messenger of God' on our head! Troll, *Sayyid Ahammad*, p. 218.

is essential. If the word is not according to the work, then such word cannot be the word of God.”<sup>41</sup> By the work of God, Syed understood what the positivists and scientists of his time understood by it: Nature and natural laws which, being unchangeable, constitute the firm basis of all epistemological and theological claims. Laws of nature are as perfect and firm as religion in its structure and function. Its ‘perfection’ is guaranteed by the perfection of God. ...the violation of that law of nature, so long as that law exists, is impossible. If it does occur then it implies defect of the perfect attributes of God, the creating essence. Making these promises and setting up a universe a law of nature cannot be contrary to the absoluteness and infinitude of his power.<sup>42</sup>

Looking from within, Syed’s views on the nature of revelation, prophecy, angels (‘divine moral support’), *jins* (‘savage tribes’), devils (‘dark passions’), prayer, etc. and other religious matters such as the transmission of the sayings of the Prophet and abrogation in the Qur’an could be explained as an extension of the ideas of the Mu‘tazilites. But his intellectual modernism was something more. Alongside other modernist movements in Egypt and Turkey, Syed and his generation shared or rather suffered from a common point that is the loss of self-confidence stemming from civilization-identity and consciousness. The fact that Islamic world was the ‘defeated side’ in this confrontation explains one of the reasons of the rise of apologetic literature of the time. Like his counterparts such as Namik Kemal in Turkey and Abduh in Egypt, Syed too involved in some apologetic and polemical disputes with the Orientalists.

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<sup>41</sup> Principles of Exegesis, The Fourteenth Principle, p.34; in A. Ahmad & von Grunebaum *Muslim Self-statement in India and Pakistan*, Wiesbaden, 1970.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 29 The resemblance between Syed’s description of nature and the Enlightenment’s notion of the ‘perfect nature’ is striking here. Perfection of God has been replaced with this perfection of nature in the Enlightenment thinkers. For an account of the Enlightenment’s construal of the perfection of nature and God, see E. Cassier, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 37-92. Both in western and Muslim modernist thinkers, natural sciences and their methodologies derive their firmness and exactitude from this notion of the perfection of nature. Unchangeable and permanent structure of nature and natural laws is a consequence of this perfection. To state as a note, since then the idea of perfection of nature has gone through a substantial change.

Second and more essential characteristics of the modernist Muslims was their conviction that the same principles which had brought the Islamic civilization to its pinnacle were lost to Muslims but discovered by and transmitted to the West. The import and incorporation of these principles were believed to be neither an estrangement nor an acculturation. Appropriation of these principles was regarded the urgent need of the Islamic world for its re-birth. The notorious distinction between 'Western science and technology' and 'Western culture' was the common strategy of this feeling. But this point discloses also one of the weakest sides of the modernist thinkers, that is their knowledge of West and Islam. Those thinkers who initiated and followed the modernist line did not know either the Western world or the Islamic tradition properly. This was very clear in Syed's case. According to the information provided by his close friend and official biographer, Hali, Syed knew neither English which was necessary for the 'establishment of a new theology'. If it is true that to live in an environment (say in the Islamic world) does not necessarily mean to know it, Syed can safely be said to have had no necessary and sufficient knowledge of both the traditions. This lack of proper knowledge of the both worlds led them to an over simplification of the confrontation between the old and the new, or better said, oversimplification of the transition from an old and deep-rooted sphere to a totally new and alien area. This simplification and relegation of the confrontation of the two civilizations to a simple and steady modernization (Westernization) kept them away from grasping the real nature of the clash and the importance of the period they went through.

Syed's denouncement of the Islamic tradition as unsatisfactory for the needs of the modern times was a natural consequence of his rationalism. This negative attitude towards history and tradition, however, is not peculiar to his modernism but common to almost all rationalisms, Western or Islamic. In a sense every rationalism has to break away with the sense of time as history and tradition. Because, as far as the basic principles of reason and inferences from it are concerned, history in the broadest sense of the word is not a necessary constituent of the 'rational constructions' of reason. Point of reference in rationalism is a closed-system having no necessary link with tradition which is, for the rationalist, a redundant burden over reason. Within this context, the present (the 'modern') as Habermas points out, 'enjoys a

prominent position as contemporary history.<sup>43</sup> This lack of the sense of time and history can be observed in almost all modernist thinkers and in their religious and philosophical ideas.<sup>44</sup> As a matter of fact, modernist's references to history and their seemingly connection with the tradition (Syed's references to and quotations from Shah Waliullah, for instance) are not an essential part of their way of thinking but rather something emotional and necessary for some other reasons.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *The philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, tr. by F. Lawrence (The MIT Press Cambridge, 1992), p. 6. In fact the literature of 'the end of history' goes back to this construal of time and present. Hegel, for instance, declared his time 'as the last stage in History' due to the completion of the self-grounding of reason in its historical track. *The Philosophy of History* (New York, 1956), p. 442. The reflection of this on Muslim modernism would be to denounce the tradition on the basis of the tacit claim that the present movement has come closer than ever to the 'real authentic understanding' of the religion since the first generation.

