STUDYING THE WESTERN OTHER, UNDERSTANDING THE ISLAMIC SELF: A QUR'ANICALLY REASONED PERSPECTIVE

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The fact that Islam is facing a particularly difficult challenge in its socio-cultural encounter with the modern West is attentively detailed by Murad in his essay titled "Faith in the Future: Islam After the Enlightenment".[165] In the beginning of the essay he cites the late right-wing Dutch politician Prim Fortuyn as pointing to the root cause of the impasse. Fortuyn said: "Christianity and Judaism have gone through the laundromat of humanism and enlightenment, but that is not the case with Islam".[166] Foruyn's position requires contemporary Islam to pass through the Enlightenment in order for it to become a part of the modern world. In reaction to this diatribe from the right in Western Europe, certain quarters in the Muslim world assert that Islam must resist any and all constructive engagement with the Enlightenment tradition. The former position sees nothing good in Islam and requires a complete embrace of the Enlightenment while the latter position sees nothing good in the Enlightenment and advocates an assertion of Islamic ideals in the face of encroaching modernity. Both of these positions fail to note that the post-Nietzschean critique of the Enlightenment has laid bare the fact that there is no such thing as Enlightenment orthodoxy. A careful review of the Enlightenment tradition reveals that it is composed of differing (and very often competing) voices, ideas and trends. This postmodern "discovery" brings with it the possibility of a more nuanced (and perhaps more fruitful) way of discussing the possibilities and dynamics of Islam's encounter with the modern West. While some elements in the Enlightenment are clearly repugnant to Islamic (and other religious) ideals other elements show remarkable convergence with Islamic ideals and

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[165] Murad, A. (2002) "Faith in the Future: Islam After the Enlightenment" at http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/ahm/postEnlight.htm. 8.

[166] Cited by Murad, 3.

teachings. Given the multiform character of the Enlightenment, a more adequate way of discussing Islam's encounter with Enlightenment modernity would be to identify those elements that are antithetical to Islamic teachings and propose a meaningful way of responding to the difficulties and challenges that they pose. Given the multiform character of the Enlightenment, this critical engagement with Enlightenment modernity has to be complemented with constructive engagement. The constructive engagement for its part will have to go beyond merely providing a list of the positive attributes of the Enlightenment and identify possibility and parameters of their affirmation from an Islamic perspective. I will first present a reasoned argument outlining the possibility (and necessity) of such a mode of engagement between Islam and the modern West. Then I will turn to the Qur'an and demonstrate how this "reasoned" argument is rooted in the Qur'anic narrative. I hope to offer a Qur'anically reasoned argument that not only makes it possible to "understand the 'self' by studying the 'other'" but almost seems to predicate the very possibility of self-knowledge on a critical but empathetic understanding of the "alien" other.

At the risk of sounding pedantic I must offer a disclaimer at the very beginning of this discussion. Terms such as "Islam", "modern West", "Enlightenment", "modernity" etc. will be used quite often in the following pages. I am conscious of the fact that the reality that these terms refer to is far more varied (actually infinitely more varied) than my presentation suggests. That much having been said, I feel justified in using these terms in the manner that I do because I use them in a manner that is "objectively possible" and has proven to be so by numerous other investigations. These terms are "ideal types" in a strictly Weberian sense— concepts that have been abstracted from empirical reality in order to facilitate the conceptual mastery of that reality for the purpose of understanding (and eventually remedying) a cultural condition that the investigator finds to be deleterious.

Squaring the Circle: Islam and the Enlightenment Challenge

Murad notes that theology is "all about the successful squaring of circles"[167]— talking about the infinite mystery of God in finite human terms,

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[167] Murad, 1.

asserting that in spite of appearances to the contrary God is as absolutely just as He is omnipotent, and asserting that the most valuable of knowledge is to be had by means that are as palpable as they are inexplicable. But the squaring of circles is not limited to spiritual concerns— it has socio-cultural implications as well. The particular character of Islamic monotheism leads to a universalism in which a particular religious tradition (i.e. Islam) seeks to integrate itself into and enrich cultures other than the one into which it was born. And the historical record indicates that Islam has been largely successful in this endeavour:

> Despite its Arabian origins, Islam is to be not merely *for* the nations, but *of* the nations. No pre-modern civilization embraced more cultures than that of Islam…The many-coloured fabric of the traditional *Umma* is not merely part of the glory of the Blessed Prophet, of whom it is said: "Truly your adversary is the one cut off" (108:3). It also demonstrates the divine purpose that this Ishmaelite covenant is to bring a monotheism that uplifts, rather than devastates cultures.[168]

This record of historical success makes the tensions characterizing Islam's encounter with modern Western culture that much more puzzling. For Murad the conflictual state of affairs between Islam and the modern West gives rise to the most serious of all questions: "[I]s the engagement of Islamic monotheism with the new capitalist global reality a challenge that even Islam, with its proven ability to square circles cannot manage?".[169] The answer given by ideologues, demagogues and zealots on both sides of the Islam-West divide is a resounding "NO!"

Murad argues that this negative response can be and should be challenged. He posits that turning to a spiritual form of Islam, as represented by Sufism, opens up the possibility of "a form of religion that elegantly and persuasively squares the circles" in the contemporary encounter between Islam and the West. This is an alternative to a "purely non-spiritual reading of Islam, lacking the vertical dimension [that] tends to produce only liberals or zealots;

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[168] Ibid, 2.
[169] Ibid.

and both have proved irrelevant to our needs".[170] In contrast to blindness characterizing the fanatics and the slavishness of the liberals:

> A more sane policy, albeit a more courageous, complex and nuanced one, has to be the introduction of Islam as a prophetic, dissenting witness *within* the reality of the modern world.[171]

It is difficult to argue with Murad's conclusion that the successful squaring of the circle in the contemporary setting requires that the dissenting voice be located within modernity. But in order to do this adequately the difficulties and challenges inherent in such an undertaking need to be understood clearly. A close look at the defining characteristics of modern Western thought reveals the extreme difficulty of being a dissenting voice within the this tradition from the perspective of traditional religion and classical philosophy. It is well known that concern with wisdom, illumination and the Divine is at the heart of all pre-modern religious traditions. Recent studies of classical philosophy have shown that this also the case with the philosophical tradition. For example, Pierre Hadot notes that in spite of many differences regarding the particulars, all schools of classical Greek philosophy viewed the study of philosophy as a an "*askesis*" or philosophical exercises "linked to the custom of spiritual instruction".[172] The ultimate goal of these exercises was "to effect a modification and a transformation in the subject who practiced them".[173] Furthermore, philosophy as a means of "attaining wisdom" was seen as being inseparable from the choice of a particular way of life,

> [w]hether it is the choice of the good, as in Plato; or the choice of pleasure, as for the Epicureans; or the choice of moral intent, as for the Stoics; or the choice of life in accordance with the Intellect, in the case of Aristotle and Plotinus…[174]

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[170] Ibid, 9.
[171] Ibid, 8.
[172] Hadot, P. (2002*) What is Ancient Philosophy?* Translated by Michael Chase. Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press. 188.
[173] Ibid, 6.
[174] Ibid, 175.

In agreement with traditional religion, classical philosophy viewed human reason as one means among others in the pursuit of the ultimate goal (i.e. wisdom, illumination or the Divine). Additionally, both traditional religion and classical philosophy saw ethical praxis as an indispensable element in the exercise and disciplining of reason. In short the pre-modern religious and philosophical tradition sees the human mind as a finite and limited entity that needs the aid of external resources if it is to fulfill its function adequately. But Enlightenment philosophy categorically rejects the limited and relational character of the human mind/reason. Murad notes:

> The Enlightenment,…, as Descartes foresaw, would propose that the mind is already self-sufficient and that moral and spiritual growth are not preconditions for intellectual eminence…Not only is the precondition of the transformation of the subject repudiated, but the classical idea, shared by the religions and the Greeks, that access to truth itself brings about a personal transformation, is dethroned just as insistently.[175]

The repudiation of classical philosophy and traditional religion by Enlightenment thought has far reaching implications regarding the possibility of a meaningful "prophetic dissenting witness *within* the reality of the modern world". The possibility of such a voice requires that the critiquing, dissenting witness and the critiqued modern world share some common ground. In the absence of some common ground relating the critic to the critiqued there cannot be any critique from within, only (zealous) condemnation from without, or the obsequious surrender of the outsider. But Enlightenment philosophy categorically rejects all philosophical and religious notions of wisdom, illumination and the Divine. From the Enlightenment perspective all talk about these "spiritual realities" is either irrational nonsense or a hermeneutical mask concealing economic interests, the will to power or libidinal desires. Because of the Enlightenment's notion of self-sufficient reason as the ultimate arbiter between doubt and certainty, the crucial question that any religious or philosophical voice aspiring to be a dissenting voice within modernity has to face is: Where is the common ground that I share with Enlightenment thought that allows for a meaningful exchange?

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[175] Murad, 9.

In addition to the aforementioned difficulty that faces all religious and philosophical traditions, Enlightenment philosophy offers Islam a particularly acute challenge. In the well known Hadith i Gibreel, the salient features of *Iman*, *Islam* and *Ihsan* are described in detail by the Blessed Prophet— and it is implied that faith, peace/surrender and grace/plentitude are the natural order of things. If we take Descartes, Hobbes and Malthus as representative thinkers of the Enlightenment paradigm we can say that doubt, brutishness and scarcity/selfishness characterize the state of nature.[176] To the degree that Cartesian doubt, Hobesian brutishness and Malthusian calculations are part of the ethos that shaped (and is shaping) the modern West, it becomes that much more difficult to envision Islam playing the role of a "dissenting witness *within* the reality of the modern world". While other religious traditions are challenged by the Enlightenment paradigm, none is challenged more directly and acutely than Islam given the centrality of faith (*iman*), peace/surrender (*islam*) and grace/plentitude (*ihsan*) in the Islamic theological and socio-cultural vision.

Any attempt to square the circle in the modern setting requires a candid acknowledgement of the unique characteristics of the Enlightenment paradigm that has given birth to the modern reality. Because of the Enlightenment's rejection of the traditional religious/philosophical understanding of wisdom, illumination and the Divine human reason/mind are left as the only shared ground on which the dissenting voice and the dominant paradigm can relate to each other. Consequently, if the squaring of the circle is to be done as a dissenting voice from within the modern world then the following conditions will have to be met: a) human mind/reason be the court of appeal for all critique/complaints and b) human mind/reason be the foundation on which all principles are affirmed/stand. In other words reason and rationality have to be the starting point of both the critique of the Enlightenment paradigm and the affirmation of any (Islamic) alternative. In sum in order for Islam to be a dissenting voice from within the modern world, the squaring the circle means pursuing the twin tasks of critique of the

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[176] It is obviously the case that the Enlightenment paradigm does not define the modern West in its totality, and it is equally obviously the case Descartes, Hobbes and Malthus do not exhaust the possibilities of Enlightenment thought. Enlightenment thought and the ideas of these thinkers are cited here only to bring into sharp relief the uniquely modern character of the problematic that Islam must face (and face up to) in its attempt to square the circle.

Enlightenment paradigm and affirmation of the Islamic alternative "within the limits of reason alone".[177] While this task seems quite daunting one can scarcely imagine the implications for contemporary Islam's self-understanding if an affirmation of *iman*, *islam* and *ihsan* (if not *Iman*, *Islam* and *Ihsan*) can be accomplished "within the limits of reason alone". This apparent capitulation to the Enlightenment paradigm should not in any way be taken to mean that revelation and tradition have no role to play in Islam's contemporary encounter with the modern West (the next two section will detail the role of revelation and tradition in this regard). But it should be understood that since any appeal to "spiritual realities," religion and tradition place the dissenting voice outside the reality of the modern world, then such appeals are not directly relevant to Islam's contemporary attempt to square the circle.

Circling the Square: Islam and the Enlightenment Promise

If Islam has been supremely successful at squaring the circles in the past it is not just because it has had the ability to be a dissenting voice within a particular socio-cultural reality. Just as importantly, perhaps more importantly, Islam has been able to affirm the validity and authenticity of the deepest aspirations and yearnings of numerous non-Arab cultural configurations— and offer the resource of the Qur'anic narrative in which these aspirations and yearnings can be expressed (augmenting and enriching the pre-existing expressions). This dual role of dissent and affirmation is in keeping with a holistic vision of the prophetic witness. Robert Ellwood notes that the apostle (or prophetic witness in our terms) is not merely a dissenting critic but also (and maybe more importantly) an affirming advocate. For Ellwood, the prophetic witness becomes a "spokesperson for an existing, but perhaps uncrystallized and emergent"[178] spiritual and ethical agenda that was already present in society. It is the task (and genius) of the prophetic witness to adapt and reconfigure these pre-existing (positive) trends in society, distinguish them from the established (negative) trends and attitudes inhibiting their emergence and affirm the positive trends from the

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[177] This phrase is used with due acknowledgment (and apologies) to Kant.
[178] Ellwood, R. (2003) *Cycles of Faith: The Development of the World's Religions*. California: Altamira Press. 85.

perspective of his ministry. In other words, the prophetic witness offers a revelatory affirmation of some of the real but dormant aspirations and potentialities at the very heart of its socio-cultural environment, whose emergence and maturation is being forestalled by neglect and forgetfulness. In short, in addition to striving to be a dissenting witness from within an established order, the prophetic witness also strives to be an affirming voice from outside of that order— with the revealed word providing the grounds of affirmation.[179] Consequently, in order for the task of squaring the circle to be a meaningful exercise in Islam's contemporary encounter with the modern West, there has to be an Islamic affirmation of some of the deepest aspirations that are at the heart of the Enlightenment project.