<sup>44</sup> Although it is the subject of another investigation, we can point very briefly to some similarities between modernity's consciousness of time in the west and the sense of history in modernist Muslim thinkers. In both schools tradition has been seen as a burden and obstacle on the new creation and reconstruction of the philosophical and religious credo. Both have seen their emergence as unique and incomparable in their history to the extent that most of the enlightenment thinkers have depicted their allergy to such words. The 'light of the reason' could not arise out of the reason. Lastly and most importantly, modernity (in the west) and modernism (in the Islamic world) had to bring about its 'self-grounding' without having any recourse to the experience and tradition of the past. What Hegel believed as the duty of Philosophy apart from its classical connotations was the justification of this 'modernity'. Among others, Hegel's below description of the 'new age' is a specimen of this attitude: 'It is surely not difficult to see that our time is a birth and transition to a new period. The Spirit has broken with what was hitherto the world of its existence and imagination and is about to submerge all this in the past; it is at work giving itself a new form. *Phenomenology of Mind*, preface. Syed explains the principles of Aligarh college on a different fashion but with a similar mood: 'The object of the college was to impart liberal education to the Muslims, so that they may appreciate the blessings of the British rule, 'to dispel those illusory traditions of the past which have hindered our (Muslims') progress; to remove those prejudices which have hitherto exercised a baneful influence of our race; to reconcile oriental learning with Western literature and science; to inspire in the dreamy minds of the dreamy minds of the people of the East the practical energy which belongs to those of the West ... 'S. Muhammad, *op., cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>45</sup> Importance of the '*lebenswelt*' (life-world) of culture and civilization should be recalled here. As is clear from the writings and activities of the Young Turks and nationalists in Turkey, those who were passionately in favour of reform and modernization, either by affirming or denouncing the tradition, had to use the same language with the tradition due to the determinative power of the life-world. As happened at Aligarh in India, when a Muslim

Alongside all these political and theological ideas and stances, education was Syed's real field of struggle. He was emphatic that education was the underlying ground of all reforms for improvement and rehabilitation of the Muslim community. Having this firm conviction in his concrete educational endeavours. Aligarh College and M. A. O. Educational Congress were established in 1881 and 1886 respectively. Aligarh was open to all, Muslim or non-Muslim. Syed tried to attract the Muslim population to the College. But since the general discourse of the school was shaped by Syed's political and ideological stance which we summarized above, attitude of the Muslim community was not affirmative towards the school. Syed (that is, in a sense, the Aligarh itself) faced a formidable reaction. Muslims saw the college as a place aiming at, or at least leading to, the conversion of the Muslim pupils to Christianity under the name of Western culture and customs.<sup>46</sup> They believed that 'the philosophy and logic taught in the English language was at variance with the tenets of Islam and they looked upon 'the study of English by a Musalman as a little than the embracing of Christianity'.<sup>47</sup> Syed's diagnosis for this reaction was conservatism and bigotry despite the fact that the reaction of the deemed it to be true.

As stated earlier, Syed had many colleagues who have supported him in his intellectual and educational reforms. The generation of Syed which was deeply influenced by him included such names as Chirag Ali, Sayyid Mahdi Ali (known rather as Muhsin al-Mulk), Zakauallah, Nazir Ahmad and for a certain period of time, M. Shibli Nu'mani. These figures of the Aligarh movement as the considerable disciples of Syed contributed to the spreading

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student was converted to Christianity in an American college in Bursa around 1925 or so, the college was immediately closed for ever by the order of the secular republican government of Mustafa Kemal despite the historical fact that at that time all gates of Turkey were open to western culture at the expense of the deep-rooted Islamic tradition.

<sup>46</sup> This identification of western culture with the religion of Christianity is remarkable characteristic of the Muslim community of that time. In Turkey as well as in the Subcontinent, there was no such a thing as, 'western culture and civilization' distinct from the Christianity. Such Islamist thinkers in Turkey as Ahmed Cuvdet Pasha, Said Halim Pasha, and Mehmed Akif and the traditionalist muslims of India have never accepted western values as universal, all-encompassing and applicable to the Muslim communities. Until the rise of modernism in the Muslim world, modernism and Christianity were the same thing going back to the same source.