The task of affirmation in the contemporary meeting of Islam with the modern world, pre-supposes that there is something worthy of affirmation. This for its part requires an identification of the affirmative side of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment is not merely a negative program that rejects the reality of wisdom, illumination and the Divine, it is also a positive program that affirms the ideals of individualism, universalism and materialism. Expressing these Enlightenment ideals in their non-reified form, it can be said that the Enlightenment ideals affirm the irreducible dignity of the individual human being, the equality of all human beings before the law and the value/worth of the material and profane worlds. In conjunction with other ideas and in tension with still some others, these three ideals have shaped the social, political and educational institutions of the modern West. Speaking in the most general terms, it can be said that modern civil law, the modern political state and the modern secular academy/university represent the institutionalization of these ideals. While the depth and breath of institutionalization of these ideals has varied greatly in different Western societies, the past 3-4 centuries of Western history show an inexorable movement in this direction. An argument could be made (and has been made) that the United States has institutionalized Enlightenment ideals with a greater consistency and breadth than any other Western country. The

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[179] Mohammed Bamyeh has authored a recent study detailing the fact that the Blessed Prophet simultaneously built upon and critiqued/dismantled existing ideas and structures from the pre-Islamic era. See Mohammed A. Bamyeh *The Social Origins of Islam: Mind, Economy, Discourse.* Minnesota, London: University of Minnesota Press. 1999.

evidence in favor of this contention is not insignificant. What cannot be contested is the fact that the modern West's institutions, self-understanding and historical development are all inextricably tied to these three ideals. The Enlightenment break with traditional religion[180] is as much tied to the affirmation of individualism, universalism and materialism as to the rejection of the notions of wisdom, illumination and the Divine. In short, the institutionalization of these three ideals represent those positive affirmations that set Enlightenment thought apart from traditional religion.

This Enlightenment affirmation provides the opportunity for the monotheistic religious traditions to engage with the Enlightenment tradition on a positive note. Beginning with Max Weber[181] in the early part of the 20th century, a body of literature has been steadily accumulating demonstrating that critical Enlightenment ideas and ideals cannot be understood in isolation from the sublimation of a particular religious impulse. Alasdair McIntyre,[182] Peter Berger,[183] John Milbank,[184] and Rodney Stark[185] (among others) have further detailed the intimate link between religious ideals and the birth of modern West. The sociologists in this list have gone so far as to suggest that secularization of human culture becomes an historical possibility only with the emergence of monotheism and that the modern, secular West is the product of a particularly monotheistic religious development. To the degree that the analysis linking monotheism with modernity is correct, it provides

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[180] I do not mention classical philosophy at this point because Enlightenment self-understanding posits a continuation with and fulfillment of the classical philosophical tradition. While there is scholarly research that shows Enlightenment philosophy to be a break from classical philosophy in its rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine (i.e. Hadot), I am not aware of a similar argument showing that the Enlightenment understanding of individualism, universalism and materialism is also a departure from classical philosophy.

[181] See Max Weber (2002) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Press.

[182] See Alisdair MacIntyre (1984) *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Univ. Press.

[183] See Peter Berger (1967) *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

[184] See John Milbank (1998) *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. Oxford and Massachusettes: Doubleday.

[185] See Rodney Stark (2001) *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

the traditional monotheistic religions with the opportunity to consider the Enlightenment as a post-traditional expression of monotheistic ideals. From the Islamic perspective the Enlightenment can be seen as a post-Qur'anic monotheistic tradition— in a very limited, particular (but not insignificant) sense. But in addition to this opportunity that Islam shares with other monotheistic traditions for positively engaging with the Enlightenment, it is distinctively positioned to affirm key Enlightenment ideals in a way that other religious traditions can't. The Enlightenment affirmation of the dignity of the individual, equality before the law and the value of the material/profane world provides Islam with a unique opportunity to be an affirming witness from outside the modern world. It can be stated with confidence that Islam can affirm the three aforementioned Enlightenment ideals (in their non-reified form) with a greater degree of consistency and insistency than any other religious tradition. The fact that the Qur'an is a revealed book by which the Divine instructed humanity in the ways of knowledge, wisdom, etc. locates Islam in the pre-modern historical period. Consequently, the Qur'anic event places Islam outside the modern world in a very particular and limited (but by no means insignificant) sense.

The Hajj is the one ritual in Islam that expresses the affirmation of the aforementioned ideals most comprehensively and the "circling of the square" (the *tawaf* around the Ka'aba) is among the most important rituals of the Hajj. This annual circling of the square is the Islamic affirmation of the irreducible dignity of the individual, the equality of all human beings before the law and the spiritual value of the material world and profane acts. During the Hajj all pilgrims perform the same rites, in the exact same way and in the exact same sanctuary. Furthermore, every act that the pilgrim performs, from eating and getting a haircut to circling the Ka'aba and standing at the plain of Arafat, is a consecrating act. There is no culminating event where a particular individual, from a particular tribe, goes into a particular part of the sanctuary to perform particular rituals that signal the culmination of communion between the human and the Divine. Similarly there is no particular caste whose members perform particular rituals to symbolize the human participation in the life of the Divine.

The rituals during the Hajj are a more intense expression of Islam's claim that all human beings in the post-Prophetic period are equally capable of

becoming priests— individuals whose actions can transform the profane into the sacred and who can participate in the life of the Divine. There is no liturgy or consecrating ritual that is the exclusive privilege/domain of a group of people set apart from (or above) the rest of the community— all liturgy and all consecrating rituals are the collective heritage of the Ummah. Furthermore, there is no worldly act or material object that is not potentially sacred— all that is needed is for a believer to invoke the Word of God (in the tradition of the Blessed Prophet) to consecrate the object/act. In other words, potentially every human being is a Levite/Brahman, every place in the world the Holy Land and every worldly act (or material thing) a sacrament. From the Islamic perspective any act done by any human being at any time can be a means of communion/participation in the Divine life. For Muhammad Iqbal, this is the profound cultural and philosophic significance of the doctrine of the finality of Prophethood:

> The [Blessed] Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. In so far as the source of his revelation [the Qur'an] is concerned he belongs to the ancient world; in so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the modern world. In him life discovers other sources of knowledge suitable to its new direction. The birth of Islam…is the birth of the inductive intellect. In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot for ever be kept in leading strings; that, in order to achieve full self-consciousness, man must be finally thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Qur'an, and the emphasis it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality.[186]

Consequently, it is stating the obvious that there are strong elective affinities between the Qur'anic notion of the human being as an individual, humanity on a universal level and the material/profane worlds and the

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[186] Iqbal, M. (1999) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Lahore, Pakistan: Institute of Islamic Culture. 100ff.

Enlightenment ideals of individualism, universalism and materialism.[187] The research of George Makdisi[188] on the rise of colleges, Marcel Boisard[189] on

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[187] In the previous section the examples of Descartes, Hobbes and Malthus were isolated from the Enlightenment tradition in order to highlight and sharpen the distinction between Islam and Enlightenment thought. Here three particular ideals are isolated in order to highlight the commonality. On both occasion the writer is well aware of the fact that countervailing arguments could be made – as a matter of fact he himself offers a countervailing argument in the present section to the argument made in the previous section (i.e. showing strong elective affinities between Islam and the Enlightenment ideals.) In the present case it could be argued that the guillotine in revolutionary France and the gas chambers in Nazi Germany are as much an expression of Enlightenment ideals as the three ideals that have been mentioned. Astute thinkers since the very birth of the Enlightenment have warned of the "dark" side of the Enlightenment – Pascal, Blake, Goethe, Rousseau – long before world wars, death camps, total war, mutually assured destruction etc. In more recent times, Weber (1978) [*Economy and Society*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press. Vol. 2.] is probably alluding to the role of guillotine in revolutionary France when he comments: "This charismatic glorification of 'Reason,' which found a characteristic expression in its apotheosis by Robespierre…" (p.1209). Richard Rubenstein (1987) takes Weber's analysis of bureaucracy and technology further and analyzes the Nazi Holocaust in its light in *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future*. New York: Harper Torchbooks. He argues that:

The Holocaust was an expression of some of the most significant political, moral, religious and demographic tendencies of Western civilization in the twentieth century. The Holocaust cannot be divorced from the very same culture of modernity that produced the two world wars and Hitler (p. 6, emphasis in original).

And a little bit later:

One of the least helpful ways of understanding the Holocaust is to regard the destruction process as the work of a small group of irresponsible criminals who were atypical of normal statesmen and who somehow gained control of the German people, forcing them by terror and the deliberate stimulation of religious and ethnic hatred to pursue a barbaric and retrograde policy that was thoroughly at odds with the great traditions of Western civilization.

On the contrary*, we are more likely to understand the Holocaust if we regard it as the expression of some of the most profound tendencies of Western civilization in the twentieth century* (p. 21, emphasis in original).

Consequently, when Muslims point to the dark side of the Enlightenment they add nothing new to the discussion. The point of the present discussion is not to offer a value-judgment based on comparing and contrasting the "bright" side of the Enlightenment with its "dark" side. The goal is to identify the particular points on and the particular conditions under which Islam (in contrast to other religious traditions) can make a (uniquely?) positive contribution to the modern world, and also benefit from what the modern world has to offer. In the context of the circling of the square, the following observations by Iqbal are very much on the mark:

Humanity needs three thing to-day – a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and the basic principle of a universal import directing the evolution of society on a spiritual basis. Modern Europe has, no doubt, built idealistic systems on these lines, but experience shows that truth revealed through pure reason is incapable of bringing that fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring. This is the reason why pure thought has so little influenced men, while religion has always elevated individuals, and transformed whole societies. The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life, and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich. Believe me, Europe today is the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical advancement. The Muslim, on the other hand, is in possession of these ultimate ideas on the basis of a revelation, which, speaking from the inmost depths of life, internalizes its own apparent externality…and in view of the basic idea of Islam that there can be no further revelation binding on man, we ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated peoples on earth. Iqbal in *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (p. 142).

The fact that the Enlightenment ideals (i.e. the "bright" side of the Enlightenment) is currently under siege is obvious – and it is under siege from precisely the "dark" side of the Enlightenment. In its current predicament it is difficult to see how the humanistic ideals of the Enlightenment can survive the assault from the unrestrained quest for economic profit, technological domination and manipulation of the environment and bureaucratic efficiency. This is what Rubenstein wrote in the concluding paragraph of his book after acknowledging that the book was the "result of one political conservative's attempt to reassess his views on politics and society in the aftermath of Watergate and the Nixon presidency" (p. 95):

Much of this book has dealt with the fate of those who were rendered politically or economically redundant in earlier decades of this century. Their story is one of the most terrible in the annals of the race. In a time of diminishing affluence and increasing mass unemployment, their story carries a warning concerning our own future. The history of the twentieth century has taught us that people who are rendered permanently superfluous are eventually condemned to segregated precincts of the living dead or are exterminated outright. No genuine conservative could possibly defend policies or institutions that condemn an ever-multiplying number of people to such a fate. Such policies are recipes for unmitigated disaster. Before it is too late – and the hour is very late indeed – conservatives must distinguish themselves from defenders of selfish, anti-social privilege (pp. 96ff.)

Given the predicament of Enlightenment ideals, Islam is afforded with a unique historical opportunity to render a most meaningful service to modern humanity. If it is the case that the modern Muslim can affirm the ideals of human dignity, universal equality before the law and the value of the material/profane on the basis of revelation then Islam can provide a supra-rational affirmation of these ideals and inject fresh life and vigor into them. In return the Muslim would be in a position to move out his/her own state of spiritual stupor and lethargy.

[188] See, George Makdisi (1981) *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Higher Learning in Islam and the West.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. See also, his equally impressive work (1990)

the rise of humanism and Richard Bulliet[190] on the rise of modern culture in the modern West (among others) suggests that there is causal link between the Islamic affirmation of these ideals and the emergence of these ideals in post-Rennaisance Europe. It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to delve into this issue in detail, but a growing body of research suggests that the aforementioned elective affinities are not mere theoretical possibilities, but historical realities— thereby providing the historical grounds on which future possibilities can be constructed. In short, Islamic ideals and teaching as well as modern scholarship on the historical exchange of ideas between Islam and the West suggest that the circling the square (i.e. the Islamic affirmation of modern Western ideals from outside of the modern world) is a real possibility.

The fact that Islam contains the resources to be an affirming witness from outside the modern world is a very attractive possibility for the present and the future. But at the same time it raises a very troubling question about the past. If it is indeed the case that Islam affirms the irreducible dignity of the individual, equality of all before the law and the inherent goodness of the material/profane worlds then the question emerges: Why is it that the modern, secular West has succeeded in institutionalizing these ideals with a degree of consistency than traditional Muslim society? The posing of this question and an honest facing up to it opens up the possibility of contemporary Islam gaining a better understanding of the historical development of which it is a product.