<sup>47</sup> S. Muhammad, *op. cit.*, p.57.

of his ideas either by writing in the *Tabdhib al-Akhlāq*, the official journal of the movement or composing some other distinct treatise and books in defense of their modernist ideas. They were not creative and original in disclosing and finding out new more comprehensive and feasible solutions other than what Syed has already proposed. They were rather instrumental in the exposition and consolidation of these ideas. Like their master, their preoccupation were mainly social, political and educational reforms. As a leitmotif of the modernist movement, they insisted on the reform and renovation of the classical juridical system through which the usual practice about slavery, women, polygamy, authority of the classical ulama, adjustment to the new condition, etc. would be revisited and extensively modified. Chirag Ali, the ardent follower and propagandist of Syed's ideas, wrote a book titled *Proposed Political, Legal and Social Reforms in the Ottoman Empire* (1883) with such a feeling as that 'I have endeavoured to show in this book that Mohammedanism as taught by Mohammad, the Arabian Prophet, possesses sufficient elasticity to enable it to adopt itself to the social and political revolutions going on around it'.<sup>48</sup> In line with this mood he conceived of the classical Islamic law, that is *fiqh*, not as canonical but as common law.<sup>49</sup> This construal of *fiqh* was strategically necessary in order to pave the way for reformation and modernization in this field. Corollary of this stance was his denouncing hadith literature as distorted and unreliable. He followed Syed in the idea that the sayings of the Prophet (pbuh) were transmitted not literally, this was impossible, but as meaning, that is to say by the words and rearrangements of the transmitter. It can be seen in this effort that the main propose was to open a way and to justify the reformation of all juridical and hadith literature.

Muhsin al-Mulk, the other close friend and advocator of Syed, held a more moderate attitude towards traditional ideas. He was not in full agreement with Syed on the principles of exegesis, the nature of supernatural beings cited in the Qur'an and the absolute status of the natural laws. Syed had stuck to the laws of nature for the verification of the religious belief at the expense of this belief itself. Unlike Syed's radicalism, Muhsin al-Mulk

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<sup>48</sup> *Proposed Political, Legal and Social Reforms in the Ottoman Empire and Other Muhammadan States*, Bombay, 1883, p. ii; quoted in W. C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, London, 1946, p.29.

<sup>49</sup> A. Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1964*, Oxford Uni. Press, 1967, p.61.



developed a more modest approach and did not take the laws of nature as immutable, absolute and immune of any explained by having reference to these exceptions. Moreover, he added, laws of nature didn't have any clear-cut definition in the West. Therefore complete dependence on the laws of nature had to be faced critically.<sup>50</sup> Alongside his intellectual position, Muhsin al-Mulk appeared in the political area as one of the forerunners of the Muslim separatism in the Subcontinent. He publicly rejected the political and religious leadership of the Ottoman State as the Caliphate and considered India as a separate region. Needless to say that this was to prepare the way for independent Muslim Pakistan in 1947.

Altaf Husain Hali, the official biographer of Syed, assumed an another stance towards the decadent situation of the Muslim community and contrasted it not with the 'glorious and enlightened' Western civilization but with the brilliant history of Islam. In comparison with the uncompromising ideas of modernism of the time, his path of thinking was inward and from within. He described the misery of the community in his famous poem *Musaddas* in a beautiful way. His book on Syed's life, *Hayat-i-Javid*, and his other literary works were the main contributions to the Aligarh as well as to the modern Urdu literature.

Aligarh Muslim college was given the status of university in 1920. As stated earlier, it was taken over by a traditional (ist) scholar from Deoband, Shibli Nu'mani who taught in the college during the lifetime of Syed too. But since he had almost no appeal to Syed's modernist ideas, his rule gave a new (or old!) shape to the college which was drastically different from what Syed has thought. As Fazlur Rahman points out, this resulted in that 'the modern never really met with the traditional, which remained extremely peripheral to the academic life of the institution... Concerning the dream of Syed Ahmad Khan...to re-fertilize Islamic thought and create a new science of theology vibrant with a new and potent Islamic message, Aligarh was doomed to failure from the very start.'<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless Aligarh, apart from the intellectual in the Islamic world, was to have a considerable share in the creation of Pakistan.