Robert Bellah[191] and Ernest Gellner[192] are two social scientists puzzled by the friction characterizing Islam's encounter with the modern world,

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titled *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West: With Special Reference to Scholasticism.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

[189] See the "Introduction" in Marcel Boisard (1988) *Humanism in Islam.* Indiana: American Trust Publications.

[190] See, Richard Bulliet (2004) *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization.* New York: Columbia University Press.

[191] See, Bellah, R. (1991) "Islamic Tradition and Problems of Modernization" in *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditionalist World.* California: University of California Press. 146-167.

[192] See. Gellner, E. (1992) *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion.* London, New York: Routledge.

precisely because they see the Qur'anic event anticipating certain "modern" ideals, being open to them and affirming them. Gellner goes so far as to note that Islam appears to be better suited than any other pre-modern religious tradition to integrate itself into the modern world while maintaining the integrity of its foundational principles. They note that certain historical and institutional developments in traditional Islamic culture short-circuited the process of the complete rationalization and integration of the aforementioned ideals into the relevant institutions. Observations such as these suggest that while there are resources in the Islamic tradition that are indispensable for coming to terms with the modern world, there are also hindrances (both intellectual and institutional) that must be overcome. In other words, if the circling of the square is to be done in an honest and consistent manner then the affirmation of modern Western ideals from outside of the modern world must be complemented by a critical stance towards developments in Islamic history based on the same criteria (i.e. the Qur'anic event). This means that the circling of the square requires a rejection of the uncritical affirmation of tradition (or a particular school within tradition) just as the squaring of the circle requires a rejection of the blind negation of tradition by the zealots and the liberals.

Squaring the Circle, Circling the Square— the Qur'anic Warrant

The argument in the previous two sections can be summarized thus. Islam can gain valuable insights into its own inner ethos, historical development and latent potentialities by critically but constructively engaging with the modern West. This engagement has two aspects and both aspects are characterized by simultaneous affirmation and criticism— in the first part this is done "within the limits of reason alone" and in the second part it is done from the perspective of the Qur'anic event.

Squaring the Circle: Islam plays the role of a prophetic dissenting witness from within the modern world— which means:

1. a reasoned/rational critique of the Enlightenment rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine and
2. a reasoned/rational affirmation the Islamic ideals of *iman*, *islam* and *ihsan*

Circling the Square: Islam plays the role of a prophetic affirming witness from outside the modern world— which means:

1.   the Qur'anic affirmation of the Enlightenment ideals of human dignity, human equality and the value of the profane/material
2.   the Qur'anic critique of Islamic tradition for its failure to fully express key Islamic ideals in institutional form.

Having looked at the reasoned grounds on which this approach is built the discussion now turns to the scriptural grounds. In this section I offer the Qur'anic treatment of Judaism and Christianity as informing the rationale underpinning the squaring the circle approach and the Qur'anic treatment of the Fall from Eden (as interpreted by Muhammad Iqbal) as informing the rationale underpinning the circling the square approach.

In its engagement with Judaism and Christianity, the Qur'an turns to the Bible at critical points in the discussion. On the one hand the Qur'an affirms the validity of the Biblical narrative in very strong terms, thereby establishing it as the common ground on which it can interact with (and affirm portions of) the Jewish and Christian traditions. On the other hand the Qur'an critiques particular beliefs and practices in the Jewish and Christian tradition precisely because they do not find any warrant in the Biblical narrative. The Qur'an's employment of the Biblical narrative does not end here, it goes (much?) further. The Qur'an goes on to assert that the Bible bears testimony to the verity of the Blessed Prophet's ministry— thereby affirming its own self-identity on Biblical grounds. While the Qur'an turns to other sources besides the Bible in its engagement with Judaism and Christianity, it can be stated with confidence that its use of the Biblical narrative has a privileged place in the discussion.

The Qur'an affirms the Torah in very strong terms. According to the hadith literature a group of Jews in Madinah came to the Prophet for a judgment on an halakhic issue— the punishment for adultery. In response to this query by the Jewish community to the Blessed Prophet the Qur'an says:

…why do they come to you for judgment when they have the Torah with God's judgment and even then still turn away? These are not believers. We revealed the Torah with guidance and light (5:43).

The Qur'anic affirmation of the Gospels is in very similar terms:

We sent Jesus, the son of Mary, in their [the Hebrew Prophets'] footsteps, to confirm the Torah that had been sent before him: We gave him the Gospels with guidance, light, and confirmation of the Torah already revealed— a guide and lesson for those who take heed of God (5:46).

The fact that the affirmation of the Torah and Gospels as containing "guidance, light" holds true even for the maculate versions of these scriptures is suggested by the following *ayah*. Here the Qur'an asks the Blessed Prophet (and the Muslims) to directly address the Jews and Christians possessing sacred scriptures:

Say, "People of the Book, you have no true basis [for your religion/arguments] unless you uphold the Torah, the Gospels and that which has been sent down to you from your Lord." (5:68).

The Qur'anic affirmation of the Torah and Gospels is further accentuated by the fact that it uses these scriptures as proof texts in its critique of particular beliefs and practices in the religious traditions claiming a Biblical origin. On certain occasions the Qur'an states explicitly that there is no Biblical warrant for a particular belief/practice, i.e. 3:93 in reference to Jewish dietary laws, 3:65 in reference to Jewish and Christian claims regarding the religious identity of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). On other occasions it implies that there is no Biblical warrant by using phrases such as "We did not enjoin it on them…" (57:48) in reference to Christian monasticism, or phrases like "Say bring forth your proof if you are indeed truthful" (2:111) in reference to Jewish claims about the outcome of the Final Reckoning. The possibility that the Qur'anic affirmation of the Torah and Gospel as containing "guidance, light" holds in the present tense, is made even stronger by the way that the Qur'an uses the Biblical narrative as a

witness on behalf of the ministry of the Blessed Prophet. Allah says in the Qur'an:

> *I shall ordain My mercy for those who are conscious of Allah and pay the prescribed alms; who believe in Our Revelations; who follow the messenger— the unlettered prophet they find described in the Torah that is with them and in the Gospels— who commands then to do right and forbids them to do wrong, who makes good things lawful to them and bad things unlawful, and relieves them of their burdens and the iron collars that were on them* (7:156-7).

In terms that we have used earlier, the Qur'an is squaring the circle in relation to the Abrahamic/Biblical tradition. The Qur'anic narrative is simultaneously playing the role of a dissenting prophetic witness from within the Biblical tradition while at the same time affirming its own identity on Biblical grounds. In very concrete and direct terms the Qur'an links its own identity to the Abrahamic/Biblical tradition— which is the very tradition that it is also criticizing (in its Jewish and Christian variations). It is indeed the case that the Qur'anic narrative goes on to transcend the grounds on which it engages Judaism and Christianity— but that transcending makes no sense whatsoever (actually it is not even possible) in the absence of the initial engagement. In other words the Qur'an never questions the legitimacy of the common grounds that it shares with Judaism and Christianity. In fact, besides explicitly affirming these grounds as containing "guidance, light" the Qur'an further affirms them by pointing out that particular beliefs and practices in Judaism and Christianity find no warrant in these grounds. The affirmation is further stressed when the Qur'an claims to be the culmination and fulfilment of the Biblical event. In a significant part of its discourse with Judaism and Christianity, the Qur'an engages these variants of the Abrahamic tradition— modifying a phrase used earlier— "within the limits of the Bible alone".

Given the manner in which the Qur'an engages the Biblical narrative in its encounter with Judaism and Christianity, the question emerges: Does the Qur'an contain any resources that make it possible for contemporary Islam to engage with the modern world in the same methodological terms? I think the answer is a very clear "YES". In the first section I identified the

Enlightenment enshrinement of human reason as the single most daunting obstacle that any "dissenting voice within the reality of the modern world" has to face. The manner and frequency with which the Qur'an addresses the issue of *'aql* or "reason" and "rational thought" suggests that the valuation of these sources is not completely dissimilar from its valuation of the Biblical narrative. If this is indeed the case then an argument can be made that there is Qur'anic warrant for engaging with Enlightenment paradigm "within the limits of reason alone." Before detailing the Qur'anic valuation of *'aql* in light of its valuation of the Torah and the Gospels, a brief word on another similarity. It is obvious that there is a significant difference between the Qur'anic "*Taurat*" and the "Torah" of Rabbinic Judaism. It is also the case that the Qur'anic "*Injeel*" differs significantly from the "Gospels" of the Church. In spite of these radical (and unbridgeable) differences it would be patently false to claim that there is no similarity between the Qur'anic and the non-Qur'anic conceptions. It would have to be further acknowledged that the similarity is significant enough for a meaningful conversation and exchange to be based on "Biblical grounds". Similarly, the Qur'anic understanding of *'aql* differs significantly from the Enlightenment understanding of "reason" and "rationality"— but this difference is not so huge as to preclude the possibility of "reason" providing a common ground for conversation and exchange. If the similarity between the Qur'anic *'aql* and Enlightenment "reason" and "rationality" is not recognized (or if there is no similarity to be recognized)[193] then any interaction between Islam and the Enlightenment tradition will be an exercise in polemics and apologetics rather than meaningful exchange.

While the Qur'an does not explicitly say that human *'aql* contains "light, guidance" it does say repeatedly that misguided people groping about in the dark are not using their reasoning faculties (*'aql*) properly. On nearly two dozen occasions the Qur'an condemns those who misuse their *'aql* and thereby turn away from light and guidance. For example, the Qur'an has Abraham (peace be upon him) saying to the idol-worshippers:

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[193] If it is indeed the case that there is no similarity between Qur'anic *'aql* and Enlightenment "reason" then there is very little practical value or meaningful substance in the line of argument in this presentation.

Shame upon you and that which you worship besides Allah! Will you not, then, use your reason? (21:67)

On the Day of Judgment, Allah will say to those who followed Satan:

He had already led astray a great many of you: could you not, then use your reason? (36:62).

On nearly three dozen other occasions the Qur'an states those who use their *'aql* properly will be blessed with "seeing the light" (so to speak) and guided to straight path. For example:

Thus do We spell out these ayaat (signs) *unto people who use their reason* (30: 28).

And:

And in the succession of night and day, and in the means of subsistence which God sends down from the skies, giving life thereby to earth after it had been lifeless, and in the change of the winds: [in all this] there are ayaat (signs) *for people who use their reason* (45:5).

What the Qur'an lacks in explicit formulation it makes up by implicit pointers. While never explicitly saying that human reason contains "light, guidance", on nearly five dozen different occasions the Qur'an draws attention to the inherent value in using the *'aql* properly and the pitfalls of not using it properly. In contrast there are only about one dozen references to the Torah and Gospels in the same vein. Consequently, the use of reason as the grounds on which to critique the Enlightenment and affirm the Islamic alternative is as Qur'anically authentic as the Qur'an's use of the Bible in its engagement with Judaism and Christianity.

In light of the foregoing discussion on the necessity of remaining "within the limits of reason alone" in the critique of the modern world, it is obvious that critiques of modernity emanating from the quarters of perennial philosophy and different traditionalisms are inadequate. But the fact that

these responses do not measure up to the standards proposed in this presentation is not their most egregious offence (if it can be considered an offence at all.) Far more egregious is the fact that these critiques violate a cardinal principle that is at the heart of all spiritual teachings. Because of this violation (which may actually be a logical corollary of not remaining within the limits of reason alone in the critique of the Enlightenment) perennialism and traditionalism have practically abdicated the role/responsibility of being an affirming prophetic witness. In its Islamic expression this cardinal principle of spiritual teachings is the Sufi saying that "all things have two sides, one pointing to God and the other pointing away from God". In the context of the present discussion this basically means that one can/should take a stance of critiquing dissent and affirming witness with respect to all cultural phenomena. It simply cannot be the case that the Enlightenment is worse than the days of *jahiliyyah*— even the pre-Islamic Arab tradition had noble characteristics that Islam not only affirmed but internalized. But in looking at the analysis of modernity produced by the aforementioned schools, one can be excused for coming to the conclusion that the Enlightenment is an absolutely unique phenomenon in human history in the sense that it has only one side— and that side is worthy of only critique and condemnation. It might have been plausible to dismiss the Enlightenment as having only one side— the one that faces away from God— in the 18th and 19th centuries. But given the evidence that has been accumulating since the beginning of the 20th century it is difficult to discount the fact that a religious/monotheistic impulse is at work within the Enlightenment paradigm. Consequently, it is among the most pressing demands of the day to face this paradigm squarely (both in its negativity as well as its positivity) and engage with it constructively.