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<sup>50</sup> Disagreement between the two can be seen from their correspondence around 1892. See, *Muslim Self-Statement in India and Pakistan*, pp.39-42

<sup>51</sup> *Islam and Modernity*, The University of Chicago Press, 1982, p,74.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS: SOME OBSERVATION ON MODERNISM IN ISLAMIC WORLD

As stated before, the term ‘modernism’ has different connotations when used for Islamic and Western contexts. The same principle holds true for the terms ‘modernity’ and ‘modernization’. In the west, the general discourse of the Enlightenment has provided the intellectual background and basis of modernism. The roots of the modern way of thinking go back to Descartes and reach at its peak in Kant and Hegel. Philosophical and intellectual establishment of the discourse of modernism was preceded by the scholastic age and in that sense it was, as its advocates tend to believe, unique. An absolute subject-centred epistemology, establishment of the ontological reality on the basis of epistemological principles and results of reason and science, ‘oblivion of Being’ over against beings as Heidegger says, formation of the external world as a perfection (Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy), reduction of the continuity of the march of time to a new ‘start’ and ‘renaissance’ etc. were the basic parameters of modernism as an intellectual discourse. The so-called all-encompassing project of modernism was brought into practice by such historical events as the French revolution, formation of the nation-states, industrialization, colonialism, etc. In the intellectual sphere the process of modernization was accompanied by the disenchantment of nature and secularization<sup>52</sup> whereby the abstract imaginations of modernism are realized and made manifest in its all possible forms. Therefore modernity’s project of reality, life and society presents itself as a blend of these three dimensions.

Unlike the western transformation which we just outlined very roughly, the rise of Islamic modernism followed a different course. Islamic modernism was an outcome of Islam’s encounter with modernity. What modernity meant to the Islamic world was not a mood or state imbued with the psychology of modernism but was an encounter and confrontation with a new violent power, with colonialism, with ideological attacks on values and beliefs. At this juncture the Indian subcontinent was the first part of Islamdom to encounter with ‘modernity’: Coming of the East India

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<sup>52</sup> This transformation and shift to modernity can be followed from Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York, 1985), p. 25; for a succinct account of this process see S. M. N. al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur, 1978), pp.13-47.

Company, disintegration of the Mughul empire, campaigns of the missionaries and the establishment of the British rule in India as the mighty power. Ottoman state, that is the centre of the Caliphate, was not exception. What it saw for the first time as 'modern' were western imperialism, loss and destruction of the Islamic lands, missionaries, Pan-Slavism, the rise of nationalism in Muslim lands, etc. All these encounters brought the Islamic world to 'modernization', that is reform attempts in social, political, economic and military matters. This can easily be seen in the reform proposals (*layiha*) in the Ottoman state and in the case of Muhammad Ali in Egypt. What the Islamic world has understood from modernization was neither the realization of modernism nor the internalization of modernization was neither the realization of modernism nor the internalization of modernity; it was a slow, presumably clumsy but at least careful move to face up to modernity. Islamic modernism appeared after this process of transformation.

This last point tells us something about one of the basic parameters of Islamic modernism. Unlike the western modernism flourished from the Enlightenment, Islamic modernism was a response to the encounter with modernity. In that sense Islamic world in general Islamic modernism in particular did not produce a discourse of 'Enlightenment' to bring about its 'historical self-grounding'. Except some thinkers who were completely westernized, Muslim intelligentsia of the time never came face to face with the intellectual discourse of modernity. What was essential for them was what they needed for the modernization of the Islamic world: Western science and technology. As is clear from the examples of the Ottoman state and Egypt, first Muslim response to the encounter with modernity was not modernism but modernization. This means that modernism was not modernism but modernization. This means that modernism in the Islamic world was not an unavoidable outcome of the intellectual and civilizational crisis of the Islamdom, if there was such a thing at all, whereas Western modernism was to bring about a very substantial as well as catastrophic transformation within Christendom. The *raison d'être* of modernism in the Islamic world was to pave the way to modernization and reform movements. As we see in Aligarh generation, main problems of modernism were and still are such social issues as the law of inheritance, polygamy, cutting off the hand, manners of dress, lifestyle, etc., which, when translated into the

language of Islam, fall within the confines of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). But the transformation which modernism created in the west was so substantial and irreversible that the basic premises of modernity have become the distinctive elements of Western 'subconscious' mind. As one can see from Foucault's analysis of power and will to power, Western civilization can no longer strip itself of the underlying categories of modernity for any past or future scheme even if it is accepted as an 'unfinished project'.

As for modernism in the Islamic world, the difference between 'modernism' and 'modernization' and modernism as a 'modernization movement' points to the fact that modernism was and is not an intrinsic part of the Islamic *welthenschauung* and that it has the potential and possibility to confront with and face up to the so-called universal values of modernity have become the common and indispensable ground of the consciousness of the modern world and that no escape is possible from this destiny.

By way of conclusion, one can say that modernism is essentially devoid of a philosophical content. Modernism's concern with its intellectual foundations is to be carried out. Granted that the tradition has always underlined the opposite of this strategy, the tension between the modernist's project of reality and tradition's commitment to the principles becomes clear. This was apparent in the Aligarh generation. Their starting point has always been the legal issues for whose justification they had to formulate some theological principles. Nevertheless the Aligarh has been a remarkable experience in Islam's path of overcoming modernity