Muhammad Iqbal's interpretation of the mythic Fall from Eden provides the grounds on which a constructive response to the Enlightenment can be articulated on Qur'anic grounds. Iqbal argues that from the Qur'anic perspective the Fall, as painful and tragic as it was, also made human culture, goodness, and faith possible. Prior to the fall it is not possible to speak of any of these things because in the Garden "there is neither hunger, nor thirst, neither heat nor nakedness" (20:118-119). For Iqbal the human being's blissful state of existence in the Garden of Eden is symbolic

of a primitive state in which man is practically unrelated to his environment and consequently does not feel the sting of human wants, the birth of which alone marks the beginning of human culture".[194]

We can take Iqbal's observation further and note that the human being's relationship with the Divine is also characterized by the same naiveté as his relationship with the physical environment in Eden. Prior to the Fall there is no question of lack of faith, doubt, or distance between the human and the Divine— these are not even possibilities prior to the Fall. For Iqbal the Fall is the event that brought with it new possibilities of human relations with the Divine, with the physical environment and with other human beings— relations based on a free, conscious, rational choice in contrast to relations based on a naïve acceptance (and affirmation) of the given. For Iqbal the Fall symbolically represents,

> man's rise from a primitive stage of instinctive appetite [and we can say naïve faith] to the conscious possession of a free self, capable of doubt and disobedience [and we may say consciously/rationally chosen faith]. The Fall does not mean any moral depravity; it is man's transition from simple consciousness to the first flashes of self-consciousness, a kind of waking from the dream of nature with a throb of personal causality in one's own being.[195]

Iqbal does not see the Fall as some catastrophic tragedy in some absolute ontological sense. This interpretation of the Fall requires a re-thinking of the first act of disobedience. The fact that the act is a mistake is self-evident because the individuals who committed it recognized it as being such. But that does not mean that the act has only negative connotations. Iqbal notes:

> Man's first act of disobedience was also his first act of free choice; and that is why, according to the Qur'anic narration, Adam's first transgression was forgiven. Now goodness is not a matter of compulsion; it is the self's free surrender to the moral ideal and arises out of a willing co-operation of free egos. A being whose movements are wholly

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[194] Iqbal, 67,
[195] Ibid, 67ff.

determined like a machine cannot produce goodness. Freedom is thus a condition of goodness.[196]

It is only in the aftermath of this act of disobedience that we can speak of the possibility of human-Divine relation being a matter of a "free surrender to [a] moral ideal aris[ing] out of a willing co-operation of free egos". To put it bluntly, the Fall brings with it the possibility of a qualitatively different[197]

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[196] Ibid, 68.

[197] As regards the qualitatively different "new possibilities of human relations with the Divine" an analogy could be drawn, based on the prophetic traditions, between the situation described here and that which is reported in the hadith literature; the difference between the earlier and later generations of believers and the possibilities that are available to the believers of the later ages.

حَدَّثَنَا هَاشِمُ بْنُ الْقَاسِمِ حَدَّثَنَا جَسْرٌ عَنْ ثَابِتٍ عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَدِدْتُ أَنِّي لَقِيتُ إِخْوَانِي قَالَ فَقَالَ أَصْحَابُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَوَلَيْسَ نَحْنُ إِخْوَانَكَ قَالَ أَنْتُمْ أَصْحَابِي وَلَكِنْ إِخْوَانِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِي وَلَمْ يَرَوْنِي (مسند أحمد: 12169)

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْمُغِيرَةِ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا الْأَوْزَاعِيُّ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي أَسِيدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَنْ خَالِدِ بْنِ دُرَيْكٍ عَنْ أَبِي جُبَيْرِينَ قَالَ قُلْتُ لِأَبِي جُمُعَةَ رَجُلٍ مِنْ الصَّحَابَةِ حَدِّثْنَا حَدِيثًا سَمِعْتَهُ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ نَعَمْ أُحَدِّثُكُمْ حَدِيثًا جَيِّدًا تَغَدَّيْنَا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمَعَنَا أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ الْجَرَّاحِ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ خَيْرٌ مِنَّا أَسْلَمْنَا مَعَكَ وَجَاهَدْنَا مَعَكَ قَالَ نَعَمْ قَوْمٌ يَكُونُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِي وَلَمْ يَرَوْنِي (مسند أحمد: 16529)

The Prophet said, "I long to meet my brothers". The Companions asked, "Are we not your brothers?" He said, "You are my Companions but my brothers are those who have not seen me and have faith in me". (*Musnad Ahmad*, 12169)
Abu Ubaydah ibn Jarrah asked, "O Messenger of God, we have believed in thee and we have fought side by side with thee, would there be any body better than us?" The Prophet said, "Yes, those who shall be after you, those who have not seen me and have faith in me". (*Musnad Ahmad*, 16529)
Mishkat, in the section titled "Bab-al-Iman" also has a report in the same vein. The text goessomething like this:
"The Prophet asked the Companions, 'Who in all of creation possesses the most beautiful faith (*'ajab-al-iman*)?' The companions replied "The angels." The Prophet said "How is it that they would not have faith while they are in the presence of their Lord." Then the Companions said; "The Prophets". The Blessed Prophet said "How is it that they would not have *Iman* when wahy descends upon them." Then the Companions said, "Then it must be us". The Prophet replied "How is it that you would not have *iman* while I am among you". Then the Prophet said "Those among creation who have the most beautiful *iman* will be

human affirmation of the Divine (and a Divine affirmation of the human[198]) than was possible prior to the Fall.[199]

Iqbal's description of the Fall suggests the tasting of the forbidden fruit heralded the onset of an enlightenment prior to the modern Enlightenment. The enlightenment resulting from the tasting of the forbidden fruit was the result of the exercise of a God-given wilful free choice, brought with the birth of a new (rational) consciousness and opened up new horizons of human culture and human relations with the Divine. The fact that the more recent Enlightenment period marks the birth of new understanding of human consciousness, human will and human freedom is not disputed by anyone. Perhaps a more cautious (and accurate) statement would be that the Enlightenment offered a more rational and comprehensible description of human will, human freedom and human consciousness than was possible prior to it. On all of these points the Enlightenment departs from tradition and opens up new horizons for human culture and human consciousness. Going beyond the rhetoric of good and evil and leaving aside value-judgments, it can be stated with confidence that the Enlightenment break with tradition is not unlike the original Fall from Eden— an act that results from the tasting of the forbidden fruit and creates a rupture as a result but which at the same time also contains the resources not only for self-correction but also self-enhancement. The fact that there is an element of the

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your brothers who come after you, they will find leaves with writing on them and they will believe in the contents".

[198] This is quite obvious from the text of a well known hadith qudsi in which Allah says: "If humanity were to stop sinning I would destroy it and bring in its place a creature who sins – so that I may [have the opportunity to] forgive". This hadith suggests that the manner in which Allah relates to the human being plays a central role in His Own Self-Understanding. In the absence of the act of eating the forbidden fruit some of key attributes of Allah remain hidden or un-manifest – it is only in the aftermath of this "tragic" act that the Divine Glory has the opportunity to manifest itself more fully.

[199] It should be mentioned in passing that after the Fall it is not possible to return to the state of naïve bliss that was present before the Fall. Those who return to Eden in the here-after, Adam and Eve (peace be upon them both) no less than any other human being, will return with a very different understanding of the Divine, the human self and the relation of the human self to the Divine than they had when the originally left Eden. It is nothing more than naïve romanticism to endeavour to recapture the bliss of the original naiveté after it has been shattered.

"Fall" in the Enlightenment is recognized by the religiously unmusical Max Weber— but the same intellectual honesty that leads him to see the problematic side of the phenomenon also opens up his eyes to the latent potentialities in it:

> The fate of an epoch which has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must know that we cannot learn the *meaning* of the world from the results of its analysis, be it ever so perfect; it must rather be in a position to create this meaning itself. It must recognize that general views of life and the universe can never be the products of increasing empirical knowledge…[200].

Taking Weber's observation as a starting point, but going beyond it, it can be further said that as was the case with the enlightenment resulting from the original Fall the potential for self-correction and self-enhancement in the aftermath of the modern Enlightenment can only be realized with the aid of the Divine Word.

In sum the Qur'anic engagement with Judaism and Christianity provides scriptural grounds of the rationale informing the squaring of the circle approach. And the Qur'anic narrative of the Fall, as interpreted by Iqbal provides the scriptural grounds of the rationale informing the circling of the square approach. Taken together this scripturally grounded rationale complements and affirms the rationale based on reason offered in the first two sections of this paper regarding the most fruitful and promising approach to take in Islam's encounter with the modern West.

A Final Word

I began my presentation by noting Murad's observation that in order to square the circle adequately, contemporary Islam will have to become a "prophetic, dissenting voice within the reality of the modern world". During the course of my presentation, I have tried to remain consistent with the line

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[200] Weber, M. (1949) "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy." In *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Ed. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. p. 57.

of reasoning contained in this observation. If I depart from some of Murad's conclusions it is only because of the imperative of consistency (or at least I'd like to think this is the case). Remaining consistent with this line of reasoning means that the dissent from the Enlightenment can only be "within the limits of reason alone". It also means that the prophetic witness will have to play the indispensable role of affirming witness from outside the Enlightenment tradition— affirming some of the deepest aspirations of Enlightenment ethos from the Qur'anic perspective. In the last section I have endeavoured to provide the Qur'anic warrant for the reasoned rationale informing the squaring the circle and circling the square approach, thereby suggesting there is a common logic underpinning both the reasoned and the Qur'anic rationales. As a final word I'd like to explicitly articulate this logic. The logic underpinning both of the approaches offered above with respect to the ultimate goal of Islam in its encounter with the modern West is not to critique-condemn-replace but to redeem-reform-embrace. It is obvious that this is the Qur'anic logic in its engagement with Judaism and Christianity as well as its approach to the events surrounding the Fall. Speaking from the Qur'anic perspective, while there is certainly something deeply problematic in the modern reality that needs to be critiqued loudly (just as there is something deeply problematic in the Jewish and Christian traditions, as well as the Fall that needs to be critiqued loudly), the critique cannot become reified. The critique is a means towards redeeming, which itself is a prelude to reforming with the ultimate goal being the embracing of the afflicted paradigm/event.[201]

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[201] I think that Murad is much closer to advocating a "redeem, reform, embrace" approach to the Enlightenment than appears to be the case at first glance. This is suggested by the proposal he makes regarding contemporary Islam's engagement with modern feminism. The following is a quote from the concluding part of Murad's essay titled "Islam, Irigaray and the Retrieval of Gender": http://www.masud.co.uk.islam./ahm/gender.htm

Feminism, in any case, has no orthodoxy, as Fiorenza reminds us; and certain of its forms are repellent to us, and are clearly damaging to women and society, while others may demonstrate striking convergences with the Shari'a and our gendered cosmologies. We advocate a nuanced understanding which tries to bypass the sexism-versus-feminism dialectic by proposing a theology in which the Divine is truly gender neutral, but gifts humanity with a legal code and family norms which are rooted in the understanding that, as

In the final analysis if there is one unredeemable part of the Enlightenment tradition it is the fact that it allowed its critique of illumination, wisdom and the Divine turns into an outright rejection because of the reification of the critique. The flip-side of this reified critique is the fact that the Enlightenment affirmation of individualism, universalism and materialism became a set of reified/dogmatic assertions based on completely abstract concepts rather than a living (and life-giving) ethos. It is obviously the case that the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment analysis of illumination, wisdom and the Divine laid bare deeply problematic aspects of traditional culture that were not known before. But instead of endeavouring to redress these problematic aspects of traditional culture as a "philosophic healer" using the resources already present in the afflicted paradigm, Enlightenment thought played the role of a colonizing imperialist on a mission to civilize the savages by means of socio-cultural engineering. In short the only unredeemable aspect of the Enlightenment is that its stance towards non-Enlightenment paradigms is one of critique-condemn-replace.

But in the interests of intellectual honesty it must be forcefully stated that the "sin" of reification is not a peculiarly Enlightenment/modern/Western shortcoming— it is a universal human potential. Furthermore, long before the birth of the modern West, this potential was actualized repeatedly during the course of history by every "traditional" religion known to historians. The very fact that each religious tradition has witnessed a "reformation" of some type is evidence enough of the fact that reification has set in. Social scientific analysis of the different religious tradition has laid bare the inescapable fact that particular theologies and institutions, throughout the course of religious history, have been identified with Absolute or Ultimate Truth. This is no less true of the Islamic tradition than others. Just as the effective diagnosis and remedy of the reifications of religious traditions in the past did not mean the

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Irigaray insists, the sexes 'are not equal but different', and will naturally gravitate towards divergent roles which affirm rather than suppress their respective genius.

Murad is arguing that the most fruitful Islamic response to modern feminism is "redeem, reform, embrace" rather than "critique, condemn, replace". In this particular quote if the term "feminism" is replaced with "Enlightenment" and if the "sexism-versus-feminism dialectic" is replaced with the "modernism-versus-traditionalism dialectic" then it obvious that the "redeem, reform, embrace" approach is as applicable to the Enlightenment in general as it is to feminism in particular.

abandoning of the tradition itself, a meaningful response to the reifications of the Enlightenment tradition cannot mean the abandoning of the tradition itself. To adopt the position that the Enlightenment tradition has to be abandoned in its entirety in response to its shortcomings is to exhibit the worst characteristics of that which one is critiquing and rejecting. This basically means that one has adopted the same attitude towards the Enlightenment paradigm that the Enlightenment paradigm had adopted towards traditional religion and classical philosophy. This is not only a modernist move in the most negative sense, but also one that is unlikely to bear fruit. A more sane approach "albeit a more courageous, complex and nuanced one" and one that is built on scripturally (Qur'anically) reasoned grounds is redeem-reform-embrace— an approach that will lead to enhanced understanding on the part of a troubled and alienated self, as a result of it critical but empathetic study of the alien other.